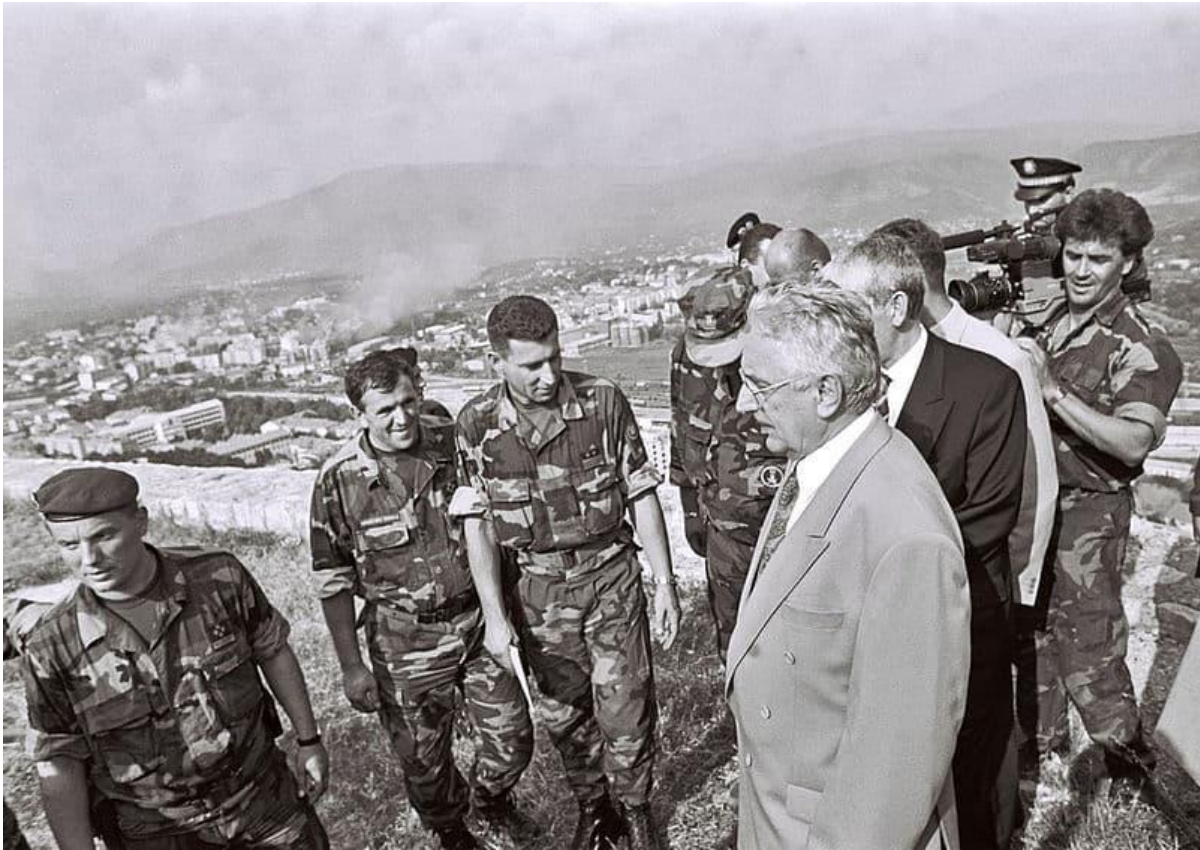


Turning Neighbors into Foes: A Comparative Analysis of Patterns of Violence against Civilians in the Krajina Region during Croatia's War of Independence through the Lens of Alliance Theory and the Notion of Violence as a Political Strategy



Croatian President Franjo Tuđman (center right) and General Ante Gotovina (center left) standing above the liberated town of Knin during Operation Storm on 5 August 1995. Source: [History Collection](#).

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the phenomenon of violence against civilians in the Croatian region of Krajina by examining the two most intense periods of the conflict between August 1991 and early March 1992, and in August 1995 during and after Operation Storm. It asks the question of what the most dominant aspects of such violence were in these periods, and what can be said about their nature and the observable patterns through a comparative analysis. Utilizing the frame of alliance theory complemented with insights from studies of ethnicity and identity, this thesis delivers its argument through a qualitative analysis of documentary primary sources from the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. For the first period, it identifies significant differences among the various armed actors in the conflict and their treatment of civilians and strong elements of local participation. For the second period, it identifies notable differences in micro-level dynamics of violence between different areas of Krajina, toleration of otherwise prohibited behavior of the armed forces by the elites, and elements of opportunism in the form of widespread looting framed along the lines of revenge against a collective enemy. While finding several important differences, this thesis delivers the argument that in both episodes the respective elites responsible for the orchestration of violence shifted the societal structures through the framing of the ethnic other as a danger to the nation and by not holding perpetrators of violence against civilians accountable. This created an environment in which otherwise prohibited behavior became justified. On the micro-level, this environment was on many occasions welcomed by those willing to exploit it for their own gain, satisfaction, or a sense of moral fulfilment, which in turn was used by the elites to secure their political objectives.

Keywords: violence against civilians, violence as a political strategy, ethnicity, alliance, civil war, Krajina, Croatia, the Balkans

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This thesis represents not only the final product of my academic efforts, but it also serves as a symbolic closure to a major chapter of my life. As I now turn the page and start looking to what lies ahead, I would like to take a moment to express my gratitude to all those who have helped me get to this point.

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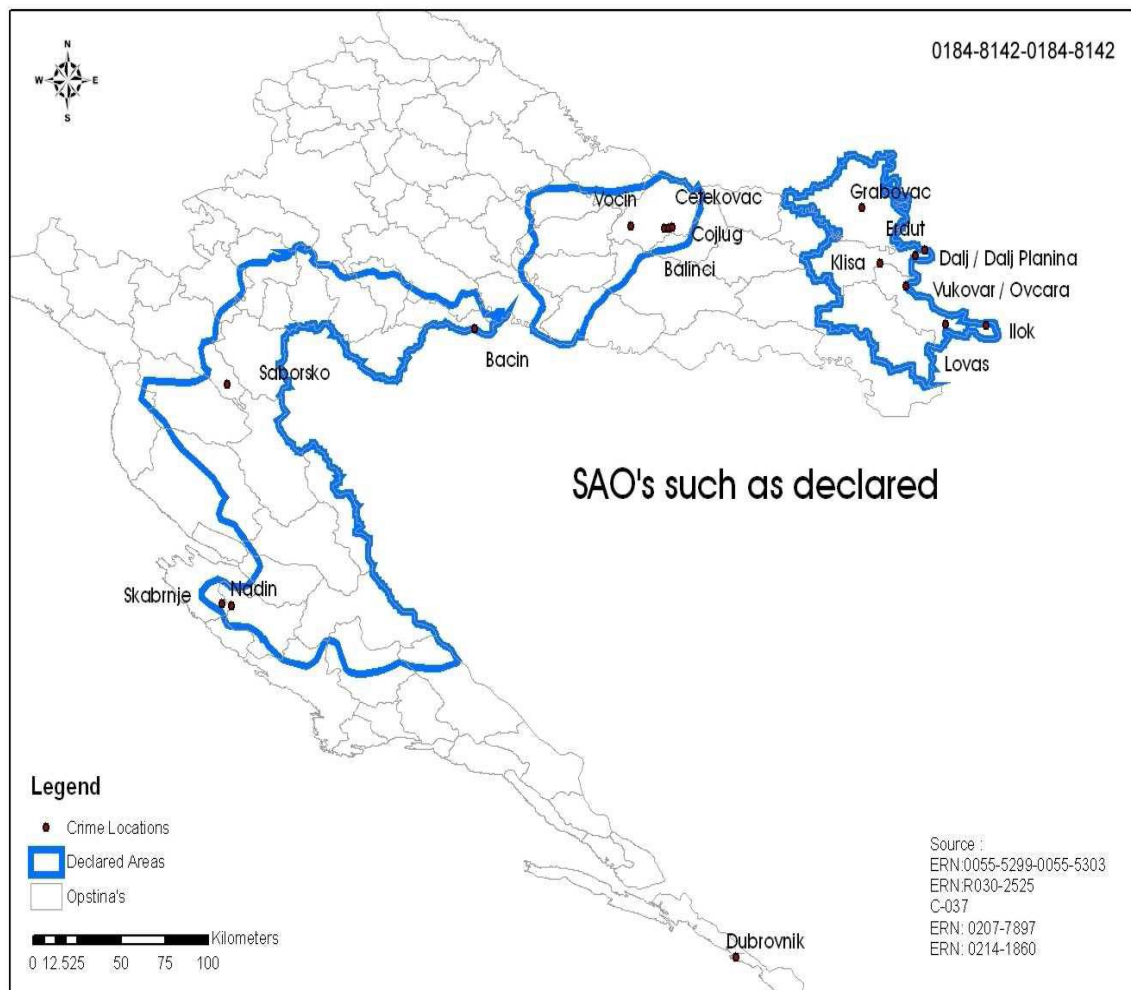
Contents

Abbreviations	7
1. Introduction	9
2. Alliance Theory and Ethno-Political Identities: An Analytical Frame	16
3. Methodology	19
<i>3.1. Justification</i>	20
<i>3.2. Case selection</i>	21
<i>3.3. Data collection and analysis</i>	22
4. The Shifting of Boundaries: A Historical Overview	27
<i>4.1. Inflammatory dynamics</i>	28
<i>4.2. Polarized visions of nationhood</i>	30
<i>4.3. Conflict on the horizon</i>	33
<i>4.4. The onset of violence</i>	35
5. The Alliance Between Knin and Belgrade	37
<i>5.1. Conflicts among elites</i>	40
6. Outbreak of Violence against Civilians	43
<i>6.1. Differences between armed actors</i>	45
<i>6.2. Further basis for empirical differentiation</i>	47
<i>6.3. Involvement of local actors</i>	48
<i>6.4. Opportunism and ideology</i>	49
<i>6.5. Strategies of violence</i>	50
<i>6.6. Complex dynamics and more questions</i>	52
7. Violence Committed against Civilians during and after Oluja	53
<i>7.1. Geographical differences</i>	56
<i>7.2. A time of permissible terror</i>	59
<i>7.3. Widespread looting and a collective enemy</i>	62
<i>7.4. Further reflections on strategy</i>	63
8. Patterns of Violence	64
<i>8.1. Differences</i>	65
<i>8.2. Similarities</i>	67

8.3. <i>Further reflections on the significance of the identified patterns</i>	69
9. Conclusion	73
Bibliography	81
<i>Secondary literature</i>	81
<i>Primary sources</i>	82
<i>Websites</i>	84
Appendices	85
<i>Appendix 1: Plagiarism declaration</i>	85

Abbreviations

DB	Serbian State Security Service (<i>Državne bezbednosti</i>)
HDZ	Croatian Democratic Union (<i>Hrvatska demokratska zajednica</i>)
HHO	Croatian Helsinki Committee (<i>Hrvatski helsinški odbor</i>)
HV	Croatian Army (<i>Hrvatska vojska</i>)
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
JNA	Yugoslav National Army (<i>Jugoslavenska narodna armija</i>)
MUP	Croatian Ministry of Internal Affairs (<i>Ministarstvo unutarnjih poslova</i>)/Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs (<i>Ministarstvo unutrašnjih poslova</i>)
NDH	Independent State of Croatia (<i>Nezavisna Država Hrvatska</i>)
RSK	Republic of Serbian Krajina (<i>Republika Srpska Krajina</i>)
SAO	Serbian Autonomous Region of Krajina (<i>Srpska autonomna oblast Krajina</i>)
SDS	Serbian Democratic Party (<i>Srpska demokratska stranka</i>)
SFRY	Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (<i>Socijalistička Federativna Republika Jugoslavija</i>)
SNV	Serbian National Council (<i>Srpsko nacionalno vijeće</i>)
SVK	Army of the Republic of Serbian Krajina (<i>Srpska vojska Krajine</i>)
TO	Territorial Defense (<i>Teritorijalna obrana</i>)
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
ZNG	Croatian National Guard (<i>Zbor narodne garde</i>)



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Figure 1. Map of the different SAOs in Croatia. This thesis focuses on the largest one – SAO Krajina, on this map encompassing the crime locations of Bačin, Saborsko, Nadin, and Škabrnja.

Source: ICTY Court Records, Case No. IT-95-11: Martić, “Map of Croatia Showing Areas Declared as SAOs by the Serbs,” Exhibit 00834, February 28, 2005.

1. Introduction

We are aware of our own defencelessness, finitude and mortality. We can feel pain, and self-disgust, and shame, and horror, and we know it. We know what makes us suffer. We know how dread and pain can be inflicted on us – and that means we know exactly how to inflict it on others. We know how we are naked, and how that nakedness can be exploited – and that means we know how others are naked, and how they can be exploited. We can terrify other people, consciously. We can hurt and humiliate them for faults we understand only too well. We can torture them – literally – slowly, artfully and terribly. That’s far more than predation. That’s a qualitative shift in understanding. That’s a cataclysm as large as the development of self-consciousness itself. That’s the entry of the knowledge of Good and Evil into the world. That’s a second as-yet-unhealed fracture in the structure of Existence. That’s the transformation of Being itself into a moral endeavour – all attendant on the development of sophisticated self-consciousness. Only man could conceive of the rack, the iron maiden and the thumbscrew. Only man will inflict suffering for the sake of suffering.¹

This brief segment is part of a greater discussion of good and evil and the human “proclivity for malevolent actions” presented by the Canadian academic Jordan Peterson in his *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos*.² One of the most interesting things about Peterson’s investigation of human malice and resentment is his juxtaposition of animalistic predation, which he calls “innocent brutality,” necessary for a natural predator’s survival, against man’s capacity to commit horror consciously, with the knowledge of how his actions will impact his victims, for he only knows too well how he himself can be harmed in ways most terrifying.³ And although such behavior can also come about as a result of carelessness, or perhaps willful blindness, as Peterson noted, it is precisely the infliction of “suffering for the sake of suffering” that is part of one of the key points of focus of this inquiry – violence committed against civilians during the Croatian War of Independence.⁴ The reason why a parallel with Peterson’s discussion of evil is drawn here is that violence which specifically targets civilians, especially unarmed ones, is also qualitatively different from standard violence during wartime, where killing often occurs rather involuntarily, or at the very least, not killing often means dying, as the opposing military force constitutes a direct threat to one’s survival in combat.⁵ In the targeting of unarmed civilians, especially once an area had already been militarily conquered and the enemy forces driven out, there is often no or very little threat posed by the civilians to the direct survival of the perpetrators. This is even more evident when the majority of civilians

¹ Jordan B. Peterson and Norman Doidge, *12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos* (London: Allen Lane, 2018), 54.

² Peterson and Doidge, *12 Rules for Life*, 55.

³ Peterson and Doidge, *12 Rules for Life*, 54.

⁴ Peterson and Doidge, *12 Rules for Life*, 54.

⁵ Peterson and Doidge, *12 Rules for Life*, 54-55.

that stay behind are elderly persons. This realm of various interactions between different sorts of armed actors and the civilian population is one of the central themes of this inquiry.

More specifically, this study focuses on the region of Krajina in Croatia, where in 1991 the Croatian Serb minority, supported by Belgrade and the Yugoslav National Army (JNA – *Jugoslavenska narodna armija*), launched a military offensive against Croatia with the intention of separating the majority Serb-populated areas of Croatia and connecting them with other Serb-dominated areas of the former Yugoslavia into a Greater Serbia. On 19 December of the same year, the Republic of Serbian Krajina (RSK – *Republika Srpska Krajina*) was proclaimed and lasted until 1995, when the Croatian forces dismantled the regime during Operations Flash (*Bljesak*) and Storm (*Oluja*) in May and August respectively. Between 1992 and 1995, however, a ceasefire existed in the region, and so military clashes and violence were only sporadic. As such, the most intense periods of the conflict were at the start of the war and then at the end, especially during *Oluja*.⁶ In the initial stages of war, when the JNA and the Serb forces were conducting the offensive, the bulk of violence against civilians had been borne mainly by Croats that stayed behind, while during *Oluja* the majority of civilian victims were ethnic Serbs. Even though the majority on each side of the conflict did not kill civilians, the phenomenon of civilian-oriented violence did exist during the war and in respect to the region of Krajina it is a highly under-researched subject within the academia.⁷ Accordingly, this thesis tackles this issue by asking the research question:

What dominant aspects formed the violence against civilians in the Croatian region of Krajina throughout the Serb military offensive between August 1991 and March 1992 on the one hand, and during and after Oluja in August 1995 on the other, and what in particular can be said about the nature and patterns of this violence by comparing the two respective episodes?

In order to answer this question, several steps will be taken throughout this inquiry. First, given the fact that the context and legitimization of violence are seen here as fundamental parts of understanding the dynamics of perpetrator-victim interactions, the ethno-political context in Croatia during the relevant period will be addressed through questions such as how the leadership of each side utilized propaganda and distorted historical narratives to justify extreme politics, how ethnicity and political goals came to be merged, but also how the situation

⁶ Mila Dragojević, *Amoral Communities: Collective Crimes in Time of War* (Ithaca [New York]: Cornell University Press, 2019), 119-125.

⁷ What is meant by this in particular is that the efforts at ethnically homogenizing the region by the respective warring sides, while including the killings of several hundred of civilians, involved mostly forced expulsion achieved through various measures, as this thesis explores. As such, the objectives and methods of the respective leaderships were not centered around any sort of systematic elimination of civilians.

escalated from political crisis to war. Second, since external support was crucial for the Krajina Serbs, questions such as how an alliance came to exist between their leadership and Belgrade, what the relationship was between Slobodan Milošević, the president of Serbia, and respective members of the Krajina Serb leadership, or in what areas the Krajina Serbs depended on the support of Belgrade and the JNA and how this cooperation functioned in practice, will be answered. Third, for the first period of violence analyzed in this study, questions such as how various armed actors treated civilians, how local participation functioned, or whether a certain “division of labor” can be observed among the armed actors will be discussed. Fourth, questions such as how violence was organized, which actors participated in it and when, and what measures the Croatian state implemented that had an impact on the situation of civilians who faced violence during and after *Oluja* will be focused on. Fifth, a comparison between the two episodes will be done through questions such as what the commonalities and differences are, what results can be drawn from them in terms of observable patterns, and how these can be explained.

In terms of academic literature, the war in Croatia has been so far mainly covered from the perspective of propaganda and the distortion of historical memory as a tool for mobilization, or by focusing on the impact of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) on post-war reconciliation in the Balkans.⁸ Accordingly, Vjeran Pavlaković examined the role of collective memory in the RSK and the power of media manipulations, political rituals and commemorations that were to persuade the Serb minority that coexistence with Croats was impossible.⁹ In that respect, Pavlaković described, among other things, how the Krajina Serb leadership’s efforts at legitimacy were based around associating the Croatian administration of Franjo Tuđman with the Independent State of Croatia (NDH – *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*), which was historically responsible for the World War II genocide of Serbs, as well as Jews, Roma, and Croat political prisoners.¹⁰ Pavlaković discussed how instead of embracing the antifascist Partisan Yugoslav legacy, the Krajina Serb leadership instead turned to the chauvinistic ideology of Greater Serbia.¹¹ He further examined how limited nationalistic

⁸ Vjeran Pavlaković, “Symbols and the Culture of Memory in Republika Srpska Krajina,” *Nationalities Papers* 41, no. 6 (November 2013): 893–909; Vjeran Pavlaković, “Croatia, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, and General Gotovina as a Political Symbol,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 62, no. 10 (December 2010): 1707–40; Iva Vukušić, “Judging Their Hero: Perceptions of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in Croatia,” in *Prosecuting War Crimes: Lessons and Legacies of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia*, ed. James Gow, Rachel Kerr, and Zoran Pajić, Contemporary Security Studies (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2014), 151–81.

⁹ Pavlaković, “Symbols and the Culture of Memory.”

¹⁰ Pavlaković, “Symbols and the Culture of Memory,” 894–896.

¹¹ Pavlaković, 894–896.

discourse of a single victim and a single aggressor mentality came to then be reflected in the post-communist Balkan political commemorative context and even debates about the ICTY.¹²

Similarly to this final point, Iva Vukušić examined the ramifications of the controversial Appeals Chamber judgment in the case of Gotovina *et al.* regarding *Oluja*.¹³ She looked at how for many Croats Ante Gotovina, a general of the Croatian Army (HV – *Hrvatska vojska*) and one of the accused for crimes committed during and after *Oluja*, is a hero who cannot be tried for crimes against Serbs in Croatia, because Croatia waged a defensive war against Serbian aggression, whereas for many Serbs *Oluja* represents ethnic cleansing.¹⁴ Vukušić discussed the public perception of the ICTY in Croatia and Serbia and how with the appeals judgment “the ICTY has lost the battle for public opinion both in Croatia and in Serbia.”¹⁵ Finally, she also delivered the argument that discussions of the past in the region need to be much more neutral and based on evidence, instead of “what is generally portrayed in the media.”¹⁶ The not only academic but also societal relevance of her work therefore lies likewise in the fact that she demonstrated how one-sided interpretations of the past in Croatia result in lack of proper recognition and understanding of victims on the other side, which perpetuates narratives that prevent the needed stability and healing in the region.¹⁷ In the end, Vukušić also discussed how more research is needed on the events that transpired in Krajina and how Serbs were treated by the Tuđman administration.¹⁸ This inquiry sees the works of Pavlaković and Vukušić not only as important factual pieces on the empirical topic, but Vukušić’s emphasis on the need for more factual scrutiny of the events in Krajina adds to both the societal as well as academic relevance of this thesis.¹⁹

Despite a number of other smaller studies dealing with Krajina, such as Pål Kolstø and Davor Paukovic’s article on how and why the RSK de facto state failed, or Hannes Grandits and Carolin Leutloff’s piece on the discourses of mobilization to war in Krajina in 1990-1991, academic literature in English focusing on cases of actual violence and local dynamics is quite scarce.²⁰ That is, with the exception of Mila Dragojević’s recent book *Amoral Communities*:

¹² Pavlaković, “Symbols and the Culture of Memory.”

¹³ Vukušić, “Judging Their Hero.”

¹⁴ Vukušić.

¹⁵ Vukušić, “Judging Their Hero,” 152.

¹⁶ Vukušić, “Judging Their Hero,” 153.

¹⁷ Vukušić, “Judging Their Hero.”

¹⁸ Vukušić, “Judging Their Hero,” 172-174.

¹⁹ Pavlaković, “Symbols and the Culture of Memory.”; Vukušić, “Judging Their Hero,” 172-174.

²⁰ Pål Kolstø and Davor Paukovic, “The Short and Brutish Life of Republika Srpska Krajina: Failure of a De Facto State,” *Ethnopolitics* 13, no. 4 (August 8, 2014): 309–27; Hannes Grandits and Carolin Leutloff,

Collective Crimes in Times of War.²¹ Although the next chapter of this inquiry will discuss her theoretical approach in more detail and explain how it fits into this study's analysis, in respect to the empirical contribution the book is seen here as invaluable, especially because of the basis it sets for future research into the violence in Croatia.²² The overall strengths of her work include the fact that she not only scrutinized a scholarly under-researched subject, but did so by combining the somewhat disconnected fields of interdisciplinary genocide studies with those of political science to ask a question of why violence occurred in some ethnically heterogeneous communities while in others it was largely absent.²³ As such, she looked at subnational variation in wartime Croatia by examining both the state-level processes of linking ethnicity with political goals, as well as how ethnicity manifested as a dividing line on the micro-level.²⁴

Her work is likewise highly valuable in identifying that certain patterns of violence existed throughout the war in Croatia, especially during the most intense periods of the conflict.²⁵ Dragojević analyzed many of these through her concept of violence as a political strategy, which will be explained properly in the following chapter, that rests on the assumption that once a territory is militarily conquered, political loyalties, in this case along ethnic lines, must be enforced so that neutrality or any form of resistance against the salience of ethnicity is eliminated.²⁶ In this respect, she also identified such patterns in the initial phases of violence as well as during *Oluja*, which formed the starting point for this research.²⁷

The difference between her work and this inquiry, however, is that Dragojević looked at both cases of violence as well as non-violence to find causal mechanisms, which in the cases of violence led to recurring patterns of political violence.²⁸ This study, on the other hand, looks principally only at cases where violence did occur to further explore and explain what other patterns there might be, which forces actually participated in the attacks on civilians and how, and how exactly violence, even as part of a political strategy, actually manifested on the micro-level.²⁹ It can therefore be said that it picks up the topic where Dragojević left it, largely endorses many of her findings, and aims to contribute new insight by scrutinizing precisely

"Discourses, Actors, Violence," in *Potentials of Disorder*, ed. Jan Koehler and Christoph Zürcher (Manchester University Press, 2018).

²¹ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*.

²² Dragojević.

²³ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 3-15.

²⁴ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 118-127.

²⁵ Dragojević, 118-127.

²⁶ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 125-127.

²⁷ Dragojević, 125-127.

²⁸ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 14-19, 125-127.

²⁹ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 7.

what the micro-level dynamics were in areas where violence occurred in 1991 and early 1992, and then during and after *Oluja*, thus also filling a scholarly gap.³⁰ Therefore, in respect to questions such as how violence becomes permissible on the state level and perhaps imaginable in local communities, this inquiry largely utilizes findings of Dragojević and other authors, whereas on the matter of how exactly violence was carried out on the micro-level, it relies fundamentally on analysis of documentary primary sources conducted by the author.³¹

As far as theoretical debates regarding perpetration of violence and the phenomenon of civil war are concerned, this thesis is inspired by the discussion of the ontology of political violence by Stathis Kalyvas.³² In principle, it rejects mono-causal macro explanations of conflict as well as reductionism of perpetrators' identities and motivations.³³ Importantly, it builds on alliance theory and its attribution of agency to both the elites as well as the local participants of civil wars, but also addresses the potential criticism of this theory as limited by the framework of rational action.³⁴ Kalyvas' work resonates in this study through the idea of possible disjunctions between a civil war's master cleavage, in this case an ethno-nationalist war between Croats and Serbs, and the various local cleavages that often on the micro-level take the form of violence that is more related to struggles that surface from the community level instead of being simply imposed by external forces.³⁵ The almost positivist approach by Kalyvas, however, is not taken here for granted, but is instead complemented through a thorough discussion of contextual factors that make violence possible, namely the legitimizing or justificatory character of narratives disseminated by the elites to establish a context in which violence becomes permissible.³⁶ It can be said that in that respect it also draws on elements of constructivism.

As such, it almost follows the logic of Anthony Giddens' structuration theory and his call for recognition of both structure and agency as mutually constitutive components of social

³⁰ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*.

³¹ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*; Pavlaković, "Symbols and the Culture of Memory,"; Vukušić, "Judging Their Hero."

³² Stathis N. Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence': Action and Identity in Civil Wars," *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 3 (September 2003): 475–94.

³³ Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence,'" ; Jonathan Leader Maynard, "Theorizing Ideological Diversity in Mass Violence," in *Perpetrators and Perpetration of Mass Violence: Actions, Motivations and Dynamics*, Routledge Studies in Genocide and Crimes against Humanity (Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 58–79.

³⁴ Jolle Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict: An Introduction*, Second edition (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 31–32.

³⁵ Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence,'" , 475–476.

³⁶ Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence,'" ; Kjell Follingstad Anderson, *Perpetrating Genocide: A Criminological Account*, Routledge Studies in Genocide and Crimes against Humanity (Abingdon, Oxo ; New York, NY: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 69–87.

reality.³⁷ What is meant by this is that individual actors, who act within existing and fluent structures, are capable of changing these structures, while structures produce “the possibility of agency.”³⁸ Throughout this thesis, this idea will mainly resonate through a principal logic that sees the micro-level actors in Krajina acting within a moral and ideological context – a structure, which was significantly influenced by the elites on both sides who relied on a rhetoric of historically impossible coexistence between Serbs and Croats.³⁹ This rhetoric shifted the normal societal conditions to those under which violence against those defined as the ethnic enemy became a legitimate and justifiable form of behavior.⁴⁰ Argumentatively, agency is then an important factor not only for the elites, capable of changing the moral structure, but also on the micro-level, manifesting as willingness of conflict participants to engage in violence against civilians, or not. Examples of both will be thoroughly discussed throughout the following chapters.

As such, in terms of the structure of this paper, this introduction will be followed by a discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of this work, together with the most important analytical concepts. Afterwards, a methodological chapter will follow, addressing the process of collecting and processing empirical evidence in this research project. With respect to the analysis of the relationship between Knin and Belgrade as well as the micro-level dynamics for both episodes of violence, this inquiry employed predominantly legal sources from the ICTY as well as a number of other documents that played an important role during the various proceedings, such as expert reports, witness statements, but also transcripts of hearings and other documents. This chapter will be followed by a discussion of the historical and political context in Croatia in the early 1990s, explaining the respective political aspirations of Milošević, Tuđman, and the Krajina Serb leadership, and how historical memory was manipulated to justify the war. Additionally, the chapter will also provide an overview of the main political events and the conflict between 1990 and 1995. The following chapter will then explain the formation of a military and political alliance between Knin and Belgrade. The subsequent one will delve into the first episode of violence between summer 1991 and early 1992, while the next chapter will focus on *Oluja*. The final argumentative chapter will then compare the two episodes, address similarities and differences, and present the final argument together with a reflection on the theoretical findings of this study. In the end, the conclusion

³⁷ Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Polity Press, 1984), 1-34; Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 126-128.

³⁸ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 128.

³⁹ Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 1-34; Pavlaković, “Symbols and the Culture of Memory,” 894-899.

⁴⁰ Anderson, *Perpetrating Genocide*, 69-87.

will answer the research question, summarize the main arguments of each chapter, address the strengths and weaknesses of this thesis, and identify some areas with potential for future research.

2. Alliance Theory and Ethno-Political Identities: An Analytical Frame

The theoretical approach to the study of violence employed in this thesis is partly a reflection of the author's epistemological stance of critical realism, which can be characterized by the assumption that a real world exists "independently of our theories about it or perceptions of it," but that these perceptions and interpretations are also seen as part of the real world.⁴¹ This stance was then part of the decision to construct a theoretical framework that would analytically reflect such understanding of the social world, with the focus placed on patterns of violence.

Kalyvas' ideas about the nature of civil wars have been labeled above as almost positivist, and what is meant by this is that his allocation of agency, which this study largely endorses, can almost start to resemble the assumption that the existence of said agency equals an actor's capacity to manipulate others or navigate the war's context to secure their own gain, whether they are at the top or at the bottom of the societal hierarchy.⁴² This is where the criticism of alliance theory as perhaps overestimating this capacity to the point of falling within the trap of rational choice theory then comes in.⁴³ While such criticisms might be perhaps slightly too rigid, as Kalyvas himself acknowledges that "civil war cannot be reduced to a mere mechanism that opens up the floodgates to random and anarchical private violence," it can be said that Kalyvas, to a degree, undervalues the meaning of ideology, symbols, and the power of narratives, especially on the micro-level.⁴⁴ This can be justified on the basis of the fact that he proposes a larger theory for the analysis of civil war, where it might be difficult to allocate significance to all the possible micro-level factors and variations, yet as will be demonstrated throughout the following chapters, ideology had an empirically observable impact on micro-level dynamics during the war in Croatia.⁴⁵

In his argument, symbols are used by actors at the center, together with resources, to form an alliance with actors fighting local struggles, which allows them to acquire power.⁴⁶ While this can certainly be true, and will also form part of the argument in this thesis about how

⁴¹ Jennifer Mason, *Qualitative Researching*, 3rd edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2018), 9.

⁴² Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence.'"

⁴³ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 31-32.

⁴⁴ Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence'", 487.

⁴⁵ Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence.'"

⁴⁶ Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence,'" 475-476.

the elites utilized certain narratives to solidify the ethno-political actor network between the macro and the micro-levels, the argument falls somewhat short in the analysis of actual micro-level dynamics. As such, while ideas and symbols might possess a very functional role for the elites, their perceptions on the micro-level are crucial and go beyond the lines of instrumentality or functionalism. This is where the second part of critical realism then comes in, which means that together with agency, perceptions of the world are also a part of the real world and cannot be disassociated from the analysis.

Because of this, the work of Dragojević is also seen here as important in terms of theory and in relation to the power of ethno-political ideas to form real boundaries on the ground.⁴⁷ In respect to the question of why targeted violence against civilians occurred in some communities but not in others, she argued that in communities that became violent, a process of “ethnicization” transpired through the exclusion of moderates and the production of borders.⁴⁸ She defined the process as “the fusing of a political goal with ethnicity in order to produce political support,” and in this ethno-politically salient environment ambiguity of identity as well as defection became virtually impossible.⁴⁹ Based on the new boundaries, communities were separated along the lines of the newly formed identities, which she calls “political ethnicities.”⁵⁰ The reason why this is important is that while these processes were in fact highly instrumental for the elites, on the micro-level they produced real divisions that cut across former communal ties and during the periods of actual violence played a key role in defining the potential targets.⁵¹ In theoretical terms, the elites’ changing of the normal pre-war ethno-political structures to the new ones where agency on the micro-level became constrained by the shifted moral context then directly influenced people’s capacity on the ground to navigate it.⁵² With that being said, however, once violence broke out, it also presented new opportunities and ways in which agency could manifest for those who were willing to participate in violence, but also for those who went out of their way to save those who were defined as the enemy. In this way, this study also aims to operationalize agency.

Another theoretical challenge that might arise when analyzing the behavior of perpetrators is the trap of perpetrator reductionism. In the case of perpetrator studies, it could be said that in several major works in the field, the complexity of the case was traded in favor

⁴⁷ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*.

⁴⁸ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 6.

⁴⁹ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 6.

⁵⁰ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 6.

⁵¹ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 5-7.

⁵² Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 1-34.

of delivering a strong argument.⁵³ One example of this could be the relatively well-known debate between Christopher Browning and Daniel Goldhagen on the matter of the murders of Jews by German reservists in Nazi-occupied Poland, where the former author utilized arguments relying primarily on situational psychology, such as obedience and peer pressure, while the latter scholar delivered an argument on the willful participation of Germans in the extermination of Jews due to well-established notions of antisemitism in German society and a general acceptance of Adolf Hitler's vision by many.⁵⁴ The general argument here is that it can be relatively easy to present social reality as dichotomous, as, for example, perpetration being either ideological or opportunistic.⁵⁵

More on the matter of the above stated example, in a chapter on ideological diversity, Jonathan Maynard explained relatively well the previous tendency of many scholars to homogenize perpetrator heterogeneity, and the important thing to note is that such studies do collect firm empirical findings to support them.⁵⁶ In a way, such arguments are still tempting to make, as the empirical evidence is there. When confronted with widespread looting of property in Serb villages, for example, singling out opportunism of Croatian troops as the most dominant behavioral theme would make sense from many angles. However, in that case this study would become guilty of the very thing it aimed to overcome – the oversimplification of social reality. As such, by complementing alliance theory with ideology and identity, this inquiry aims to not only sufficiently capture the complexity of the conflict but also address the fluidity between ideological and opportunistic behavior. Accordingly, there are several notable concepts which will be employed in the analysis.

First, this study works with the concept of “alliance,” defined by Kalyvas as a phenomenon that:

entails a transaction between supralocal and local actors, whereby the former supply the latter with external muscle, thus allowing them to win decisive local advantage; in exchange the former rely on local conflicts to recruit and motivate supporters and obtain local control, resources, and information – even when their ideological agenda is opposed to localism.⁵⁷

⁵³ Maynard, “Theorizing Ideological Diversity in Mass Violence.”

⁵⁴ Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland*, Revised edition (New York: Harper Perennial, 2017); Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*, 1. Vintage Books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1997).

⁵⁵ Maynard, “Theorizing Ideological Diversity in Mass Violence.”

⁵⁶ Maynard.

⁵⁷ Kalyvas, “The Ontology of ‘Political Violence’”, 486.

Although both episodes of violence will not fit this definition, this concept is still valuable for understanding especially the episode of 1991 and early 1992, and in the end this thesis will likewise reflect on how the discussion of alliances can be complemented based on this study's findings. Second is the concept of "intimate" violence, which is an observation that "rather than being imposed upon communities by outsiders, [...] violence often (but not always) grows from within communities even when it is executed by outsiders."⁵⁸ Such phenomena were at times notable during the first period of violence, when in some instances perpetrators knew their victims from before the war, and violence occasionally took the form of private revenge associated with personal grievances.⁵⁹

Third, Dragojević's distinction between violence as a military or as a political strategy is an important conceptual tool in this inquiry.⁶⁰ She defined the former as "a set of tactics for eliminating threats during a battle and achieving military advancement," and the latter as "a set of tactics for forming new political identities and securing political power over the desired territorially defined sovereign entities."⁶¹ Whereas in the first one civilian casualties might come about as a result of a military attack, a bombing, or a shelling, in the case of the second civilians are specifically targeted on the basis of their "ethnicity, race, religion, or political views" and in case these do not align with those of the occupying forces, they might become suitable targets for violence.⁶²

3. Methodology

This research is fundamentally focused on documents associated with the ICTY. Like all primary sources, these were likewise created with a purpose and have their own strengths and weaknesses. Accordingly, this chapter seeks to address the sources' main characteristics, their significance and impact on the conducted research, and the decisions made by the author in the respective parts of the research process. The method was developed in accordance with the two aims of this inquiry: the explanation of how civilians were targeted and the subsequent comparison of the two respective episodes of violence. The most important data that the author focused on were predominantly very basic information, such as who committed what, where and when, or what was going on in an area at a certain time, and then from such data the

⁵⁸ Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence'", 482.

⁵⁹ International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), Case No. IT-95-11-T, "Prosecutor v. Milan Martić: Judgement," June 12, 2007, 77, 103, accessed August 4, 2020 <https://www.icty.org/x/cases/martic/tjug/en/070612.pdf>.

⁶⁰ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 6-7.

⁶¹ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 6-7.

⁶² Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 7.

dynamics and patterns were subsequently reconstructed. By relying in its construction of the argument on predominantly basic factual information that is hard to contest or misinterpret, this thesis aims to make its empirical claims more difficult to challenge, especially because it addresses matters both sensitive as well as politically contested.

3.1. Justification

To begin with, regarding the focus on sources from the ICTY, this decision can be justified on the basis of several research possibilities that the sources allow. First, given the Tribunal's international character, all sources employed in this research were available in English, which was an important factor in considering the most favorable technique of data collection, given the author's lack of fluency in either Croatian or Serbian. Second, approaching matters of mass violence means approaching matters of human suffering, disaster, and tragedy. As such, studying such violence makes it necessary for a researcher to not only possess a certain degree of sensitivity and respect, but each possible technique of data collection carries with it its own risks and rewards.

The decision not to approach this project through fieldwork was heavily influenced by the fact that a rich data base existed online, and the author was of the assumption that it would provide this research with considerably more data than fieldwork. One of the great strengths of the selected ICTY-related materials is the fact that the institution itself, in its struggle to prosecute at least some of those responsible for what happened in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s, provided space for victims to share their experiences and voice their memory of the past. It is precisely in such details where the researcher can obtain the necessary data for their research, whilst avoiding the budgetary and language difficulties associated with a fieldwork-oriented project. Furthermore, the ICTY Court Records Database holds all public court records, can be accessed online and for free, and given the fact that it stores documents used at trial, can be considered as very much reliable.⁶³ On the other hand, possible weaknesses exist in relation to the testimonies of both the accused as well as the witnesses and the nature of human memory.⁶⁴ The trials were conducted years after the events transpired, which makes it possible for individuals to either forget things or present them as they are remembered, not necessarily

⁶³ Iva Vukušić, "The Archives of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia," *History* 98, no. 332 (October 2013): 623–35; ICTY Court Records, accessed August 4, 2020, <http://icr.icty.org/>.

⁶⁴ Anna Sheftel, "Talking and Not Talking about Violence: Challenges in Interviewing Survivors of Atrocity as Whole People," *The Oral History Review* 45, no. 2 (August 1, 2018): 288–303.

as they happened.⁶⁵ Even if fieldwork and interviews were to be conducted though, there would be no real way around this potential weakness, as it is an inherent facet of historical research.⁶⁶

It is likewise necessary to keep in mind the role of the Tribunal – to hold accountable those responsible for war crimes, contribute to conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction, and combat denial.⁶⁷ Most importantly, however, it does so on the basis of determining individual criminal responsibility, and as such, the information the official documents contain should be viewed in this light.⁶⁸ While this can be said for each of its cases, for this research it was most important in the case of Gotovina *et al.*, which is arguably one of the most controversial cases the ICTY has dealt with.⁶⁹ As such, it had to be approached with the idea of searching only for factual information regarding instances of violence, while trying to leave out the legal debate and putting aside the judges' determinations and opinions.

3.2. Case selection

In terms of sampling, the first round of selection was performed through a review of case information sheets, which are unofficial documents prepared by the communications service of the ICTY containing brief summaries of the different court cases, proving to be relatively useful documents in the early stages of research. Based on the geographically defined region of Krajina, the cases of Slobodan Milošević, Milan Babić, Milan Martić, Stanišić & Simatović, and Gotovina *et al.*, were selected.⁷⁰ There were several reasons for this decision. First, Milošević was one of the fundamental orchestrators of the wars in the former Yugoslavia and one of the leading Serb political figures. With this inquiry being interested also in the nature of the political and military alliance between the rebel Serbs and Milošević's regime, his case was

⁶⁵ A. Sheftel and S. Zembrzycki, "Only Human: A Reflection on the Ethical and Methodological Challenges of Working with 'Difficult' Stories," *Oral History Review* 37, no. 2 (June 1, 2010): 191–214.

⁶⁶ Sheftel and Zembrzycki, "Only Human."

⁶⁷ "About the ICTY," ICTY, accessed August 4, 2020, <https://www.icty.org/en/about>.

⁶⁸ "About the ICTY."

⁶⁹ In the Trial Chamber judgment, the accused Generals Ante Gotovina and Mladen Markač were unanimously found guilty and sentenced to 24 and 18 years in prison respectively for the crimes committed during and after Oluja. In the Appeals Chamber judgment, however, both were acquitted by a three-two majority of judges, with judges Pocar and Agius submitting dissenting opinions. One of the controversies was that the chambers reached fundamentally different conclusions while relying on the same facts. ICTY, Case No. IT-06-90-T, "Prosecutor v. Ante Gotovina, Ivan Čermak, and Mladen Markač: Judgement, Volume I of II," April 15, 2011, accessed August 4, 2020, https://www.icty.org/x/cases/gotovina/tjug/en/110415_judgement_vol1.pdf; ICTY, Case No. IT-06-90-T, "Prosecutor v. Ante Gotovina, Ivan Čermak, and Mladen Markač: Judgement, Volume II of II," April 15, 2011, accessed August 4, 2020, https://www.icty.org/x/cases/gotovina/tjug/en/110415_judgement_vol2.pdf; ICTY, Case No. IT-06-90-A, "Prosecutor v. Ante Gotovina and Mladen Markač: Judgement," November 16, 2012, accessed August 4, 2020, https://www.icty.org/x/cases/gotovina/acjug/en/121116_judgement.pdf.

⁷⁰ "Cases," ICTY, accessed August 4, 2020, <https://www.icty.org/en/cases>.

considered as potentially important. Second, Babić was one of the most prominent Serb political representatives in Krajina during the relevant period and as such his case files were recognized from the start as vital.

Third, Martić held not only influential leadership positions in the Krajina Serb government during the relevant period, but he also had authority over the armed forces of the Serbian Autonomous Region (SAO – *Srpska autonomna oblast*) of Krajina, which were responsible for a considerable amount of violence against civilians. This case was therefore seen as fundamental to the understanding of the violence that took place during the studied period. Fourth, the case of Stanišić & Simatović was perceived as potentially useful in case the previous sources would not be enough to construct a proper and cross-referenced analysis, as Stanišić served as the head of the State Security Service (DB – *Državne bezbednosti* [Serbian]) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MUP – *Ministarstvo unutrašnjih poslova* [Serbian]/ *Ministarstvo unutarnjih poslova* [Croatian]) of Serbia, while Simatović was employed at the institution.⁷¹ Both individuals were allegedly involved in the removal of non-Serbs from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and given the fact that it was identified prior to the data collection phase that strong cooperation existed between the Croatian Serbs and Milošević, it was established that this case could be potentially useful. Fifth, the case of Gotovina *et al.* is virtually the only case of the ICTY that focuses on *Oluja*, and as such it was clear from the start that it would be categorically crucial. What is important to note here is that these cases are dealing with high level perpetrators, so a criticism of an elite-bias could be brought up against an extensive reliance on them. In that respect, however, while these processes dealt with the criminal responsibility of mostly elite-level individuals, the factual basis for the crimes they were indicted for was determined heavily through testimonies and statements from micro-level witnesses, and so verified information of what occurred on the ground was likewise obtained.

3.3. Data collection and analysis

After this initial round of sampling, based on the proposed sub-questions, the decision was made to first begin with the analysis of the case of Babić to scrutinize the political developments in Krajina and the nature of the alliance with Milošević. Accordingly, questions such as what the governmental and military structures of the SAO Krajina and later the RSK were, what actors were the main decision makers at what time and what the consequences of their actions were, what influence Milošević had over the Croatian Serbs' political and military strategies

⁷¹ Apart from DB, the abbreviation SDB (*Služba Državne Bezbednosti*) is also common.

and what role the JNA played in all of this were asked. In each analyzed court case, the data collection technique involved visual scanning of hundreds of pages to conduct a qualitative analysis, with the exact procedure differing in each case based on the characteristics of that case and the sources it involved.

In the case of Babić, priority was given to the factual statement part of his plea agreement, which, due to his cooperation with the Tribunal, made for a firm start and a detailed historical and political overview of the most important developments.⁷² After this step, the precise issues of how exactly certain political realities came to exist still remained unanswered, especially in regards to Milošević's role and power over the Krajina government. As such, a search for more documents was conducted through the digital ICTY Court Records, which led to the acquisition of expert reports on various incidents from the case files, several maps of the area, a selection of quotations of the accused in his testimony in the Milošević trial put together by the Office of the Prosecutor, and several hundred pages of interview transcripts from November 2001 until April 2002. Apart from the information's usage in order to answer the above questions, analysis of the Babić case documents showed that evidence from the Milošević files will not be needed, as a sufficient portion of the raised questions were answered through the Babić documents.

Following this step of the method, the research process proceeded with the Martić case. Due to the absence of any plea agreement in which the accused would admit his responsibility, but given the existence of the sentencing judgment, the decision was made to start the data collection process with the factual basis section of Martić's Trial Chamber judgment.⁷³ This allowed for a further and more detailed description of the alliance between Knin and Belgrade, namely in respect to newly introduced sub-questions of the existence of a parallel governmental structure among the Krajina Serbs and a comparison between how differently Milošević approached Babić and Martić respectively. The fact that even more information was gathered on the subject from this case further reaffirmed the decision to not delve deeper into the Milošević files. Apart from the Trial Chamber judgment, multiple witness statements and several reports were acquired through the ICTY Court Records. This part of research was approached with the idea to analyze the use of violence in certain periods of times in specific

⁷² ICTY, Case No. IT-03-72-I: The Prosecutor v. Milan Babić, "Annex A to the Joint Motion for Consideration of Plea Agreement Between Milan Babić and the Office of the Prosecutor – Plea Agreement; Tab 1: Factual Statement," January 22, 2004, accessed August 4, 2020, <https://www.icty.org/x/cases/babic/custom4/en/040122a.pdf>.

⁷³ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, "Martić: Judgement," 43-128.

communities, with questions such as who exactly perpetrated which crimes against civilians, in what local contexts and dynamics, and, for example, whether these were subsequently explained by perpetrators or other actors.

Asking these types of questions allowed for detailed empirical differentiation not only in respect to perpetrators as actors in a highly heterogeneous setting, but the inclusion of local dynamics allowed for an insight into, for instance, local participation in acts of violence and the use of local informants. In the end, this part of the research narrowed the geographical areas of interest for this case down to the areas of Kijevo, Drniš, Hrvatska Dubica, Predore, Cerovljani, Baćin and its surroundings, Lipovača, Poljanak and Vukovići, Saborsko, Škabrnja, Nadin, Bruška, and the municipality of Plaški. The justification for this was the fact that these were the most well documented areas where violence against civilians occurred from the Trial Chamber judgment.⁷⁴ An important thing to also note is the fact that after analyzing the Martić files, a decision was made to not include the Stanišić & Simatović case as part of the analysis.⁷⁵

The next step of the method was then to tackle the complex case of Gotovina *et al.* and delve into the violence of *Oluja*. It can be said that this part of the research process in a sense deviated the most from the previous two steps of the method, namely due to the complexity of the sources. The Trial Chamber judgment in this case contained an incredibly dense section titled “Crimes committed in municipalities (July-September 1995),” where witness statements were often intertwined with forensic evidence and other factors determining their reliability.⁷⁶ Furthermore, a considerable part of this case was deemed as not particularly useful for this research, namely in respect to whether the shelling of particular Serb towns by the Croatian artillery was lawful or not, or what the particular responsibility of the accused was. For that reason, information from the judgment was utilized in a slightly different manner in this part of the research, with the aim of reconstructing an account of what happened.

⁷⁴ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement.”

⁷⁵ The primary justification for this was that neither individual involvement nor criminal responsibility of the accused were relevant in respect to the research question in this thesis, while no new factual evidence in respect to violence in Krajina would be found, given the fact that the factual basis of the Trial Chamber judgment in the Stanišić & Simatović case was the same as in the Trial Chamber judgment of Martić. ICTY, Case No. IT-03-69-T, “Prosecutor v. Jovica Stanišić and Franko Simatović, *Public With Confidential Appendix C: Judgement*, Volume I of II,” May 30, 2013, accessed August 4, 2020, https://www.icty.org/x/cases/stanisic_simatovic/tjug/en/130530_judgement_p1.pdf, 27-161; ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement.”

⁷⁶ ICTY, Case No. IT-06-90-T, “Gotovina *et al.*: Judgement Vol. I, 105-794; IT-06-90-T, ICTY, Case No. IT-06-90-T, “Gotovina *et al.*: Judgement Vol. II,” 800-884.

The fundamental questions which were asked here were highly similar to those in the Martić case, with focus placed on who perpetrated which crimes and in what ways, in what local contexts and settings, and how certain geographical areas differed from one another during *Oluja*. Once again, to answer such questions, it was important to examine testimonies and reports from witnesses and victims of violence. While analyzing the testimony of witness Žarko Puhovski, a member and deputy president of the Croatian Helsinki Committee (HHO – *Hrvatski helsinški odbor*) between 1993 and 1998 and its president from 2000 to 2007, a report by the organization in the form of a book titled “Military Operation Storm and It’s [*sic*] Aftermath,” stood out as a potentially crucial source.⁷⁷ Recognizing its importance, but being aware of the fact that the report had strengths and weaknesses of its own, and that it was put together by an organization with certain interests, it was necessary to first examine these factors and the report’s methodology. This was done mainly through a scrutiny of three publicly available transcripts from Puhovski’s hearing during the trial and his own witness statement.⁷⁸ There, Puhovski described not only the institution’s role and aim of the report, but the document was also cross examined by the Prosecution as well as the Defense, and as such it was possible to likewise identify its main weaknesses.

The report itself was published in 2001 in the form of a book, in reality compiled of multiple reports based in large part on fact-finding missions conducted in mid-August and September 1995, and in March and April 1996, by the organization.⁷⁹ The general rule regarding missing and killed persons was that members of these missions would go from village to village and only include an individual’s name in case it was mentioned by two independent sources.⁸⁰ The mission members would likewise take photographs and often record audiotapes of eyewitness testimonies.⁸¹ This information was further corroborated by other NGOs in Croatia, Bosnia, and Serbia, and the members’ colleagues from the Helsinki Committee in those countries.⁸² The organization likewise used multiple other sources of information, including United Nations (UN) and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) documents, official

⁷⁷ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It’s [*Sic*] Aftermath: Report* (Zagreb: HHO, 2001).

⁷⁸ ICTY, IT-06-90: Gotovina *et al.*, “Public Transcript of Hearing 12 February 2009,” Transcript, February 12, 2009; ICTY, IT-06-90: Gotovina *et al.*, “Public Transcript of Hearing 13 February 2009,” Transcript, February 13, 2009; ICTY, IT-06-90: Gotovina *et al.*, “Public Transcript of Hearing 16 February 2009,” Transcript, February 16, 2009.

⁷⁹ ICTY, IT-06-90: Gotovina *et al.*, “Witness Statement for Witness 140,” Exhibit P02316, February 12, 2009.

⁸⁰ ICTY, IT-06-90, “Witness Statement for Witness 140.”

⁸¹ ICTY, IT-06-90, “Hearing 12 February,” 52-53.

⁸² ICTY, IT-06-90, “Witness Statement for Witness 140.”

positions of government representatives, and information from journalists.⁸³ The basis for the 2001 book was a 1999 version of the report which was also sent to multiple institutes and individuals for a review.⁸⁴ However, members of the fact-finding missions were never accompanied by professionals such as forensic or ballistic experts, which can be considered as a potential weakness in terms of providing accurate details.⁸⁵

As far as the purposes of the report are concerned, Puhovski stated that “the intention was to come out in the public with the names of those killed, rather than the numbers.”⁸⁶ In that respect, he stated that they only published the names or initials in cases where they had witnesses “who had either witnessed the murders themselves or saw the body.”⁸⁷ However, adding to the list of potential weaknesses, the report might have contained the names of missing persons who had eventually returned home, as was established during one of Puhovski’s hearings.⁸⁸ Because of this, a methodological decision was made during the research to focus predominantly on what can be described as patterns of violence during and after *Oluja* in this document. This is also because certain facts were contested after the report had been already published, and more events had likewise transpired between its publishing and the presenting of evidence at trial. Furthermore, the HHO likewise was not able to receive any police reports at the time, which could have potentially made things clearer, and the organization was “not engaged in any activities related to criminology.”⁸⁹

What is interesting to note, however, and what can be considered as adding to the report’s reasonable credibility and usefulness for this research, is the fact that the HHO did not aim to accuse anyone or allocate responsibility, as Puhovski stated that “we didn’t find it within our remit,” and that the aim was to “establish who the victims were and, if possible, if we knew, we stated which units were present in the field at the time.”⁹⁰ The report likewise included the ethnicity of the victims established through information gathered from neighbors, family members or friends of the victims.⁹¹ With these strengths and weaknesses in mind, it was determined that the report would serve as a highly useful primary source, and as such

⁸³ ICTY, IT-06-90, “Hearing 12 February,” 52-53.

⁸⁴ Examples include institutes for migration and sociology, several university professors, political scientists and other experts, and other members of the Helsinki Committee from Belgrade and Sarajevo ICTY, IT-06-90, “Hearing 13 February,” 18.

⁸⁵ ICTY, IT-06-90, “Hearing 13 February,” 24.

⁸⁶ ICTY, IT-06-90, “Hearing 13 February,” 39.

⁸⁷ ICTY, IT-06-90, “Hearing 13 February,” 31.

⁸⁸ ICTY, IT-06-90, “Hearing 16 February,” 59-60.

⁸⁹ ICTY, IT-06-90, “Hearing 16 February,” 88.

⁹⁰ ICTY, IT-06-90, “Hearing 16 February,” 72.

⁹¹ ICTY, IT-06-90, “Hearing 16 February,” 76.

constituted a crucial document in this part of the research method. The report itself is also divided based on the former geographically designated areas of UN Sectors South and North in Krajina.⁹²

In the last step of the method, a comparison was conducted between the first analyzed episode of violence between August 1991 and March 1992, and the violence happening during and after *Oluja*, with focus placed mostly on August and fall of 1995, although incidents of violence continued in the following months and even years. The general rule for this part of the research process was to first examine differences and similarities between the two episodes and subsequently scrutinize what these findings might mean for the wider discussion of patterns. The former part was done predominantly based on the results of the previous three steps of the method, while the latter was done on the basis of asking the question of how these findings might be explained and understood in the context of the war in Croatia.

Lastly, what is also important to note that throughout the argumentative portions of this inquiry, the author principally uses the term “elites” to refer to the orchestrators of violence and propaganda on the respective sides of the conflict. What is meant by this is not a generalization of the entire political culture in Krajina to the actions of those such as Babić and Martić, who were later convicted by the ICTY for their role in the violence against non-Serb civilians. In the same manner, when referring to the Croatian elites, the argument is related principally to the most influential individuals within the Tuđman administration. It is therefore important to remember that not everyone supported the policies of these people, and this study aims to refrain from making such generalizations.

4. The Shifting of Boundaries: A Historical Overview

Before this paper can delve fully into the matter of perpetration of violence against civilians during the war in Croatia, it is first necessary to properly elaborate on the developments that preceded this violence and made the war possible in the first place. In essence, this chapter focuses on the key political developments in Krajina and how those, together with intense propaganda, contributed to an ever-growing context of polarization between the two ethnic groups that produced rigid divisions throughout society, which in the end led to a greater escalation and finally war. At the end of the chapter, a summary of the main events between 1992 and 1995 will be provided.

⁹² Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*.

In political terms, the breakup of Yugoslavia had been largely underlined by the rise of ethnic nationalism, yet the nationalist parties that won in the first multiparty elections in 1990 in Croatia and Serbia “continued to face strong opposition within their own respective republics.”⁹³ It was only after their coming into the office that they increasingly turned more nationalistic and extreme in their discourses and authoritarian in their policy-making, in no small part as a result of the political opposition in their respective countries.⁹⁴ A notable aspect of the political context at the time was the merging of political goals with ethnicity, which was performed in great deal by both the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ – *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*) led by Tuđman, and the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS – *Srpska demokratska stranka*) which represented ethnic Serbs in Croatia and was led by Jovan Rašković.⁹⁵ Yet even though the parties framed their aims along such lines, they were “not welcomed unanimously by all ethnic group members in Croatia,” and, in this manner, there was no clear homogeneity among ethnic Serbs, Croats, or other ethnic groups in Croatia.⁹⁶

4.1. Inflammatory dynamics

Tensions started to rise in the summer of 1990, after the movement that became known as the Log Revolution (*Balvan revolucija*) set up tree logs barricades on the main roads that were connecting the north of Croatia with the coast line in the region of northern Dalmatia on 17 August 1990.⁹⁷ Despite the fact that the situation remained non-violent for quite some time, in November a police officer was killed on the road between Obrovac and Benkovac by unidentified attackers.⁹⁸ Even though the attackers’ identity remained unknown, the fact that the victim was an ethnic Serb in a Croatian police uniform quickly turned into an opportunity for the Serb political leadership in Benkovac to frame the incident along ethnic lines.⁹⁹ Furthermore, in this period, the government in Serbia and the JNA began secretly arming the Croatian Serbs, while the local SDS leaders were “encouraged by the promise of support” from the two institutions.¹⁰⁰ Around this time the JNA, albeit operating as an officially Yugoslav institution, was becoming a de facto extended arm of Milošević. This was mainly because, as Babić later stated during an interview, “Yugoslavia was disintegrating. The presidency of

⁹³ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 8.

⁹⁴ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 7-9.

⁹⁵ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 7-14.

⁹⁶ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 9.

⁹⁷ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 9-14.

⁹⁸ Dragojević, 9-14.

⁹⁹ Dragojević, 9-14.

¹⁰⁰ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 9.

Yugoslavia wasn't functioning. [...] In August [1990], you didn't know anymore what was this [the presidency], it was a collapsing institution. Milošević had under control four members of this presidency. So, these are the representatives of Serbia, of Kosovo, Vojvodina, and of Montenegro."¹⁰¹ For Croatia and Slovenia, the aim was to break apart from a Serb-dominated Yugoslavia.

On 22 December 1990, Croatia adopted a new constitution, which reduced the status of ethnic Serbs from that of a "constituent nation," which equaled the status of Croats, to that of "other nations and minorities."¹⁰² Such a decision was unacceptable for Serb leaders in areas where Serbs formed an ethnic majority, as due to their historical contribution to Croatia they believed their status was deserved to be equal to that of Croats.¹⁰³ The adoption of the new constitution therefore virtually eliminated any real possibility of a political discussion, as the Serb representatives refused to take part in a dialogue with the central government.¹⁰⁴ What is important to note though is the fact that the adoption of the constitution and the changing of the Serbs' status was not just a symbolic issue, as real discrimination against Serbs existed at the time, which included violations of their citizenship rights, loss of jobs, and requirements to swear oaths of loyalty at work.¹⁰⁵

Importantly, both the SDS and the HDZ engaged in their own interpretations of the issue and revisions of history. While Tuđman justified the new political order as "returning Croatia to Croats," the SDS interpreted it as a justification for demanding greater autonomy for the Serbs.¹⁰⁶ In respect to the larger political context in Yugoslavia at the time, the aim of the HDZ was to secure greater autonomy for Croatia within Yugoslavia, or, in the case of failure, to obtain absolute Croatian independence. Milošević, on the other hand, aimed to create a more Serb-controlled Yugoslavia, with the HDZ, but also other Croatian political parties, fearing an actual military intervention by the JNA directed from Belgrade.¹⁰⁷ The image below displays the ethnic distribution of Croatia in 1991. As can be observed, most of the SAO Krajina municipalities were composed of over 80% ethnic Serbs.

¹⁰¹ ICTY, Case No. IT-03-72: Babić, "Babic Interview, Part 6/8," Exhibit PS7.2.6, April 1, 2004, 11.

¹⁰² Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 10.

¹⁰³ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 10-14.

¹⁰⁴ Dragojević, 10-14.

¹⁰⁵ Dragojević, 10-14.

¹⁰⁶ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 10.

¹⁰⁷ Grandits and Leutloff, "Discourses, Actors, Violence," 23-24.

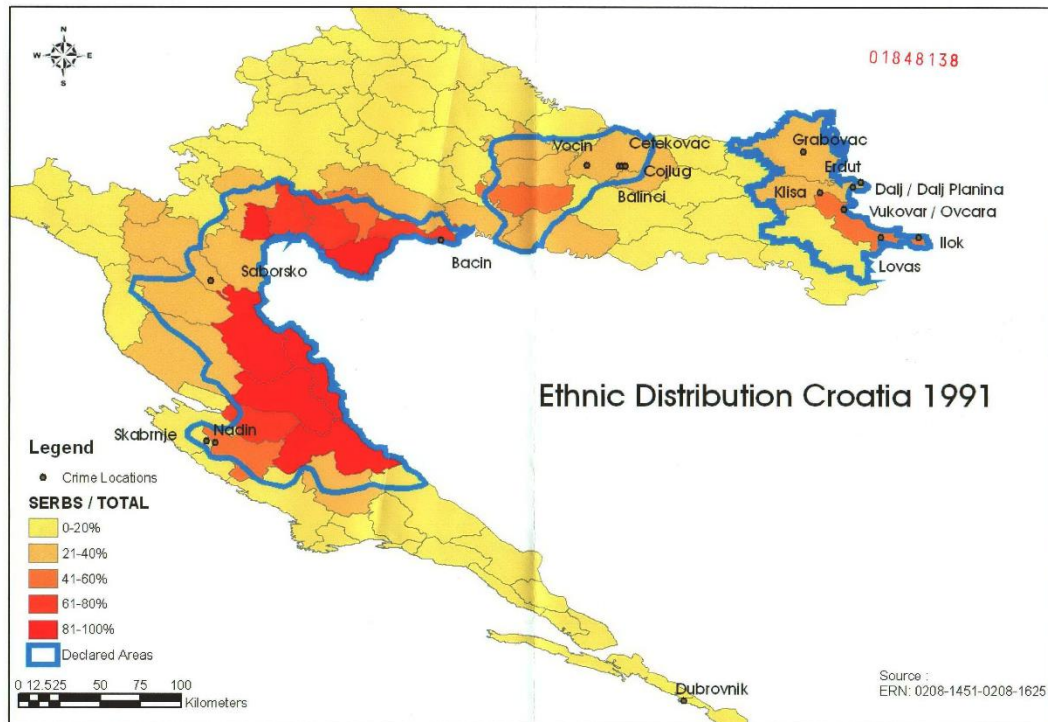


Figure 2. Map of ethnic distribution of Croatia in 1991.

Source: ICTY Court Records, Case No. IT-95-11: Martić, “Map of Croatia Ethnic Distribution Croatia 1991,” Exhibit 00838, February 28, 2005.

4.2. Polarized visions of nationhood

Both the HDZ as well as Serb nationalists in Croatia and in Serbia engaged in significant revisions of history, with the commonality being a rejection of the Partisan legacy of Tito’s Yugoslavia and his principle of “brotherhood and unity,” and common references to the World War II period.¹⁰⁸ The civilian population of the territory of former Yugoslavia during that era suffered at the hands of both the Croat *Ustaša* – the forces of the NDH, as well as the Serb nationalist *Četniks*. While the former was allied with the Axis powers and was responsible for genocides of Serbs, Jews, and Roma, the latter, while embracing the idea of Greater Serbia, also collaborated with the Nazis as well as the Italians and carried out genocidal massacres of Croat and Muslim civilians.¹⁰⁹ What is important about these forces and labels is the fact that they

¹⁰⁸ Edina Bećirević, *Genocide on the Drina River* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 16; Marko Attila Hoare, “Genocide in the Former Yugoslavia Before and After Communism,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 62, no. 7 (September 2010): 1193–1214.

¹⁰⁹ Hoare, “Genocide in the Former Yugoslavia,” 1200–1203.

were often used throughout the 1990s as a reference to the ethnic enemy.¹¹⁰ On both sides images of a collective enemy became the most dominant representations of the ethnic other in this context.¹¹¹ It was therefore important to get rid of the Partisan legacy, as members of multiple ethnic groups joined the resistance during World War II to fight against both the *Ustaša* and the *Četniks*, and the cultural memory under Tito was one of a common struggle of both Croats and Serbs against Nazism and fascism.¹¹² All things considered, the Croatian state at the time was a highly nationalist one and its government certainly did not accommodate the Serbs. However, a revival of nationalist propaganda and the myth of another genocide faced by Serbs at the hands of Croats managed to exacerbate the existing issues and create an entirely new ideological and moral environment.¹¹³

The precise way in which history was revised in the 1990s by the HDZ government then revolved around a complete ideological restructuring of the culture of memory through transformation of public spaces, history books, symbols, national holidays, and other things.¹¹⁴ Despite being a Partisan colonel himself, Tuđman tolerated the widespread criticisms and attacks on the Croatian antifascist legacy coming from the Croatian media and history books.¹¹⁵ By virtually rehabilitating the *Ustaša* heritage of Ante Pavelić, Tuđman achieved what he needed – a unification of Croats of all political backgrounds against a new collective enemy that allegedly threatened the Croatian state – the Serbs.¹¹⁶

The Croatian Serb political leadership, on the other hand, employed a different version of history in their propaganda, with the main intention being the attempt to discredit the HDZ government and legitimize their own political aspirations of belonging to a greater ethnically Serb state.¹¹⁷ Importantly, Pavlaković examined this topic by focusing on the collective memory of World War II by the Krajina Serbs and their embracing of the *Četnik* legacy and the vision of Greater Serbia.¹¹⁸ The Serb political elite at the time purposefully employed a narrative of a new genocide which Serbs were to face from a “vampiric neo-*Ustaša* Croatia.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁰ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 92, 112; Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*. 50-53; ICTY, IT-06-90, “Hearing 13 February,” 5.

¹¹¹ ICTY, IT-06-90, “Hearing 13 February.”

¹¹² Pavlaković, “Symbols and the Culture of Memory in Republika Srpska Krajina,” 894-896.

¹¹³ Anthony Oberschall, “The Manipulation of Ethnicity: From Ethnic Cooperation to Violence and War in Yugoslavia,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 23, no. 6 (January 2000): 982–1001.

¹¹⁴ Pavlaković, “Symbols and the Culture of Memory in Republika Srpska Krajina,” 894-896.

¹¹⁵ Pavlaković, 894-896.

¹¹⁶ Pavlaković, 894-896.

¹¹⁷ Pavlaković, “Symbols and the Culture of Memory in Republika Srpska Krajina,” 899-904.

¹¹⁸ Pavlaković, “Symbols and the Culture of Memory in Republika Srpska Krajina.”

¹¹⁹ Pavlaković notes that this phrase “was commonly used by the Belgrade media at the time.” Pavlaković, “Symbols and the Culture of Memory in Republika Srpska Krajina,” 896.

This was done primarily by associating the new HDZ-led government with the heritage of the NDH. The Milošević regime was spreading a significant amount of propaganda from Belgrade, which focused on Tuđman's partial rehabilitation of the NDH, creating parallels between him and the *Ustaša* leader Pavelić, and constantly reminding the Croatian Serbs of the *Ustaša* atrocities of World War II. For instance, they were being continually warned of the Serb suffering in the Jasenovac concentration camp, which, despite the fact that tens of thousands were indeed murdered there in a horrific manner by the *Ustaša*, entailed fabrications about the precise death toll.¹²⁰

Pavlaković argued, however, that “media manipulation and collective memories were not enough to convince the Serb population that coexistence with Croats was impossible,” and that the emotional and symbolic power of political rituals, commemorations, and the appropriation of crucial sites of World War II memory would play an important role in delivering this message to the Serbs.¹²¹ Despite the fact that in the 1990 elections many Croatian Serbs voted for the reformed communists instead of the SDS, following the SDS mass rallies at Petrova Gora and Srb, held on 4 March and 25 July respectively, the view of the HDZ government and virtually everything Croat as fascist gradually gained more influence.¹²² Both of the rallies were held at sites associated with resistance against the *Ustaša*, with Jasenovac death toll numbers portrayed significantly inflated (while Tuđman instead downgraded them way below the real numbers), and images of dead bodies were often circulated to mobilize the Serb minority against the Croatian state.¹²³ The latter rally took the form of a Serb Assembly in Srb (*Srpski sabor u Srbu*), which passed the “Declaration of the Sovereignty and Autonomy of the Serb People.”¹²⁴ Furthermore, it also established the Serbian National Council (SNV – *Srpsko nacionalno vijeće*) and stated that “if Croatia remained in Yugoslavia, the Serbs in Croatia would demand cultural autonomy, but if Yugoslavia became a confederation of independent republics, the Serbs in Croatia would demand political and territorial autonomy.”¹²⁵ In essence, while Tuđman opted for a political strategy of moving past the

¹²⁰ Oberschall, “The Manipulation of Ethnicity,” 989-990; according to the website of the Jasenovac Memorial Site, as of March 2013 the estimated death toll of all people killed at Jasenovac is 83,145 dead. Out of these, 47,627 are Serbs. “List of Individual Victims of Jasenovac Concentration Camp,” Jasenovac Memorial Site, accessed August 5, 2020, <http://www.jusp-jasenovac.hr/Default.aspx?sid=7126>.

¹²¹ Pavlaković, “Symbols and the Culture of Memory in Republika Srpska Krajina,” 896.

¹²² Pavlaković, “Symbols and the Culture of Memory in Republika Srpska Krajina,” 896-899.

¹²³ Pavlaković, 896-899; Hoare, “Genocide in the Former Yugoslavia Before and After Communism,” 1204.

¹²⁴ Pavlaković, “Symbols and the Culture of Memory in Republika Srpska Krajina,” 898.

¹²⁵ Babić Factual Statement, 3; Pavlaković, “Symbols and the Culture of Memory in Republika Srpska Krajina,” 896-899.

horrors of World War II, the strategy and the resulting justifications for demanding autonomy of the Croatian Serbs revolved around their victimization.¹²⁶

4.3. Conflict on the horizon

In this quickly escalating ideological and political struggle, the SNV declared on 30 September 1990, Serb autonomy in Croatia and on 21 December the SAO Krajina was proclaimed and formed by the municipalities of the regions of northern Dalmatia and Lika, with Croatia adopting its new constitution on the following day.¹²⁷ In the first half of 1991 the SAO Krajina was joined by additional municipalities.¹²⁸ Prior to the outbreak of war there were two notable instances of violence that further divided Serbs and Croats. In both cases there were attempts at takeovers of police stations by the local SAO Krajina leadership, and both were prevented by Croatian special police units.¹²⁹ The first one took place in March 1991 in Pakrac, Western Slavonia, and entailed no casualties, while in the second one, known as the Plitvice Bloody Easter (*Plitvički krvavi Usrks*), SAO Krajina paramilitaries fought with the Croatian special police forces, with the result being one dead on each side.¹³⁰ In both of these cases, the JNA intervened to separate the two sides.¹³¹ Dragojević stated that both instances figured as important in explanations of how ethnicity became a salient and significant dividing factor in local communities at the time and a way of political navigation for the ordinary people.¹³²

In terms of subsequent political developments, on 1 April 1991, the Executive Council of the SAO Krajina “passed a decision joining the SAO Krajina to Serbia, wherein it was stipulated that the constitution and laws of Serbia, as well as the constitutional-legal system of the SFRY, were to apply in the SAO Krajina.”¹³³ A decision was likewise passed on the fact that a referendum would be held on whether the people of the SAO Krajina wished for the region to be annexed to the Republic of Serbia.¹³⁴ However, Milošević publicly opposed such phrasing and instead insisted on the question being whether the people were “in favour of

¹²⁶ Pavlaković, “Symbols and the Culture of Memory in Republika Srpska Krajina,” 895.

¹²⁷ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 44.

¹²⁸ On 4 January 1991, the Executive Council of the SAO Krajina established the Regional Secretariat for Internal Affairs in Knin. The following day the Council informed the MUP of Croatia that the establishment of the Secretariat revoked authority of the MUP of Croatia in the SAO Krajina territory. The SUP in Knin encompassed the police stations of Obrovac, Benkovac, Knin, Gračac, Titova Korenica, Donji Lapac, Dvor na Uni, Glina, Kostajnica, and Vojnić. ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 45.

¹²⁹ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*. 12-14.

¹³⁰ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*. 12.

¹³¹ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 45.

¹³² Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*. 12-14.

¹³³ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 46.

¹³⁴ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 46.

remaining in Yugoslavia.”¹³⁵ In the end, on 12 May the referendum was held on the question of being “in favour of the SAO Krajina joining the Republic of Serbia and staying in Yugoslavia with Serbia, Montenegro and others who wish to preserve Yugoslavia,” with 99.8% of votes being in favor.¹³⁶ On 19 May, however, a referendum was held in Croatia with the exception of predominantly Serb areas on the independence of Croatia from Yugoslavia, with 94.1% of votes in favor.¹³⁷ On 29 May the SAO Krajina government was established, with Milan Babić becoming the President.¹³⁸ Furthermore, the Assembly of the SAO Krajina established “special purpose police units” called *Milicija Krajine*, in addition to the already existing police units.¹³⁹ On 25 June 1991, Croatia and Slovenia declared their respective independences from Yugoslavia, which were annulled the following day by the National Executive Council of the SFRY in Belgrade, with the JNA put on the border of Slovenia to prevent its secession.¹⁴⁰

Prior to this the role of the JNA started changing from being a Yugoslav military to increasingly providing more and more support and protection for Serbs in Croatia, and serving as Milošević’s instrument there but also in Bosnia and Kosovo.¹⁴¹ However, already in 1991 it suffered from serious recruitment issues, with many young soldiers opting for desertion or emigration in order to avoid military service.¹⁴² It should therefore not be viewed as a purely ideological actor, and the subsequent chapters of this thesis will likewise demonstrate how in some instances its members came into conflict with paramilitary units who were often characterized by utter lack of discipline and extreme brutality towards civilians.¹⁴³ Another thing worthy to keep in mind is the fact that the JNA was by no means an ethnically Serb organization either. Many of its regular members were young conscripts from multiple constituent areas of the former Yugoslavia.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁵ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 46.

¹³⁶ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 46.

¹³⁷ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 46.

¹³⁸ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 46-47.

¹³⁹ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 46.

¹⁴⁰ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*. 12.

¹⁴¹ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*. 12-14.

¹⁴² Dragojević, 12-14.

¹⁴³ Pavlaković, “Symbols and the Culture of Memory in Republika Srpska Krajina,” 900. What is also important to note, however, is that when addressing the behavior of members of the JNA in this thesis, the author does so through a discussion of evidence relating specifically to the studied region, and it might not correspond with other areas where the JNA was deployed.

¹⁴⁴ In his witness statement, Ivan Jelić, who worked as the head of the Municipality Unit of Civilian Protection for the Collection of Bodies in the Area of the Municipalities of Zadar, Biograd, Benkovac, and Obrovac, stated that during a mission to collect bodies from the JNA in November 1991, he saw that most of the JNA unit, which was about 40 men in total, were very young conscripts of about 18 or 19 years of age, many of them demoralized and wanting to desert. ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11: Martić, “Rule 92 Bis Witness Statement Witness MM-28,” Exhibit 00825, January 25, 2006.

4.4. The onset of violence

On 27 June 1991, the JNA attacked Glina in central Croatia which signaled the outbreak of mass violence in Croatia. On 5 July 1991, it withdrew from Slovenia, with the forces later sent to Croatia to areas where “ethnic Serbs were demographically represented in greater numbers,” with the war rapidly spreading to other areas of central Croatia, northern Dalmatia, and Eastern and Western Slavonia.¹⁴⁵ On 19 December 1991, the RSK was proclaimed by the Assembly of the SAO Krajina, with Milan Babić becoming its president. On 16 February 1992, its government fell, Babić was removed from office after his opposition to Milošević in respect to the adoption of the Vance Plan, and after his removal the plan was adopted by the Assembly of the RSK.¹⁴⁶ Babić was subsequently succeeded in office by Goran Hadžić later in February. On 21 February the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 743 which established the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) in areas of Croatia labeled as “United Nations Protected Areas” (UNPAs).¹⁴⁷ On 26 February the SAO Western Slavonia and the SAO Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Srem, together with the Dubrovnik Republic (*Dubrovačka Republika*) joined the RSK and a new government was formed.¹⁴⁸

In respect to the rest of the war, even though UNPROFOR troops started arriving in April, the RSK was not demilitarized in its entirety as the Vance Plan demanded, due to fears of possible Croatian attacks and the subsequent inability to defend its territory. The RSK authorities also interpreted the Vance Plan as meaning that UNPROFOR would protect the population in areas of its deployment.¹⁴⁹ Although between 1992 and 1995 the Croatian forces carried out several military operations into the UNPAs, the situation since 1992 generally resembled a stalemate on the battlefield.¹⁵⁰ On 25 January 1994, Milan Martić was elected President of the RSK and in April a new government was formed, the intention of which was to obtain “sovereignty of the RSK and the right of the Serb people to self-determination and

¹⁴⁵ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*. 13.

¹⁴⁶ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 53-58.

¹⁴⁷ The Vance Plan specified three UNPAs covering four sectors: “UNPA Krajina, covering Sector South (Lika and Dalmatia) and Sector North (Banija and Kordun), UNPA Western Slavonia, covering Sector West, and UNPA Eastern Slavonia, covering Sector East.” The intention for the UNPAs was to be demilitarized, which would in practice mean that all armed forces would either have to withdraw or be disbanded. Babić claimed that he wanted a change in the Vance Plan so that the JNA could stay in Krajina to protect the Serbs until a political solution could be found. ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 54.

¹⁴⁸ ICTY, Case No. IT-03-72-S, “Prosecutor v. Milan Babić: Sentencing Judgement,” June 29, 2004, 13, accessed August 4, 2020, <https://www.icty.org/x/cases/babic/tjug/en/bab-sj040629e.pdf>.

¹⁴⁹ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 56.

¹⁵⁰ These included the Miljevački plateau on 21 June 1992, Maslenica on 22 January 1993, Medak pocket on 9 and 12 September 1993, and Operation Flash which started on 1 May 1995. ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 56; Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 9; Kolstø and Paukovic, “The Short and Brutish Life of Republika Srpska Krajina,” 314.

unification with other parts of the Serb people.”¹⁵¹ After the Zagreb Agreement of 29 March 1994, the Z-4 Plan was presented, which proposed a reincorporation of the RSK lands into Croatia over a five-year period, with a high degree of autonomy planned for these lands. On 30 January 1995, Martić refused to accept the Z-4 Plan and Croatia stated that it would not agree to an extension of UNPROFOR’s mandate, but the mandate was eventually extended until March 1995.¹⁵²

In their article, Pål Kolstø and Davor Paukovic explored the RSK’s failure by relying on research on de facto states to argue that if such a state is to survive it must have an external patron for protection and funneling of resources, and it likewise needs to engage in efforts of state-building and nation-building.¹⁵³ The authors subsequently claimed that the RSK leadership essentially failed on all three fronts, losing the initial support of Milošević, failing to build proper state institutions, and instead fostered corruption, abuses and anarchy, and never formed any real state identity, which resulted in the RSK having a rather ambiguous status as a state, only to be finally toppled in 1995.¹⁵⁴

On 1 May 1995 Croatia launched Operation Flash, which ended on 4 May and resulted in the RSK losing control over Western Slavonia. On 2 and 3 May the RSK Army (SVK – *Srpska vojska Krajine*) then shelled Zagreb, supposedly as a retaliation for the attack on Western Slavonia.¹⁵⁵ On 4 August 1995, the HV and the Croatian special police launched *Oluja*, which lasted until 7 August. While at the start of the conflict Croatia suffered from a substantial military disadvantage, since the JNA seized most of the equipment of the Territorial Defense (TO – *Teritorijalna obrana*) in the fall of 1990, various volunteer units started being formed as early as summer 1990, with the HV officially formed in November 1991.¹⁵⁶ In the end, however, Croatia achieved a decisive military victory during *Oluja* after managing to efficiently

¹⁵¹ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 57; The objective to unify lands on which Serbs lived existed already prior to this event. An example of this was also the military operation codenamed *Koridor 92* carried out in summer and late autumn 1992, that, albeit resolving a humanitarian crisis that resulted from the blocking of the road near Doboj in the Posavina region by Croatian and Bosnian forces, had the intention to link Serb lands in Croatia (*Republika Srpska Krajina*) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (RS – *Republika Srpska*). RSK special police forces, police and TO units participated in the operation under the leadership of the Army of Republika Srpska (VRS – *Vojska Republike Srpske*) and the RS police. ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 56-59.

¹⁵² ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 56-57.

¹⁵³ Kolstø and Paukovic, “The Short and Brutish Life of Republika Srpska Krajina.”

¹⁵⁴ Kolstø and Paukovic.

¹⁵⁵ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 114.

¹⁵⁶ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 13-14.

build up and organize its military during the war, swiftly dismantling the RSK regime, which was by 1995 weakened both politically as well as militarily.

All things considered, this chapter has discussed how, following the breakup of Yugoslavia, in a newly nationalistic Croatia the political leadership of the Serb minority started looking for help from Milošević and the JNA. The situation then escalated especially in the first half of 1991, following the two armed clashes between SAO Krajina forces and Croatian special police. Independence from Croatia started being demanded by the SAO Krajina leadership, encouraged by the promises of support from Belgrade and the covert arming of Croatian Serbs by the JNA. All of this then took place in a context where the leadership on both sides employed revisionist narratives of history to achieve political legitimacy, which for Tuđman meant forgetting the horrors of World War II and partly rehabilitating the NDH, while the Serb elites focused on associating the HDZ government with the *Ustaša*, and claimed that Serbs would face a new genocide at the hands of Croats. In the next chapter, this thesis will delve into the alliance between the Krajina Serbs and Milošević and examine the issue from several perspectives, such as the character of the military and state security forces, the economic relationship between Knin and Belgrade, or the differing political relations between Milošević, Babić, and Martić. In this way it will therefore also contribute to the research on the RSK done by Kolstø and Paukovic by focusing predominantly on the essential role of the external patron, Milošević.¹⁵⁷

5. The Alliance Between Knin and Belgrade

The focus in this chapter will be placed on explaining the relationship between the Krajina Serb leadership and Milošević. Accordingly, questions such as how this alliance came to exist, what the relationship between Milošević and various members of the Krajina leadership was, how vital this alliance was for the leadership and how the cooperation functioned in practice will be addressed. Overall, this chapter will substantiate the following findings.

First, for the Krajina Serb leadership, this alliance was everything, it was virtually fully dependent on it and once Milošević withdrew his support, the Krajina leaders were unable to do anything substantial on their own. While their struggle was favorable to Milošević at the start in his game of power politics in a crumbling Yugoslavia, in the end he was willing to abandon them once the war proved unwinnable. Second, within the Krajina government itself a parallel structure developed that led to a strife between the military and the political factions

¹⁵⁷ Kolstø and Paukovic, “The Short and Brutish Life of Republika Srpska Krajina.”

within the government, and due to Serbia's involvement the former was able to overrule the latter and gain full control. As such, Serbia was basically able to heavily intervene even in intra-state Krajina matters. Third, from a theoretical perspective, this case shows how incredibly complex but also shifting such a relationship can be. What is also important to note is that the presented findings are for the most part the result of documentary research conducted by the author. In terms of secondary sources, only the article by Kolstø and Paukovic has been utilized to further contextualize some of these findings, yet the bulk of the chapter is the product of primary source analysis.

To begin with, in respect to the formation of the alliance and the dependence of Krajina Serbs on external support, Babić already contacted Milošević in 1990 to complain about the treatment of Serbs in Croatia, and was referred by him to Borislav Jović, president of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY – *Socijalistička Federativna Republika Jugoslavija*).¹⁵⁸ Babić was then promised support and protection by the JNA. In his position as one of the most notable Krajina Serb political figures at the time, Babić publicly advocated for the idea of all Serbs living in a greater unified Serb state and originally perceived Milošević as “the leader and protector of all ethnic Serbs in Yugoslavia.”¹⁵⁹ His perception would then change later, as disagreements would rise between him and Milošević, which the chapter will explore below. With the knowledge of being able to sever their ties with Croatia and rely on Serbia and the SFRY for support, the Krajina leaders continued their necessary preparations for the coming conflict.

In military terms, the Krajina Serbs were largely supplied in the first half of 1991 with infantry and artillery weapons from JNA depots, with the SAO Krajina police forces receiving weapons through the MUP of Serbia.¹⁶⁰ Additionally, the SFRY Federal Secretariat for National Defense “made unit and personnel changes within the SAO Krajina armed forces,” and after the summer of 1991 the SAO Krajina TO was subordinated to the JNA.”¹⁶¹ In practice, this meant that in the case of combat operations, TO units were directly re-subordinated to the JNA, with the re-subordination carried out by the JNA.¹⁶² Furthermore, temporary assignment re-subordination of Krajina MUP units likewise existed on occasion. Interestingly, when re-

¹⁵⁸ ICTY, Case No. IT-03-72-I, “Factual Statement,” 5.

¹⁵⁹ ICTY, Case No. IT-03-72-I, “Factual Statement,” 5.

¹⁶⁰ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 49-50.

¹⁶¹ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 50.

¹⁶² The usual practice after this re-subordination would be that the largest unit of either the JNA or the TO would be in a commanding position on such operations, which, under normal conditions, would be the JNA. ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 50-51.

subordinated, the MUP units were under the command of the JNA, but when only “acting in cooperation or concert” with the JNA, the units would remain under the command of the MUP.¹⁶³ After a completed mission, the re-subordinated units would return to the MUP structure.¹⁶⁴ While throughout the summer of 1991 the main role of the JNA in the region was to protect Serbs from attacks by Croat forces and “prevent occupation of cities under Serb control,” coinciding with the attack on Kijevo on 26 August 1991, the JNA became an active participant in the war in Croatia, joining the side of the Krajina Serbs.¹⁶⁵

In terms of material and economic support, the Krajina administration likewise depended for the most part on Serbia. From January 1991 onwards, Martić traveled on occasion to Belgrade to meet with Stanišić and Simatović, and also with Radmilo Bogdanović, the Serbian Minister of the Interior, to discuss “the provision of financial, logistical and military assistance.”¹⁶⁶ Apart from the already mentioned sending of weapons, the Krajina economy likewise functioned only through connections with Serbs in Bosnia and with Serbia. While the SAO Krajina and later the RSK financed its civil administration from its own revenues, the military and police structures that existed on its territory were financed by Serbia and the SFRY.¹⁶⁷ One of the most significant problems of the RSK was, however, that in its complete dependence on Serbia, the proper functioning of state institutions remained a problem throughout its entire existence.¹⁶⁸

While professionals for such institutions were promised by Milošević, in reality he sent predominantly military personnel to Krajina.¹⁶⁹ What can be observed from these findings is that while supporting the Krajina Serbs, Belgrade directed the bulk of its resources at strengthening the security apparatus and making it more robust, which in the long run, paired with the inefficiency of the Krajina leadership, led to a considerable decline in general living conditions of the Krajina population.¹⁷⁰ As such, the RSK resembled more of a militarized frontier than a functioning state and the overly emphasis on militarization then also affected intra-state Krajina politics.

¹⁶³ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 50.

¹⁶⁴ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 50-51.

¹⁶⁵ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 123.

¹⁶⁶ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 49.

¹⁶⁷ ICTY, Case No. IT-03-72: Babić, “Babic Interview, Part 4/8,” Exhibit PS7.2.4, April 1, 2004, 12.

¹⁶⁸ Kolstø and Paukovic, “The Short and Brutish Life of Republika Srpska Krajina,” 317-319.

¹⁶⁹ Kolstø and Paukovic, 317-319.

¹⁷⁰ Kolstø and Paukovic, 317-319.

The strong support continued until around the end of 1993 or beginning of 1994, when Milošević started distancing himself from the previous aim of all Serbs living in an ethnically homogenous Serb state. With international sanctions rising and more and more countries recognizing Croatia, the prospect of breaking apart pieces of Croatian territory and uniting them with Serbia became virtually impossible.¹⁷¹ In addition to this, the war struggle of the Bosnian Serbs likewise appeared to have been more important to Milošević, and by 1995 “there was very little interest in the plight of the Krajina Serbs in Serbia.”¹⁷² Until the end, however, the RSK leadership believed that it had Belgrade’s support. In reality though, while for them their status was non-negotiable, Milošević was willing to negotiate with Tuđman despite the common knowledge that Tuđman desired a Croatia without Serbs.¹⁷³ In the end, the loss of its external patron proved to be one of the key factors that led to the RSK’s downfall.

5.1. Conflicts among elites

So far in this chapter the RSK leadership has been described in rather unitary terms. However, Milošević had considerably differing relations with the various political figures in Krajina, notably with Babić and Martić. Coming back to the parallel structure that developed within the Krajina government, this already took place in August 1990. This separate faction included members of the MUP and DB of Serbia, some members of the SDS in Krajina, as well as some Serb policemen from Croatian municipalities.¹⁷⁴ In Krajina, the main positions in this structure were occupied by Martić and Dragan Vasiljković, nicknamed Captain Dragan.¹⁷⁵ While it initially enjoyed the support of Babić, who was at the time one of the main political representatives of the Krajina Serbs, he later started distancing from it as Milošević employed it to provoke the Croatian authorities by, for example, “attacks on the Croatian police, shooting of non-Serb civilians, destruction of non-Serb property, etc.”¹⁷⁶ In addition to this, this faction answered only and directly to Milošević, and apart from him in Serbia it also included the head of the DB, Stanišić, and his subordinate Simatović.¹⁷⁷ The incidents the faction was responsible for were supposed to instill fear among the Serb population and further escalate the Serbo-Croat tensions, which eventually spiraled into war.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷¹ Kolstø and Paukovic, “The Short and Brutish Life of Republika Srpska Krajina,” 316-317.

¹⁷² ICTY, IT-06-90, “Witness Statement for Witness 140,” 4.

¹⁷³ ICTY, IT-06-90, “Witness Statement for Witness 140,” 3-4.

¹⁷⁴ ICTY, Case No. IT-03-72: Babić, “Babic Interview, Part 5/8,” Exhibit PS7.2.5, April 1, 2004, 11-14.

¹⁷⁵ ICTY, Case No. IT-03-72, “Interview, 5/8, 11-14.

¹⁷⁶ ICTY, Case No. IT-03-72-I, “Factual Statement,” 6.

¹⁷⁷ ICTY, Case No. IT-03-72-I, “Factual Statement,” 5-6.

¹⁷⁸ ICTY, Case No. IT-03-72-I, “Factual Statement.”

As such, it is important to recognize that also when speaking of elites in Krajina, these were not unitary actors and Milošević not only recognized this, but had the capacity to manipulate events in Krajina directly by supporting the more radical or extremist elements, notably Martić. An example of this was also that in August 1991, Milošević insisted on Martić being appointed the Commander of the TO, to which Babić objected, but in the end was made to comply.¹⁷⁹ Martić also received further support from Belgrade in his training of special purpose police units at a camp in Golubić, which was also financed in part by the MUP and DB of Serbia.¹⁸⁰ These units were also often referred to as “Martić’s Police” and “Martić’s Men (*Martićevci*).”¹⁸¹ Martić also retained control over the *Milicija Krajine* special police forces, which, together with the TO, composed the armed forces of the SAO Krajina.¹⁸²

Already in this period the Krajina government can be characterized as largely ineffective, which was further demonstrated by the fact even its armed forces were not able to function according to their legal principles. That is, officially, in the fall of 1991, still acting as President of the SAO Krajina, Babić was supposed to lead “the armed forces in times of peace and war,” yet in reality he had no effective control over these forces.¹⁸³ They were controlled by Milošević and the DB of Serbia through Martić.¹⁸⁴ What can therefore be observed from this is that Martić’s vision was to militarize the entire security apparatus of Krajina, that is, including all the police forces, and in this effort he received considerable support from Serbia. After clashing with Milošević over the Vance Plan, Babić was then removed from office as President of the RSK.¹⁸⁵ This militarization of the security forces, however, also meant that its normal duties of upholding the law and preserving public order were largely neglected, and under these conditions crime and anarchy flourished in the RSK.¹⁸⁶

¹⁷⁹ Babić later stated in an interview that he believed that “such a position is always occupied by an officer with the rank of general. It’s a very professional job, a job for a general, while Martić was only a police inspector.” ICTY, Case No. IT-03-72: Babić, “Babic Interview, Part 7/8,” Exhibit PS7.2.7, April 1, 2004, 24. In the end, he only appointed Martić the Deputy Commander to prevent him from becoming “independent from the government.” ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 48.

¹⁸⁰ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 52-53.

¹⁸¹ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 52. Although the evidence presented at Martić’s trial was insufficient to conclude whether all units that trained at Golubić were referred to by this name, or whether all members of the SAO Krajina police forces were referred to as Martić’s Men, Nikola Medaković, the commander of *Milicija Krajine* in Plaški in 1991, testified that members of that unit trained at Golubić and were indeed referred to as Martić’s Men. Another witness called all those led by Medaković “Martić’s Police.” ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 52-53.

¹⁸² ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 47-48.

¹⁸³ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 49.

¹⁸⁴ ICTY, Case No. IT-03-72, “Interview, 5/8,” 10.

¹⁸⁵ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 53-54.

¹⁸⁶ Kolstø and Paukovic, “The Short and Brutish Life of Republika Srpska Krajina,” 317-319.

All of these identified characteristics of the relationship between Knin and Belgrade have at least two fundamental analytical ramifications as well. First, they show that the creation and maintaining of such an alliance might very well involve a multiplicity of relations between the external patron and the local actors characterized by different levels of support, which then directly affects the events on the ground. Milošević had an overall strong alliance with the armed wing of the Krajina government, and provided it with enough support so that it not only reflected the will of Belgrade in respect to the Croatian enemy, but also managed to overrule its rivals, who were not favorable to Milošević – namely Babić. The alliance therefore contained a set of strong relations with some local elites, while with others it was problematic at best. Second, the alliance changed over time from strong support, ideologically built around the vision of Greater Serbia, to, once it was no longer political tenable and favorable to Milošević, virtual abandonment. This is perceived here as the fact that Milošević played his own game of power politics during the breakup of Yugoslavia, and for him the struggle of the Krajina Serbs was only one of a number of localized conflicts that contained potential sources of power, with the others being the war in Bosnia and the conflict in Kosovo.

Acting as the supralocal actor, he allied himself with the Krajina Serbs to potentially carve out the new borders of Greater Serbia, yet once that became unfeasible given the strength that Croatia managed to amass over the years, there was little hesitation before he withdrew his support. However, for the Krajina Serb elites that fully depended on their network with Serbia, this meant a complete disaster, which ultimately led to the flight of 150,000 to 200,000 Serbs from the region.¹⁸⁷ Apart from their functional incompetence, the RSK elites likewise never fostered a proper sense of state identity, and so throughout the war the RSK's existence remained in a state of ambiguity, fostered by omnipresent mythical propaganda of what will happen to Serbs in an independent Croatia, and why they must unite with Serbs in other parts of Yugoslavia.¹⁸⁸ The alliance was necessary in order for the Serb leadership to initiate a campaign of aggression against Croatia, which entailed a systematic removal of tens of thousands of non-Serbs, mostly Croats, from what was to become ethnically homogenous unified Serb territory.¹⁸⁹ As such, this alliance between the elites was one thing that made the

¹⁸⁷ Pavlaković, "Croatia, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, and General Gotovina as a Political Symbol," 1713.

¹⁸⁸ Kolsto and Paukovic, "The Short and Brutish Life of Republika Srpska Krajina," 317-321.

¹⁸⁹ ICTY, Case No. IT-03-72: Babić, "Expert Report of Dr. Mladen Lonchar Including Curriculum Vitae," Exhibit PS8a, April 1, 2004.

violence possible in the first place. The other though was the ability and in some cases outright willingness of individuals on the micro level to directly engage in violence against civilians.

This chapter aimed to reveal the post-1990 transformation of the SAO Krajina and then the RSK through the power dynamics between Milošević, Martić, and Babić, who were seen here as the most notable political figures in the Knin-Belgrade alliance. By examining these elite-level relations, its purpose was to prime the assessment for a deeper analysis of how these dynamics then translated onto the micro-level. The next chapter therefore turns to the discussion of these dynamics.

6. Outbreak of Violence against Civilians

In this chapter, the focus will be placed on examining the most dominant aspects of violence against civilians in the period between the end of August 1991 up to early March 1992. As such, this chapter seeks to highlight the various interactions on the micro-level between different types of armed actors and the civilian population, and link the discussion to how the Serb leadership benefitted from violent behavior of many of these actors in its aim of carving out the new borders of Greater Serbia.

Accordingly, first the overall persecution of non-Serbs in Krajina during the relevant period will be discussed, after which this chapter will address and substantiate the following claims. First, notable differences can be observed in this period in respect to how certain armed actors treated civilians differently than others. This argument applies predominantly to the observation that in the analyzed cases, the JNA overall treated civilians considerably better than the Serb paramilitaries as well as the TO and the police forces. Second, throughout this period of violence, instances of local participation in various forms were a recurring aspect in many cases. As such, focus will be also placed on exploring how locals were used, but also in what ways the established context presented opportunities for local participation. Third, the concepts of violence as a military and as a political strategy will be discussed based on the observed empirical findings. Fourth, the author will also reflect on the utility of alliance theory as an analytical tool for explaining the empirical realities and complement it with insights on ideology and ethnicity for which there exists substantial empirical basis in this episode of violence. Fifth, limitations of this research will be addressed at the end of the chapter.

When violent conflict erupted in Krajina, the objective of the Serb leadership to establish the new borders of an ethnically homogenous Serb state was to be achieved through

forced expulsion of the non-Serb, predominantly Croat, population.¹⁹⁰ The methods employed in this included not only deportation, but also killing and abuse of civilians, as well as looting and overall destruction of Croat villages. While occasional killings and destruction continued even after 1992, the period studied here can overall be seen as the most intense one. Interestingly, Catholic churches were also destroyed in many areas, signaling the attempts to get rid of Croatian elements also culturally.¹⁹¹ Apart from this, violence and abuse also took place in several detention facilities in Krajina and while not all of those detained there were civilians, the general treatment of prisoners there included beatings, humiliation, threats and abuses, lack of proper medical treatment, sanitary facilities, or food.¹⁹² Interestingly, guards at one of these facilities in Knin “allowed beatings of prisoners by civilians, Serbian prisoners, ‘Martić’s Special Forces members’ and all others who wanted to beat them.”¹⁹³ Throughout the RSK’s existence, harassment of civilians also occurred in other areas than analyzed in this study, and Martić’s speeches in which he claimed that he could not guarantee the safety of Croats contributed to an overall atmosphere of fear and pressure in which many Croats left the region.¹⁹⁴

It is important to note that Croatian troops were likewise responsible for a number of attacks on Serb civilians throughout the conflict. For example, in October 1991 a massacre of mainly Croat civilians in Široka Kula by Serb troops was subsequently followed by a massacre of mostly ethnic Serbs in Gospić by Croatian forces.¹⁹⁵ Two civilians, most likely Serbs, were likewise murdered near Benkovac in September 1991.¹⁹⁶ Still, the majority of civilian victims in this period were Croats. What is also interesting, however, is that despite the fact that the Serb leadership wanted to get rid of Croats in Krajina through a multiplicity of means, some of which included brutal treatment and killing, there were also instances of Croats saved or protected by members of the attacking forces or by their neighbors.¹⁹⁷ Such incidents are important to note not only in terms of demonstrating that despite the capacity to commit evil

¹⁹⁰ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 122-125; ICTY, Case No. IT-03-72, “Report of Dr. Mladen Lonchar.”

¹⁹¹ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 24-25; ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 68,72.

¹⁹² ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 104-109.

¹⁹³ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 109.

¹⁹⁴ Between 1992 and 1993, the RSK police directed Croat civilians to Croat settlements near Knin, where in generally poor conditions they were forced to wait for an agreement to be reached between the RSK government, the Croatian government, and international organizations, after which the population was transported by buses to Croatia. Until 1994, harassment and intimidation also occurred in other areas apart from Knin. ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 110-112.

¹⁹⁵ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 15.

¹⁹⁶ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11: Martić, “Document Compiled by the FRY Government, Dealing with Deliberate Killing of Civilians,” Exhibit 00994, October 31, 2006.

¹⁹⁷ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 92-95.

acts, even in extreme situations of violence there are people who, despite possibly being in danger themselves, go out of their way to save others, but also because they demonstrate the existence of agency and thus reaffirm one of the fundamental theoretical assumptions of this inquiry.

6.1. Differences between armed actors

One of the most dominant aspects of this period of violence is that it is possible to observe a relatively strong differentiation between the various armed actors and their behavior towards civilians. Overall, it appears that members of the JNA treated civilians significantly better than members of Serb paramilitaries and Krajina police forces. Empirically, this can be supported by multiple observations on the micro-level. For example, following the shelling of Saborsko in June and August 1991, and the attack of the Croatian National Guard (ZNG – *Zbor narodne garde*) and MUP units on the JNA barracks in Lička Jasenica on 4 November, the JNA, together with units from the Plaški TO as well as the DB and *Milicija Krajine* forces attacked Saborsko on 12 November.¹⁹⁸ Following the Serb military victory, looting and destruction of predominantly Croat but also some Serb houses commenced.¹⁹⁹ Apart from this, however, around twenty civilians were murdered on the same day by armed men, while another group of around thirty to sixty civilians, predominantly elderly persons, that remained in the village were taken to the JNA Lička Jasenica barracks by the Plaški TO.²⁰⁰ Afterwards, they were transported by buses to territories under Croatian control.²⁰¹

Similarly, during the fighting in Škabrnja on 19 November, civilians that fled the village were transported out of the area by JNA and TO forces again to territories under the control of Croatian forces, while paramilitaries in Nadin and Škabrnja around the same period executed a number of other civilians after they had already surrendered, same as in Saborsko.²⁰² Interestingly, these civilians were first forced out of hiding by JNA soldiers, who confiscated their weapons, and afterwards left, while the paramilitaries and police forces appeared to usually have stayed in an area after it had already been conquered militarily.²⁰³ In Lipovača, for example, eleven or twelve Croat civilians were murdered in their homes after the arrival of paramilitary forces at the end of October 1991.²⁰⁴ What is also striking is that some of these

¹⁹⁸ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 81-83.

¹⁹⁹ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 81-83.

²⁰⁰ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 83-84.

²⁰¹ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 83.

²⁰² ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 90.

²⁰³ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 92.

²⁰⁴ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 74-75.

paramilitaries appeared to have referred to themselves as *Četniks*, while often calling the Croat civilians *Ustaša*.²⁰⁵

Another interesting aspect is that members of the JNA in many instances appeared to have been aware of the behavior of paramilitaries, which sometimes produced clashes between the two, while in other instances JNA members outright intervened to prevent the killings.²⁰⁶ Also in Lipovača, for example, JNA soldiers stayed in the village for about seven or eight days, during which some of them warned a Croat civilian at whose house they were staying of the Serb paramilitary forces who would come later. Interestingly, when the civilian was asked what he was afraid of, he replied that he was not afraid while the JNA soldiers were still there.²⁰⁷ To this the soldiers replied that “we know. When we leave, beware of the reserve forces of those paramilitary units.”²⁰⁸ Indeed, after the JNA left the village, Serb paramilitaries both from inside as well as outside the region entered, and although these forces wore the same army uniforms, they were referred to as “reserve forces, Martić’s troops or Martić’s army.”²⁰⁹ In another instance in Škabrnja, before a member of a paramilitary group could carry out further executions of two more civilians, an officer of the JNA “intervened and prevented their killing.”²¹⁰

In addition to drawing a distinction between the JNA and especially paramilitaries and members of the *Milicija Krajine*, who, for example, murdered four civilians in Bruška in December 1991, it is also possible to reflect on members of the TO.²¹¹ Interestingly, it has been noted above that on two occasions they transported civilians out of the combat zone, with one of these cases being Škabrnja. However, in respect to killings in Škabrnja, a soldier reported that he saw members of the TO, together with volunteers that called themselves *Četniks*, carry out executions of several civilians, while using others as a live shield.²¹² The soldier stated this in a report in November 1991, and, interestingly, the person classifying the report noted that

²⁰⁵ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11: Martić, “Report Re: Killing of Civilians in Škabrnja. Summary: Referring to the Statement Given on 23-Nov-91 by Dragan MITROVIC Who Witnessed the Killing in Škabrnja,” Exhibit 00614, April 4, 2006; ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 78, 91, 98; ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11: Martić, “Saborsko Operation. Witness Statement by Marinko MUDRIC, Re: Attack on Saborsko and Other Serb Attacks, Dated 7 April 1992,” Exhibit 00507, April 5, 2006.

²⁰⁶ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11, “Killing of Civilians in Škabrnja,” ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11: Martić, “Public Transcript of Hearing 4 April 2006,” Transcript, April 4, 2006, 30-31; ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 92-95.

²⁰⁷ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11, “Hearing 4 April 2006,” 31-32.

²⁰⁸ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11, “Hearing 4 April 2006,” 31.

²⁰⁹ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 74.

²¹⁰ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 93.

²¹¹ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 102-103.

²¹² ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11, “Killing of Civilians in Škabrnja.”

“from the information given by soldier MITROVIĆ, it can be understood that certain units of the TO behaved more like a ‘gang’ than like an Army. This type of behavior caused a revolt with soldiers, who almost openly stood up against them, so as to protect some Croatian civilians.”²¹³ Unfortunately, given the absence of more complete data, it is difficult to say whether members of the TO behaved generally the same or better as paramilitaries, but a possible explanation can be offered for why in other cases they participated in the transportation of civilians to safety, while here they carried out executions. It is possible to argue that in the instances where they transported civilians to safety, they did so because of orders from the JNA, to which they were re-subordinated during combat operations, as the previous chapter described.²¹⁴

6.2. Further basis for empirical differentiation

In arguing that considerable differences existed between the JNA and other units, especially paramilitaries, but also the *Milicija Krajine* as well as the TO on certain occasions, it is also necessary to be able to differentiate between these actors from the empirical accounts with enough credibility. This is especially important because civilians in the area also wore JNA uniforms without being active members of the JNA, and in the Trial Chamber judgment of Martić, killings perpetrated by individuals wearing JNA uniforms were noted, such as in the case of the village of Nadin.²¹⁵ In that respect, this thesis identifies two notable criteria by which such instances can be judged.

First, the method of execution of civilians by these individuals in JNA uniforms was identical to methods of executions often employed by paramilitaries in the region. The civilians were not only shot in the head at point-blank range, but also shot multiple times from a distance of over one meter.²¹⁶ In none of the other cases, however, were official JNA soldiers recorded as targeting and killing civilians, which makes it highly unlikely that in Nadin they would take part in such violence. In addition to this, the TO members that were present in Škabrnja, which was close to Nadin and attacked on the previous day, “wore the same uniforms, caps and helmets as the JNA.”²¹⁷ Second, members of the TO often wore white bands on the left shoulder, or SAO Krajina patches on their uniforms, whilst members of paramilitaries often wore various types of hats or caps that distinguished them even if they were dressed in the

²¹³ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11, “Killing of Civilians in Škabrnja,” 2.

²¹⁴ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 50-51.

²¹⁵ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 95.

²¹⁶ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 95.

²¹⁷ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 91.

typical JNA olive-gray or olive-drab uniforms.²¹⁸ In the case of Saborsko, for example, a witness testified that “some of the soldiers had white ribbons on their upper arms and some had camouflage caps with bills.”²¹⁹ In addition to this, those that referred to themselves as *Četniks* also had *Četnik* insignia on their uniforms and wore long beards.²²⁰

Furthermore, those participating in executions of civilians in some cases spoke with a heavy Serbian dialect, and often referred to the Croat civilians as *Ustaša*.²²¹ As such, it is also possible to differentiate accurately between the paramilitaries and local Krajina forces, such as the TO, and the JNA. The repetitive discourse of referring to Croat civilians as *Ustaša* and the embracing of the *Četnik* legacy by many of these paramilitaries is also seen here as an empirical demonstration of the fact that the ethno-political ideological context in which the violence took place ultimately mattered in the actual interactions between perpetrators and victims in many cases. Typically Serb ideological units were significantly more brutal towards civilians than other actors and in some cases included volunteers from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.²²²

6.3. Involvement of local actors

The second notable aspect of micro-level dynamics of violence in this period is that throughout the analyzed cases, strong elements of local participation were present. Not only did local civilians, together with members of various armed forces, including the JNA, participate in widespread looting following several military victories in the area, but in the villages of Hrvatska Dubica, Škabrnja, and Nadin, units committing violence against civilians also utilized lists of local inhabitants in their searches, which points at the existence of local informants.²²³ For instance, when over forty civilians, predominantly Croats but among them also a couple of Serbs and Muslims, were detained on 20 October at the local fire station in Hrvatska Dubica, their names were read out from a list to make sure that nobody was missing.²²⁴ On the next day, thirty-one of these civilians were killed.²²⁵ Apart from looting, local Serbs also directly participated in killings in areas such as Škabrnja and Vukovići, appearing well informed about

²¹⁸ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 48, 83, 90-91.

²¹⁹ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11: Martić, “92 Bis Statement of Witness MM-033,” Exhibit 00276, January 16, 2006, 4.

²²⁰ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 98.

²²¹ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 83-84.

²²² Pavlaković, “Symbols and the Culture of Memory in Republika Srpska Krajina,” 900; ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 100.

²²³ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 62-63, 66, 72, 77-78, 92-93, 100, 121.

²²⁴ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 66-67.

²²⁵ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 66-67.

their victims.²²⁶ In Cerovljani, armed Serbs entered the village on 13 and 21 September and burned Croat houses, with about 80% of this group's members dressed in civilian clothes, while the rest was dressed in camouflage and spare JNA uniforms.²²⁷ Later in October the remaining civilians of Cerovljani were rounded up, again by armed Serbs, detained for a night, and murdered the next day.²²⁸

The explanation for such phenomena and the argument presented here is that this type of local participation, resulting in killings and harassment of Croats was heavily facilitated by the elites in their aim of getting rid of the Croat population from the new borders of Greater Serbia. Empirically, apart from the already discussed shifting of moral and justificatory boundaries that was implemented through propaganda and provocation that resulted in gradual escalation of the Serbo-Croat relations in the region, this can be also supported by the fact that local Serbs were provided with weapons by the JNA prior to the outbreak of war, which enabled their participation in the conflict. For example, earlier in 1991, in Lipovača, weapons from the JNA were carried into the village via helicopters and then distributed to local Serb civilians in 1991.²²⁹ As such, the elites, that is, those responsible for the orchestration of violence, tapped into local networks to recruit willing participants for the conflict.²³⁰

6.4. Opportunism and ideology

The above stated explanation is also why alliance theory has been selected as part of the analytical lens through which these cases are explained, as it allows for a recognition of the interaction between the local and the supralocal, as well as for an examination of how this interaction worked in practice.²³¹ Without attempting to address the motivations of perpetrators, especially collective motivations, this thesis recognizes the existence of both ideological as well as opportunistic behavior on the micro-level, which are seen here as complementary instead of contradictory. The case of members of paramilitaries adopting the *Četnik v. Ustaša* rhetoric is a fitting example of the manifestation of ideology on the micro-level, while the widespread

²²⁶ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, "Martić: Judgement," 76-77, 95

²²⁷ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11: Martić, "92 Bis Statement and 92 Bis Attestation Package, Containing Attestation Pages in English and the Underlying Statement in BCS, of Witness MM-019, Dated 23 June 2003," Exhibit 00273e, January 16, 2006.

²²⁸ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, "Martić: Judgement," 68-69.

²²⁹ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, "Martić: Judgement," 74.

²³⁰ Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence,'" 486-487.

²³¹ Kalyvas, 486-487.

looting committed by virtually everyone ranging from members of the JNA all the way to local civilians, reaffirms the existence of opportunism.²³²

This argument can also be illustrated well through a Croatian MUP record of statement of a man that took part in the attack on Saborsko.²³³ In the statement, he described how all men from Plaški between the age of sixteen and sixty took part in the attack, and how individuals from Martić's men bragged about setting houses on fire and stealing.²³⁴ He also stated that "Peić, from Ogulin, was the worst of Martić's men. During the attack on Saborsko, he shot dead eight people in front of the Centre in Saborsko. He went around boasting about it in taverns saying that he had done it because he hated 'all Ustashas'."²³⁵ He likewise stated that the identified individual, together with other Martić's men, "had taken part in the attack on Slunj with the intention of stealing vehicles and plundering houses."²³⁶ In addition to this, the man stated that he heard such individuals openly bragging about brutal murders of civilians.²³⁷

This quote then accurately captures what is described in this thesis as an environment in which otherwise prohibited forms of behavior became permissible, facilitated not only through the provision of weapons and creation of opportunity by the elites, but also by the changing of the structure of morality and ideas, again through the agency of those at the top.²³⁸ On the micro-level, it can manifest in many forms, the most dominant of which in this period were looting, seen here as demonstration of opportunism, as well as willful and prideful infliction of harm on members of the opposing ethnic group by many of the actors, especially paramilitaries and local special police forces.

6.5. Strategies of violence

Taking into account these two main findings of differentiation between the JNA and other armed actors as well as the strong elements of local participation, the third dominant aspect that this thesis identifies is that a variation between violence as a military and as a political strategy is empirically observable in this episode to a considerable degree.²³⁹ In analytical terms, it is also where the logic derived from the work of Kalyvas is complemented by observations and

²³² Case No. IT-95-11-T, "Martić: Judgement," 78, 91, 98; 62-63, 66, 72, 100.

²³³ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11, "Witness Statement by Marinko MUDRIC."

²³⁴ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11, "Witness Statement by Marinko MUDRIC," 4-5.

²³⁵ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11, "Witness Statement by Marinko MUDRIC," 4.

²³⁶ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11, "Witness Statement by Marinko MUDRIC," 5.

²³⁷ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11, "Witness Statement by Marinko MUDRIC."

²³⁸ Anderson, *Perpetrating Genocide*, 59-60; Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 1-34.

²³⁹ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 6-7.

arguments by Dragojević.²⁴⁰ In that respect, the JNA has been described above as the principal military actor, that is, the “external muscle” needed to “win decisive local advantage,” and its involvement mostly depended on the presence of enemy units in an area.²⁴¹ Overall, the JNA’s activity was strongest in areas where Croatian troops offered some form of military resistance, such as in Lipovača, Saborsko, Škabrnja, and Nadin.²⁴²

It appears, however, that in most cases the JNA did not stay long in an area, whereas after it left the police forces and various paramilitaries would often come and stay for a longer period of time. In this context, while on multiple occasions killing by paramilitaries and other such forces occurred also on the day of an attack, in many cases killings and harassments continued over a longer period. This was the case in, for instance, Škabrnja, where by mid-1992 there were not many JNA soldiers left in the village, but there was instead a significant presence of about fifty to seventy members of paramilitary forces.²⁴³ Interestingly, such units, as well as other Serb armed groups, were also active in areas where only civilians remained and where Croatian military presence was absent, such as in Cerovljani, Poljanak, or Bruška.²⁴⁴

From such observations it can be largely concluded that the main role of the JNA was to militarily secure an area, and while civilian casualties might have occurred as the result of shelling or other indiscriminate forms of violence, civilians were not targeted by the JNA as such. On the other hand, the paramilitaries and police forces that would then occupy an area for a longer period of time appeared to have served a political purpose that fits the nature of violence as a political strategy – the enforcing of ethno-political boundaries.²⁴⁵ This observation can also be supported by the fact that in the context of ethnicity as a salient and divisive characteristic, and in territories where the state is still trying to establish proper control, individuals of the same ethnic group as the perpetrators might also become targets of political violence in case they challenge these boundaries, and thus challenge the state’s control.²⁴⁶ In some cases, therefore, Serbs were also killed together with Croats.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁰ Kalyvas, “The Ontology of ‘Political Violence;’” Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*.

²⁴¹ Kalyvas, “The Ontology of ‘Political Violence;’” 486.

²⁴² Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 73-76, 79-83, 88-92.

²⁴³ Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 98-100.

²⁴⁴ Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 68-69, 76-79, 101-104.

²⁴⁵ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 6-7.

²⁴⁶ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 123-127.

²⁴⁷ Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 66-67, 102-103.

6.6. *Complex dynamics and more questions*

Such differentiation, however, is not without its own limitations, thus staying aware of them is essential. First, assuming that micro-level perpetration of violence fits into a larger scheme of the use of violence as a political strategy makes a considerable amount of sense when one takes the elite-centered perspective, and fully focuses on violence as instrumental and functional.²⁴⁸ On the micro-level, however, while it also helps make sense of observations which would otherwise appear as perhaps too random, such as why would Serb forces kill Serbs as well, it risks attributing motivations to actors who might not have even cared about the state's political strategy. This is again where the arguments of Kalyvas come to complement the tools borrowed from Dragojević, and vice versa, as in his work it is noted how civil wars open up the possibility for local cleavages to manifest and enable violence to gain its intimate form, that is, for it to grow from within the community.²⁴⁹

For example, a Serb man, in fact a member of the JNA, was killed in Bruška by members of the *Milicija Krajine* while playing cards with his Croat neighbors.²⁵⁰ Was this a case of violence as a political strategy simply because he did not conform to the ethnic boundaries and remained friendly towards his Croat neighbors, which might have been seen as even more traitorous because he was a member of the JNA?²⁵¹ Perhaps. But such answer, which would directly affirm the existence of violence as a political strategy in this specific case, would also mean assuming a motive.²⁵² And in this particular case, an investigation was later carried out into the incident with a JNA report stating that “the killings may have been motivated by revenge by a named individual.”²⁵³ The reason why this is important is because it does not only highlight the complexity of actor relations on the ground, but also points to the importance of remaining conscious of the fact that no matter how detailed an analysis, certain things will simply remain hidden. It is precisely in such details, however, where also the potential for future research is located, as the answer might lie in a closer examination of such local dynamics.

Furthermore, there are several aspects that are perhaps less clear from the researched documents. For example, while members of the JNA refrained from targeting and killing civilians in this area and time, in cases such as Predore near Hrvatska Dubica, they participated

²⁴⁸ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 6-7.

²⁴⁹ Kalyvas, “The Ontology of ‘Political Violence;’” Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*.

²⁵⁰ Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 101-102.

²⁵¹ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 6-7, 123-127; Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 101-102.

²⁵² Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 6-7.

²⁵³ Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 103.

in looting next to members of the TO, the *Milicija Krajine*, as well as local civilians.²⁵⁴ Was this because looting was perhaps understandable as an expected phenomenon following a military victory and the occupation of a territory? Or maybe as something allowed by the military leadership as compensation for the soldiers' actions on the battlefield? In a similar way, questions can be asked as to why, also in Predore, abandoned Serb houses were also destroyed together with Croat houses, or why detained Croats were forced to take part in looting.²⁵⁵ Was the latter perhaps a case of humiliation or, to put it bluntly, an attempt by the looting Serbs at greater effectivity?

Another important point that needs to be raised is that although strong differences were identified between the JNA and the paramilitaries and other such forces, they are somewhat difficult to explain and warrant further examination. What this thesis proposes is that the difference can mostly be explained by the fact that the JNA was not an ideological actor in a sense that it would be driven by the nationalistic *Četnik* ideology and that its members were often young conscripts from various parts of Yugoslavia who did not join the war voluntarily.²⁵⁶ In one instance, however, what has been described as “a special JNA unit from Niš, Serbia” that “wore darker camouflage uniforms,” which were not the usual uniforms the JNA personnel would wear, carried out the killing of eight Croat civilians in Vukovići on 7 November 1991.²⁵⁷ Questions such as what this unit was, how it operated, or generally on what basis such special units of the JNA functioned can therefore be asked to further inspect the matter. In the next chapter, this thesis will delve into the case of violence committed during and after *Oluja*.

7. Violence Committed against Civilians during and after *Oluja*

In this chapter, the focus will be placed on *Oluja* and its consequences to address the second fundamental part of the research question in order to establish what the dominant aspects of violence against civilians in Krajina were in 1995. After a brief description of the operation and the general context that drove the violence, four main arguments will be discussed below. First, notable differences existed between the former UN Sectors South and North and these had significant impact on the micro-level dynamics of violence. Second, the Croatian elites, that is, those officials and members of the system in charge of the operation, tolerated otherwise prohibited behavior of members of the HV and the special police. Additionally, the Croatian

²⁵⁴ Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 65-66.

²⁵⁵ Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 65.

²⁵⁶ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11, “Witness Statement Witness MM-28.”

²⁵⁷ Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 77.

government took various measures to prevent the Serb refugees from returning to Krajina, which also included the encouragement of hostile behavior towards these refugees after the operation was over. Third, the evidence presented on the micro-level, apart from widespread opportunism in the form of looting, seems to point towards the reality that reflection of the war's master narrative in the shape of collective revenge exercised along ethnic lines is an empirically dominant aspect of the analyzed violence. Fourth, the chapter will also reflect on the examined findings through the chosen analytical lens of this thesis and deliver the final argument.

In military terms, *Oluja* represented a swift and decisive Croatian victory that ended the war in Croatia and reintegrated most of the former RSK territories. What is interesting to note here is that unlike in the case of Krajina Serbs in 1991, Croatia was able to achieve this victory without being dependent on an external patron. By the time the operation was launched, the RSK also suffered from poor military organization, low morale, and the loss of its external support. In addition to this, when negotiations regarding the Z-4 Plan were taking place a week prior to *Oluja*, the RSK leadership already started organizing possible escape routes for the Serb population of Krajina.²⁵⁸ What is perhaps more important, however, is the context in which the Serb population of Krajina lived.

From the start of intensification of relations between Croatia and its Serb minority, the Serb political leadership constantly reminded the Serb population that coexistence with Croats was impossible, and that Serbs could never live safely in Croatia.²⁵⁹ The general perception of Serbs in Croatia at the time was that they were perceived as a collectively guilty enemy of the Croatian state, and they were to be punished as such.²⁶⁰ The violence that this chapter analyzes should therefore be again viewed in this light. While it is possible to speak of empirically demonstrable acts of personal enrichment or revenge, it is necessary for these to be viewed through the filter of the identity politics that were at the time reinforced by years of propaganda on both sides. During his hearing, Puhovski stated that especially Croatian soldiers were convinced of the Serbs' guilt.²⁶¹ In the end, the events that transpired in some communities during and after *Oluja* showed that the fear of revenge due to which so many Serbs left Krajina was not just an imagined construct, but a reality for some of those that stayed behind.²⁶² Despite

²⁵⁸ ICTY, IT-06-90, "Hearing 13 February," 84-85.

²⁵⁹ ICTY, IT-06-90, "Hearing 13 February," 84-85.

²⁶⁰ ICTY, IT-06-90, "Hearing 13 February," 4.

²⁶¹ ICTY, IT-06-90, "Hearing 13 February," 4-5.

²⁶² ICTY, IT-06-90, "Hearing 12 February," 94.

the fact that on 4 August 1995, in his speech Tuđman guaranteed the protection of all human, civil, and property rights for those who did not take part in the rebellion and would choose to stay in their homes, which turned out to be mainly elderly civilians, looting and burning of Serb property, killings, and further hostilities accompanied the operation.²⁶³

What is also important to note is that the two episodes of violence were driven by fundamentally different factors. Whereas Serb claims of legitimacy rested on the right of all Serbs to live in a unified Serb state, in addition to their framing of parallels between Tuđman's attempts at Croatian independence and the NDH, they generally had to rely to a considerable degree on historical analogies and persuasion to create the necessary fear among Serbs in Croatia.²⁶⁴ As such, their legitimacy fundamentally rested on historical perceptions of suffering and victimization. On the other hand, apart from the fact that Croatia was in fact retaking its legal territories during *Oluja*, the theme of revenge against Serbs was connected with the fact that four years earlier their forces did indeed launch an aggressive campaign against Croatia.²⁶⁵ As such, the frame of reference was connected a lot more with the living memories of what the Serb forces had done, not fifty years ago, but recently, and how their efforts to create Greater Serbia prevented the Croatian people from living freely and independently.²⁶⁶

Before the main analysis can commence, it is also important to note that the HV and the special police were not the only forces the members of which committed violence against civilians. The operation itself was conducted in cooperation with the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and members of its Fifth Corps were also responsible for a number of incidents.²⁶⁷ Furthermore, Croat civilians also participated in violence against fleeing Serbs in some instances, such as in Sisak, while there were also cases of members of the SVK causing civilian casualties, which also included an incident of an SVK tank running over Serb civilians.²⁶⁸ On the other hand, like in the previous analyzed episode of violence, during *Oluja* there were likewise many occasions during which Serb civilians were saved or helped by the Croat forces, such as in the area of Lipovac where some 2,000 refugees who left one of the refugee columns

²⁶³ ICTY, Case No. IT-06-90: Gotovina *et al.*, "President Tudjman's Open Letter to Serbs From the RSK, Dated 04.08.95.," Exhibit D01809.E, November 18, 2009; Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 20.

²⁶⁴ Pavlaković, "Symbols and the Culture of Memory in Republika Srpska Krajina."

²⁶⁵ ICTY, Case No. IT-06-90: Gotovina *et al.*, "Media Report – Franjo TUDMAN Speech at Knin Station, 26 August 1995," Exhibit D02029, March 26, 2010

²⁶⁶ ICTY, Case No. IT-06-90, "TUDMAN Speech."

²⁶⁷ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 214-215, 293.

²⁶⁸ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 214-216; ICTY, IT-06-90, "Hearing 13 February," 78-79.

were received by Croatian authorities and secured in collection centers from which they returned to their homes.²⁶⁹

7.1. Geographical differences

The first main argument that this chapter proposes is that notable differences existed between the two former UN Sectors in terms of how the military campaign evolved, and that these differences had significant impact on the micro-level dynamics of violence and destruction. In Sector South, seemingly because most of the Serb population had left either prior to or around the start of *Oluja*, some members of the HV and the Croatian police moving through the villages already commenced with the widespread looting, destruction, and abuse of the remaining Serb civilians.²⁷⁰ Interestingly, with respect to looting, while Serb property was available to virtually anyone who desired to take something, in the beginning it was principally the members of the HV and the police who participated in looting, and “after them all others.”²⁷¹ In many areas in Sector South, the situation resembled almost complete anarchy in terms of the behavior of troops, which even manifested in the form of conflicts between members of the HV and the police, as well as among the soldiers themselves. In Donji Lapac, for example, some soldiers were in favor of looting while others were against it, which led to physical confrontations.²⁷²

While many of these situations resembled high levels of anarchy, the HHO in their observations and reports noted the systematic manner of destruction of Serb houses and a number of villages in Sector South, including industrial, economic, and cultural objects, with the exception of Orthodox churches.²⁷³ In Sector South this was striking due to the virtual absence of a proper opposing military force, with the exception of occasional points of resistance such as near Knin, as the majority of the SVK fled together with the civilians, meaning that the Croatian forces largely encountered only civilians that remained behind.²⁷⁴ Interestingly, in respect to the overall situation in Sector South, the commander of the Canadian Battalion “Canbat 1,” Jacques Morneau, specified in his witness statement that him and his forces observed systematic looting and burning of houses and farms done by Croat soldiers,

²⁶⁹ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 215.

²⁷⁰ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 107-115.

²⁷¹ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 107.

²⁷² Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 88.

²⁷³ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 81, 135.

²⁷⁴ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 28, 83.

policemen, as well as civilians, yet civilian participation in these acts grew only after about a week after the operation and continued for weeks afterwards.²⁷⁵

Apart from the looting and destruction, multiple murders of civilians likewise occurred in Sector South, many of which were carried out by members of the HV and by the Croatian police forces. As such, killings in Sector South were perpetrated by both the attacking forces during the operation, such as in Knin, but also afterwards, with the frequent pattern being that these killings were often covered up, or the victims' bodies were burned or disappeared.²⁷⁶ Overall, while it is possible to establish perhaps a pattern in respect to looting and destruction in Sector South, which would consist of the attacking forces first participating in all of these activities directly during the operation and subsequently for about a week, after which Croat civilians and everyone else took the opportunity, killings in Sector South appear much more sporadic or random.

In Sector North, on the other hand, the civilian death toll was lower than in Sector South, with civilians fleeing mainly in three main columns, while the SVK offered stronger resistance. Overall, however, civilians from Sector North left for exile later than those in Sector South.²⁷⁷ A considerable amount of civilian casualties resulted from multiple attacks on the refugee columns by some members of the HV, but also by Croat civilians, especially in the territory of Glina and Sisak, where fleeing Serbs became the targets of stoning by Croat civilians.²⁷⁸ A particular issue in respect to the columns was that their security was in certain cases compromised by the retreating SVK forces, while in multiple instances individual executions of civilians were carried out in cases of some that separated from these columns.²⁷⁹

The most important aspect in relation to the argument discussed here, however, is the fact that overall looting and arson occurred much later than in Sector North, sometimes months after *Oluja*, and destruction was not as widespread or common.²⁸⁰ In many instances the most serious harassment and attacks on Serb civilians started happening when Croat refugees started taking over the abandoned Serb houses, or when the next wave of Croatian units entered the villages after the operation.²⁸¹ While civilians were also killed during the operation itself, the

²⁷⁵ ICTY, Case No. IT-06-90: Gotovina *et al.*, "Statement of Witness Jacques Morneau, Dated 26 and 27 August 1996," Exhibit P00308, May 29, 2008

²⁷⁶ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 41-42.

²⁷⁷ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 214-216.

²⁷⁸ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, 214-216

²⁷⁹ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 218-222.

²⁸⁰ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 210-211.

²⁸¹ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 265, 292-300.

general pattern was that these incidents occurred afterwards. This therefore raises the question of why there were such considerable differences in respect to violence and destruction between the two sectors, and to what these differences can be attributed.

This thesis proposes the argument that the considerable differences in respect to the behavior of Croat armed forces and civilians can be largely attributed to the organizational differences in the withdrawal of Krajina Serbs between the two sectors and that the more significant resistance by the SVK in Sector North as well as the delayed withdrawal of civilians are parts of the explanation why the majority of abuses and crimes there occurred only in the following weeks and months after *Oluja*. In connection with the killing of civilians, in the immediate period in Sector South, possible explanations are likely to include the failure of the military leadership to provide the necessary capacity for collection of prisoners, the absence of proper information on the treatment of civilians in some army units, as well as the fact that some units might have in fact received orders not to take prisoners.

Furthermore, the fact that *Oluja* was an incredibly fast-paced military operation was also likely to shape the relations between the attacking forces and the civilians that stayed behind. What is meant by this is that, according to Puhovski, *Oluja* was conducted at the pace of one hundred and forty-five square kilometers per hour in a mountainous environment in which the SVK was expected to put up a fight.²⁸² The fact that the HV was able to make such fast progress, however, meant in military terms that there was a possibility of the SVK letting the HV enter deep into the territory so that it could then attack it from behind.²⁸³ Puhovski therefore speculated that when the soldiers found only civilians behind, they might have expected them to fight, perhaps not believing that their feared enemy suddenly just abandoned its positions.²⁸⁴

Another factor that likely facilitated the sporadic killings of civilians by soldiers, especially in Sector South, is that some Croat soldiers stated that in some units they were not informed what to do with prisoners, and in the absence of proper collection centers, these civilians were killed due to the fact that the soldiers would have to take care of them personally, which was impossible on the front lines.²⁸⁵ From that information it is therefore clear that these soldiers were of the assumption that killing the civilians, in such case, was the only choice. In

²⁸² ICTY, IT-06-90: Gotovina *et al.*, “Video-clip (and the Transcript Thereof) – Zarko Puhovski Speaking in Documentary Film ‘Gotovina’ From 11 Oct 2006,” Exhibit D01309, February 13, 2009.

²⁸³ ICTY, IT-06-90, “Zarko Puhovski Speaking.”

²⁸⁴ ICTY, IT-06-90, “Zarko Puhovski Speaking.”

²⁸⁵ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 63.

different instances, however, Morneau testified that he heard the information that Croat soldiers were in fact instructed not to take prisoners.²⁸⁶

Additionally, it appears that, quite naturally, also in the case of *Oluja* looting commenced once the enemy was already driven out of an area. The problem was, however, that while the first few houses in a village were often abandoned and susceptible to looting, in others there would frequently still be some of the inhabitants.²⁸⁷ When threatening the HV as potential witnesses or sources of resistance, they were killed.²⁸⁸ This therefore appears to be a predominant pattern in Sector South, whereas in Sector North, on the other hand, out of those civilians that were killed in the immediate period, most of them were either moving with or separated from the refugee columns, with the dynamics of killing being almost entirely different than in the case of robberies in a largely abandoned area.²⁸⁹

7.2. A time of permissible terror

With the hypothesis of differences between the two sectors established, the next proposed argument builds on it by discussing the tolerance of unlawful behavior by the Croatian authorities and their refusal to prosecute it or establish a proper rule of law in the newly liberated territories in the immediate period, particularly because such behavior on the micro-level suited the greater political aims of the Tuđman administration of getting rid of the Krajina Serb population permanently.²⁹⁰ In a documentary film titled “Storm over Krajina” (*Oluja nad Krajinom*), Puhovski described the atmosphere following the operation as “pathetic attempts” by the Croatian officials to create a picture that “the Croats behaved better than any other army that we know, that there were no incidents, that everybody behaved correctly towards these refugees or Chetniks or female supporters of Chetniks, more decently than they deserved, which of course was not true.”²⁹¹ On the basis of the conducted research, the author identifies two fundamental instruments through which the Croatian leadership worked to achieve the goal of preventing the Serb population from returning. First, the Croatian authorities largely tolerated the looting of Serb property and violent behavior towards Serb civilians by members of the HV,

²⁸⁶ ICTY, Case No. IT-06-90, “Statement of Witness Jacques Morneau,” 5.

²⁸⁷ ICTY, IT-06-90, “Zarko Puhovski Speaking.”

²⁸⁸ ICTY, IT-06-90, “Zarko Puhovski Speaking.”

²⁸⁹ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 10.

²⁹⁰ It is important to note that what the thesis argues in this respect is that in the immediate period, the attitude of the Croatian authorities did not correspond with any intentions of establishing a proper rule of law. It is necessary to also mention, however, that since then the situation has changed and a number of people were convicted for crimes committed during and after *Oluja*. “Epilogue,” Storm in the Hague, accessed August 12, 2020, <https://snv.hr/olujja-u-haagu/olujja-en.html>.

²⁹¹ ICTY, IT-06-90, “Hearing 12 February,” 93.

the police, as well as by civilians during and in the aftermath of *Oluja*. Second, the HDZ government utilized the occupation of Serb houses by Croat refugees as a way of preventing Serbs from returning to Krajina.

In respect to the first claim, in its report, the HHO described *Oluja* and its aftermath as “a time of permissible terror, crime and loot,” corroborated also by the fact that Knin and other major cities in the region were almost completely looted.²⁹² This is evident mainly from the fact that looting was not only taking place in the direct presence of state authorities, but those very authorities participated in the looting as well.²⁹³ Puhovski likewise mentioned in his witness statement that despite the fact that after the operation checkpoints were established in the region, the authorities were not exercising their duty to prevent crimes in their areas of responsibility.²⁹⁴ This can also be corroborated again by Morneau’s witness statement, in which he testified that despite the fact that these checkpoints were manned by military and civilian police, and even though vehicles loaded with looted goods were passing through them almost constantly, the police never arrested anybody.²⁹⁵

Furthermore, in August 1995, the authorities were likewise not carrying out proper investigations into the killings that were occurring in the region, with a frequent pattern also being either the liquidation of the bodies of victims, or reburials to unknown locations.²⁹⁶ When Morneau’s subordinates were sent to inquire about the reason why the Croat forces were permitting this sort of behavior, their reply was that “they couldn’t control it,” an answer that was simply not true.²⁹⁷ In addition to this, certain subordinate officers apparently issued voluntary commands regarding the destruction of Serb property.²⁹⁸ The fact that the Croatian leadership fostered chaos and anarchy on the micro-level can also be supported by a local witness who was threatened by a member of the HV during *Oluja* and later told the HHO that “the one who wanted to kill me came from Šibenik, and was called Bili, and the other soldier, very good man, told us that Bili was a criminal, released from prison a few days earlier.”²⁹⁹

In respect to the second claim, the general pattern regarding this practice was that many of these refugees first broke into the houses of Serbs who had left, with the Croatian authorities

²⁹² Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It’s [Sic] Aftermath*, 81.

²⁹³ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It’s [Sic] Aftermath*, 39, 88, 107.

²⁹⁴ ICTY, IT-06-90, “Witness Statement for Witness 140.

²⁹⁵ ICTY, Case No. IT-06-90, “Statement of Witness Jacques Morneau,” 4.

²⁹⁶ ICTY, IT-06-90, “Hearing 12 February,” 47; Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It’s [Sic] Aftermath*, 39, 41-42, 261.

²⁹⁷ ICTY, IT-06-90, “Witness Statement for Witness 140.”

²⁹⁸ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It’s [Sic] Aftermath*, 265.

²⁹⁹ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It’s [Sic] Aftermath*, 39, 43.

being largely of the assumption that the Serbs' exile was to be permanent.³⁰⁰ In the former UN Sector North, Croats that were displaced during the war and who were not able to return to their former homes likewise appropriated Serb houses.³⁰¹ In the immediate period, only a small portion of these settlers received permissions from the government to occupy the Serb property, yet their status was subsequently legalized.³⁰² In multiple cases, some families occupied not just one but several Serb houses, occasionally even selling those they did not need.³⁰³ In this context, many of those Serbs that only left temporarily during *Oluja* found their houses occupied by Croats upon their return, and, together with institutional obstacles, likewise faced physical attacks in case they would try to reclaim their property.³⁰⁴ On several occasions, during incidents of harassment of Serbs by the resettled Croats, members of the Croat police were also present, with some police officers insulting the Serbs and urging them to leave permanently.³⁰⁵ Many of those Serbs who decided to stay in their homes during *Oluja* were forced to leave after the operation due to threats, violence, and harassment by the settlers.³⁰⁶

What is interesting to note though is the fact that what might seem as local instances of violence here were in reality acts encouraged by the Croatian government, for which this constituted a part of a larger political strategy.³⁰⁷ Not only did the government permit the initially illegal usage of Serb property, but also the fact that former ethnically Serb territories were now occupied predominantly by Croats solved the initial security dilemma by preventing the Serbs, who were seen as a potential threat, from returning, thus also fulfilling Tuđman's ambitions of an ethnically homogenous Croatia.³⁰⁸ One of the resettled Croat refugees in Krajina told the HHO that the government wanted to keep these settlers in Krajina for two reasons, "first, they use us as a barrier against the return of Serb refugees and second reason is that they need our votes and it is clear to whom we should give them."³⁰⁹ Their situation was therefore politically highly favorable to the Tuđman administration. In addition to this, the government not only took advantage of the local conflicts between the settlers and the returnees, but also actively pressured the settlers to act towards Serbs with hostility and encouraged the keeping of their property, despite the fact that many Croats "expressed a wish to return to their

³⁰⁰ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 299-300.

³⁰¹ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, 299-300.

³⁰² Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, 299-300.

³⁰³ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 301-303.

³⁰⁴ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 299-310.

³⁰⁵ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 302.

³⁰⁶ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 299-300.

³⁰⁷ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 300-303.

³⁰⁸ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, 300-303.

³⁰⁹ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 131.

former residence.”³¹⁰ As such, the Croatian government at the time, that is, immediately after and during the first few years following *Oluja*, was not interested in solving the settler question, but in making sure that Serbs would not return.³¹¹

7.3. Widespread looting and a collective enemy

The next argument that this chapter presents is that the evidence presented on the micro-level, apart from widespread opportunism in the form of looting, seems to also point towards the reality that reflection of the war’s master narrative in the shape of collective revenge exercised along ethnic lines is an empirically dominant aspect of the analyzed violence. There are two explanations that this thesis proposes for this observation. First, notwithstanding the fact that localized acts of violence were dominant during the post-war occupation of Serb houses, and despite the fact that in some cases even civilians participated in violence together with the army, it was mostly the state-organized Croat armed forces responsible for the initial wave of harassment, killings and mistreatment of civilians that occurred in some villages. What is meant by this precisely is the fact that these civilians were often targeted not by local armed actors such as regional paramilitaries, but by regular soldiers that were deployed in the area, decreasing the likelihood of the possibility of personal vendettas exercised on the local civilians.³¹² In addition to this, unlike when paramilitary Serb forces often employed lists of local Croats and a network of local informants, such a pattern appears to be virtually absent in this case.³¹³

Based on this, the second proposed rationale for the above stated argument is the fact that in many instances people were killed without an apparent particular reason or motive other than looting, which can be explained through the already discussed attribution of collective guilt to the Serbs.³¹⁴ This also involved attacks on Croats who were perceived as having collaborated with Serbs, thus pointing to a persistent delineation along ethnically-political lines.³¹⁵ For example, at the end of *Oluja*, in both former UN Sectors existed cases of Croats

³¹⁰ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 303.

³¹¹ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 299-310.

³¹² This argument is related to the fact that Serb paramilitaries and other forces apart from the JNA in 1991 and early 1992 were often composed of or at least accompanied by local actors that were familiar with the local context, and under such pretext it was possible to solve previous grievances through violence. The HV, however, functioned as a regular army, not relying on local recruitment. Instances of local participation in the first period included Hrvatska Dubica, Škabrnja, Nadin, and Vukovići. ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 62-63, 66, 72, 76-78, 92-93, 95, 100, 121.

³¹³ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 62-63, 66, 72, 77-78, 92-93, 100, 121.

³¹⁴ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 46, 281.

³¹⁵ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 281, 284.

that were marked as “objectionable” and subsequently faced harassment and mistreatment based on accusations of serving the former RSK regime or supporting the rebels in their fight against Croatia.³¹⁶ These included especially people from mixed marriages.³¹⁷ In a different case, a Serb woman from Komić, whose mother was murdered and whose house was burned down by HV soldiers told the HHO that “I thought that the army would not do anything to us because we were not guilty at all.”³¹⁸ Interestingly, twenty Serb houses were also destroyed in Vrana, a majority Croat village that was not even occupied by the Serb forces during the war.³¹⁹

7.4. Further reflections on strategy

Having proposed these arguments, it is important to reflect on violence as a military and as a political strategy.³²⁰ Based on the above analyzed findings, the author claims that the Croatian government at the time clearly tolerated behavior such as thieving and abuse committed by its forces as well as by civilians who participated in the widespread looting and burning in Sector South, and in appropriation of abandoned Serb property predominantly in Sector North. For the purpose of the argument, this is seen here as evidence of the fact that the Tuđman administration, together with the military leadership, created and facilitated conditions under which such conduct became justified on the basis of eliminating the Serb enemy that had stabbed the Croatian nation in the back.³²¹ Under the pretext of removing the *Četnik* threat, however, the targeted civilians were mostly elderly or ill people, similarly to when Serb forces targeted Croat civilians a few years earlier. The environment created by the elites enabled violent and opportunistic behavior on the micro-level in order for the elites to secure their own aim of preventing the Serb population from returning to Krajina, thus solving a political as well as a security question.³²²

Furthermore, by supporting the takeover of Serb houses by resettled Croats, as well as by tolerating and encouraging hostile behavior in these communities towards Serb returnees, the Croat government at the time achieved and secured recognizable political gain. As such, also taking into account the facts that in certain cases Croats were attacked together with Serbs, mainly on the accusation of conspiring with the enemy, and that many of these were especially in mixed marriages, paired with the fact that attacks and violence continued for a longer period

³¹⁶ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 281.

³¹⁷ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, 281.

³¹⁸ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 48.

³¹⁹ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 90.

³²⁰ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 6-7.

³²¹ ICTY, Case No. IT-06-90, “TUDMAN Speech.”

³²² Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 131, 299-310.

of time after *Oluja*, this thesis claims that a strategy of solidifying the power of the Croatian government in contested territories is likewise observable, thus fitting the purpose of violence as a political strategy.³²³

Unlike in the previously analyzed episode, however, differentiation between the two types of violence on the basis of actor involvement is rather difficult for this period. This is especially the case because the regular armed forces, responsible for carrying out the military operation, were also essential in creating the atmosphere of fear in which the remaining Serb civilians were pressured to leave, so the HV here, unlike the JNA before, figures as an actor essential for employing violence both as a military as well as political strategy, with empirical divisions between the two often fading in this period.³²⁴

All things considered, the main argument here is that the willingness of perpetrators on the micro-level to engage in actions such as looting and destruction of property, as well as abuse and killings of civilians, was instrumentally utilized by actors at the top, seeking to secure their own ethno-political interests. The context in which such otherwise prohibited behavior became possible and temporarily normalized then resulted from the identification of Serbs as a collectively guilty enemy, and from the unwillingness to hold accountable those engaging in such behavior. In the next chapter, this thesis will delve into the comparison of the two analyzed episodes of violence to reflect on their similarities and differences and on the contribution of this inquiry to the discussion of alliances and political violence in civil wars.³²⁵

8. Patterns of Violence

In this chapter, the focus will be placed on examining the most important differences and similarities between the two episodes, based on which the author will subsequently reflect on the classification of these patterns in respect to the war in Croatia. In this manner, the second part of this inquiry's research question will be answered. Accordingly, in the first part of the chapter, dealing with differences, focus will be placed especially on the existence or absence of an external patron, on the organization of violence, the divisions or unity among armed actors, and on differences in utilization and participation of local actors and civilians. In the second part of the chapter, similarities in connection with the existence of elite-backed justification and tolerance of morally and, under normal societal conditions, also legally reprehensible behavior

³²³ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 6-7, 118-127.

³²⁴ Dragojević, 6-7, 118-127.

³²⁵ Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence:'" Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 6-7, 118-127.

will be first examined. Afterwards, that part of the chapter will continue by addressing similarities along the lines of local participation in violence and similarities in terms of the existence of violence as a political strategy. The final reflection will then contribute to the discussion of alliances in civil war by highlighting a number of factors which can significantly influence the likelihood of an alliance coming to existence, as well as offer a possible broadening of the concept.

8.1. Differences

The first main difference that this chapter identifies is the fact that while the Krajina Serbs depended almost fully on the support of Belgrade as well as the JNA, the Croats, while enjoying international legitimacy, retook most of the Krajina region using its own military and special police forces, with some cooperation with the armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In addition to this, while the Serb military offensive lasted overall for several months in this region, Croat forces retook the region in an incredibly swift manner, with the bulk of violence and destruction, while some of it continued into the following years, happening in a relatively short period of time and in a much more systematic way. Despite the fact that some of this might be also attributed to the loss of external support which translated into, together with other factors, the RSK's inability to properly defend itself, the governmental organization of Croatia proved to be much more effective in executing the overall plan of retaking Krajina. The reason why this is important is the fact that it also appears to correspond with the composition of armed actors on each side, namely with the fact that it was the HV and the special police forces on the Croatian side that appeared to have carried out the majority of violence against civilians and destruction in the immediate period, while in the previous episode of 1991 and 1992 the differences between the various armed actors, especially regarding the different strategies each of them employed, were quite striking.

In that respect, the second important difference is the composition of armed actors partaking in violence and destruction during the respective episodes of conflict analyzed here. The fundamental argument presented here is that the organization of the military campaigns influenced the composition of armed actors on the ground, which had a direct, empirically observable, impact on micro-level dynamics. Analyzing the differences in treatment of civilians between the JNA on the one hand and the paramilitaries, police forces, the TO, and armed locals on the other, was possible also through a conceptual differentiation between violence as a

military and as a political strategy.³²⁶ While such differentiation certainly is not without its problems, as has already been explained, the fact that these units treated civilians in Krajina differently is a fact. In the case of *Oluja*, however, while there were notable differences in terms of treatment of civilians among various members or units of the HV, overall these cannot be differentiated on the basis of the armed actors belonging to a particular group, as both perpetrators and “saviors” were members of the same armed forces.³²⁷ Therefore, while in the initial period of violence it can be said that members of the JNA, that is, members of a regular army, predominantly refrained from killing civilians, in the period of *Oluja*, members of the HV, also a regular army, carried out many of these killings.

Building on this distinction, the third identified difference between the two episodes is that of a distinctive use of local actors. During the violence of 1991 and 1992, local actors were utilized on multiple occasions to gather information about Croats that were potential targets for violence.³²⁸ Furthermore, prior to the actual outbreak of war, local Serbs in many villages were covertly armed by the JNA, and many of them wore spare JNA uniforms or joined paramilitary units in the region to participate in attacks on Croats.³²⁹ On multiple occasions, the perpetrators likewise knew their victims, and in several instances the violence that occurred appeared a lot more “intimate,” that is, it grew “from within communities” even if it was “executed by outsiders.”³³⁰ In certain cases, private acts of revenge were likewise carried out by local actors under the umbrella of ethno-political and ideological justification.³³¹ All things considered, in the first analyzed episode of violence local actors played a pivotal role in shaping micro-level dynamics and victim-perpetrator relations on numerous occasions. With the objective of the Serb leadership being the creation of an ethnically homogenous Greater Serbia, even if these local actors simply took their chance to settle private grievances or enrich themselves materially at the expense of their neighbors, for the elites they served as an effective mechanism of terror that would drive out the remaining Croats in many cases.³³²

³²⁶ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 6-7.

³²⁷ For example, in a case of several elderly people who were separated from the refugee column and stumbled upon a group of HV soldiers, the soldiers fed them and allowed them to return to their homes. In another case, however, soldiers mistreated and tortured villagers. As such, multiple examples can be found of both types of behavior among members of the HV. Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 100-101, 215.

³²⁸ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 62-63, 66, 72, 77-78, 92-93, 100, 121

³²⁹ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 74; ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11, “Statement of Witness MM-019.

³³⁰ Kalyvas, “The Ontology of ‘Political Violence,’” 482.

³³¹ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 103.

³³² ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 122-125.

In the case of violence and overall strategy surrounding *Oluja*, however, while there were several cases of civilians participating in killings once the army showed up, in the immediate period civilian participation appeared to have been much less instrumental and more related to the overall micro-level environment of chaos and anarchy, especially in Sector South.³³³ This argument, however, refers to the general pattern and does not aim to explain every single instance in which local civilians also took part in violence. What is specifically meant is that the real utilization of local civilians only became truly beneficial for the Tuđman administration when the resettled Croats moved into the abandoned Serb houses, which for the elites had constituted a bulwark against possible Serb returnees.³³⁴ As the previous chapter explained, those Serbs that wished to come back in the first few years after *Oluja* faced harassment and attacks, and those that remained in their houses had their property shot at by small arms or faced other actions which contributed to an overall atmosphere of fear.³³⁵ The micro-level dynamics therefore included the resettled Croat civilians which were encouraged by those in power to keep occupying the Serb property and in certain cases pressured to act towards the remaining Serbs with hostility, thus functioning as a political instrument.³³⁶ In addition to this, while incidents of revenge and intimate violence were numerous in 1991 and early 1992, in 1995 most micro-level dynamics appeared to have been driven by widespread looting, which might also explain a significant portion of killings, with collective revenge and guilt serving as a mode of interaction with the remaining Serb civilians.³³⁷

8.2. Similarities

Despite the divergent characteristics of the two different episodes of violence, there are also considerable similarities to be observed between them. The first main similarity is that in both episodes, despite the notable differences in context, the elites presented a justificatory narrative that attributed guilt collectively to the members of the other ethnic group. In the case of the Serb leadership, this revolved around seeing Croats guilty of planning another genocide against

³³³ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 42.

³³⁴ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 131, 299-310.

³³⁵ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 286, 299-303.

³³⁶ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 131, 299-303.

³³⁷ What is meant by "mode of interaction" is the contextual structure's impact on the perceptions of Serbs in Croatia after the Serb forces attacked it in 1991, resulting in an idea of collective revenge. While this might not have been the case in the minds of many Croats, it offered a plausible justification for why looting of Serb property would not be perceived as something immoral. This argument is derived primarily from the thorough discussion of propaganda and ideological context in this thesis and from Puhovski's comments. ICTY, IT-06-90, "Hearing 13 February;" ICTY, IT-06-90, "Witness Statement for Witness 140."

Serbs, and so their mobilization was to be their means of survival in a nationalist Croatia.³³⁸ For Croats during *Oluja*, the attribution of collective guilt to Serbs was connected with the JNA's and Krajina Serbs' military aggression against Croatia in 1991, which persisted through occupation into 1995 and involved not only attacks on Croat forces, but also murders and mass expulsion of Croat civilians. Krajina Serbs came to be collectively seen as a security threat, deemed worthy of collective revenge, which offered justification for looting, destruction, and murder. In both cases, such behavior on the micro-level was framed by the authorities in a context of myths where Croats and Serbs have been at each other's throats for centuries, where members of the ethnic groups were not individuals, but *Četniks* or *Ustaša*.³³⁹ Yet in both cases, the bulk of violence against civilians had been borne by elderly individuals.

The second similarity is that looting was a widespread pattern present in both episodes of violence and generally dominated the micro-level dynamics in the analyzed cases. Whilst this could perhaps be perceived as an almost expected consequence following a military victory, in both episodes not only did state authorities, such as police forces, not intervene to prevent such incidents from occurring and establish the rule of law, but directly participated as well.³⁴⁰ Such behavior was therefore accepted by the elites, because it contributed to a general environment of fear that helped drive out the remaining members of the other ethnic group. On the micro-level, in each analyzed case there was no shortage of those willing to loot and rob, and even though there were also those that refused to partake in such incidents, looting was in both episodes an omnipresent pattern that appeared to have also driven a substantial portion of micro-level dynamics. In both episodes, members of the regular armies, members of the police forces, as well as various local individuals took part in looting. Once again, without aiming to address the motivations of these people, the argument of opportunism as an empirically observable type of behavior is presented here, based on the factual account of looting being a widespread pattern in both episodes.

The third identified similarity is that in both episodes, members of the same ethnic group as the perpetrators were likewise targeted, with the common pattern being that they visibly

³³⁸ While certain historical precedence of Croat violence against Serbs certainly existed, it was mainly connected to the World War II period, and so the Serb leadership's claims of legitimacy rested predominantly on pre-Tito era events and Tuđman's partial rehabilitation of the NDH. Pavlaković, "Symbols and the Culture of Memory in Republika Srpska Krajina," 894-897.

³³⁹ ICTY, IT-06-90, "Witness Statement for Witness 140," 5.

³⁴⁰ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, "Martić: Judgement," 112; ICTY, Case No. IT-06-90-T, "Gotovina *et al.*: Judgement Vol. II," 1172-1173.

refused to accept the divisions which came about as the result of the salience of ethnicity.³⁴¹ This is based predominantly on the fact that these people were often of mixed marriages or generally interacted positively with members of the other ethnic group during these times of violence.³⁴² The proposed explanation for this is that such people became the legitimate targets for violence on the micro-level because they were politically undesirable due to their refusal of accepting the extremist narrative.³⁴³ The usage of violence as a political strategy is therefore a dominant pattern in the two episodes.³⁴⁴ Furthermore, in both periods there were people who decided to help or protect individuals on the other side of the ethno-political barricade. This demonstrates, together with the above mentioned observations of people refusing to loot, for example, not only the multiple possibilities of micro-level dynamics in civil war, but once more reaffirms the author's assumption regarding the existence of agency, both at the elite and at the local levels.

8.3. Further reflections on the significance of the identified patterns

In order to uncover what can be said about the nature and patterns of the observed violence, this inquiry links its findings back to Kalyvas' observations regarding the ontology of political violence.³⁴⁵ First, the patterns undoubtedly demonstrate one of the fundamental characteristics of civil war – its ambiguity and common disjunctions between the war's master cleavage and local issues on the micro-level, as well as the fact that local actors often take advantage of said master cleavage to settle their own conflicts.³⁴⁶ In this case, the latter is likewise composed of not only forms of intimate violence that resemble private vendettas thrown under the umbrella of ethnic conflict, but also of acts of material gain in the form of looting.³⁴⁷ Despite the fact that the war in Croatia was often framed along the ethno-political lines of a struggle between Serbs and Croats, and while that certainly might have been the perceived reality for many of the war's belligerent actors, on the micro-level the complexities point at multiple interactions between various actors and victims with multiplicity of identities and motivations.³⁴⁸ Especially in the first analyzed episode, local conflict and local participation in various forms appeared to have dominated the micro-level dynamics, but in the case of *Oluja* it is very much possible to find

³⁴¹ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 5-7, 77-91.

³⁴² ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, "Martić: Judgement," 102-103; Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 35, 281.

³⁴³ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 5-7, 119-127.

³⁴⁴ Dragojević, 5-7, 119-127.

³⁴⁵ Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence.'"

³⁴⁶ Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence,'" 475-476.

³⁴⁷ Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence,'" 482.

³⁴⁸ Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence.'"

these as well.³⁴⁹ What the case of *Oluja* demonstrates in a striking manner though, is how strong framing of collective revenge can translate on the micro-level into murders of elderly noncombatants and widespread looting.

Coming back to the concept of alliance as defined by Kalyvas, this inquiry identifies two respective alliances during the first analyzed episode of violence, while insights from *Oluja* can also serve to complement the concept.³⁵⁰ The first argument that it presents is that the relationship between Knin and Belgrade, that is, between the Krajina Serbs and Milošević, is a textbook example of the concept of alliance. In that respect, with alliance being seen as a transaction between local and supralocal actors, this inquiry reflects mainly on the supply of “external muscle” to the former by the latter, and the acquisition of control through local conflicts by the latter, interestingly, even when the supralocal actor’s “ideological agenda is opposed to localism.”³⁵¹ As has already been explained several chapters prior, the external muscle in the form of the JNA was an absolute necessity for the Krajina Serb leadership, and Milošević utilized the situation in Krajina to increase his control and grip on Croatian territories during the breakup of Yugoslavia.³⁵² Interestingly, the entire ideological agenda of the Serb leadership was also very much opposed to localism, as the discourse was filled with claims of Greater Serbia.³⁵³

The second argument presented here is that the relationship between the Krajina government and the local participants in violence on the micro-level can also be viewed as an alliance, albeit a slightly different one.³⁵⁴ In the analysis of the relationship between Knin and Belgrade, Milošević is seen as a supralocal actor given the wider context of the breakup of Yugoslavia, which could generally be seen as a greater war composed of a number of civil wars, including the one in Croatia, whilst the Krajina Serb leadership is seen as the local one.³⁵⁵ The actor relations between the elites and the locals, however, are observed here as the Krajina Serb leadership figuring as the supralocal actor, whilst regional participants in different villages are defined here as the local actors.³⁵⁶ What this argues in terms of theory is the possibility of multiple alliances in complex contexts of civil war, where a certain empirically defined

³⁴⁹ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, “Martić: Judgement,” 62-63, 66, 72, 76-78, 92-93, 95, 100, 121; Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 42, 46, 100.

³⁵⁰ Kalyvas, “The Ontology of ‘Political Violence,’” 486-487.

³⁵¹ Kalyvas, “The Ontology of ‘Political Violence,’” 486.

³⁵² Kalyvas, “The Ontology of ‘Political Violence,’” 486-487.

³⁵³ Kalyvas, 486-487.

³⁵⁴ Kalyvas, “The Ontology of ‘Political Violence.’”

³⁵⁵ Kalyvas.

³⁵⁶ Kalyvas, “The Ontology of ‘Political Violence,’” 486-487

participant can figure as either a local or a supralocal actor, depending on his relationship with other actors on various levels of societal interactions.³⁵⁷ However, one thing that does not fully apply here in consistence with Kalyvas' definition is especially the aspect of provision of external forces that allow the actors to "win decisive local advantage."³⁵⁸ This is because in a large part it was the JNA that allowed these local actors to obtain military victories, and the JNA was provided by actors that operated on the federal level of the former Yugoslavia. Even though SAO Krajina armed forces also participated in the military operations, the JNA figures here as the primary military actor that enabled the Krajina Serbs to launch and maintain the offensive against Croatia.

In order to tackle this theoretical disjunction between Kalyvas' definition and the findings of this research, the author proposes that an aspect of legitimization or justification of behavior might be brought into the discussion of alliances along the already included factor of external military power.³⁵⁹ Within the scope of this thesis, the inclusion of legitimization can be justified by the fact that a considerable amount of attention has been devoted to the shaping of political and moral context by the elites, which was seen here as a crucial piece of the relationship between these actors that ultimately allowed violence to manifest. The fundamental logic by which this was informed was also largely derived from Kalyvas' recognition of the theoretical advantage of "subsuming both strategic actions by political actors and opportunistic actions by local individuals."³⁶⁰ This is also precisely why the concept of violence as a political strategy, borrowed from Dragojević, figured as an important analytical lens in this paper.³⁶¹ It was especially important in showing how, when enforced such as in the case of Croatia, political divisions along ethnic lines can become so pervasive in people's daily lives that they largely shape people's mode of interactions with others.³⁶² This is where the heart of legitimization of violence then largely lies, and the suitable examples for this include cases of Serbs murdering Serbs who refused to act alongside the ethnic boundaries, but attempted to breach them, same as in the cases of Croats murdering Croats who were seen as guilty of such behavior.³⁶³

While opportunism figured as a dominant theme in many of the analyzed cases, the argument presented here is that it could only manifest because of an environment in which the

³⁵⁷ Kalyvas, 486-487.

³⁵⁸ Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence,'" 486.

³⁵⁹ Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence,'" 486.

³⁶⁰ Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence,'" 486.

³⁶¹ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 5-7, 119-127.

³⁶² Dragojević, 5-7, 119-127.

³⁶³ Dragojević, 5-7, 119-127.

perpetrators believed they could act in such way without punishment, and that such behavior was morally permissible because the opposing ethnic group and all those that would be sympathetic with its members were guilty.³⁶⁴ Furthermore, the fact that perpetrators on both sides also often employed the discourse of *Četniks* and *Ustaša*, and the fact that in many cases their treatment of civilians that stayed behind, which were mainly elderly people, showed signs of ideological brutalization, cannot be ignored. What this implies is that, even though opportunism is a potentially powerful argument and this inquiry utilizes it throughout the chapters, when applied alone it is perhaps too positivist and thus narrow to capture efficiently the complexities of micro-level dynamics. For that reason, recognizing the importance of context and justification that shape people's perceptions of reality is a crucial step of micro-level analysis, while it could also aid in overcoming potential criticisms of alliance theory as limited by boundaries of rational action.³⁶⁵

Additionally, this inquiry proposes one more argument regarding the nature of alliances. As was noted multiple times, Croatia retook the former RSK territories without an external patron that would provide it with external military forces that would secure its victory. Furthermore, the HV generally proved to be a highly capable and effective military actor. In addition to this, unlike in the case of the Serb campaign, there was no clear usage of paramilitary forces during or after *Oluja*. At the start of the war, however, when Croatia was militarily at a significant disadvantage, different paramilitary and volunteer units likewise fought on its behalf, some of which later became part of the newly formed HV in November 1991.³⁶⁶ By the end of the war, Croatia's military status improved significantly, and the HV expanded considerably, while the SVK and other RSK's forces suffered from a lack of morale and other factors that decreased their efficiency. Based on this and the analysis conducted in the previous chapters, this thesis argues that the likelihood of an alliance coming to existence can also be influenced not only by the presence of a possible external patron that would act as a supralocal actor, but also by the warring party's, in this case a state's, capacity to execute its military strategy efficiently and resolve a security crisis by itself.³⁶⁷ Interestingly, in the case of Croatia the Tuđman administration only started to particularly utilize local actors in a functional manner after the war was over, to prevent the Serb refugees from returning to Krajina.

³⁶⁴ Dragojević, 5-7, 119-127.

³⁶⁵ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 32.

³⁶⁶ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 14.

³⁶⁷ Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence.'"

What this chapter aimed to achieve was to show how, despite numerous significant differences, both episodes of violence share certain dominant traits with respect to micro-level dynamics. These correspond, to a lesser or greater degree, with Kalyvas' observations regarding the ambiguities of civil wars as well as with Dragojević's findings on how ethnic boundaries influence the relations between victims and perpetrators.³⁶⁸

Conclusion

In this final chapter, the author will first summarize what dominant aspects formed the violence against civilians first in the most intense episode of the Serb offensive, then during and after *Oluja*, and, finally, the question of what can be said about the nature and patterns of violence in the two episodes by comparing them will be answered. Apart from this, the inquiry's contribution to the empirical and theoretical bodies of literature on the subject will also be discussed, as well as its limitations and the potential for future research.

To begin with, in respect to the first episode of violence scrutinized in this study, the author has argued that on the macro-level, the Serb offensive and the violence against civilians it subsequently led to was made possible primarily through the formation of an alliance between Knin, the capital of Krajina Serbs, and Belgrade, from where Milošević was pulling the strings at the time. Politically and ideologically this alliance was characterized by the mutually shared vision of Greater Serbia of which the Krajina Serbs were to become a part of, yet the actual development of events showed that Milošević tapped into the Krajina struggles to secure his own interests during the period of Yugoslavia's breakup, and the Krajina Serb leadership enjoyed his support only in so far as it was reflecting in action his will.³⁶⁹ Furthermore, the Krajina Serbs depended almost entirely on Serbia and the former SFRY both economically as well as militarily.

Moving from the macro to the micro-level, based on the conducted analysis, this thesis identified several main characteristics of the military offensive against Croatia and the subsequent violence against civilians. First, in this episode of violence it was possible to observe notable differences among armed actors regarding their treatment of civilians. The striking aspect in respect to behavior of armed actors was that while even members of the JNA would take part in looting of abandoned property, they generally refrained from participating in executions civilians. These executions and various other murders were largely carried out by

³⁶⁸ Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence';" Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*.

³⁶⁹ ICTY, IT-06-90, "Witness Statement for Witness 140," 4-5.

paramilitaries from both inside as well as outside the region, by members of the TO and the police forces of SAO Krajina, and by local armed Serbs. In that respect, the author of this thesis has noted several instances in which members of the JNA, often officers, intervened and prevented further killings of civilians by other forces.³⁷⁰ Out of all the victims, the majority were elderly civilians.

The second notable characteristic of this period of conflict was a strong element of local participation in many villages. Prior to the outbreak of violence, weapons were distributed in many areas to local Serbs, who then took part in the attacks on Croat civilians, and in several instances local informants were utilized by actors who were carrying out the killings of civilians.³⁷¹ In theoretical terms, throughout this episode in many cases a disjunction between the war's master cleavage and the micro cleavages was observed by the author, often taking the form of personal vendettas or other forms of opportunism. In order to explain this, the concept of intimate violence, that is, violence that grew from within the communities instead of being imposed by external forces, was utilized.³⁷²

The third dominant aspect that was part of the violence against civilians in this period was the occasional killing of even members of the perpetrators' co-ethnics, that is, of Serbs being killed by Serbs. To explain this, the concept of violence as a political strategy was utilized.³⁷³ In practical terms, this meant that those individuals that did not act in accordance with the ethno-political boundaries established by the elites, also became desirable targets of violence, due to their challenging of the divisions caused by the salience of ethnicity, imposed mainly by the elites.³⁷⁴ Examples of this included mainly people who were in mixed marriages, or those that interacted positively with members of the ethnic other, and thus did not conform to the dominant narrative of a survivalist struggle between Serbs and Croats.³⁷⁵ In addition to this, the discourse of perpetrators often corresponded to the propaganda narrative at the time, that is, of Croats labeled as murderous *Ustaša*, while some Serb paramilitaries also referred to themselves as *Četniks*.

In the second episode of violence analyzed here, the first main identified finding was that notable discrepancies existed during *Oluja* in the strategy of armed actors between the

³⁷⁰ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, "Martić: Judgement," 78, 91, 93, 98.

³⁷¹ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, "Martić: Judgement," 62-63, 66, 72, 77-78, 92-93, 100, 121.

³⁷² Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence,'" 482.

³⁷³ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 5-7, 119-127.

³⁷⁴ Dragojević, 5-7, 119-127.

³⁷⁵ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, "Martić: Judgement," 102-103; Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 35, 281.

former UN Sectors North and South. These manifested predominantly as different levels of destruction and actor involvement in terms of perpetration of violence. In respect to these observed differences, this thesis proposed the argument that in Sector South the possible explanations included the fast pace of the operation which was paired with the large withdrawal of civilians so that only some elderly people stayed behind, who potentially threatened members of the attacking forces as potential witnesses in cases of looting and robberies.³⁷⁶ Furthermore, multiple pieces of evidence showed that proper guidelines and means of treatment and collection of civilians were either not provided to HV soldiers, or soldiers in some units were told not to take prisoners, which applied also to civilians.³⁷⁷ In Sector North, however, while the civilian death count was generally lower than in the southern sector, apart from civilian casualties that came about as result of attacks on the refugee columns, civilians became targets of violence at a later stage than in Sector South. Paired with the fact that arson and mining of houses were also not as common in this sector, unlike in its southern counterpart, and that Croats from Bosnia and Herzegovina were resettled into the abandoned Serb houses, those Serbs that stayed behind often faced violence that would create an environment of fear in which they would abandon their homes and flee.³⁷⁸

The second main finding regarding *Oluja* was that the Tuđman administration took various measures to secure the political objective of Serbs not only fleeing from Krajina, but also being prevented from returning, which for Tuđman solved a security question.³⁷⁹ This thesis identified that this was done through two fundamental instruments. The first one was a tolerance of otherwise prohibited or unlawful behavior by members of the HV, the police, as well as by Croat civilians, which manifested not only through the coverup of murders through propaganda claiming that everybody behaved decently towards the “Chetniks,” but also by the fact that members of the police did not just fail to prevent people from roaming around and looting, but directly participated in it as well.³⁸⁰ The second instrument was that Croat refugees moved into the abandoned houses of Serbs that fled the region, who were, through various mechanisms, often prevented from returning to Krajina.³⁸¹ The resettled Croats were in some

³⁷⁶ ICTY, IT-06-90, “Zarko Puhovski Speaking.”

³⁷⁷ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 63; ICTY, Case No. IT-06-90, “Statement of Witness Jacques Morneau,” 5.

³⁷⁸ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 10, 265, 286, 281-284.

³⁷⁹ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 131, 299-310.

³⁸⁰ ICTY, IT-06-90, “Hearing 12 February,” 93; Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 107-115.

³⁸¹ Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 299-310.

cases also pressured to act with hostility against Serb returnees, and would come to form a bulwark against a possible return of Serbs to Krajina.³⁸² For Tuđman, the repopulation of Krajina by Croats therefore solved a security dilemma as well as fulfilled his vision of an ethnically homogenous Croatia.³⁸³

The third main finding regarding the dominant aspects of violence in this period was that the use of local actors as key in the conquering of an area, especially politically, appears to have been virtually absent here. However, material opportunism was in this period a highly common pattern, produced in a context where Serbs were defined as a collective enemy guilty of attacks on the Croatian state.³⁸⁴ Therefore, in this period, revenge appeared to have been a factor applied collectively to Serbs as such, instead of being based on micro-level differentiation formed by local community dynamics, which was something common in the episode of 1991 and early 1992. Furthermore, just like in the first episode of violence scrutinized in this thesis, even during and after *Oluja* even the perpetrators' co-ethnics became targets of violence in certain cases. Croats who had contact with Serbs, or those who were in mixed marriages, were often accused of serving the RSK or supporting the Serb attacks on Croatia.³⁸⁵

With respect to the question of what can be said about the nature and patterns of the observed violence against civilians, this thesis identified several notable differences and similarities between the two episodes. In terms of differences, the first striking one was the organizational difference between the Krajina Serbs and the Croats during their respective military campaigns, since while the former depended for the most part on the support of the JNA and Belgrade, the latter managed to retake the Krajina territories not only in an incredibly swift manner, but relying mostly on its own military and police forces. This distinction was important because it had a direct impact on the second notable difference – the composition of armed actors during the respective episodes of conflict, which had significantly influenced micro-level dynamics. While actors in the first episode can be differentiated more clearly with respect to violence as a military and as a political strategy, with JNA filling primarily the role of the former and those forces responsible for killings of civilians the latter, in the case of *Oluja* there was much more overlap and a possible differentiation in this manner was not possible. The third important distinction was that whilst local actors, whether members of various forces

³⁸² Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 131, 299-303.

³⁸³ ICTY, IT-06-90, "Witness Statement for Witness 140," 4-5.

³⁸⁴ ICTY, IT-06-90, "Witness Statement for Witness 140," 5; ICTY, Case No. IT-06-90, "TUDMAN Speech."

³⁸⁵ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, "Martić: Judgement," 102-103; Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 35, 281

or simply armed civilians, played a vital role in the attacks on Croats during the Serb offensive, and in many cases served as effective instruments of terror in the aim of establishing a homogenous Serb territory, in the case of *Oluja* they generally only came to play an important role later.³⁸⁶

In terms of similarities, this thesis identified three most striking patterns present in both episodes of violence. First, despite the notable differences in context and the mobilization of the population, in both episodes the elites had manipulated historical narratives through propaganda to portray the other side as a threat to the survival of the nation. In both episodes, the majority of the subsequent violence against civilians had been borne by elderly individuals. The essence of each side's propaganda was the claim that Serbs and Croats cannot coexist in one state, that they cannot live peacefully side by side.³⁸⁷ The second commonality was that looting was an omnipresent pattern in both episodes, in which all actors involved took part. Regular armed forces, such as the JNA and the HV, paramilitaries, various MUP units, as well as local civilians all participated in widespread looting following a military takeover of an area. In addition to ideological discourse, therefore, the micro-level dynamics were dominated by what can be characterized as opportunistic behavior, even without assuming the motivations of those who took part in it. Importantly, looting was permitted by the authorities, many of which even took part in it.³⁸⁸ It was tolerated and allowed by the elites. The third influential similarity was that in both episodes, those that challenged the ethno-political divisions likewise became targets for violence, despite the fact that they were of the same ethnic group as the perpetrators.³⁸⁹ These victims often came from mixed marriages or were otherwise reacting positively and without hostility to members of the other ethnic group, which had been defined by the elites as the enemy.³⁹⁰ This phenomenon was throughout this thesis largely explained as part of violence used as a political strategy.³⁹¹

Based on the conducted research through the form of predominantly documentary analysis, this thesis argues that in the case of the war in Croatia, in both the period of 1991 and early 1992 as well as during and after *Oluja* in 1995, the respective elites of the two warring

³⁸⁶ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, "Martić: Judgement," 62-63, 66, 72, 77-78, 92-93, 100, 121; Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 131, 299-303.

³⁸⁷ ICTY, IT-06-90, "Witness Statement for Witness 140," 5.

³⁸⁸ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, "Martić: Judgement," 112; ICTY, Case No. IT-06-90-T, "Gotovina *et al.*: Judgement Vol. II," 1172-1173.

³⁸⁹ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 5-7, 119-127.

³⁹⁰ ICTY, Case No. IT-95-11-T, "Martić: Judgement," 102-103; Hrvatski helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, *Military Operation Storm and It's [Sic] Aftermath*, 35, 281.

³⁹¹ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 5-7, 119-127.

parties created an environment in which violence against the ethnic enemy became a legitimate form of action, which on the micro-level meant a complete justification of under normal societal conditions strictly forbidden forms of behavior, such as looting, destruction, and murder. The elites created this environment through effective mechanisms of propaganda, by letting state authorities, normally responsible for the rule of law, directly participate in such behavior, and by refusing and failing to hold accountable in the immediate period those that took the opportunity to steal, and rape and murder civilians. This environment, or structure, was on many occasions welcomed on the micro-level by those willing to exploit it for their own gain, satisfaction, or a sense of moral fulfilment.³⁹² Violence therefore functioned in these episodes both ways, as it was utilized by the elites to achieve the securing of an almost fully ethnically homogenous and politically stable territory, while on the micro-level it presented a sophisticated justificatory umbrella for the realization of otherwise prohibited acts.

What is essential in this argument, however, is the fact that while opportunism figures in it as an important theme, it does not aim to assume the motivations of those who participated in the violence. Opportunism is derived mainly from the fact that widespread looting was an empirically observable pattern present in virtually all analyzed cases, together with robberies and killings that often accompanied it. Another essential factor is that this would not be possible without a functional justificatory narrative, which enabled such behavior to rise to surface in the first place. In that way, opportunism and ideological beliefs are not seen here as contradictory factors, but complementary.

In terms of theoretical ramifications, this thesis and the argument it proposes has largely followed the argumentation of Kalyvas in his work on the ontology of political violence and the concept of alliance.³⁹³ On the Serb side, the inquiry identified two possible alliances, one between Milošević and the Krajina Serb leadership, and the other one between the leadership and the local actors on the micro-level.³⁹⁴ The insight these observations produced is that a possibility of multiple alliances in civil wars exists, depending on the relationship of an empirically defined participant of the conflict with other actors on various levels of societal interactions.³⁹⁵ By examining the two episodes, another theoretical reflection this inquiry arrived at was the hypothesis that the likelihood of an alliance coming to existence can be influenced not only by the presence of an actor that could possibly act as the external,

³⁹² Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, 1-34; Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence.'"

³⁹³ Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence.'"

³⁹⁴ Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence,'" 486-487.

³⁹⁵ Kalyvas, 486-487.

supralocal, patron, but also by the warring party's, in this case a state's, capability to carry out its armed operations competently and deal with a security crisis by itself.³⁹⁶

Due to a disjunction between Kalyvas' theoretical framework and the findings of this project, the author proposes that the aspect of legitimization or justification of violence may be included in the discussion of alliances alongside the emphasis on the provision of external military power.³⁹⁷ In that respect, the work of Dragojević was likewise utilized in this study to demonstrate how ethno-political divisions created by the elites can become heavily pervasive in people's lives on the micro-level and to a great degree significantly influence their mode of interaction with others.³⁹⁸ Additionally, by carefully contextualizing the violence and by placing emphasis on the recognition of the real impact of ethno-political divisions on the micro-level, this study also aimed to partially overcome criticisms of alliance theory as bound within the framework of rational action.³⁹⁹

As far as the strengths of this project are concerned, it contributes to a largely empirically under-researched subject within the academia, building on the work of Dragojević.⁴⁰⁰ Influenced by the concept of violence as a political strategy, and using her claim that similarities indeed existed, this inquiry set out to examine the precise cases where violence occurred to pick up the topic where Dragojević left it and further the current understanding of violence against civilians during the war in Croatia.⁴⁰¹ It managed to do so through a systematic detailed analysis of the existing documentary evidence from various cases and areas within Krajina, dealing with both the elite level as well as the dynamics of micro-level violence and destruction, thus examining both the relations between the elites and those on the ground, but also dynamics between perpetrators and victims and among perpetrators themselves. This is precisely then where the novelty of this research lies.

Naturally, the episodes of violence in Krajina contained numerous incidents that are not entirely explicable through the prism of this thesis' analytical frame. However, by comparing the two episodes the author uncovered patterns between them that affirm various Kalyvas' assumptions, while at the same time nuancing them through insights from ideology and the

³⁹⁶ Kalyvas, 486-487.

³⁹⁷ Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence.'"

³⁹⁸ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*.

³⁹⁹ Demmers, *Theories of Violent Conflict*, 32.

⁴⁰⁰ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*.

⁴⁰¹ Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*, 5-7, 119-127.

power of ethnic boundaries.⁴⁰² Nevertheless, while this study strived to avoid generalizations, it is possible that it did not always succeed in this objective. The arguments it proposed, while established on firm empirical evidence, explain the most dominant patterns derived from the most significant differences and similarities. These were, however, not the only ones, and they do not capture the entirety of what happened on the ground. Furthermore, while analysis of documentary evidence certainly constituted a suitable technique of data collection, different conclusions might have been reached through, for example, fieldwork and interviews. For these reasons, the author encourages further exploration of this topic and a deeper uncovering of the empirical complexities on the ground. A potentially worthwhile endeavor could be to select only a few villages, for example in two different municipalities in Krajina, and conduct more in-depth research in that manner. This empirical topic is certainly complex, rich, and worth exploring further.

⁴⁰² Kalyvas, “The Ontology of ‘Political Violence;’” Dragojević, *Amoral Communities*; Maynard, “Theorizing Ideological Diversity in Mass Violence.”

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Appendix 1: Declaration of Originality/Plagiarism Declaration
MA Thesis in Conflict Studies & Human Rights
Utrecht University
(course module GKMV 16028)

I hereby declare:

- that the content of this submission is entirely my own work, except for quotations from published and unpublished sources. These are clearly indicated and acknowledged as such, with a reference to their sources provided in the thesis text, and a full reference provided in the bibliography;
- that the sources of all paraphrased texts, pictures, maps, or other illustrations not resulting from my own experimentation, observation, or data collection have been correctly referenced in the thesis, and in the bibliography;
- that this Master of Arts thesis in Conflict Studies & Human Rights does not contain material from unreferenced external sources (including the work of other students, academic personnel, or professional agencies);
- that this thesis, in whole or in part, has never been submitted elsewhere for academic credit;
- that I have read and understood Utrecht University's definition of plagiarism, as stated on the University's information website on "Fraud and Plagiarism":

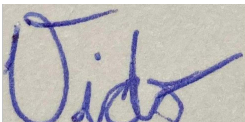
"Plagiarism is the appropriation of another author's works, thoughts, or ideas and the representation of such as one's own work." (Emphasis added.)⁴⁰³

Similarly, the University of Cambridge defines "plagiarism" as " ... submitting as one's own work, irrespective of intent to deceive, that which derives in part or in its entirety from the work of others without due acknowledgement. It is both poor scholarship and a breach of academic integrity." (Emphasis added.)⁴⁰⁴

- that I am aware of the sanction applied by the Examination Committee when instances of plagiarism have been detected;
- that I am aware that every effort will be made to detect plagiarism in my thesis, including the standard use of plagiarism detection software such as Turnitin.

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Title of MA thesis in Conflict Studies & Human Rights: ***Turning Neighbors into Foes: A Comparative Analysis of Patterns of Violence against Civilians in the Krajina Region during Croatia's War of Independence through the Lens of Alliance Theory and the Notion of Violence as a Political Strategy***

Signature 	Date of Submission 14/8/2020
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⁴⁰³ <https://students.uu.nl/en/practical-information/policies-and-procedures/fraud-and-plagiarism>

⁴⁰⁴ <http://www.plagiarism.admin.cam.ac.uk/what-plagiarism/universitys-definition-plagiarism>