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When Do Ties Bind? Foreign Fighters, Social Embeddedness, and Combatant Repertoires of Behavior During Civil War

Abstract

How does the extent to which rebel organizations are embedded into local conflict contexts - i.e. the extent to which they "fit in" or "stand out" from local populations - affect their behavior on and off the battlefield during civil war? This dissertation examines why rebel group propensities to engage in governance and violence during war vary at the macro and microlevels of analysis and uses as its point of departure the presence of foreign fighters in the ranks of rebel groups engaged in civil war. I employ a cross-national analysis of insurgencies from 1989-2011, and also conduct a theory-testing comparison of the experiences of local and foreign armed actors within one conflict: soldiers in the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina during the Bosnian War from 1992-1995. Responding to limitations in explanations of rebel behavior ranging from governance to civilian victimization, I argue that combatants' interactions that occur on and off the battlefield are contingent on actors' embeddedness into local conflict contexts. Using existing data on foreign fighters in civil wars, data from interviews with 50 subjects in Bosnia, combatant memoirs, as well as archival and secondary sources, I find that when soldiers are structurally and culturally embedded into a local context, they are most likely to experience war through fluid civilian-soldier identities that open doors to a range of nonviolent interaction. By contrast, soldiers who lack social ties into civilian communities and who do not share a common understanding of a war with local populations are more likely to resort to coercion and violence to meet their battlefield needs. The theory and findings suggest that understanding the broad scope of armed group behavior requires examining the social origins of rank and file fighters, and how combatants' integration and assimilation into local contexts incentivizes violent versus nonviolent interaction with the local populace.

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When do Ties Bind? Foreign Fighters, Social Embeddedness, and Combatant Repertoires
of Behavior during Civil War

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of the Josef Korbel School of International Studies

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Pauline L. Moore
March 2019
Advisor: Deborah Avant

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

On a summer day in July 2017, war veterans from the Bosnian war of 1992-1995 gathered together at the former Vozuća battleground in central Bosnia, one of the war's bloodiest. They paid their respects to the civilian and combatant casualties and shared what it was like for them to take part in the battle. While the commemorative visit may strike one as ordinary and ritualistic, part of "what people do" in post-war environments, this particular episode of commemoration stands out for its inclusive nature. It involved war veterans not only from Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), but also from Croatia, and Serbia; individuals who fought as members of the Army of BiH, as well as of Bosnian Serb, Bosnian Croat, Serbian, and Croatian forces.

The coming together of people who fought on opposite sides of the bloodiest conflict to have taken place on European soil since the end of the second world war might seem surprising, even twenty years after the gruesome war's end. Studies that seek to explain why and how neighbors and family members turn on one another after living in peace for decades often cite this particular conflict. Nearly 100,000 civilians and combatants lost their lives during the war, and hundreds of thousands more were forcibly displaced from their homes. Many were betrayed by people they had known and

trusted before the war, some killed by their neighbors or coworkers. Indeed, the victims of massacres all too often belong to the same community or village (Semelin 2003).

Yet the intimate nature of civil war also provides space and opportunity for actions that resist violence, as friends, neighbors, schoolmates, and occasionally even family members mobilize to join the ranks of opposing armed groups. Sometimes, the front line is just a street in a village around which people have spent their whole lives. While one person may have joined one side, knowing that it was the “right” thing to do, his best childhood friend, who ended up on the other side, also believed he was on the “right” side. These two individuals spend the war “officially” or “publicly” as members of opposing groups, but “privately” as members of their prewar social networks.

This is what Bosnia’s war veterans today will sometimes bring up when talking about the war. I met Mirza in a coffee shop in Zenica after he agreed to share with me his experiences as a soldier in the Bosnian Army from 1992-1995. The war interrupted his studies in Sarajevo, and in the fall of 1992 he returned home to his town in central Bosnia where his parents and siblings still lived. As an engineer, he mobilized as a logistician and was eventually attached to a headquarters unit in the 3rd Corps. His role gave him the opportunity to use the unit’s radio nearly everyday, and with it he gathered news of his friends’ well-being who were fighting on the side of Bosnian Croat and Bosnian Serb

forces: “I know that my friends did what they had to do.”¹ He said that despite his role as a soldier fighting for a particular side, he was always interested in inquiring about how the people he’d grown up with were doing; he wanted to know if they were alive, if they were doing well.

Mirza’s experiences are not unique to his role as a logistician. Somewhat surprisingly, a fair number of veterans from Bosnia’s war in the 1990s will tell stories of the encounters they had with prewar friends across front lines, and of the often-conflicting wartime roles that they maintained as warrior-soldiers, on the one hand, and fathers, sons, schoolmates, clients, and friends, on the other. In places like Sarajevo and Mostar, Bosniaks tell stories of having received help from their non-Muslim neighbors at the start of the war, who warned them of upcoming attacks or concealed their identities to spare from the tragedies that befell many Bosnian Muslims during house to house raids conducted by non-local Serbs.² Cigarettes and other black-market goods crossed hands and front lines, moving from Bosnian Army soldiers to Bosnian Serb soldiers and back again. Soldiers listened to music and shared jokes at night, a respite from the daytime shooting. The trade and banter were not as much the result of the organizational savvy of particular units, as the product of enduring prewar relationships that crossed ethnic lines. As is true for many individuals who mobilize to fight in civil war,

¹ Interview 125, October 2017.

² Throughout the text I use the term “Bosniak” to refer to Bosnian citizens of Muslim faith.

the lines between warrior and civilian identities are frequently fluid and vague, and the social capital that is built up in peacetime persists in spite of the eruption of active hostilities. Although fratricide – as opposed to fraternization – admittedly characterizes much of what happens in war, acts of solidarity that reach across macro-level cleavages are also a reality of wartime.

But interactions between soldiers and civilians were of a starkly different nature elsewhere in Bosnia. When Zeljko looked out his window from his apartment in Zenica in central Bosnia towards the war's end, he could not help but feel deep dismay at the yellow house by the factory, where a group of Islamic militants took up residence in the fall of 1992. Tensions between local residents – including Bosniaks – were nearing a breaking point. In addition to becoming well-known for the intensely brutal violence that they inflicted on enemy soldiers on the battlefield, the so-called mujahedin – as many local residents referred to them – also victimized local villagers. According to Zeljko, the harassment of the local population was insidious, rather than violent: “they come with local Muslim extremists to our houses and inquire if the house is for sale. They ask whether we will be leaving soon. They shout insults at us in the street” (Cohen 1995). They also employed other forms of violence, particularly against local Muslims, including forced marriages, kidnappings, and the occupation of apartments and houses in their efforts to remain in Bosnia after the Dayton Accords. They forced local Muslims to

change their style of clothing in accordance to strict interpretations of Islam, and reprimanded them from drinking alcohol.

Existing studies of the Bosnian war generally emphasize the violent side of war, in particular patterns of ethnic killing. Yet the type of violence employed by combatants often varied in form, and also often occurred alongside instances of nonviolent action, as relational dynamics had the capacity to activate both. How can we explain the drastically different contexts that characterized the wartime experiences of Mirza and Zeljo? Why was it that some places exhibited such different levels of violence overall? In Bosnia, the quality of interactions depended on social proximity between individuals; acts of solidarity, dialogue, and ultimately resistance to violence were borne of prewar relationships and a common search for a return to the qualities of prewar life in Bosnia. As social distance increased between combatants and other local actors, however, possibilities for nonviolent action dwindled and combatants used a variety of violent techniques in their interactions with the local populace.

Based on the current literature, it is unclear which town in Bosnia we would have wanted to live in during the war. Yet the scenarios presented above present substantially different qualities of wartime life for local civilians. This is largely because existing explanations cannot account for armed group actions that fall beyond the scope “restraint”, and also discount nonmaterial – or nonphysical – forms of violence that are

often prevalent in war. The scholarship also gets wrong key predictions about which groups or subgroups are more likely to commit abuses. Organizational explanations, for instance, cannot account for the anti-Muslim violence in which ideologically-motivated and committed mujahedin engage. Nor can logics of desperation explain why the mujahedin detachment – one of the Bosnian Army’s strongest and best-equipped units – victimized noncombatants at such high levels, compared to other army units.

Indeed, it is often the case that even geographically proximate locations go through drastically different experiences during a civil war: intensities of violence vary from one town to the next, or the quality of combatant-noncombatant interactions may be marked by violence in one area, and voluntary collaboration in another. Relatedly, it is not uncommon for two units belonging to the same armed group to experience war in dramatically different ways (Christia 2008). Significant sub-national variation in trajectories of violence is a fact of civil conflict, whether the object of study is war, genocide, riots, or insurgency (Kalyvas 2006; Varshney 2002).

Underlying this puzzle about the quality of combatant-noncombatant interactions and levels of nonviolence versus violence in civil war are questions about the character and qualities of a rebel organization’s rank and file, and how individual fighters actually experience war. Also important are their reasons for being there: was an insurgent forced to pick up arms as his home and family came under attack by enemy forces? Or did she

willingly mobilize in pursuit of an ideal or other objective that had little to do with protecting her social relationships and livelihood? Why people participate in war is therefore a related part of the puzzle. This dissertation explores dynamics that combatants face during war to understand how their origins influence the character of their interactions and behavior on and off the battlefield.

In particular, I examine the extent to which combatants are embedded into the local context of the conflict in which they are fighting. By embeddedness, I refer to how well fighters, soldiers, combatants, or rebels³ “fit in” or “stand out” from a conflict’s social fabric. While some combatants or rebels may be local to a conflict by way of having lived in an area their entire lives – and thus be deeply embedded into local webs of relationships and indigenous understandings and experience of life in that context – others may be newcomers to the area and lack social and other connections to the local context. To examine the effects of embeddedness on rebel behavior, I conduct a cross-national analysis of global insurgencies with and without foreign fighters from 1989-2011, and also compare the wartime actions of different types of local and foreign soldiers within the ranks of the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina during the Bosnian war (1992-1995). My central argument is that armed groups’ tendencies to rely on violent and nonviolent strategies to engage local civilian populations stem from their embeddedness into particular conflict contexts along two specific dimensions.

³ I use the term combatant, rebel, fighter, and soldier interchangeably to refer to members of an armed group. I do not differentiate between members of nonstate and state armed groups.

Structurally, an insurgency's embeddedness refers to its social capital, or set of pre-war relationships that tie it to local population networks and provides its members with direct access into those networks (Lin 2001). Culturally, embeddedness refers to the extent to which an armed group's members share a common understanding of the conflict with local civilian populations and adopt similar conflict frames to those of the general populace. Together, an armed group's structural and cultural embeddedness relative to a given wartime context evokes constraints and opportunities when it comes to interacting with other local actors and shapes the quality of those interactions.

By adopting a relational ontology that grants pride of explanatory place to armed groups' local versus extra-local social capital, and to the extent to which their understandings of a conflict resonate with local frames and narratives, I am able to investigate the diverse ways in which combatants relate to civilians during war. My outcome of interest is therefore not whether rebel groups engage in civilian victimization, or whether they establish systems of service provision in the areas they control, but rather the different ways they engage might engage other local actors, which spans the spectrum between formal governance and anti-civilian violence. Within this spectrum are also the more informal and less observable behaviors that might fall in between these two extremes.

This dissertation builds on the work of others that expands the outcome of interest beyond just simply considering the presence or absence of certain forms of insurgent behavior (Stanton 2016; Hoover Green 2018). I problematize both sides of the insurgent “behavior coin” as different ends of a spectrum. General theories of rebel governance, on the one hand, and civilian victimization by rebels, on the other, focus primarily on explaining why groups engage in either governance or violence, but most often do not consider why groups might simultaneously employ both strategies, ie. broader repertoires that include balances of both (see Heger, Wong and Jung (2017) for an important exception). Yet the behavior of combatants on and off the battlefield is often more complex and nuanced than bird’s eye views of governance and lethal violence can capture. As the opening sections of this dissertation suggest, rebel-civilian interactions might range from nonphysical forms of violence less noticeable to the outside observer but equally scarring to its victims as physical violence, to informal nonviolent actions that resist violence and help to maintain the local social fabric in the midst of violence.

Most studies of civil war strip away this nuance for the sake of more parsimonious “logics of violence” (cf. Kalyvas 2006), implying that they can neither tell compelling stories of other forms of non-lethal violence (Hoover Green 2018: 18), nor those of the diverse nonviolent interactions in which combatants engage. Even of the notable recent contributions that do delve more into violence “repertoires” and also offer compelling

theories of rebel “restraint” (Jo 2015; Stanton 2016; Hoover Green 2018), restraint itself remains a relatively underexplored category. In fact, it often entails much more than low levels of lethal violence combined with narrow repertoires. A key contribution of this dissertation is thus to begin to unpack the “black box of restraint” by offering a theory of “restraint-plus” that is able to account for the diversity of combatants’ nonviolent interactions on and off the battlefield.

I examine the macrolevel and microlevel implications of my argument, focusing specifically on how the presence of foreign fighters affects armed group behavior. As a test of my theoretical framework’s macrolevel implications, I use statistical analysis to identify correlations between foreign fighters and their levels of embeddedness and rebel propensities towards institutionalization and civilian victimization. I then use process tracing to demonstrate the mechanisms at play between social embeddedness and combatant behavior on and off the battlefield in the context of the Bosnian war. This constitutes a test of the theory’s microlevel implications, and focuses on the less systematically observable patterns of rebel behavior, ranging from nonviolent civil action (Avant et al. 2018) to nonphysical forms of violence (Malešević 2017). The comparisons in the quantitative and qualitative components of the research design provide support to my argument that rebel embeddedness raises barriers to violence and increases the propensity of combatants to engage in unexpected instances of civil action that promote deeper engagement even across enemy lines.

This study develops a new microlevel theoretical perspective on the diverse ways in which combatants engage civilian populations during civil war, emphasizing how combatants' prewar and wartime social ties and conflict frames influence their interactions on and off the battlefield after war breaks out. It also adds an important case to the theoretically and empirically burgeoning study of civil action, and to the small collection of studies that account for the otherwise paradoxical instances of aid and rescue that occur in even the most violent contexts (Fujii 2009; Avant et al. 2018). Importantly, it also builds on the literature that acknowledges the agency of a wide variety of actors to engage in diverse behavior during war, in particular rebel organizations (Pearlman 2011; Cunningham, Bakke and Seymour 2012; Lawrence 2013). While this literature convincingly presents organizational dynamics and internal fragmentation in particular as key precipitants of insurgent shifts towards anti-civilian violence, my key explanatory variable – embeddedness – offers yet another explanation for why certain organizations may become more internally divided (and thus violent) than others.

The rest of this chapter is organized as follows. First, I demonstrate the need for a more complete model of combatant behavior during war that incorporates governance, anti-civilian violence, and the more informal, if less observable, range of options that exists in between. Second, I provide a brief summary of my argument. I then detail my

research design and preview my findings from the dissertation's empirical chapters. The last section provides a roadmap of the dissertation.

1.2. The Limits of Existing Explanations of Rebel Behavior

Two extensive literatures in political science seek to explain variation in violence against civilians, on the one hand, and rebel governance, on the other. For the former camp, the scholarship typically defines wartime "violence" as either lethal violence or sexual violence, including rape. The domain of rebel governance is less clearly defined, but is most often conceptualized as "the production of government for civilians during the protracted violence and high levels of coercion produced by civil war" (Arjona, Kasfir and Mampilly 2015, 5). However, while some existing studies directly examine repertoires or carry repertoire implications, they are often limited to either governance or violence (but not both), and none adequately explains the types of interactions discussed in this chapter's opening sections. In this section, I outline a number of key theoretical approaches to anti-civilian violence and rebel governance and discuss how each has implications for the study of the broader range of combatant-civilian interactions. In the end, I believe that the abundance of theories of both violence and governance speak to the need for an alternative approach that can explain both violent and nonviolent combatant-civilian interactions during wartime.

While some insurgencies coerce civilians to gain access to the materials they need for war, many others encourage civilian contributions by promising security, dispute resolution, and other governance services (Mampilly 2011). Studies implicitly highlight the relevance of embeddedness and actors' social environments when it comes to explaining the development of wartime systems of mutual exchange between rebels and civilians. To obtain voluntary cooperation from civilians, rebels secure loyalty by taking into consideration local demands (Mampilly 2011). Civilians are also more likely to view insurgents as legitimate when insurgents embody locally grounded values and norms (Kasfir 2015). Even when rebels attempt to make sweeping changes to a socio-political order, research shows that they frequently adopt local values and narratives that evoke the shared beliefs of civilians. This helps to strengthen their claims to authority (Hoffmann 2015).

Presumably, the distinction between rebel and civilian is also more blurred when rebels have deep ties to local communities. When civilians see insurgents as extensions of their own communities, rebels can rely at least partially on compromise to seek compliance and popular support (Förster 2015). Embeddedness, in particular deep immersion into the social realities of a conflict context, thus appears to ease access to critical information that enables rebels to rely on promises, rather than threats, to accumulate needed resources.

Other scholars have developed and tested theories of rebel restraint, though not in relation to rebel governance. Stanton (2015, 21), for instance, defines restraint as “extremely low levels of violence” or a “deliberate attempt to limit [anti-civilian] violence”. However, by these standards, groups that carry out non-lethal or nonphysical forms of violence would end up in a restraint category, given the nature of their violence techniques. Hoover Green (2018), in turn, conceptualizes restraint as combatants’ adherence to controlled violence - narrow repertoires of violence combined with low levels thereof. Importantly, restraint does not imply governance, and vice versa.

The flip side of the “restraint coin” is for combatants to employ violence against local populations as they seek popular support. Cooperation through coercion is a strategy employed by states and insurgent groups alike (Mason and Krane 1989; Valentino 2004; Downes 2006; Kalyvas 2006; Weinstein 2007). Theories of rebel violence highlight how civilian constituencies determine rebels’ organizational structures, and that violence from rank and file combatants is ultimately a byproduct of group recruiting practices (Humphreys and Weinstein 2006; Weinstein 2007; Cohen 2013, 2016). In particular, Weinstein (2007) shows how rebellions that attract high-commitment individuals, or investors, obtain resources from noncombatants by striking bargains based on their knowledge of established norms and social networks. Opportunistic rebellions, on the other hand, attract consumer rebels as a result of their reliance on economic endowments that decrease their need to rely on local populations. While activist

rebellions can use violence strategically thanks to insurgents' social ties to the local conflict context, opportunistic rebellions lack the local ties necessary to control violence. Once conflict is underway, ties that bind armed groups to local populations during war – in particular shared ethnicity – continue to influence patterns of victimization (Ottman 2017). When militants share a common ethnicity with local populations, they are less likely to victimize civilians as doing so would be tantamount to attacking one's own community (Fjelde and Hultman 2014; Stanton 2015).

The findings discussed above are largely consistent with the idea that rebels' embeddedness into the local social fabric of a conflict shapes propensities towards or away from abusive behavior, specifically lethal violence. The social capital with which rebels enter a conflict – i.e. their connections to local conflict actors – imparts them with varying aptitudes to access critical local knowledge, and the ability to limit violence, mimicking the behavior of "stationary bandits" (Weinstein 2007; Mampilly 2011). For rebels to limit their violence, they must begin with or develop deep access into local communities (Barter 2015). In addition, familiarity with local norms and values that inform civilians' demands helps them strike bargains with local communities, highlighting the role of cultural embeddedness.

Nevertheless, existing explanations of insurgent violence and governance cannot provide full explanations for the diverse ways in which combatants engage civilian

populations. At the very least, no single theory – whether based on ideology, organizational dynamics, or strategic interaction between opposing sides – can explain both violent and nonviolent interactions. Returning to the Bosnia case from the beginning of this chapter, we know that the nonviolent interactions that soldiers had across front lines and with civilians of different ethnicities were not rational calculations to “limit violence,” largely because it was not behavior that officers widely ordered. They were also not responses to dampening battlefield violence, given that they occurred throughout the war’s duration, including in central Bosnia when the Bosnian Army was engaged in a two-front struggle against both Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat forces. The nonviolent interactions were also the product of loose command structures, given the uniformity of such actions across various units.

What’s more, the violence that characterized foreign fighters’ interactions with local populations – including local Muslims – emphasizes that ideological commitment is insufficient in explaining restraint from violence. According to Weinstein’s (2007) logic, the mujahedin that joined the Bosnian Army are the prototypical “investor” rebel. Yet while the theory expects such “investors” to limit their violence, relative to so-called “consumer” rebels who lack ideological commitment to a cause, in the case of the Bosnian Army it was often the investors who used coercion and threats in their interactions with the local populace, rather than the other way around. The key predictions of Weinstein’s theory, as well as others that emphasize the role of

coethnicity – but not embeddedness per se – in determining propensities for anti-civilian violence, would also not expect members of the Bosnian Army to abuse members of the local Muslim population. While there is relatively limited evidence of mujahedin killing Muslim civilians during the war, there is ample evidence of insidious violence that fell short of killing yet did lasting damage to local communities. By broadening the outcome of interest to include informal instances of nonviolent exchange as well as nonmaterial forms of violence, and focusing on the role of embeddedness in informing the quality of these exchanges, the theoretical framework that I elaborate in this dissertation offers a more nuanced explanation of the diverse ways that combatants and civilians interact during civil war.

1.3. The Argument in Brief

I draw on a relational ontology that focuses on the social context of war to offer a more accurate understanding of armed group behavior during war. Members of armed groups are better able limit violence and engage in nonviolent interaction with noncombatants when they are able to cultivate relationships with local civilians as a result of their embeddedness into the local social fabric of a conflict. Social embeddedness grants insurgents deep local knowledge that fosters trust with local populations, convincing the latter that the fighters in their midst are as interested in the long-term, post-conflict stability that they themselves presumably seek. Social embeddedness also helps to foster direct dialogue between armed groups and the

populations that they purport to fight for. Dialogue ensures that the activities in which insurgents engage work towards meeting the needs of populations indigenous to the conflict zone. Armed groups that benefit from a multitude of diverse social ties to local populations may also thus be better placed to contribute to building local communities through civilian administration, for instance through the provision of education or health services. And as the civil war literature shows, familiarity of the local conflict context also allows for limited forms of violence, as armed actors can draw on local knowledge to limit their targeting strategies (Kalyvas 2006; Lyall 2010; Schutte, 2015). Overall, socially embedded groups should exhibit more restraint in the use of violence, and increased tendencies of engaging in service provision activities.

Social disembeddedness, on the other hand, makes it more difficult for armed actors to understand and fulfill the needs of local populations. It also makes it difficult for insurgent groups to cultivate local relationships that enable its members to accumulate critical battlefield resources, such as food, shelter, and intelligence. A lack of social connections to the local conflict context weakens the potential for dialogue with civilians, and is likely to lower insurgents' barriers to violence as groups turn to forcibly gathering basic amenities for survival. Socially disembedded outsiders may also have shorter time horizons compared to fighters who are well-connected to local populations, especially if they have options for exit that reduce their interest in a stable post-conflict environment. A dearth of kinship ties to local communities in which the fighting is taking place may also

make them less fearful of retribution in the wake of violent attacks, further reducing barriers to lethal forms of violence. These groups should thus engage in higher levels of violence, relative to embedded insurgencies, and largely refrain from behavior aimed at serving local communities.

I consider social embeddedness as representative of the degree to which individuals are integrated and assimilated into local conflict contexts. Integration refers to immersion within webs of social relations, while assimilation refers to immersion within shared understandings of appropriate behavior or of a particular conflict frame. Insurgencies should therefore be embedded into conflict contexts along two dimensions: structurally, by way of their ties into social networks local to a conflict, and culturally, by way of their shared understanding of a conflict context with local populations. Structural and cultural embeddedness should foster nonviolent interaction between insurgents and surrounding populations, while disembeddedness along the two dimensions should incentivize violence. It also follows that armed groups and their fighters may be embedded along one dimension (for example structurally), but disembedded along the other (in this case culturally). Different balances of embeddedness along the two aforementioned dimensions therefore gives rise to “intermediate” levels of embeddedness. Following Goldberg and co-authors (2016), I refer to groups that are structurally embedded into a local conflict context but culturally disembedded as “integrated nonconformists”; conversely, groups that are culturally embedded but

structurally disembedded from a context become “assimilated brokers.” The end result is a four-fold typology of armed groups according to different configurations of embeddedness: *doubly embedded* groups; *disembedded* groups; *assimilated broker* groups; and *integrated nonconformist* groups.

By adopting an approach centered around embeddedness, a term that I define in more detail in Chapter 2, I imply that individual as well as group behavior cannot be understood apart from the social world in which it occurs. More generally, the idea of social embeddedness as employed here helps to describe and explain how different actors present in the immediate and very local context of a civil war interact to either complement or come into conflict with one another. It suggests that actors’ preferences and ensuing patterns of action can only be understood and interpreted within relational, institutional, and ultimately cultural contexts. This is in direct contrast to rational choice or strategic accounts of civil war violence or rebel governance, and transcends structural explanations that ignore dynamic interaction. Embeddedness does not simply regulate behavior by shaping the way in which individuals or groups pursue their preferences, it also plays a substantial role in constituting these interests.

If social embeddedness works in the ways that I describe above, then its effects should be particularly present and observable among armed groups that recruit or accept foreign nationals into their ranks. Foreign fighters, as they are typically referred to in

public and scholarly circles, are individuals who have joined active, armed non-state groups but lack citizenship in the conflict state and are not members of a formal military organization (Malet 2013; Hegghammer 2010). This intermediary category of actor is a meaningful addition to the broader literature on civil war, and especially useful for the purposes of this dissertation. Unlike local insurgents, foreign fighters are unlikely to have built lives in the immediate conflict zone, and therefore risk experiencing many of the dynamics linked to structural and cultural disembeddedness that I describe above. When armed groups recruit them, I expect that they will gravitate less towards institution building, and more towards violence during war. However, these propensities for certain types of engagement with local populations are also likely to vary according to foreign fighters' degrees of foreignness, relative to the conflict they have joined. Some, for example, may share a common ethnicity with the majority of their local insurgent counterparts, or come from neighboring states. Others may exhibit heightened degrees of disembeddedness if they come from beyond the immediate conflict region, or do not share ethnic ties to local actors.

Although typically linked to groups with radical Islamist ideologies, foreign fighters participate in a wide variety of conflicts across global regions (see Figure 1.1). They have joined conflicts as diverse as the Spanish Civil War (in the case of the Socialist International Brigades), and various west African rebellions (Malet 2013; Clapham 1998). In the Bosnian war of the early 1990s, foreigners joined the ranks of the Catholic Bosnian

Croats and Orthodox Bosnian Serbs, in addition to the ranks of the Muslim-majority Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Arielli 2012; Hoare 2004). Historically speaking, the phenomenon of foreign fighters dates back to the origins of warfare itself.

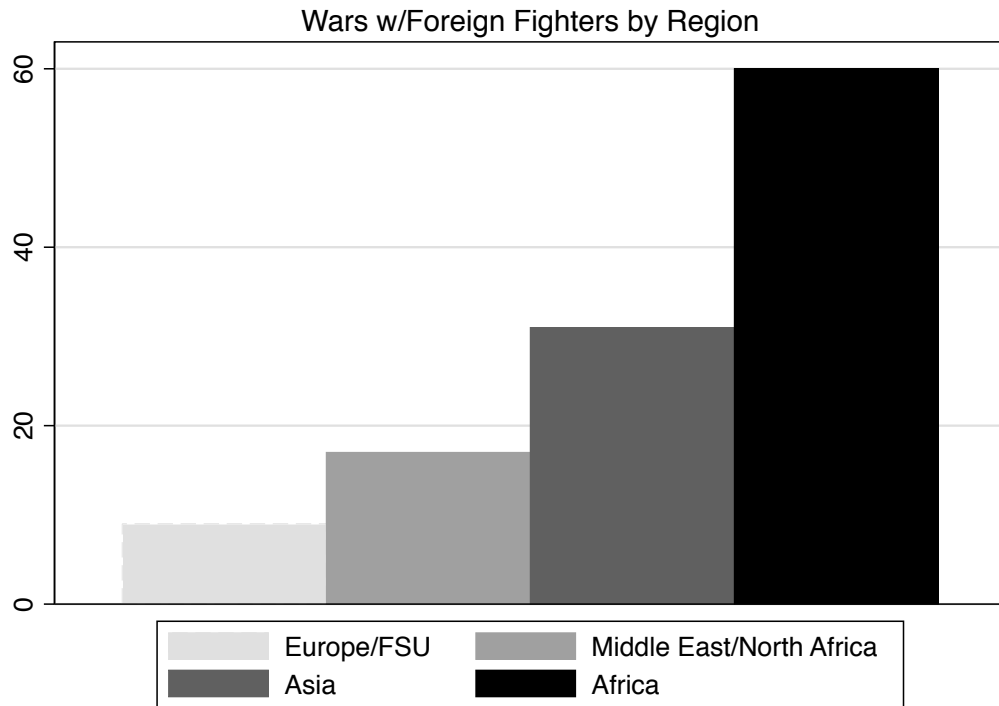


Figure 1.1. Foreign fighters in civil wars, 1989-2011.

That said, the scholarly literature on foreign fighters' impacts on conflict trajectories remains underdeveloped. What studies do exist support the conjecture that these actors have meaningful impacts on a number of conflict dynamics and outcomes, including access to finance systems (Malet 2010; Byman 2015); group cohesion (Bakke 2014; Gates and Podder 2015); the formation of terrorist organizations (Braithwaite and Chu 2017; Mendelsohn 2011); military victory (Chu and Braithwaite 2017); and the set of

military strategies available to opposition groups (Malet 2013). However, the literature does not yet speak to the effect that foreign fighters have on trajectories of violence in the conflicts that they join, or on rebel propensities to develop institutions in the service of local populations. As such, the focus on this particular category of actor not only serves as a useful way of capturing variations in embeddedness across insurgencies, but also extends the literature that addresses the impact of external, third-party actors on conflict dynamics (Salehyan, Siroki and Wood 2014).

1.4. Research Design

I employ a mixed method research design to test the relationship between combatant embeddedness and patterns of behavior on and off the battlefield. The empirical portion of the dissertation focuses on three main questions: (1) At the macrolevel of analysis, why do insurgencies establish institutions and why do they engage in civilian victimization? and (2) how do degrees of embeddedness among foreign fighter populations influence the propensities of insurgencies to govern versus abuse local civilians? (3) At the microlevel of analysis, how do different types of soldiers, including foreign fighters (defined according to their levels of embeddedness along structural and cultural dimensions), experience war differently – gravitating towards nonviolent or violent interaction – and what role does embeddedness play in shaping these different wartime experiences?

The quantitative and qualitative analyses contained in this dissertation each serve important purposes and jointly allow for a triangulation of different types of evidence. The statistical analysis of global insurgencies in Chapter 4 helps to establish evidence of a correlation between foreign fighter types and insurgent service provision and lethal anti-civilian violence. The analysis draws extensively on existing data on foreign fighters in civil conflicts from Malet (2013), as well as existing datasets that provide information on rebel institutionalization (Huang 2016) and violence against civilians (Allanson, Melander and Themnér 2017). The dataset that I construct from these existing sources contains information on foreign fighters and insurgent behavior from 1989-2011.

Because quantitative analyses are unable to identify the causal mechanism that might link social embeddedness to particular forms of insurgent behavior during war, I also use the case study method to test the causal processes at the heart of my theoretical framework. Causal mechanisms are processes that convert inputs into outputs, in this case social ties and cultural understandings into varieties of violent and nonviolent interaction. Little is mechanistic about these processes; instead, the link between social embeddedness and combatant behavior is shaped by human action. By bringing human actors into my narrative, I make room for a rigorous test of the actual processes that underlie the hypotheses I elaborate in Chapter 2. The qualitative case study is also critical to evaluating a key claim on which this dissertation is based, namely that combatants engage civilian populations in diverse ways. While the quantitative

analysis limits the range of combatant behavior under analysis to formal instances of service provision and recorded civilian deaths, the qualitative study considers informal nonviolent interactions (so-called cases of civil action), in addition to instances of nonmaterial violence.

I examine one case in depth, and conduct an in-depth comparison of local and foreign soldiers in the Bosnian Army from 1992-1995, as well as combatants that I categorize as “integrated nonconformist” and “assimilated broker” soldiers. The Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina (ABiH) formed in late 1992 out of a conglomeration of locally-based territorial defense units organized by Yugoslav President Josip Tito in the late 1960s. The war in Bosnia also attracted a significant number of foreign combatants, who joined all three sides of the conflict but flocked in particular to join the ranks of the Bosnian army. The territorial defense units gave what eventually became the ABiH a highly local nature, as units were made up largely of men and women who mobilized in defense of their homes, families, and in many cases neighbors. Local soldiers fought predominantly in the places where they had lived and worked before the outbreak of active hostilities, and frequently interacted with their family members and civilian friends and neighbors who had stayed behind even during the fighting. As a result, most soldiers never made the full transition to a warrior identity and remained deeply tied to their prewar roles and responsibilities. Fraternization with the “enemy” across front lines was a common occurrence among local soldiers, and many engaged in micro instances of cross-ethnic

solidarity building, dialogue, and even aid and rescue during the war. While these civil actions did not occur as part of large-scale, coordinated action and thus did not turn the tide of the war or have other macrolevel effects on the war's evolution, they are nevertheless important conflict dynamics. Civil action that works to maintain or enhance relationships is crucial to local social fabrics, and has important implications for post conflict reconciliation and peacebuilding.

The experiences of the Bosnian Army's foreign soldiers, on the other hand, were rife with violence and antagonistic relationships with members of Bosnia's local populations. The largest unit formed by foreigners, which became known as the *El Mudzahid* detachment, engaged in particularly brutal violence throughout the conflict, committing atrocities against enemy forces and civilians alike that were uncharacteristic of regular Bosnian Army units. Unlike local soldiers, whose conceptualization of the "enemy" was often fluid, foreign fighters had an unwavering vision of the war as an existential jihadist struggle between Islam and Christianity. Their violence was not limited to killing non-Muslims, as evidenced by the constant state of harassment and fear in which Bosnian Muslims lived in central Bosnia.

Importantly, a number of local Bosnian villagers from central Bosnia joined the foreigners' unit, forming what I refer to as a contingent of "integrated nonconformist" soldiers. While these local Bosnians adopted the non-resonant ideological frame of

foreign mujahedin and thus faced a significant amount of stigma from their peers, their ties into local social networks worked to limit their direct participation in violence on a number of occasions. In addition, an entire unit active in central Bosnia was made up of so-called “refugee soldiers.” These soldiers, who hailed primarily from northwestern Bosnia, were exposed to severe violence at the hands of Bosnian Serb forces and forced into exile where they formed a unit dedicated to their return home. While violence and the destruction of their social networks structurally disembedded these soldiers from the local social fabric, their drive to return home and rejection of staunchly nationalist conflict frames suggests that they remained assimilated into Bosnia’s wartime social fabric. Refugee soldiers – who I refer to as “assimilated brokers” – faced lower barriers to violence, relative to local Bosnians serving in regular Bosnian Army units, but did not display propensities to commit atrocities similar to those orchestrated and led by disembedded foreign soldiers.

The origins of the ABiH as a largely locally-based territorial defense organization and the addition of structurally and culturally disembedded “outsiders” make the case a most-likely test of my theoretical framework. I draw on a range of sources to explore this case, including over forty interviews with local stakeholders from the Bosnian war such as war veterans from the ABiH’s 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Corps.

1.5. Preview of Key Concepts and Findings

Research on rebel behavior during civil war has long debated various dimensions of violence, and is now beginning to also focus more on the variegated nature of rebel governance. In this dissertation, I expand on what is considered violence and governance to gain a more complete picture of how armed groups interact with other actors on and off the battlefield. I address these expanded conceptualizations in detail in Chapter 2, and this section briefly previews that discussion. First, I define violence in both “material” and “nonmaterial” terms (Malešević 2017), but limit the discussion and analysis to intentional violence that is the result of coordinated interaction between two or more people acting in relation to a larger, intrastate political dispute (Tilly 2003).⁴ Nonmaterial, or nonphysical, violence includes assaults of individuals’ personhood, dignity, or sense of self-worth (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004), and has important social and cultural dimensions.

Second, governance refers not only to the formal institutions that rebels build during war (such as police forces, legislatures or elections, or health and education services), but also to the informal actions that, like formal governance institutions, are examples of local authority claims. These actions typically fall outside the scope of most existing studies of rebel governance, but nonetheless should be included in the range of nonviolent actions that individuals – including rebels – take during war that induce

⁴ Wider definitions of violence centers on the long-term impacts of specific social action that produces harmful effects, whether intentionally or not (Scheper-Hughes 2004; Bourdieu 1990; Galtung 1969).

deference from a broader community. In fact, recent studies of rebel governance are beginning to take this approach, noting that “formal authority is usually weak or non-existent during civil war and is sometimes replaced by fluid networking among distrustful actors” (Kasfir, Frerks and Terpstra 2017). Other studies in the conflict literature refer to some of these informal actions as “civil action” (Avant et al. 2018), or “nonviolent strategies that promote deeper engagement with stakeholders.” These actions that take place in the midst of violence are diverse in nature, but might include aid or rescuing, engaging with opponents, promoting dialogue, or facilitating information exchange. At their most basic, civil actions help to preserve relationships in otherwise war-torn social fabrics, and can scale up to dampen local violence and move warring societies towards conflict settlement.

Empirically, through qualitative and quantitative analysis, I find support for the role of embeddedness in shaping combatant behavior at both the micro and macro levels of analysis. The Bosnia case shows that deep structural embeddedness, captured through local Bosnian Army soldiers’ numerous and strong ties into local population networks, causes fighters to experience war through fluid civilian-soldier identities. Their responsibilities as soldiers but also as fathers, mothers, sons, and sisters raises barriers to violence, relative to non-local fighters, and also opens the door to nonviolent interaction that works to build solidarity and dampen violence even in the midst of intense conflict. Cultural embeddedness, in turn, fosters a common understanding of the conflict context

between soldiers and civilians, breaking down divisions between combatants and noncombatants and bringing the former in tune with local civilians' wartime needs and visions for a postwar future. Embeddedness, in other words, leads to the emergence of so-called holistic fighting communities (Wood 2003), which differ significantly from captive civilian models (Kalyvas 2006) where civilians are often held hostage by rebel fighters, and do not share their combat preferences. The in-depth analysis of disembeddedness and wartime experiences of the Bosnian Army's foreign soldiers also confirms the deleterious effects of disembeddedness on combatant-civilian relationships. While the mujahedin who came to fight in Bosnia brought with them superior resources in terms of fighting skills and the services they could provide to war torn communities, their conflict frames did not resonate with local understandings of the Bosnian war. They relied excessively on violence – both physical and nonphysical in nature – in their interactions with local conflict actors, including local Bosnian Muslims populations.

The findings from the quantitative analysis also provide support for the dissertation's main hypotheses, and are important insofar as they urge civil war scholars to dig deeper into the characteristics and qualities of rebel governance and the links between governance and anti-civilian violence. Most importantly, the analyses on foreign fighters and rebel governance and civilian victimization contained in Chapter 4 show that disembedded insurgencies (those with foreign fighters) are actually more likely to build institutions, relative to groups with no foreign fighters. However, these groups are also

more likely to engage in anti-civilian violence. The combination of lethality and institutionalization suggests that the systems of exchange that foreign fighter-heavy groups build during war may be exclusionary in nature, limiting services to certain segments of a population and coercing civilians into compliance rather than relying on voluntary contributions. The findings thus highlight the janus-faced nature of rebel governance, which few studies of rebel governance thus far consider.⁵

1.6. Chapter Overview

In Chapter 2, I review the literature on rebel patterns of behavior ranging from governance to anti-civilian violence, and develop a theoretical framework that links dimensions of embeddedness to nonviolent and violent interactions between insurgencies and local populations. Rather than dive straight into the dissertation's empirical analysis, Chapter 3 presents a more detailed overview of my mixed method research design and explains why quantitative and qualitative analyses complement one another. Chapter 4 then puts the macro-level hypotheses from Chapter 2 to a series of statistical tests, and Chapters 5 through 7 continue these tests through an in-depth examination of the case of local and foreign soldiers in the Bosnian war, as well as the intermediate categories of "integrated nonconformist" and "assimilated broker" soldiers. The history of the Bosnian war provided in Chapter 5 outlines the context in which the war occurred, and illustrates the role that disembedded, or outsider, forces played on all

⁵ For an important exception, see Reno (2015).

three sides of the conflict. I dedicate Chapter 6 to presenting evidence of local ABiH soldiers' structural and cultural embeddedness, foreign ABiH soldiers' structural and cultural disembeddedness, and the different balances of cultural and structural embeddedness that characterized local Bosnian mujahedin soldiers and refugee soldiers in the 17th Krajina Brigade. Chapter 7 then links this evidence to patterns of behavior among ABiH soldiers, constituting the main test of the theoretical framework's microlevel implications. Chapter 8 concludes with a summary of the main argument and findings, and discusses the dissertation's theoretical and practical implications.

Chapter Two: A Theory of Social Embeddedness, Foreign Fighters, and Armed Group Patterns of Behavior

2.1. Introduction

Armed groups demonstrate considerable variation in the ways that they interact with local civilian populations during war. The behavior of some groups, such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of (RUF) of Sierra Leone or the Ivorian Patriotic Movement of the Far West (MPIGO), has had particularly destructive consequences for civilians, insofar as their members have engaged in widespread acts of rape, pillaging, abduction, mutilation, and killing (HRW 2005). Conversely, other groups such as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka, known for engaging in terrorist violence targeting civilians, also provided a range of public goods to local populations ranging from mail collection to taxation (Flanigan 2008; Huang 2016). Other groups refrain from abusing civilians altogether, as was the case the Fretilin during its conflict with Indonesia over the status of East Timor. What's more, individual combatants within armed groups sometimes engage in dramatically different behavior on and off the battlefield, with some building solidarity with or even aiding and rescuing supporters across enemy lines, and others confining their interactions with civilians to coercion and threats.

What factors shape the ways that combatants conduct themselves during war, and the quality of their interactions with other conflict actors on and off the battlefield? More pointedly, when do groups behave more like stationary bandits – engaging in positive exchange with civilians and limiting their violence – and when does their behavior more resemble that of roving bandits, who rely on coercion to gather popular support (Olson 1993)? This dissertation focuses on the social context of war, and demonstrates the importance of individuals and interactions in shaping combatant behavior. I propose that armed groups' tendencies to rely on violent versus nonviolent strategies to engage local populations stem from their embeddedness into particular conflict contexts. Structurally, an insurgency's embeddedness refers to its social capital, or set of pre-war relationships that provide it access into social networks indigenous to the conflict zone (Lin 2001: 19). Culturally, embeddedness refers to the extent to which an armed group's members are familiar with local communities' norms, customs, and needs, and share a common understanding of the conflict with local civilian actors. Together, an insurgency's structural and cultural embeddedness into a local conflict context evokes constraints and opportunities when it comes to interacting with local community members, forming the distinction between what we might call stationary and roving bandits.

Building on recent studies of insurgent behavior that expand the outcome of interest beyond simply considering the presence or absence of lethal violence (see e.g. Stanton 2016; Hoover Green 2016), I attempt to understand both sides of the insurgent

“behavior coin,” as well as actions that might fall in between the extremes of “governance” and “civilian victimization.” The logic that I develop takes as its point of departure the variegated nature of a rebel group’s rank and file. Insurgent groups are not monolithic, and individual fighters join an armed group with unequal sets of resources. For instance, rebels that join a particular group rarely possess equal sets of social ties, cultural knowledge, linguistic abilities, religious or ideological leanings, or other values. While one group’s structural and/or cultural embeddedness may connect it strongly to a conflict context – for instance if it limits its recruitment to geographical areas close to the battlefield – other armed groups may recruit fighters who are non-local to a particular context, and lack direct ties into local community networks or knowledge of local traditions and values that shape daily life. I expect that the extent to which individual fighters’ networks of relations and taken-for-granted assumptions about appropriate behavior and normal, “everyday life” embed them into the local fabric of a conflict affects armed groups’ overall patterns of behavior.

Disembeddedness affects behavior in important ways. Specifically, I expect that a weakened ability to cultivate relationships with local populations – fostered by structural and cultural disembeddedness – increases frustrations between fighters and civilians, leading to an inclination towards violence. Disembedded rebel organizations might also be less likely to view civilian populations as “one of their own.” Structurally, a lack of ties into local community networks isolates rebels and amplifies distinctions between who is

a rebel, and who is a civilian. A lack of connections to local conflict actors makes it more difficult for rebels to gather information critical to warfighting through direct dialogue, and they are more likely to turn to coercion to meet their needs. Structural disembeddedness might also make it more difficult for fighters to disengage from or leave a particular conflict, given that they have no proximate connections to turn to in case they decide to abandon the fight. Culturally, differences between rebels' and civilians' understandings of appropriate behavior make it difficult for the former to appreciate and relate to local needs or expectations. This might cause friction as insurgents seek to drastically reorder a society to match their norms and values, and use indiscriminate coercion and threats to do so.

Conversely, embeddedness along both aforementioned dimensions should de-incentivize violence, and increase propensities towards nonviolent strategies meant to promote deep engagement with local stakeholders. Rebels who are local to the conflict context in which they are combatants share common understandings of the conflict with civilian populations to whom they are directly connected through longstanding ties of kinship, friendship, or work. Such contexts are reminiscent of Wood's (2003) concept of "holistic fighting communities," where combatants and civilians share social networks and preferences. Embeddedness, in other words, blurs divides between civilians and rebels and should thus reduce the extent to which the latter need to rely on coercion to achieve their objectives. Each party's cognitive access to shared customs and traditions

provides incentives for communication and negotiation that characterize nonviolent engagement. Interactions between embedded combatants and local populations might range from dialogue across macro-level cleavages (such as ethnic divisions) to acts of saving and aiding. These engagements ultimately work to preserve local relationships and the local social fabric more generally, paving the road for more formal exchanges such as the barter and provision of basic goods.

People who are local to a particular area are “embedded” in their communities (Granovetter 1985). By and large, rebels are considered local to a conflict when they have extensive community ties to members of the local population – ties of kinship or other relational ties cultivated through membership in social organizations (Viterna 2006; Staniland 2012). In fact, these dense community ties are likely what prompted them to join the insurgency in the first place (Humphries and Weinstein 2006); many rebels mobilize in defense of their homes and families at the beginning of a war. These “local” fighters enter a conflict pre-equipped with strong ties into local community networks proximate to the battlefield, which allow them to draw on the critical support of civilians (Parkinson 2013).

Importantly, degrees of embeddedness – of being “local” – varies across armed groups, as well as within them in many cases. For example, rebel embeddedness might shift according to an organization’s areas of operations, territorial gains and losses, and

other battlefield dynamics. Capturing embeddedness presents significant challenges, as this is often not a directly observable phenomenon, and can also change quickly as insurgent areas of operations shift or insurgencies gain new members. To address this obstacle, I connect the embeddedness mechanisms described previously to a more observable phenomenon: the presence of foreign fighters in armed groups. This project thus focuses on understanding the effects of embeddedness on combatant behavior through the lens of foreign fighters' involvement in intrastate conflicts.

I draw on a relational ontology to develop a social-structural explanation of foreign fighters and armed group behavior ranging from governance to victimization. Following the tradition originally developed in the literature on contentious politics, I grant pride of explanatory place to the embeddedness of actors and to the social relations that emerge between militants and civilians. The extent to which individuals are structurally and culturally embedded into particular conflict contexts influences the quality of wartime interactions between combatants and local populations, and ultimately helps to explain why the behavior of some rebels resembles that of stationary bandits, while the behavior of others is more akin to the activities of roving bandits.

The acts of abusing and serving local populations and engaging stakeholders during conflict are fundamentally interactive processes. Rather than occurring in a social vacuum, the decisions that insurgents make to administer services to local populations,

or to engage in violence, are the product of “emergent phenomena” that develop in action (della Porta 2013). The ways through which individuals – in this case members of armed groups and civilians – come into contact with one another, communicate, and more broadly interact influence variations of cooperation and contention during war. Since violence and governance are both dynamic processes, as multifaceted as they are relational, it makes sense to conceptualize and study them from the standpoint of social relations (della Porta 2008).

I devote the rest of this chapter to laying the groundwork for and elaborating the social logic behind combatant behavior during war. The next section provides some background in the way of defining key terms. Sections 2.3 and 2.4 conceptualize foreign fighters as disembedded actors, and review the literature on rebel-civilian relationships during wartime. Section 2.5 lays out the explanation, its empirical implications, and the hypotheses that emerge as macro- and micro-level observable implications of my theoretical framework. Sections 2.6 and 2.7 identify relevant boundary conditions, and ask what the study of civil war has to gain from an investigation of foreign fighters specifically, and rebel embeddedness more generally.

2.2. Definitions

Throughout this dissertation, I make reference to a number of terms that require definitional clarity. This section clarifies what I mean in this project when I use certain terms and phrases.

The term embeddedness refers to the extent to which individuals fit in or stand out from a local conflict context. Karl Polanyi (1944) first elaborated the concept of embeddedness as it refers specifically to economics. Since then, scholars have applied the term to social phenomena, insofar as it describes actors' actions as "embedded in concrete, ongoing systems of social relations" (Granovetter 1985: 487). I explore the importance of two forms of embeddedness – structural embeddedness and cultural embeddedness. Structural embeddedness speaks to the extent to which individuals are integrated into webs of social relationships. In this vein, the extent to which militant groups and their individual members are structurally embedded into the local, social fabric of a conflict depends on the multitude and strength of their social ties (based on family, work, friendship, etc.) to other actors considered "local" to the conflict context. I pay particular attention to rebels' integration into civilian networks that surround the battlefield, i.e. the extent to which they stay connected to family members, friends, and coworkers from before the war during fighting. Structural embeddedness confers trust, coordination, and identity benefits to actors, and provides them with certain advantages relative to structurally disembedded actors (Burt 2005).

Cultural embeddedness refers to individuals' cultural fit with respect to a given context, or the extent to which they share deep-rooted beliefs and assumptions about the world (Goldberg et al. 2016). Among insurgencies, when rebel understandings and experiences of conflict – their frames of reference and the narratives that they use to describe a conflict – are in line with those of civilians, they are culturally embedded into the local conflict context. More precise indicators of cultural embeddedness might include shared religion or ideology between combatants and non-combatants; shared ethnicity (including shared markers of ethnicity such as language); or shared traditions and customs. As I elaborate in more detail later in this chapter, structural and cultural embeddedness might also interact in important ways to affect the quality of relations that emerge between civilians and rebels during war. While recent studies of civil war either implicitly or explicitly recognize the importance of structural embeddedness in particular when it comes to explaining a number of conflict outcomes (Llyall 2010; Parkinson 2013; Staniland 2012, 2014), they do not explore the logic that ties rebel embeddedness to particular behavior or actions during war, and do not consider the role that different dimensions of embeddedness might play.

A significant portion of this dissertation addresses variation in the extent to which armed actors provide services to local populations, or engage in civil action and/or the establishment of systems of mutual exchange or rebel governance. Recent additions to

the literature on intrastate conflict conceptualize civil action as “nonviolent strategies that promote deeper engagement with stakeholders,” and that “often improve the prospects for peace” (Avant et al. 2018). Though studies highlight examples of particular civil actions that a variety of actors take in conflict-affected environments, they do not consider the potential for members of violent nonstate groups to engage in civil action. Yet empirical evidence suggests that parts of rebel organizations can in fact become tools for civil action despite their violent nature, due in large part to the fact that many rebel soldiers were at one time civilians and oftentimes experience the war in similar ways to noncombatants.

Combatant actions that fall under the category of civil action are often characterized by a willingness to limit violence, and also a willingness to abide by some minimal level of respect that allows those who disagree to maintain dialogue. The respect that undergirds civil actions is itself a product of shared values (cultural embeddedness), but also originates in the day-to-day interactions in which individuals are immersed on the basis of their social ties (structural embeddedness). Specific examples of civil action include deliberate efforts to reduce or prevent violence; the provision of aid, rescue, or safety across dividing lines; offering engagement with opponents and building solidarity; and promoting dialogue more generally. Civil action during wartime is an explicit rejection of interactions that exclude others, and often works to maintain and build relationships and dampen local violence (Avant et al. 2018).

At a more macro-level, a growing number of studies evaluate the logic and effects of rebel governance or service provision. Kasfir (2015) defines rebel governance as “the organization of civilians within rebel-held territory for a public purpose” (24). Rebel governance is thus a specific form of authority claim through which violent non-state actors seek to obtain deference from civilians in a way that limits violence. Like its somewhat informal variant, civil action, governance involves “the maintenance of relationships and cooperation between diverse actors with varied interests” (Pierre 2000 as cited in Papadopoulos 2003). The way that I approach governance aligns with Borzel and Risse’s (2010) conceptualization, which understands governance as modes of social coordination meant to provide a collective good ranging from security, to health care, to taxation, to education, and others in between. A critical but understudied public good that I propose enhances the welfare of non-combatants and the public in general is the creation of “pockets of normalcy” amidst highly wartime abnormal environments (Berry 2018). Though such spaces may not shape the course of war as drastically as the more formal aforementioned examples of service provision, I consider them nonetheless important indicators of armed groups’ abilities to improve the general public’s welfare. By broadening of the scope of what I consider relevant examples of mutual exchange between combatants and civilians to include civil action as well as rebel governance, I am able to draw attention to otherwise overlooked micro-level dynamics that affect the severity and effects of violence during civil war.

2.3. Conceptualizing Foreign Fighters

I apply the conventional definition to the term foreign fighter: “non-citizens of conflict states who join insurgencies during civil conflict” (Malet 2013:9) and who lack kinship ties to the militant groups that they join (Hegghammer 2010). However, I differ from Hegghammer’s (2010) conceptualization and include diaspora populations as foreign fighters.⁶ Foreigners who join the ranks of otherwise local insurgent groups engaged in violent contention against a state actor can be paid or unpaid, and their decisions to join a civil war that is not their own can range from ethnic, ideological, pecuniary, to other motivations. The term foreign fighting implies engagement in military activity, such as training or fighting, against an enemy provided that the fighting occurs outside the fighter’s country of citizenship (Hegghammer 2013). Thus, an individual from Sierra Leone who joins the Forces Nouvelles rebel group in Cote d’Ivoire and engages in fighting against the Ivorian state is considered a foreign combatant.⁷ A Rwandan citizen who has fled to a refugee camp in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and returns home to join the ranks of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (FPR), however, would not be considered a foreign fighter. My conceptualization of foreign fighters thus excludes so-called cases of “refugee warriors” (Lischer 2003; Harpviken and Lischer 2013).

⁶ As Salehyan (2009) explains, the term has different meanings in the literature, and authors diverge on the criteria that they apply to define diaspora populations. These criteria apply primarily to their assimilation into host societies, their ties to the homeland, and their political relations with the home government, among others. I simply view them here as populations that exist “outside the state... but inside the people” (Shain & Barth, 2003: 451), thus emphasizing diasporas’ geographical distance from and cultural proximity to populations in the conflict state.

⁷ I use various terms such as foreign fighter, foreign combatant, foreign volunteer, transnational insurgent, or migratory fighter interchangeably to refer to the same category of fighter.

Foreign fighters in this project are also not the same as hired mercenaries or members of private security firms, and are distinct in two important ways. First, foreign fighters display a broad range of military experience, and though many are hardened fighters, they are not professionals in the way that private security contractors or mercenaries are. Foreign fighters often quit their day jobs to join foreign conflicts; fighting in other countries is the typical mercenary's day job. Second, foreign fighters are not a uniform category of actors. Instead, meaningful within-group variation exists among foreign fighter populations. Malet (2013), for example, recognizes that foreign fighters vary in the extent to which they are "foreign" to particular contexts. The existing literature suggests that "regional" and "beyond neighboring" foreign fighters exhibit unique traits that then influence conflict dynamics in different ways (Chu and Braithwaite 2017). Whereas "regional" foreign fighters arrive from states neighboring the conflict state, "beyond neighboring" foreign fighters have traveled from farther afield to reach the conflict zone. Moreover, there is variation in the extent to which foreign fighters share a common ethnicity with the rebel organization that they join, and consequently with surrounding civilian populations.⁸

⁸ Nearly 75 percent of all rebel groups recruit from ethnic groups, which suggests that overlap between foreign and local fighters' ethnicities likely corresponds to overlap between foreign fighters' ethnicities and the ethnicities of populations from which the insurgency recruits (Wucherpfenning et al. 2012).

2.4. Modes of Civilian-Combatant Interaction

Though they have participated in civil conflict throughout history, foreign fighters have only recently been taken into account in studies of intrastate war. One reason for this is that, according to Hegghammer (2010: 55), “foreign fighters constitute an intermediate actor category that gets lost between local rebels, on the one hand, and international terrorists, on the other.” What we do know about foreign fighters during armed conflict paints an ambiguous picture. Chu and Braithwaite (2017), for example, show that foreign fighters are associated with a decreased likelihood of government victory in conflict. Malet (2013) argues that foreign fighters increase insurgent prospects of victory because they provide new skills and resources. However, a study by Seymour, Bakke, and Cunningham (2015) suggests that the presence of foreign fighters is associated with a higher risk of organizational fragmentation, and Mitchell (2008) also shows that particular foreign fighter ideologies may actually have contradictory effects on the utility of force. Bakke’s (2014) work on foreign fighters in the Chechnya context and Rich and Conduit’s (2014) comparison of foreign militants in Chechen and Syrian insurgencies also stress that foreign fighters simultaneously present a potential force multiplier and liability to the domestic groups they join. What’s more, the effect of foreign fighters on combatant behavior related to civilians is underexplored in the literature.

How foreign fighters systematically affect conflict dynamics including rebel violence towards civilians is an important area for further inquiry, especially given recent qualitative studies that point to foreign fighters' potentially escalatory effect on civil war violence. In particular, Bakke (2014) traces how the arrival of foreign insurgents to the Chechen insurgency created divisions within the original nationalist movement, pitting indigenous elements against transnational Islamists, and introducing Chechen-on-Chechen violence. The arrival of foreign combatants led to more violence aimed specifically at civilians, and the introduction of suicide bombing tactics that many local Chechens actively resisted (ibid.). This particular logic supports the claim that the recruitment of foreign fighters into civil wars is likely to induce heightened violence against local populations.

Nevertheless, the historical record also suggests that some foreign fighter populations do not lead rebels to commit more abuses. During the Spanish Civil War, the experiences of members of the transnational fighting force that fought on the Republican side stand out in sharp contrast to behavior implied in the UN's declaration. Returning Americans explained how local civilians came to accept the foreign fighters who made up the International Brigades: "[locals] are tremendously interested in these comrades from other lands and they do everything possible to make them comfortable during their stay in the village" (William Colfax Miller, as cited in Malet 2013, 122). In the 1990s, foreigners who joined Croatian irregulars during Croatia's war for independence characterized their

experiences as follows: “we’re not in it for the killing. It’s about the camaraderie... We are here because we want to be” (Arielli 2012: 10). Such accounts suggest that populations of foreign fighters may engage in different behaviors across conflicts.

The literature on rebel behavior towards civilians, by contrast, is a well-developed strain of conflict and security studies. Research shows that while some insurgencies coerce civilians to gain access to the materials they need for war, many others encourage civilian contributions by promising security, dispute resolution, and other governance services (Mampilly 2011). Rebel interactions with civilians thus span the continuum between coercion and mutual exchange, or threats and promises.

Studies implicitly highlight the relevance of social embeddedness, and actors’ social environments more broadly, when it comes to explaining the development of wartime systems of mutual exchange between rebels and civilians. To obtain voluntary cooperation from civilians, rebels secure loyalty by taking into consideration local demands (Mampilly 2011). Civilians themselves are more likely to view insurgents as legitimate when the latter embody locally grounded values and norms (Kasfir 2015; Forster 2015). Even when rebels attempt to make sweeping changes to a socio-political order, research shows that they frequently adopt local values and narratives that evoke the shared beliefs of civilians. This helps to strengthen their claims to authority (Hoffmann 2015). Rebels’ social embeddedness, or deep immersion into networks and

frames indigenous to a particular conflict, thus appears to ease access to critical information that enables rebels to rely on promises, rather than threats, to accumulate needed resources. Presumably, the distinction between rebel and civilian is more blurred when rebels have deep ties to local communities. When civilians see insurgencies as extensions of their own communities, rebels can rely at least partially on compromise to seek compliance and popular support.

Indeed, familiarity with local social structures, and an ability to tap into existing networks – both social and political – confers significant advantages to rebels, insofar as the need to divert scarce resources to war-making diminishes (Mampilly 2011; Barter 2015). Yet the role of social embeddedness itself, or the extent to which rebels and their individual members are variably integrated into the local social fabric of a conflict, remains significantly understudied in the literature. If the state can be understood as being embedded or entangled within “web-like societal forces” (Barter 2015: 228), then it is likely that rebel governance systems cannot be understood in isolation from society, or the webs of relationships that characterize local conflict contexts.

The alternative to seeking popular support through systems of mutual exchange is to do so through coercion, a strategy commonly employed by states and rebels alike (Mason and Krane 1989; Valentino 2004; Downes 2006; Kalyvas 2006; Weinstein 2007). While violence yields more immediate returns and is less costly than investments into

systems of governance, it is likely to backfire, particularly when insurgents cannot deploy selective violence due to a lack of local knowledge (Kalyvas 2006).

Theories of insurgent violence highlight how civilian constituencies impact rebels' organizational structures, and that violence from rank and file combatants is ultimately a byproduct of group recruiting practices (Humphreys and Weinstein 2006; Weinstein 2007; Cohen 2013, 2016). In particular, Weinstein (2007) shows that insurgencies that attract high-commitment individuals, or so-called investors, obtain resources from local populations by striking bargains informed by knowledge of established norms and social networks. Opportunistic insurgencies, on the other hand, attract consumer rebels as a result of their reliance on economic endowments. This decreases their need to rely on local civilians and thus on local knowledge (Stewart and Liou 2016). While activist rebellions are able to use violence strategically thanks to insurgents' social ties to the local conflict context, the disembeddedness of opportunistic rebellions renders them unable to control violence from within their ranks.

The relevance of civilian constituencies extends beyond the group formation stage to influence rebel strategies of violence once conflict is underway. In particular, ties that bind armed groups to local populations during war – such as common ethnicity – help to explain where and when groups target civilians. Ottman (2017), for instance, finds that allegiances and cleavages within and between ethnic groups that serve as rebels'

support bases impose additional incentives and restraints on fighters' behavior. Other studies show that when militants share a common ethnicity with local populations, they are less likely to victimize civilians, as doing so would be tantamount to attacking one's own community (Fjelde and Hultman 2014; Stanton 2015).

The proliferation of causal variables and mechanisms that explain forms of rebel behavior towards civilians ranging from service provision to abuse has at least one important implication. Specifically, the findings discussed above are largely consistent with the idea that rebels' embeddedness into the local social fabric of a conflict shapes propensities towards and away from nonviolent and violent behavior, and the ways through which they engage civilian populations. Yet the explicit role of embeddedness remains relatively under-theorized in the literature. What's more, most studies of rebel behavior seek to explain only one side of the behavior coin, without contemplating what factors might cause rebels to gravitate towards the other side. There is a richness in what many relegate to the "absence of violence" that warrants scrutiny.

By focusing on the social context of war, and placing pride of explanatory place on rebel embeddedness, I can better grasp the differences between stationary and roving bandits at both the micro and macro level of conflict. The social capital and cultural values and norms with which rebels enter and experience conflict informs the distance that exists between fighters and civilians. When levels of embeddedness are high, rebels'

aptitudes to form connections with other local actors should increase, and the propensity for rebels to engage in nonviolent actions ranging from civil action, at the micro-level, to more formal governance, at the macro level, should increase. Disembeddedness, on the other hand, should close off opportunities for engagement based on promises, and curtail nonviolent interaction with other local actors including members of the ordinary population. In other words, rebel groups are more likely to limit their violence and make credible promises to civilians when they begin with or develop deep access into local communities, and when their understanding of the conflict resonates with local frames.

Against this background, the theoretical framework that I elaborate in the remainder of this chapter reconsiders the role of embeddedness in informing rebel behavior, and applies it to understanding variation in the behavior of rebel groups at both the micro and macro levels of analysis.

2.5. Foreign Fighters, Embeddedness, and Combatant Repertoires of Behavior in Civil War

Following Zukin and DiMaggio (1990) as well as more recent studies in organizational attainment (see e.g. Goldberg et al. 2016), I distinguish between two forms of embeddedness. As I describe previously, structural embeddedness refers to “the configuration of interpersonal networks and the extent to which individuals are anchored in tightly-knit social communities” (Goldberg et al. 2016, 1192). Cultural embeddedness

describes the extent to which individuals share “similar norms and taken-for-granted assumptions about appropriate behavior with those around them, and how these shared understandings shape their interactions with others” (ibid., 1192). While terms such as “integrated” might describe structurally embedded individuals (or in this case, rebel organizations), others such as “assimilated” reference cultural embeddedness. Tensions between standing out or fitting in thus relate back to the extent to which rebel organizations are integrated versus assimilated into local conflict contexts.

Some of the earliest conceptualizations of economic embeddedness stressed that individual livelihoods were not shaped by market exchange, but instead by redistribution and reciprocity, or systems of mutual exchange that hinged on long-term relationships and strong political centers that redistributed goods according to established cultural norms (Polanyi 1944). Later, Granovetter (1985) extended the applicability of embeddedness to social subjects, arguing that seemingly rational interactions are influenced by pre-existing social ties: “attempts at purposive action are... embedded in concrete, ongoing systems of social relations” (ibid., 484).

Despite the fundamentally interactive nature of rebel behavior towards civilians (whether one looks at governance or violence), the bulk of civil war scholarship does not explicitly account for armed groups’ embeddedness when it comes to explaining conflict outcomes. This is somewhat surprising, given that rebel behavior does not occur in a

social vacuum and that violence in particular is a “variable, situational and contextual phenomenon” (Malešević 2017, 308). Social violence is rooted in normal social relations, and requires coordination, communication, and solidarity that predates the moment of violence or other form of interaction (Tilly 1978). The same is true for civil action and governance, or the “nonviolent” end of the insurgent behavioral spectrum. It thus follows that the social capital and cultural convictions with which rebels enter a specific conflict context (i.e. the network ties with which they enter a war and the extent to which their understanding of the conflict resonates with local frames) should influence their interactions on and off the battlefield.

In general, foreign fighters should be less embedded into local conflict contexts, relative to local fighters. They are likely to experience deficits in local social capital, relative to local combatants, because their social networks are located primarily outside the conflict zone. Additionally, foreign fighters may not speak the local language, and be oblivious to the traditions, norms, and values that guide the everyday lives of local populations. But some foreign fighters may be more foreign than others, and different qualities of foreignness likely affect trajectories of violence differently. For instance, foreigners who enter conflicts fluent in the local language or who share local customs have more resources with which to embed. They can communicate directly with local actors, and have a better understanding of the norms and values that inform the expectations of the ordinary population. Similarly, foreigners who travel from

neighboring states may benefit from direct or indirect ties to members of local populations. Preexisting social connections to the local conflict context, or the ability to embed via common language and shared understandings, should help some foreign rebels establish the social capital necessary to rely on nonviolent engagement to meet battlefield needs. These qualities may also enhance the extent to which foreign fighters see themselves as part of the civilian population, rather than as outsiders with a reduced stake in the conflict's ultimate outcome. More socially embedded foreign fighters groups should thus seek to avoid potentially destabilizing levels of violence, relative to disembedded ones. Below, I expand on these logics to develop hypotheses linking foreign fighters to rebel behavior on and off the battlefield.

Structural Embeddedness and Propensities for Nonviolent Interaction

The individuals who populate an insurgency's rank and file – its recruits – are critical military resources (Gates 2002). Recruits are the mechanism for pulling local knowledge and resources into an organization, and also the “face” of the armed group on the ground. Importantly, recruits who are deeply immersed into the local social fabric of a conflict due to multiple, diverse ties to local populations may be particularly valuable assets to armed groups, inasmuch as they are well positioned to benefit from local knowledge (Kalyvas 2006; Lyall 2010; Parkinson 2013). Local ties of everyday kinship, friendship, marriage, and other community-based relationships are often central to organizational survival and reemergence during times of crisis (Parkinson 2013), and also provide critical information, trust, and shared political meanings that serve as

foundations for the formation of new armed groups (Staniland 2012, 2014). Moreover, actors who are local to a particular conflict context have built their entire lives in the area where fighting unfolds, which allows them to deploy preexisting social connections for civil action during conflict (Parkinson 2013).

I expect that rebels' social ties into civilian networks local to the battlefield also shape the way that rebels themselves experience the war, most often by blurring the lines between civilians and fighters. Indeed, the civil war scholarship acknowledges that distinctions between combatants and noncombatants are often fluid, as fighters pass relatively seamlessly from their warrior roles to their civilian roles laden with the everyday responsibilities that come with being a father, mother, son, daughter, brother or sister. When fighters are local to a conflict, the distinction between military and civil roles depends more on specific situations, and whether that particular person is acting on behalf of the armed group or as a representative of her own interests within a personal social network affected by the conflict (Arnaut and Højberg 2008). In the Bosnian civil war, for example, most of the men and women who filled the ranks of the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina saw themselves first and foremost as people in relationships, who had picked up arms to defend their homes, family, neighbors, friends, and coworkers. The protection and well-being of their social networks – which were often interethnic in nature – was therefore often at the forefront of their minds during the war. Soldiers'

transitions into the role of “warrior” was quick and unexpected, and many reevaluated their decisions to mobilize towards violence numerous times throughout the war.

The strong ties that bind local rebels to the local populace and the blurred civilian-soldier identity through which local combatants experience civil war are not unique to the Bosnian context, as other studies of civil war confirm (Förster 2015). Most rebels and insurgents are individuals who fight “in their own backyards,” making it likely that they are never too far removed from members of opposing forces, from a social standpoint. In the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), for example, friends and enemies “live side-by-side” and “cheek by jowl in remote villages” (Marks and Stys 2018, 2). Social relationships therefore push or pull local combatants in various directions during wartime, at times reinforcing their roles as fighters but at others inducing them to resist violence or maintain restraint in otherwise volatile situations. The nonviolent social capital formed in the prewar era that emphasizes trust, reciprocity, and information is not completely replaced by violent social capital when a local actor joins an armed group in her own backyard.

This has important implications for rebel behavior during conflict in two important ways. First, the intimate nature of civil war and its local dynamics plays a role in shaping rebels’ relational potential for civil action, which the literature on civil war thus far ignores. In particular, I expect that the mundane bonds that the “rebel-civilian”

develops in the prewar era can temper reactions to disagreements during war. Through repeated, everyday interactions in peacetime, local actors develop a sense of mutual respect that leaves open the potential for listening to those who may have ended up on the other side of a front line even after the outbreak of open hostilities. Malešević (2017, 288), for instance, discusses how cognitive and emotional abilities developed through intense and repeated face-to-face interactions can give birth to microsolidarity. For most individuals, “bonds of microsolidarity are built around the individuals they grow up with – their parents, siblings, close relatives, childhood friends, neighbours, early peers, etc.” (ibid.). As such, it should follow that local rebels who have presumably grown up in the area where they fight as soldiers should exhibit higher propensities to engage in civil actions that build solidarity and resist violence, relative to non-local rebels. The nonviolent social capital that they form during their lives leading up to war should endure at least in part, and make it harder to consistently and systematically activate the relational processes that generate violence. Existing studies tend to see local actors – in particular civilians – as either perpetrators of opportunistic violence, or as victims of violence (Kalyvas 2006). With notable exceptions (see e.g. Wood 2000, 2003), few studies have focused on the way that citizens and groups – including rank and file rebels – can employ their agency to de-escalate or reduce violence. Yet the empirical record shows that people and groups do this all the time (Fujii 2009; Luft 2015; Avant et al. 2018). Oftentimes, violent activity works alongside civil action even within the ranks of organizations that prioritize violence.

I am not making the argument that local rebels are immune to the well-established logic showing that local actors (civilians) are often complicit and/or collaborate with armed groups during war to “rat out” their co-locals as a means of survival or petty revenge (Kalyvas 2006). People remember civil war as most often characterized by fratricide, as opposed to fraternization: families become divided, “brother [fights] brother, sons [fight] their fathers, killings [occurs] between spouses...” (Zur 1998, 72).⁹ However, ignoring local actors’ social capital that values nonviolent relational capacities, such as trust, reciprocity, influence, and information (Lin 1999) in exchange for focusing singularly on actors’ potential for violent capital does a disservice to our efforts to understand the full spectrum of behavior in which local actors actually do engage during conflict. Indeed, acknowledging the more mundane, nonviolent interactions in which local actors (armed and not armed) engage across front lines during war can lead to the identification of macro-level strategies to reduce violence that the conventional wisdom otherwise ignores.

Second, it should follow that rebel groups that recruit locally and maintain a structurally embedded fighter base are more likely to engage in rebel governance

⁹ Moreover, studies also acknowledge that when intimate violence does occur, it tends not to escalate and remain confined to the individual relationship from which the act was motivated: the degree of intimacy between the perpetrator and victim, in other words, is inversely related to likelihood of subsequent violence (Senechal de la Roche 2001).

because of their potential to maintain and open space for regular interaction with different local actors. Governance is in many ways connected to and often contingent on civil action, because civil action makes it more difficult to activate relational processes linked to violence and easier to preserve and build relationships. In other words, rebel civil action and governance are interconnected inasmuch as the former creates space for the latter to emerge. When rebels engage in actions during war that help nurture preexisting connections, build solidarity, and foster openness generally, they enhance the legitimacy of their organization among the broader local populace, whose members may themselves be engaging in similar actions. Moreover, the more that individual civil actions by rebels are actually coordinated and begin to consolidate into larger waves of action, the more potential they hold to scale upwards into more formal and determinative action such as governance.

The Free Aceh Movement (GAM) in Indonesia, which worked to limit violence and enable the development of accommodating systems of exchange with local populations, serves as a useful example of the links between rebels' structural embeddedness and engagement in nonviolent action to gain local legitimacy and popular support. GAM rebels who were former or current students of local Islamic teachers (ulama) used their direct ties to these important community leaders to bring them into the fold, ultimately developing systems of exchange that Acehnese civilians considered locally legitimate. Because local residents trusted the ulama more than the rebels, the latter created

positions for them to become tax collectors or judges in GAM's system of courts (Barter 2015). Eventually, ties with local activists even helped GAM transform into a political party and present candidates, further bolstering and confirming their local legitimacy (ibid.).

In sum, a rebel organization's relationships with the local populace increase its capacity to act. The relational capacities that structurally embedded insurgencies possess foster nonviolent actions ranging from civil action at the micro level to service provision at a more macro level. Such action is possible, if not inevitable, because of the blurred soldier-civilian distinctions and because regular interaction between fighters and members of the ordinary population characterizes local combatants' wartime experiences. While often neglected in studies of civil war either because they pale in frequency and shock factor compared to violence, or are simply underreported by those who engage in them, civil actions by rebels are important indicators of rebel potential for governance. Events at the macro level in war are often the product of micro level dynamics.

Structural Disembeddedness and Propensities for Violence

Social structures that precede war should also affect patterns of violence during war, as the conflict literature already acknowledges. For instance, Varshney (2002) shows that civic networks created through associational and quotidian forms of interethnic engagement before the outbreak of conflict helped to constrain violence in certain Indian

municipalities. In the case of armed groups, Balcells (2017) connects pre-war politics in Spain to patterns of violence during war the civil war in the 1930s. Pre-war political rivalries and local feuds helped to direct wartime violence, as armed groups perpetrated abuse jointly with civilians that sought to gain or consolidate local political control (ibid.). For the most part, however, the civil war scholarship works under the assumption that rebellions are made up of local fighters.

Foreign fighters' lack of preexisting ties into a conflict's local social networks suggests that these actors likely add a layer of complexity to a civil war's dynamics. Combatants who are entering a conflict from "outside" might induce mistrust between a rebel organization and its local constituents; civilians might become uncertain about a foreign combatant's skills or intentions, or the quality of her contributions to the local struggle. The uncertainty that foreign fighters introduce into a conflict's evolution might cause members of the local populace to withhold support for the group that actively recruits them or accepts them into their ranks. Furthermore, though the distinction between who is a rebel and who is a civilian is often blurred in the context of civil war, this is unlikely to hold true when fighters and civilians are not connected via pre-war social ties.

I expect that disembeddedness from local conflict networks – either through a lack of preexisting ties to the conflict zone, or an inability to form these ties – engenders

heightened levels of violence against local populations via several different mechanisms. First, foreign fighters are unlikely to be part of local civilians' so-called primary group, as defined by Cooley (1909). Primary groups are characterized by "intimate face-to-face association and cooperation. They are primary in several senses, but chiefly in that they are fundamental in forming the social nature and ideals of the individual. [They are] the result of intimate association" (25). Examples of primary groups are one's family, friends, and neighborhood or community group of elders. Primary groups are the foundation of what Malešević (2017, 286) calls microsolidarity, or mutual support among individuals. While the close proximity of local rebels' primary groups are likely to open avenues for civil action, as the preceding section explains, the absence of such primary groups in the context of foreign fighting may lower barriers to violence. A range of distinct mechanisms might come into play. For example, immunity from revengeful action may facilitate violence by foreign fighters. Kalyvas (1999) demonstrates the salience of revenge as a driver for killing in the context of Algeria's civil war. Foreigners who come from locations far removed from the conflict zone may have less to fear when it comes to retaliatory attacks, particularly those that target their kin or other members of their primary group. The farther removed a combatant is from her home, the more secure she feels that acts of violence committed on or near the battlefield will not lead to reprisals against her family. Unlike local soldiers who often experience war as the fathers, sons, or sisters of members of the ordinary population and may thus fear retribution against members of

their primary group, foreign fighters experience the war knowing that their social networks are far removed from wartime violence.

Alternatively, sparse ties to local conflict actors may also grant fighters from other countries anonymity within the conflict zone, which should lower barriers to violence. As an example, consider this statement from a foreign member of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD): “I even killed some who resisted... I felt like I could do some of those things in Liberia because no one knew me there – they weren’t my people” (HRW 2005, 34). If violence tends to become more intense with physical distance (Schutte 2017), then it becomes plausible that the violent propensities of foreign combatants may increase in conjunction with the distance they have traveled to reach the battlefield.

Finally, accounts of foreign combatants traveling long distances to reach civil wars appear to stress their lack of local, contextual knowledge. In Cote d’Ivoire, for instance, most of the migratory fighters who arrived in 2002-2003 did not know the name of the Ivoirian rebel groups actively fighting the government, and only a few were familiar with the name Laurent Gbagbo, the Ivoirian president at the time (HRW 2005). This unfamiliarity and outright disregard for local conflict dynamics may be a sign of disinterest in the ultimate outcome of a struggle, sentiments that might obstruct group’s investments into systems of rebel governance. This is likely particularly true if foreign

combatants hail from far flung destinations beyond reach of a conflict's potentially contagious effects.

The two preceding subsections leads to the following hypotheses regarding the effect of structural embeddedness on rebel-civilian interactions:

H1a: Rebels that recruit foreign fighters who are structurally embedded into the local conflict context (i.e. that are connected to civilian populations via social ties) are more likely to engage in governance, relative to groups with structurally disembedded foreign fighters.

H1b: Rebels that do not recruit foreign fighters or recruit foreign fighter populations that are structurally embedded into the local conflict context (i.e. that are connected to civilian populations via social ties) are more likely to engage in civil action, relative to groups with structurally disembedded foreign fighters.

H2: Rebels that recruit foreign fighters who are structurally disembedded from the local conflict context (i.e. that lack connections to civilian populations via social ties) are more likely to engage in violence against civilians, relative to groups with with structurally embedded foreign fighters.

Cultural Embeddedness and Propensities for Rebel Governance

Cultural embeddedness refers “the role of shared collective understandings in shaping... strategies and goals” (Zukin and DiMaggio 1990, 17). Culture sets limits to rationality, and shapes the terms of exchange by introducing beliefs, ideologies, and other taken for granted assumptions. Culture thus plays a constitutive role (by identifying categories and scripts) and a regulatory role (through values and norms) and also has a cognitive function. I focus most on culture’s regulatory role, insofar as it guides the evolution of rebel-civilian interactions during war (i.e. it constrains behavior), and on the information that certain norms, values, or customs provide to individuals, including indications of likely action that other individuals will take (Dequech 2003).

Armed groups engage in conflict with sets of preconceived norms or values, which causes them to frame particular conflicts in particular ways. When members of an insurgency are local to a conflict context, their members likely adopt similar conflict narratives and frames to those that local populations adopt: the meaning of the struggle, in other words, is the same for rebels and civilians alike. These “interpretive schemata” – as Snow and Benford (1992, 137) refer to them – give meaning to collective action, and ensure that rebels and civilians share the same or similar sets of understandings about appropriate behavior. Insurgents’ recruitment narratives and framing might make reference to specific cultural traits based in tradition to gain local legitimacy: “rebel movements often can successfully claim cultural identity with the local populace and

build or maintain a boundary between them and ‘outsiders’ or other actors who, they say, do not belong to them and their culture” (Förster 2015, 204). Indeed, an insurgent organization will likely be most culturally embedded in and its framing resonant with the community from which its claims originate, and from which it recruited its original members. In these situations, because the distinction between rebel and civilian is blurred, there is little difference between the needs of the community and the needs of the rebels.

The extent to which the behavior of combatants is normatively compliant to a local conflict context is an important component of civilians’ acceptance of rebel governance. Compliance, or behaving according to accepted norms, may be driven by institutions (see e.g. Pinker 2007) as much as by belonging to a particular “thought community” (Zerabuel 1997). Studies show that rebel governance is not just service provision, and the services that rebels provide are not mere commodities; civilians look at how and by whom things like security are actually provided (Förster 2015). As a result, civilians are more likely to view service provision and governance as legitimate when the rebels providing the services are people that share their beliefs, values, and are immersed in the same set of traditions, customs, and overarching conflict frames. Rebels that are local to a context may thus view establishing systems of mutual exchange with surrounding populations as a relatively low-cost way of accumulating popular support,

relative to rebels whose founding ideologies and conflict narratives are not normatively compliant to the local context and are likely to face local resistance.

I therefore expect that cultural proximity between rebels and civilians, or an insurgency's level of cultural embeddedness, positively influences the likelihood of insurgent governance. Rebels are more likely to see civilians as "partners," or "natural allies" when they share needs and a common understanding of the war itself, and the feeling is likely to be mutual from the standpoint of civilians (Förster 2015, 213).

Common language and familiarity with local customs should also make it easier for sides involved in civil war to identify loyalties. Culturally embedded rebels should be able to infer ties to particular ethnicities or religions based on clothing, appearance, or dialect, which in turn gives them an advantage in deciphering the norms and values that likely inform civilians' needs. As distance between rebels' and civilians' cultural circles decreases, each benefits from improved mental access to the other (Kasfir 2015). In sum, I expect that cultural embeddedness increases rebel propensities for service provision.

Cultural Disembeddedness and Propensities for Violence

On the other hand, cognitive dissonance should permeate the interactions of culturally distant rebels and civilians. In these situations, civilians and rebels lack a shared understanding of local customs, which should impede cooperative exchange and lower barriers to violence: "the absence of cognitive access to local customs can provide incentives for brutal and indiscriminate behavior" (Schutte 2015, 1109). Combatant

groups have even made deliberate efforts to increase the psychological distance between fighters and their potential targets to facilitate killing (Grossman 1995).

An observable implication of this logic may thus be that characteristics such as language, a facet of ethnicity (Horowitz 1985),¹⁰ may erect barriers between foreign combatants and local populations, influencing groups towards violence. When a rebel group's rank and file includes individuals who are unable to communicate directly with local civilians, the cognitive distance between insurgents and members of the ordinary population should increase. Fighters will be more challenged to engage civilians nonviolently, and from the perspective of civilians the addition of linguistically distinct fighters introduces another layer of uncertainty to an already unstable environment. The overall legitimacy of the rebel group becomes questionable. Language often presents itself as "an inescapable medium of public discourse," (Brubaker 2013, 5-6) and even minor linguistic distinctions are easy to notice and loaded with symbolic connotations (Gellner 1983, 58-62). Linguistic barriers may also impede the ability of an disembedded insurgency to embed itself structurally into a local conflict context, given that shared language is critical to developing and cultivating personal relationships.

¹⁰ Recent studies highlight the strong link between language and ethnic conflict, relative to other ethnic markers such as religion (Bormann, Cederman and Vogt 2017), suggesting that language is likely a particularly salient and observable source of distrust between foreigners and locals in the context of civil war.

In addition, foreign fighters' cultural disembeddedness from a local conflict context may stem from dissonant ideologies or conflict frames, relative to how indigenous actors frame or understand a particular conflict, and also lead to escalations in violence. Recall that because local actors in the conflict zone generally do not form part of foreign fighters' primary groups, the two sets of actors are unlikely to share social natures or ideals (Cooley 1909). Bakke (2014), for example, shows how militants from the Middle East brought with them new ideas about the meaning of struggle to Chechnya. Foreign fighters who joined the Chechen insurgency had particular ideas about how the war should be fought, which did not resonate with local conflict frames and were not embraced by civilian populations. As a result of trying to spread their otherwise alien understanding of struggle onto native Chechen fighters and civilians who actively resisted such attempts, foreign fighters contributed directly to increases in Chechen-on-Chechen violence.

The disembeddedness of foreign fighter populations is particularly useful in drawing attention to violent social action that most studies of conflict miss. Specifically, foreign fighters also demonstrate heightened propensities for what Malešević (2017, 5) refers to as "nonmaterial violent action", relative to local soldiers. Such forms of violence cannot be reduced to the corporal dimension. Indeed, violence can inflict emotional as well as physical pain, and include "assaults on the personhood, dignity, sense of worth or value of the victim. The social and cultural dimensions of violence are what give violence

its power and meaning” (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004, 1). In the case of the foreign mujahedin that joined the Bosnian Army throughout the early 1990s, for instance, accounts from the war highlight the near constant state of harassment in which ordinary Bosnians lived in areas where foreign combatants were present. Foreign soldiers consistently attacked the lifestyles of Bosnian Muslims, ranging from the ways that they dressed in public, their consumption of alcohol, to the ways in which men and women regularly interacted. While foreign soldiers largely refrained from inflicting physical violence on Bosnian Muslims (foreigners’ lethal violence typically targeted Bosnian Croats and Serbs), the absence of corporal punishment does not mean that they refrained from anti-Muslim violence altogether.

Finally, identifying disembeddedness among rebel groups can help explain why certain insurgencies commit violence against unexpected targets. Specifically, foreign combatants may upset the balance of ethnic overlap between rebel groups and their civilian constituency, leading a group expected to carry out low levels of violence to turn to high levels of victimization (Fjelde and Hultman 2014). Consider the reaction of an Ivorian civilian when asked about the recruitment of Liberian fighters by the Ivorian Popular Movement of the Great West (MPIGO) rebels: “In the beginning when the rebels arrived everyone was happy... Later, we were not happy. We realized the Liberians were not nice” (HRW 2005, 30). Moreover, foreigners’ non-resonant ideologies and their ensuing efforts to push alien ways of life or religious practices on local populations might

explain instances of intra-ethnic violence, as in the Chechen case described by Bakke (2014). In such contexts, intra-ethnic violence would have likely been lower or nonexistent if foreign combatants' conflict frames had resonated with local frames and understandings of the conflict. When rebels' cultural identities align with those of local populations, claims to authority can be made via nonviolent interaction.

The preceding subsections lead to three additional hypotheses:

H3a: Rebels that recruit foreign fighter populations that are culturally embedded into the local conflict context, i.e. that share a common understanding of the conflict with local civilians, are more likely to engage in rebel governance, relative to groups that recruit culturally disembedded foreign fighters.

H3b: Rebels that recruit foreign fighter populations that are culturally embedded into the local conflict context, i.e. that share a common understanding of the conflict with local civilians, are more likely to engage in civil action, relative to groups that recruit culturally disembedded foreign fighters.

H4: Rebels that recruit foreign fighter populations that are culturally disembedded from the local conflict context, i.e. that do not share a common understanding of the conflict

with local civilians, are more likely to engage in violence against civilians, relative to groups that recruit culturally embedded foreign fighters.

Interaction of Cultural & Structural Embeddedness

Earlier parts of this chapter acknowledge in passing that standing out or fitting in embodies tradeoffs. Indeed, specific network positions that strike a balance between embeddedness in one network and connection to other more distant networks (brokerage positions) might offer advantages in terms of resource diversity and ultimately performance (Vedres and Stark 2010). Similarly, there is a sweet spot in terms of cultural embeddedness whereby identity conformity and distinctiveness interact to yield more impactful results (Uzzi et al. 2013).

The preceding discussion of structural and cultural embeddedness in the context of foreign fighters and the ensuing impacts on rebel behavior does not consider how the two forms of embeddedness might interact, but considers them only independently. The hypotheses thus far may therefore offer only a fragmentary picture of how embeddedness affects rebel behavior: either the relational advantages of structural embeddedness are superior when it comes to alleviating levels of violence and encouraging rebel governance, or identity advantages matter more.

However, it may be valuable to consider the interpenetration of dimensions of embeddedness, in particular the possibility that high levels of embeddedness in one

dimension can offset or compensate for the deleterious effects of low embeddedness in the other. What's more, acknowledging that rebels may be embedded in one dimension but disembedded in the other highlights the unique positions that different rebels occupy vis-à-vis particular civilian populations. Considering interactive effects may thus lead to more fine-grained understandings of behavior. Figure 2.1 presents a potential conceptual framework. The axes depict the two types of embeddedness, and the quadrants the types of rebel groups that emerge depending on combinations of embeddedness.

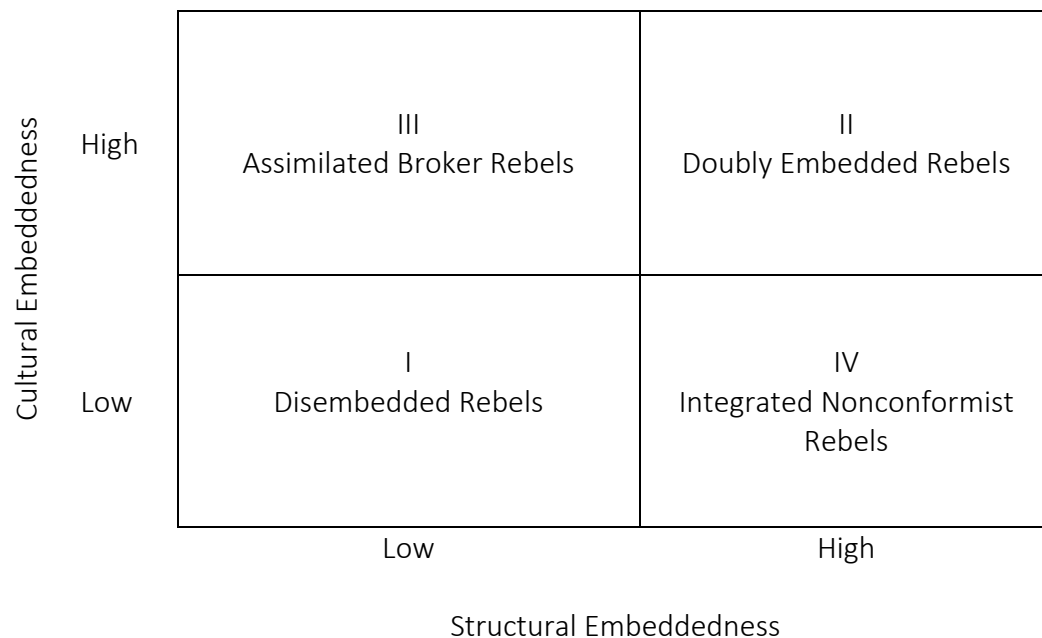


Figure 2.1. Dimensions of Rebel Embeddedness (adapted from Goldberg et al. 2016).

Quadrants I and II represent the two possible extremes: insurgent organizations that are embedded along neither dimension (disembedded rebels), and those that are embedded along both dimensions (doubly embedded rebels), respectively. Groups in

these positions are either complete outsiders, or deeply integrated and assimilated into the local communities and conflict contexts in which fighting takes place. The latter are the quintessential “local” rebels. Groups with foreign fighters that are considered part of the doubly embedded population type include those that recruit regional militants that are coethnic to the majority of the rebel organization. As the previous sections imply, doubly embedded rebels enjoy the advantages of an indigenous understanding of the conflict, and of local civilians’ needs, qualities that confer acceptance and trust from civilian populations. These rebels’ structural ties into local communities also simultaneously provide them with direct access into networks indigenous to the battlefield, such that the accumulation of information, intelligence, and critical supplies proceeds through the organization’s local social capital. Conflict contexts in which doubly embedded rebels operate are most likely to resemble what Wood (2003) calls holistic fighting communities, where rebels experience the war through fluid civilian-soldier identities. These are also the contexts where I expect rebels will most often engage in civil actions, and where rebel organizations are most likely to develop systems of mutual exchange with local populations. Among groups that recruit foreign fighters, examples include the South Ossetia insurgency in Georgia, the Kurdish rebellion in Iraq, and the National Liberation Army (UCK) in Macedonia.

Disembedded rebels, on the other hand, have limited access into local conflict networks, and their understandings of the struggles that they have joined are unlikely to

resonate with local conflict frames. Groups that recruit disembedded foreign fighter populations draw on noncoethnic militants from beyond the immediate conflict region. In these contexts, rebels are most likely to engage in high levels of violence as a means of forcing popular support and legitimacy and pushing their norms and values on alienated civilian populations. Examples include the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, the Chechen insurgency in Russia, and Serbian irregulars during the Bosnian war.

By contrast, Quadrants III and IV represent insurgencies that strike a balance between fitting in and standing out; they combine embeddedness in one dimension with disembeddedness in the other. Empirically, I expect the range of rebel behavior towards civilians that emerges from groups with different configurations of embeddedness will vary more, relative to the behavior expected from disembedded and doubly embedded rebels.

The occupants of Quadrant III, assimilated broker rebels, enjoy the cognitive benefits of cultural proximity to local civilian populations, which buffers them from experiencing the insidious effects of being perceived as untrustworthy as a result of their lack of direct ties into local population networks. Foreign fighter populations that fall into this category travel from beyond the conflict region to reach a warzone, but share a common ethnicity with members of the armed groups they join. Assimilated broker rebels' structural disembeddedness should limit access to information and intelligence

that travels through social networks indigenous to a conflict context, and the everyday lives that these fighters have built outside the local conflict context should lessen the extent to which they experience war through flexible soldier-civilian identities. The purity of their “warrior” identity, in other words, is likely to be less contaminated by a responsibility to local relationships than that of structurally embedded rebels. The social ties of assimilated broker rebels are likely to be stronger to external actors, than they are to local ones. As such, these insurgencies are more likely to draw on social capital that is extra-local to a conflict context to meet their military objectives, but may nonetheless succeed in unraveling their political objectives at the local level thanks to the values, norms, and customs that their core of fighters shares with local populations.

An example of assimilated broker rebels might include groups that rely heavily on diaspora populations, who maintain strong identity ties with populations in the conflict state but lack direct connections into local community networks due to their geographical detachment from the conflict zone. Relative to disembedded rebels, the occupants of Quadrant III may be less likely to use violence, largely because individuals recruited from a diaspora are more likely to work through local fighters to gain the trust of local populations. It is also likely that the conflict narratives that influenced them towards mobilization back to their homeland are similar to those activating local resistance. However, structurally disembedded combatants’ lack of connections into networks proximate to the battlefield suggests that such groups may still be more prone

to violence, relative to groups that rely exclusively on a local fighter base. Kaldor (1999, 85), for example, demonstrates that diasporas are more prone to extremism because of the detached “fantasies about their origins” in which they are immersed. Anderson (1998, 3 ff.) also finds that diasporas who live in locations far removed from their homelands tend to act irresponsibly because they do not face the consequences of their actions long into the future. Their short-term forays into a warzone and clear exit option reduces their stake in a conflict’s long term outcome, relative to structurally embedded rebels who will stay behind long after the war is over. Examples include the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in Serbia and the Nagorno-Karabakh rebellion in Azerbaijan.

On the other end of the spectrum, integrated nonconformist rebels (Quadrant IV) occupy positions that grant them access into social networks local to a battlefield, through which they gather information, intelligence, as well as critical materials such as shelter and weapons. These insurgents will be tied down by their relationships to members of the civilian populations, which may increase their propensities to maintain some level of restraint in combat, or otherwise resist violence (for example through desertion back to their families). However, insurgencies that fall under Quadrant IV are culturally distant from local populations, on account of ideology, religion, ethno-linguistic, or other cultural differences. While local origins may thus tie integrated nonconformist rebels to local populations and facilitate trustworthy and information-rich relationships with civilians, the frames that they attach to a struggle alienate them from local actors.

I expect that integrated nonconformist rebels might engage in governance efforts representative of a wholesale restructuring of local society, although efforts at service provision are unlikely to be preceded by the types of civil actions in which doubly embedded rebels engage to resist violence and build solidarity on the battlefield. Instead, systems of governance implemented by integrated nonconformist rebels are likely to be exclusive in nature, limiting service provision to segments of the population that have acquiesced to new sets of norms and values in line with rebel demands. Anti-civilian violence is also likely to accompany service provision, as these types of organizations rely on coercion to implement new governing institutions. Examples of integrated nonconformist rebellions include jihadist movements that draw on the participation of local recruits who have been radicalized, but are active in societies that reject the strains of militant, fundamentalist Islam that guide insurgents' belief systems. Indeed, recent research confirms that many foreign fighter groups "are not that foreign after all" (Schwampe and Senninger 2019, 8). It is often the case that local individuals end up joining groups of foreign fighters, and the latter usually recognize the importance of recruiting locals that can help deter potential enemies, can mobilize in greater numbers, and can identify potential threats and gather information without being immediately identified as outsiders (Schutte 2015; Lyall 2010). Local al Qaeda affiliates such as AQIM in Algeria and Mauritania, the al-Kattab Group during the Tajik civil war of 1992, and the

Taliban in Afghanistan are all examples of “integrated nonconformist” foreign fighter groups.

I therefore add the following set of hypotheses to account for varying balances in armed groups’ levels of structural and cultural embeddedness:

H5a: Rebels that recruit doubly embedded foreign fighter populations are more likely to develop systems of rebel governance, relative to groups with other types of foreign fighter populations.

H5b: Rebels that recruit doubly embedded foreign fighter populations are more likely to engage in civil action, relative to groups with other types of foreign fighter populations.

H6: Rebels that recruit disembedded foreign fighter populations are likely engage in higher levels of anti-civilian violence, relative to groups with other types of foreign fighter populations.

H7: Rebels that recruit assimilated broker foreign fighter populations are likely to engage in higher levels of anti-civilian violence, relative to groups with doubly embedded foreign fighters, but lower levels than groups with disembedded foreign fighters.

H8: Rebels that recruit integrated nonconformist foreign fighter populations are more likely to employ high levels of violence against civilians, relative to groups with other types of foreign fighter populations, and also more likely to develop governance institutions, relative to groups with disembedded or assimilated broker foreign fighter populations.

Table 2.1. Summary of hypotheses on foreign fighters, embeddedness, and rebel patterns of behavior.

Observed Behavior	Hypotheses
<i>Base Hypotheses: Independent Effects of Structural & Cultural Embeddedness</i>	
Rebel Governance	<p>H1a: Rebels that recruit foreign fighters who are <u>structurally embedded</u> into the local conflict context, i.e. that are connected to civilian populations via social ties, are more likely to engage in governance, relative to groups with structurally disembedded foreign fighters.</p> <p>H3a: Rebels that recruit foreign fighter populations that are <u>culturally embedded</u> into the local conflict context, i.e. that share a common understanding of the conflict with local civilians, are more likely to engage in rebel governance, relative to groups that recruit culturally disembedded foreign fighters.</p>
Civil Action	<p>H1b: Rebels that recruit foreign fighter populations that are <u>structurally embedded</u> into the local conflict context, i.e. that are connected to civilian populations via social ties, are more likely to engage in civil action, relative to groups with structurally disembedded foreign fighters.</p> <p>H3b: Rebels that recruit foreign fighter populations that are <u>culturally embedded</u> into the local conflict context, i.e. that share a common understanding of the conflict with local civilians, are more likely to engage in civil action,</p>

	relative to groups that recruit culturally disembedded foreign fighters.
Anti-Civilian Violence	<p>H2: Rebels that recruit foreign fighters who are <u>structurally disembedded</u> from the local conflict context, i.e. that lack connections to civilian populations via social ties, are more likely to engage in violence against civilians, relative to groups with structurally embedded foreign fighters.</p> <p>H4: Rebels that recruit foreign fighter populations that are <u>culturally disembedded</u> from the local conflict context, i.e. that do not share a common understanding of the conflict with local civilians, are more likely to engage in violence against civilians, relative to groups that recruit culturally embedded foreign fighters.</p>
<i>Secondary Hypotheses: Interactive Effects of Structural & Cultural Embeddedness</i>	
Rebel governance	H5a: Rebels that recruit <u>doubly embedded</u> foreign fighter populations are more likely to develop systems of rebel governance, relative to groups with other types of foreign fighter populations.
Civil action	H5b: Rebels that recruit <u>doubly embedded</u> foreign fighter populations are more likely to engage in civil action, relative to groups with other types of foreign fighter populations.
Anti-civilian Violence	<p>H6: Rebels that recruit <u>disembedded</u> foreign fighter populations are likely engage in higher levels of anti-civilian violence, relative to groups with other types of foreign fighter populations.</p> <p>H7: Rebels that recruit <u>assimilated broker</u> foreign fighter populations are likely to engage in higher levels of anti-civilian violence, relative to groups with doubly embedded foreign fighters, but lower levels than groups with disembedded foreign fighters.</p>
Governance & Anti-Civilian Violence	H8: Rebels that recruit <u>integrated nonconformist</u> foreign fighter populations are more likely to

	employ high levels of violence against civilians, relative to groups with other types of foreign fighter populations, and also more likely to develop governance institutions, relative to groups with disembedded or assimilated broker foreign fighter populations.
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2.6. Boundary Conditions and Applicability

I conclude this chapter with two points regarding boundary conditions and applicability of the theoretical framework laid out above. First, my theory regarding embeddedness and armed group behavior is more explanatory than it is predictive, given the difficulties inherent in measuring various forms of embeddedness across and within groups, even when limiting the analysis to foreign fighters as an approximation of the concept. The complexity and pervasiveness of embeddedness in everyday life suggest that it is likely impossible to capture and account for all of its potential facets in one comprehensive framework. The social world is rife with nested levels of embeddedness, implying that individuals are at once immersed in economic, political, social, and potentially other dimensions of daily life. Indeed, Balcells's (2017) recent work on the pre-war, political origins of civil war violence points to the relevance of political embeddedness in explaining wartime strategies of violence. The influence of such nested levels of embeddedness is particularly unpredictable at a macro level. Though this project may therefore not formulate a comprehensive explanatory model embeddedness effects on patterns of armed group behavior during war, it nonetheless takes an important step towards conceptualizing and acknowledging the relevance of actors' social worlds to

wartime behavior. This matters for several reasons that I outline below, both in terms of policy and from a social science perspective.

Second, my theoretical framework is agnostic as to whether the effects of embeddedness apply to nonstate armed groups or state militaries. Indeed, the empirical portions of this dissertation corroborate the notion that the addition of socially-disembedded outsiders should have similar effects across both types of armed actors. The global, large-n analysis of foreign fighters in insurgencies and in-depth case study of the Bosnian Army from 1992-1995 confirm this point. Naturally, certain organization-level characteristics, such as central command strength, ideology, size, and other variables might condition the extent to which socially disembedded fighters degrade the behavior of armed groups. However, I do not expect that these variables will have different conditioning effects across sides.

2.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the patterns of rebel behavior that we witness during civil war stem from the extent to which armed groups are embedded into the local social fabric of a conflict. Violent and abusive behavior is more likely to prevail in instances when rebel groups are disconnected from local civilian constituencies, and when they are unable to embed themselves into local population networks. I use foreign fighters to capture embeddedness, which is typically a not easily observed phenomenon.

While the presence of foreign fighters among the ranks of armed groups engaged in civil war represents the most macro-level implications of my theory, I expect that analyzing the effects that they have on conflict dynamics related to rebel behavior is a fruitful exercise to uncovering the effects of rebel embeddedness more broadly.

The theoretical framework that I elaborate in this chapter leads to specific hypotheses regarding foreign fighters, social embeddedness, and patterns of combatant behavior in conflict. First, I expect that rebels who employ culturally and structurally embedded fighters will be able to engage in nonviolent interaction during conflict, ranging from civil action at the micro-level, to the establishment of systems of mutual exchange with local populations at a more macro level. This is mainly due to the expectation that embedded rebels are more likely to experience war through fluid civilian-soldier identities, which enables the evolution of holistic fighting communities with other local actors (chiefly civilian populations). Second, I expect that groups that employ foreign fighter populations who are disembedded from the local conflict context along cultural and structural dimensions face reduced barriers to violence on and off the battlefield. These propensities arise from foreigners' lack of responsibilities to civilian populations remaining in the war zone, and to their reduced stakes in the long term outcomes of the conflict they have joined. Their objectives of pushing alien understandings of the struggles they have joined onto local populations also lead to violence. Different levels of structural and cultural (dis)embeddedness interact to yield

varying balances of governance and violence among groups that recruit different types of foreign fighter populations.

Why does accounting for actors' social embeddedness – in the structural and cultural sense – matter? I begin by addressing this question from a social science perspective. As discussed above, the literature on both rebel governance and rebel patterns of violence against civilians acknowledges the relevance of armed actors' embeddedness into the local social fabric of a conflict, albeit implicitly by highlighting the importance of local knowledge (Weinstein 2007; Lyall 2010). Access to local knowledge brings rebels in tune to civilians' needs, and allows them to establish effective, mutually beneficial systems of exchange with local populations (Mampilly 2011). Yet what makes some groups more able to access this local knowledge remains a relatively underexplored topic. Beyond a limited number of studies that highlight the role of shared ethnicity in limiting violence (Lyall 2010; Fjelde and Hultman 2014; Stanton 2015), we still do not understand how other forms of embeddedness – such as preexisting social ties to local conflict actors – might lower or raise barriers to specific behavior. Drawing on a growing body of literature that begins to link social embeddedness – in particular structural embeddedness – to armed group behavior (Parkinson 2013; Staniland 2014), I extend these findings and further unpack the concept of embeddedness to better understand the broader range of behavior in which rebels engage during war.

From a policy perspective, understanding how insurgent levels of embeddedness influence the violent and nonviolent dynamics of conflict environments has important implications for anticipating which conflicts or areas might experience high levels of victimization. At the macro level, patterns of rebel recruitment that extend beyond regional boundaries should be a warning sign for high levels of victimization. On the other hand, rebel embeddedness may signal lower levels of abuse and increased prospects for rebel governance. Given recent findings that link rebel governance to postwar democratization (Huang 2016), the existence of embedded rebel groups may be encouraging as far as post-conflict outcomes are concerned. The proliferation of disembedded insurgencies, on the other hand, may be a sign of enduring autocracy in the post-war context.

In the chapters that follow, I assess the hypotheses outlined above through quantitative and qualitative analyses. To understand the effects of rebel embeddedness at a macro level, I test the effects of foreign fighter levels of embeddedness on rebel behavior in civil wars from 1990-2011. This chapter tests specifically tests the hypotheses related to rebel governance and anti-civilian violence. To better understand the micro-level mechanisms through which embeddedness leads rebels to engage in nonviolent versus violent action on the battlefield, I trace the relationship between levels of embeddedness among soldiers of the Bosnian Army and their behavior on and off the

battlefield during the Bosnian war. Chapter 3 describes my complete research design in detail.

Chapter Three: Evaluating Macro and Micro Implications: Research Design Overview

3.1. Introduction

The preceding chapter has shed light on how rebel embeddedness into local conflict contexts might affect combatant behavior on and off the battlefield, in particular the quality of their interactions with local civilian populations. I suggest that reliance on extra-local social capital and increased social distance from locals by way of foreign fighter recruitment should induce higher levels of coercion. By contrast, armed groups that are structurally and culturally embedded into local conflict contexts – those that draw primarily in local fighters – are more likely to engage in nonviolent behavior on the battlefield, ranging from civil action at the microlevel, to the development of more formal systems of governance at the macrolevel. I expect that this is due to the fact that local rebels are likely to experience war through fluid civilian-soldier identities, which leads to the emergence of holistic fighting communities. My theoretical framework also posits that armed groups whose units and members exhibit different balances and combinations of cultural and structural embeddedness will develop unique patterns of behavior that might include different mixes of rebel service provision and violence.

The next four chapters provide empirical tests of my hypotheses. Chapter 4 tests the effects of foreign fighters and the characteristics of foreign fighter populations on rebel propensities for governance and anti-civilian violence, the theory's macrolevel implications. The next three chapters (5-7) trace the relationship between embeddedness and the microdynamics of combatant behavior, focusing on the Bosnian Army. Specifically, these chapters test the extent to which structural and cultural embeddedness affected local combatants' propensities to engage in civil action during conflict, and how disembeddedness along these same dimensions affected foreign combatants' propensities to engage in physical and nonphysical violence against local actors.

The case study chapters focused on Bosnia use process tracing to identify a set of plausible causal mechanisms that link combatant embeddedness to patterns of behavior. The focus on causal mechanisms and the use of process tracing in particular provides a useful starting point to help specify how, not why, social embeddedness plays a causal role in shaping the behavior of rebel organizations. I rely on thick description to more closely examine the correlative relationships I elaborate in Chapter 2 and test quantitatively in Chapter 4. Specifically, I am more concerned with describing the extent to which particular units of the Bosnian Army were structurally and culturally (dis)embedded from local conflict contexts on the basis of their fighter base, than making

predictions about how dimensions of (dis)embeddedness lead to specific patterns of behavior. The Bosnia case study is therefore useful insofar as it allows me to make descriptive inferences about the links between armed group embeddedness and repertoires of behaviors with civilians.

As the case study chapters will show, understanding armed groups' recruitment and mobilization patterns, and their uses of foreign fighters specifically, sheds light on organizational attitudes towards various dimensions of embeddedness. All three sides that participated in the Bosnian war – Bosnian Muslim, Croat, and Serb forces – relied to varying extents on non-local actors to perpetuate violence in support of territorial conquest and ethnic cleansing. Evidence from the war clearly demonstrates that foreign combatants – those coming from outside Bosnia, be it from Serbia, Croatia or from farther afield including places like Russia, western Europe, or Middle Eastern countries – were critical to helping military leaders drive out populations from territories to be cleansed. Although the behavior of these foreign units and individuals was often hyper-violent and fell out of line with what local armed units considered appropriate behavior, it was frequently tolerated for strategic reasons as local forces were unwilling to wield the levels of violence that military objectives required. The recruitment of foreign fighters to fulfill wartime objectives that did not resonate with the overwhelming majority of Bosnia's ordinary population (including local soldiers) provides evidence in support of the notion that disembeddedness incentivizes violence.

3.2. Methodology

In the chapters that follow, I leverage the benefits of integrating different research methods in a single study. The large-n statistical analysis that follows in Chapter 4 tests my main hypotheses on rebel governance and anti-civilian violence on a dataset of insurgencies from 1989-2006 and 1989-2011, respectively. The analysis is particularly useful in testing the macrolevel implications of my theory, and establishing correlations between foreign fighter populations' levels of cultural and structural embeddedness and rebel engagement with civilian populations. The data currently available on rebel behavior in civil war allow me to test the main hypotheses that speak to the independent effects of structural and cultural embeddedness, as well as the secondary hypotheses that probe how different balances and combinations of structural and cultural embeddedness affect insurgent behavior. However, the large-n analysis does not test hypotheses H1a and H3b, which address the relationship between embeddedness and microlevel patterns of behavior. Macrolevel tests cannot examine the propensities of armed groups to engage in civil action in the midst of violence, nor can they shed light on the perpetration of nonphysical forms of violence.

The case study is therefore important to this dissertation for two main reasons. First, in the case of complex and multifaceted outcomes of interest, qualitative methods are often an indispensable complement to large-n analysis. They introduce analytical

space to explore how multiple variables work together to influence an outcome, and also make room for finer grained analysis of the outcome's various subtleties. This certainly applies to the study at hand: as discussed in Chapter 2, scholars have identified a multitude of factors that affect rebel interactions with civilians, ranging from governance to victimization. What's more, the quantitative analysis in Chapter 4 uses broad measures of embeddedness, rebel governance, and civilian victimization that aggregates distinct features into single indicators, but cannot account for less observable instances of civil action and patterns of so-called nonmaterial violence. Through an in-depth case study, I allow for analysis of more disaggregated and systematically less observable concepts, and enable greater specificity and detail when it comes to describing both embeddedness dimensions and patterns of rebel behavior.

Second, case studies explore whether the components of a causal chain – in this case cultural and structural embeddedness and civil action, rebel governance, and anti-civilian violence – are actually observable and operating as expected in the theoretical framework. Generally, cross-national quantitative analysis is useful for identifying correlations and establishing theoretical plausibility for a set of observations included within a specified sample. Qualitative analysis is invaluable for probing the links between independent and dependent variables, as well as for descriptive analysis of these variables. Indeed, numerical data can hardly capture the intricacies of complex variables and concepts such as embeddedness and rebel interactions with noncombatants. As I

describe in more detail below, I examine one case in particular – the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina during the Bosnian war – which included the participation of doubly embedded (local) fighters, disembedded (foreign) fighters, as well as fighters that can be characterized as “integrated nonconformists” and to a lesser extent “assimilated brokers.” This case was not chosen at random on the basis of my statistical analysis, but rather in the interest of maximizing variation on both the independent and dependent variables.

3.3. Case Selection and Description

A singular focus on the actions of soldiers within the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina may seem like an odd choice for qualitative analysis, based on the statistical study that comprises Chapter 4. However, the within-case differences that exist in terms of human resources (fighters), in particular pertaining to their structural and cultural embeddedness into the Bosnian war’s social fabric as well as combatants’ drastically different behavior on and off the battlefield, make local and foreign soldiers in the Bosnian Army an interesting and useful set for comparison.

During the civil war from 1992-1995, the Bosnian army grew out of a conglomeration of locally based territorial defense forces composed of Bosnian men and women forced to take up arms to defend their homes and villages from attacking Serb forces. By the end of the war’s first year, individuals from the Middle East, North Africa,

and elsewhere had joined Bosnian forces in central Bosnia, eventually forming the El Mudzahid Detachment made up primarily of foreign combatants. Local and foreign soldiers in the Bosnian Army experienced the war in dramatically different ways. While local Bosnian soldiers remained integrated into their prewar civilian networks and shared a common understanding of the war with surrounding populations, foreign combatants lived the war through warrior identities and saw the complete restructuring of Bosnian society as a principal aim of their participation. The quality of interactions that local versus foreign combatants within the Bosnian armed forces developed with local civilians differed starkly throughout the war.

What's more, the Bosnian Army included soldiers within its ranks that conformed – albeit sometimes only loosely – to the mixed categories of “integrated nonconformists” and “assimilated brokers” that I describe in Figure 2.1 from the previous chapter. Cases of the former include local Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) who joined the El Mudzahid detachment formed by foreign fighters. These locals were presumably integrated into local civilian networks given that most of them had lived in Bosnia up until the outbreak of war in 1992. However, their decisions to join the foreign unit suggest that they harbored a different understanding of the war than the majority of local Bosniaks, who saw it as a struggle to defend their homes and social networks from outside aggression. These fighters adhered instead to foreign fighters’ ideological cause and were thus culturally disembedded from the local wartime context. Instances of “assimilated broker”

combatants, on the other hand, appear in the case of internally displaced Bosnians who fled areas in and around Prijedor, Kozarac, and the surrounding region in the wake of intense victimization by Serb forces, eventually forming a fighting unit in exile in Croatia. The unit eventually joined the Bosnian Army as the 17th Krajina Brigade, and fell under the command of first the 3rd and then the 7th Corps (Sivac-Bryant 2016). It became known as a unit made up almost entirely of “refugee soldiers” (ICTY 2006), and has also been referred to as the “brigade of the expelled” or the “army of the dispossessed” (Bryant 2004; Sivac-Bryant 2016). I consider members of this particular unit examples of “assimilated broker” combatants because of their dislocated nature (they were no longer structurally embedded into their prewar social networks, which had been destroyed by war), and their continued embeddedness into an indigenous understanding of the war shared with other local Bosnian Muslims. The displaced Bosnians joined received financial and material support from patriotic friends and relatives who had been living in western Europe, and their goal from the start was to return home to the Prijedor area to reclaim their homes and lives.

Table 3.1. Combatants in the Bosnian Army

Armed Group	Armed Group Type	Combatant Origins	Exchange w/Local Civilians	Civilian Victimization
Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina (ABiH): Local Bosniaks in regular units	2: Embedded	Local Bosnian Muslims	High	Low
Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina (ABiH): Foreign combatants in El Mudzahid detachment	1: Disembedded	Foreigners from Egypt; Saudi Arabia; Pakistan; etc.	Low	High
Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina (ABiH): Local Bosniaks in El Mudzahid detachment	4. Integrated Non-conformists	Local Bosnian Muslims	Low	Limited
Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina (ABiH): Refugee soldiers in 17 th Krajina Brigade	3. Assimilated Brokers	Internally displaced Bosnian Muslims (refugees)	Low	Limited

As the preceding discussion suggests, the Bosnian war generally and the Bosnian Army in particular is useful insofar as it allows for the comparison of the effect of embedded and disembedded actors within one case, and also offers insight into the interaction of different levels of embeddedness across the two relevant dimensions. The combination of the Bosnian war's local character and the arrival of foreign combatants, which I describe in Chapter 5, make it a paradigmatic case for the study of the effects of

embeddedness on armed group repertoires of behavior. As opposed to a mixed case, a paradigmatic one is more helpful in terms of identifying the mechanisms I theorize as relevant in affecting my outcome of interest. Specifically, the case of the Bosnian Army exhibits high values on my main independent variables of interest, allowing me to investigate how embedded, disembedded, integrated nonconformist, and assimilated broker combatants behaved differently on and off the battlefield. The majority of local Bosnian fighters were strongly embedded both structurally and culturally into the war's context, while foreign combatants lacked ties to local conflict actors and clashed culturally with Bosnian Muslim norms and values. Local Bosniaks who joined the El Mudzahid detachment began the conflict with ties to the local population, but harbored a different perspective of the struggle itself relative to most of Bosnia's Muslim population, one that was more in line with foreign mujahedin's visions of jihad and existential religious conflict. Finally, Serb strategies of ethnic cleansing destroyed the social networks of refugee soldiers from the 17th Krajina Brigade, who fought with the goal of one day returning to their prewar towns and villages, in line with the hopes of the overwhelming majority of local Bosnian soldiers from other units.

I devote Chapter 6 to presenting evidence of varying levels of embeddedness and disembeddedness across combatants and combatant units within the ABiH. Chapter 7 then describes the impacts of embeddedness, linking combatant integration and assimilation to behavior on and off the battlefield. Broadly speaking, foreign fighters'

efforts to restructure Bosnian society in adherence to strict interpretations of Islam did not resonate with the conflict frames around which Bosnian civilians understood and experienced the war. Interactions that occurred between foreigners in the El Mudzahid Detachment and local civilians were based largely on coercion and threats, rather than voluntary contributions and mutually beneficial exchange. Local soldiers in regular ABiH units, on the other hand, regularly succeeded in creating spaces of “normalcy” that helped many ordinary Bosnians survive the war and dampened violence at the microlevel. Many of these soldiers engaged in important, if isolated, instances of nonviolent civil action throughout the war, despite their formal role as agents of violence. If my theory is correct, fighters’ pre-war social ties and shared understandings of norms and values with Bosnian civilians should constitute a key part of the explanation of how armed actors behaved on and off the battlefield, even as other variables may have had their own effects on trajectories of violence.

“Integrated non-conformist” soldiers, or local Bosnian Muslims who joined the El Mudzahid Detachment, were often shunned by members of their prewar networks and participated in anti-civilian violence and other atrocities alongside foreign soldiers. Foreign soldiers at times made use of local mujadehin’s local knowledge, and the latter occasionally helped to identify non-Muslims for victimization. However, most of the atrocities for which the El Mudzahid Detachment has been blamed were led and carried out by foreign combatants. Local soldiers in the foreign unit were often more pragmatic

and less willing to sacrifice themselves in attacks against well-defended positions, and often wore hoods so that local residents did not recognize them during attacks. These dynamics suggest that embeddedness in Bosnia's prewar social fabric may have de-incentivized direct participation in violence for local members of the El Mudzahid detachment, even though there is evidence that they helped set the stage for victimization on a number of occasions. Finally, the group combining members of the diaspora and displaced survivors of ethnic cleansing – the so-called “assimilated broker” soldiers from the 17th Krajina Brigade – would go on to become one of the best and most mobile units in the ABiH. The Brigade's actions were motivated and driven by a single, clear goal, which was to return home, and their stories and conversations revolved around the idea of what life would be like once they reached that objective. Though the destruction of their social networks and “refugee” status disembedded them structurally from local contexts, they still felt solidarity with local Bosnians through their status as victims and were thus able to limit levels of victimization relative to doubly disembedded foreign soldiers.

Importantly, the case of the Bosnian Army shows how the theory developed in this dissertation is agnostic on sides; in other words, armed group embeddedness should affect state and nonstate armed groups in similar ways. Nevertheless, it is also worth noting that the Bosnian Army's roots in Bosnia's territorial defense system made it such that the group was not much more than a disorganized band of fighters who mobilized to

defend their homes with their personal weapons. In fact, locals often described the Bosnian Army of spring 1992 as follows: “this was not an army that was established, equipped. It looked like a peasant uprising of some sort.”¹¹ Its origins are thus reminiscent of the origins of many rebel groups, in terms of level of organization and overall strength, relative to a more coherent opponent. Only as the war progressed did the Bosnian Army become more organized, although it always remained poorly armed relative to its Bosnian Serb opponents.

3.4. Conclusion

Given the extensive literature on armed groups’ use of one-sided violence against civilians and the growing literature on rebel governance, this exercise risks leaving area and substantive experts alike dissatisfied. For example, civil war scholars might conclude that I give too much credit to social variables when explaining patterns of behavior towards civilians, relative to the strategic interactions that occur between rebel and state forces during war. Experts on the Bosnian war might be particularly likely to react in this way as far as patterns of civilian victimization are concerned. Alternatively, experts might contend that rebel reliance on foreign patrons or revenue from criminal activities better explains why some groups engage in high levels of violence. These explanations might in fact best explain the patterns of behavior in which a number of groups represented in the large-n analysis engage when seeking popular support from civilians. However, the kind

¹¹ Alic, Saban. “Testimony of Saban Alic,” July 17, 2007, ICTY Archives.

of comparative process tracing that I use in the Bosnian case study can demonstrate the importance of new processes in ways that cast age-old theories in new light; even though a theory accurately predicts an outcome, showing the importance of new causal processes can generate better insights into how to use it in the future. In the Bosnia case, I give explanatory weight to fighters' pre-war social ties in the areas where they fought (structural embeddedness), and to their cultural proximity to Bosnian civilians insofar as they shared a common understanding of the conflict with them. In many cases, these factors help to explain microdynamics of the war that a narrow focus on ethnic-based hatred and rivalry tends to overlook. The overwhelming majority of studies of the Bosnian war, for example, do not account for the important instances of cross-ethnic fraternization, aid, and rescue that occurred during the war, especially in reference to soldiers' behavior. What's more, there is a relative dearth of attention paid to the nonmaterial forms of violence that many ordinary Bosnians endured. Although this is understandable given the extent of physical violence perpetrated during the war, identifying instances and patterns of nonphysical violence is an equally important contribution to more complete understandings of the conflict.

Together, the large-n analysis of rebel behavior across global insurgencies and qualitative case study of patterns of behavior among soldiers in the Bosnian Army provide support for my theoretical framework. The quantitative analysis shows that rebel embeddedness along structural and cultural dimensions has significant effects on

propensities for governance and anti-civilian violence. Whereas disembedded groups are more likely to abuse civilians, relative to embedded rebels, they are also more likely to develop institutions that provide services to local populations. Different configurations and combinations of integration and assimilation along structural and cultural dimensions, respectively, also lead to statistically significant correlations with service provision and civilian victimization. The qualitative case study of the Bosnian war delves into the mechanisms behind these relationships. Where we would expect it based on the theory presented in Chapter 2, we observe the two dimensions of embeddedness influencing rebel behavior towards cooperative engagement with civilians, and away from indiscriminate violence. Where rebels' cadres of fighters are disembedded structurally or culturally from the local conflict context, we see less service provision and more reliance on abuse. What's more, an analysis of interactions between local civilian populations and the Bosnian Army's foreign fighters underscore the importance of assessing the qualities of rebel governance. While foreign soldiers did in fact provide services to aggrieved Bosnian Muslims in the war's early years, the forms of governance that they tried to establish did not benefit from local legitimacy. In other words, while organizations that recruit foreign fighters may in fact develop systems of governance, it is likely that these systems will be unable to fulfill civilian needs, rely on coercion rather than voluntary contributions, and not lead to lasting legitimacy and popular support.

Beyond these findings, the empirical analyses in this dissertation also impart new insights about how embeddedness interacts with other factors to shape rebel behavior. In the statistical analysis, I find that variables such as reliance on civilian aid as opposed to foreign patronage, the presence of government violence, and levels of conflict intensity and duration also matter in influencing patterns of rebel institutionalization and violence against civilians. The analysis as a whole therefore cautions against monocausal explanations of armed group behavior towards civilians, but highlights the causal centrality of embeddedness. In the next four chapters, I explore both the roots of insurgent embeddedness (via their demand for certain types of foreign fighter populations), and their exploitation of embeddedness in their interactions with local civilian populations. The need, or push, for certain forms of embeddedness, drives armed groups to recruit and draw in a particular cadre of fighters that then incentivizes specific repertoires of behavior on and off the battlefield.

Chapter Four: Macro-Level Implications: The Effects of Foreign Fighters on Rebel Governance & Civilian Victimization

4.1. Introduction

This chapter tests the macro-level implications of my theory through a series of quantitative analyses on global insurgencies from 1989-2011. The evidence lends support to the dissertation's central argument: that insurgents' behavior depends on their embeddedness in the local conflict context, in particular that disembeddedness lowers barriers to civilian victimization. The first part of the chapter provides an overview of the operationalization of the key independent variables structural and cultural embeddedness. I then move on to the statistical analyses, where I first test Hypotheses 1-4 that focus on the independent effect of structural and cultural embeddedness on rebel behavior. The second portion of the analysis focuses on the secondary hypotheses, i.e. testing the interactive effects of embeddedness dimensions on rebel behavior.

Overall, these findings show that variation in rebel embeddedness into local conflict contexts – operationalized through the presence or absence of foreign fighters in otherwise domestic insurgencies – has important impacts on behavior towards local populations. Specifically, while groups that recruit foreign fighters (disembedded

organizations) are significantly more likely to abuse local populations, relative to groups with no foreign fighters (embedded insurgencies), they are also likely to develop more institutions than groups that rely predominantly on local fighter bases. This poses a puzzle, and confirms the need to identify how different dimensions of embeddedness affect rebel-civilian interactions, and lead to different relative balances of cooperative and contentious behavior.

The chapter proceeds as follows. First, I present an overview of the main dependent variables that inform the analysis, specifically measures of rebel governance and anti-civilian violence. The next section discusses and presents my main independent variables: existing data on foreign fighter populations, and how these measures correspond to the theoretical concepts of structural and cultural embeddedness. Third, I present my research design, and then proceed through a number of statistical tests of my main and secondary hypotheses. Sections 4.5 and 4.6 test the effects of foreign fighters and foreign fighter qualities on rebel governance, and then test their effects on organizational propensities for civilian victimization. In Sections 4.7 and 4.8 I discuss my findings from tests of my base and secondary hypotheses. Section 4.9 discusses how the empirical analysis in this chapter addresses alternative explanations for rebel governance and civilian victimization, Section 4.10 concludes with questions that the statistical analyses leave unanswered. This serves as a segue into the qualitative component of the empirical analysis.

4.2. Dependent Variables: Measures of Rebel Governance and Civilian Victimization

Rebel Governance in Civil War

Few data sets provide information on the extent and quality of rebel service provision, or governance, during civil war. Of the data that does exist, those compiled by Huang (2016) provide the most comprehensive assessment of rebel institutionalization, and best serve the purposes of this project. The coding provided in Huang (2016) accounts for rebel governance across 127 cases of civil wars between 1950 and 2006, based on an updated list of conflicts from Doyle and Sambanis (2006). Because data on rebel violence against civilians – my second main dependent variable – is only available beginning in 1990, I limit my analysis of rebel governance to civil wars from 1990-2006. Huang (2016) captures what she refers to as “rebel statebuilding” – the extent to which rebel groups engage with civilians – by observing how groups organize politically, hold elections or “legislative meetings,” establish village councils, impose taxes, and provide a variety of social services.

The main dependent variable related to rebel governance that comes from Huang (2016) is the *govern* variable, which is a normally-distributed count variable ranging from 0-10 depending on the number of institutions that a rebel group builds during its struggle against the state. Figure 3.5 summarizes this variable. As the slight leftward skewness¹² of

¹² The skewness of the *govern* variable is 0.24, indicating that the variable’s distribution across cases is approximately symmetric.

the graph implies, most rebel groups engage in little institution-building. The mean number of institutions organized by rebel groups active between 1990-2006 is 4.4; 42.6 percent of rebel groups built three or fewer institutions. However, the figure also shows that 14.7 percent of insurgencies built as many as nine institutions, compared to 10.6 percent that built none. This confirms notions that “state building is the insurgents’ central goal” (Kalyvas 2006, 218), but also suggests that rebel governance comes with significant challenges and that most rebel groups, cumulatively, built few or no institutions.

Nevertheless, between 25 and 35 percent of all groups established a variety of institutions ranging from legislatures, to courts or laws, to police forces, to schools and health clinics. Forty five percent of the groups represented in this study engaged in active diplomacy in their attempts to gain international recognition for their cause. Twenty-six insurgent organizations (21 percent of the total) built eight or more institutions, creating something akin to full-blown states (Huang 2016,72). The high-institutionalists are diverse in nature, including groups such as Hezbollah in Lebanon, Maoists in Nepal, and the Kurds in Iraq.

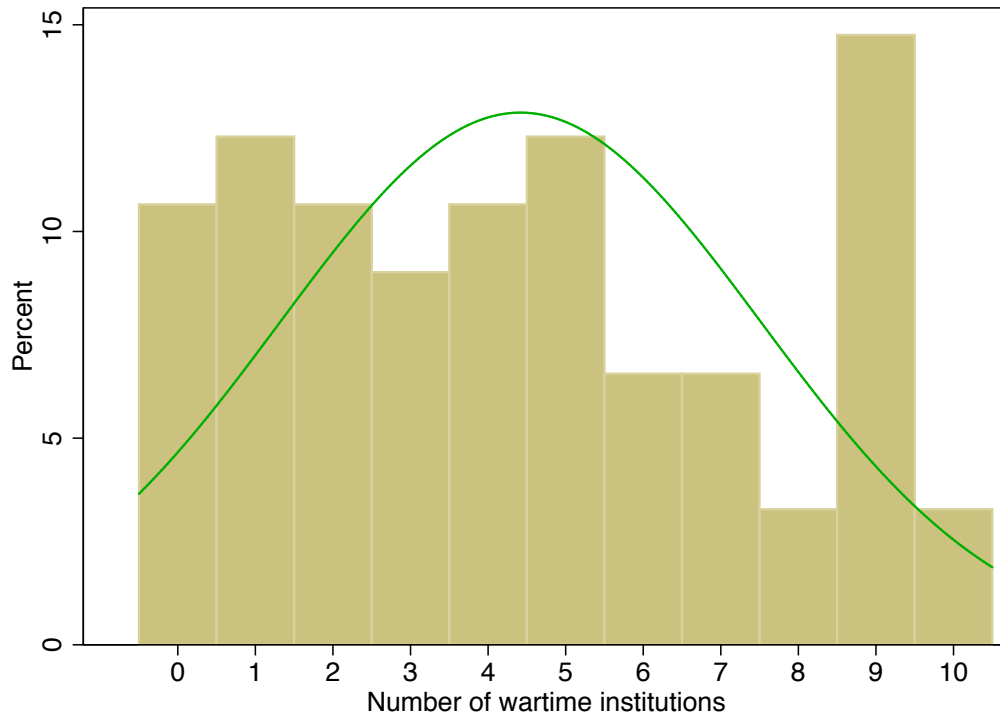


Figure 4.1. Frequency of rebel statebuilding, 1990-2006 (Huang 2016).

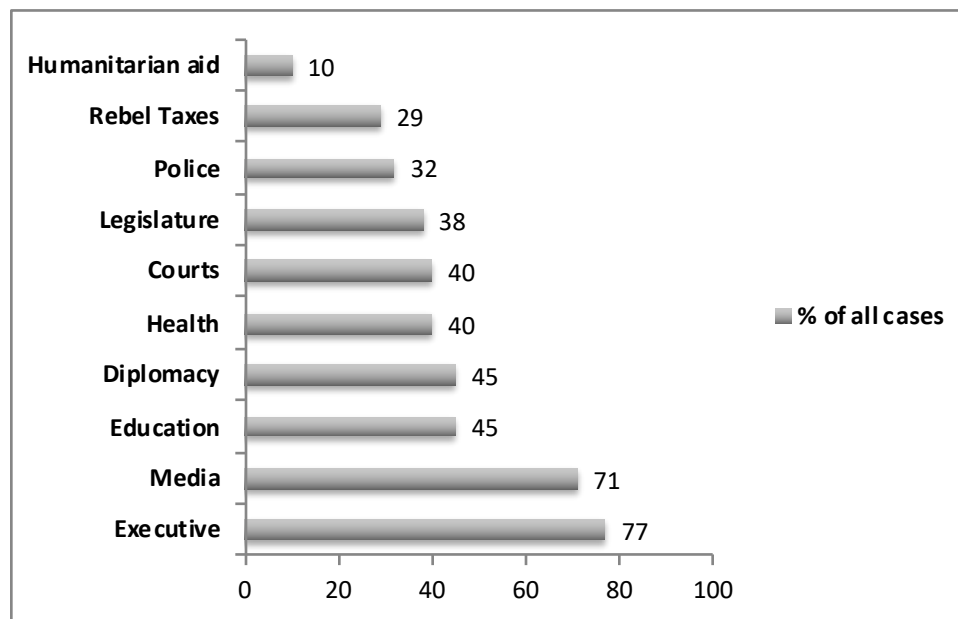


Figure 4.2. Frequency of rebel statebuilding by institution type, 1990-2006 (Huang 2016)

In addition, Huang's (2016) data on rebel governance includes three binary variables that capture rebel institutionalization by institution type: propensities to construct executives or legislatures (elect); propensities to create a modicum of law and order (law); and propensities to engage in social service provision (service). Seventeen percent of rebel groups introduced an electoral system in which people voted for rebel leaders at some level within the group's internal hierarchy. About half of all rebel groups between 1990-2006 (50.8 percent) created "law" or "order" institutions, and the same proportion provided at least one of three social services (education, health, or the delivery of humanitarian aid). Each of these variables takes on a value of 1 if the rebel group provided relevant institutions, and 0 otherwise.

Civilian Victimization during Civil War

The other primary outcome of interest in this analysis is the extent to which rebels engage in anti-civilian violence. I focus on the count of civilian deaths caused by insurgents during civil war, and use existing data of one-sided violence from UCDP (Eck and Hultman 2007; Allansson, Melander and Themnér 2017). Admittedly, and as discussed in Chapter 2, civilians face a wide variety of violence during civil war, and their experiences can hardly be summed up by counts of human casualties. In fact, some of the most traumatic forms of civil war violence, such as forced displacement and sexual violence, do not kill their targets but leave them suffering long after the war is over. None of these measures are incorporated in this chapter's macrolevel tests of my theoretical framework. Due to data limitations, I use the aforementioned measure of anti-civilian

violence with the expectation that it provides a highly general, yet useful approximation of conditions for noncombatants in a given context.

The UCDP measure for one-sided violence accounts for any event in which civilians are deliberately and directly targeted by nonstate groups and includes all conflicts that exceeded the minimum threshold of twenty-five battle-related deaths (Allansson, Melander and Themnér 2017). The counts of civilian deaths are aggregated to the rebel-government dyad level, such that this dependent variable reflects the total recorded number of civilians intentionally killed by a rebel group in a given conflict. Importantly, the list of cases that include one-sided violence all exceed the minimum threshold of twenty-five fatalities. The overwhelming majority of rebel groups (70.6 percent) kill either no or fewer than twenty-five civilians during their struggle against the state, as coded in the UCDP dataset; these observations account for the variable's significant leftward skewness (see Figure 4.4). As Figure 4.3 shows, the number of civilians killed annually by nonstate armed groups remains relatively constant between 1989-2011, with the exception of 1996 when the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL) reportedly caused over 30,000 civilian deaths. The mean number of civilians killed by rebel groups during the aforementioned time period is 328.

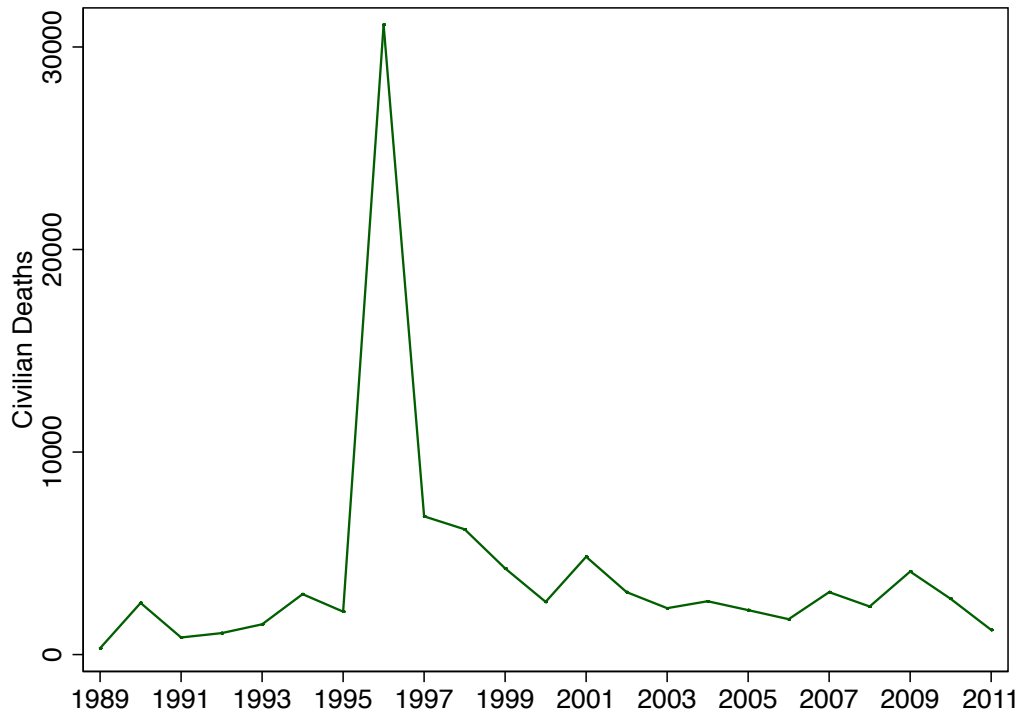


Figure 4.3. Civilian fatalities caused by nonstate armed groups, 1989-2011.

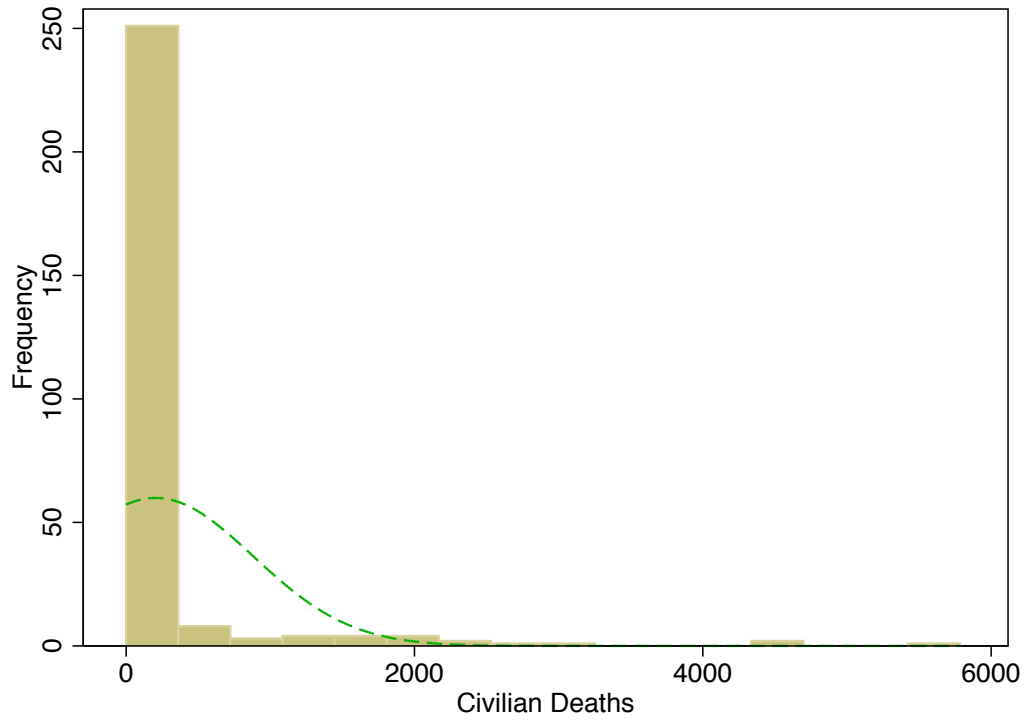


Figure 4.4. Frequency of civilian deaths caused by rebel groups, 1989-2011.

4.3. Main Independent Variables: Data on Foreign Fighter Populations

In Chapter 2, I focus on the presence of foreign fighters in civil war to capture the effects of embeddedness on rebel behavior. The empirical record shows that there is significant variation in foreign fighters' experiences across civil wars. Most of the extant data on foreign fighters comes from Malet (2016), and records which civil conflicts between 1815-2015 involved the participation of foreigners on the insurgent side. The dichotomous variable Foreign Fighters accounts for whether foreign combatants were present in the ranks of an insurgency (1) or whether the insurgency recruited from a predominantly local fighter base (0).

Malet's (2016) data also includes information on two characteristics of foreign fighter populations: whether foreign insurgents are coethnic to the rebel group that they join, and whether they have traveled from a non-neighboring state to reach the conflict zone. These two categorical variables are not mutually exclusive, such that foreign fighter populations may at once be coethnic to the majority of a rebel group and have traveled from beyond a neighboring state. Similarly, foreign fighters who join an insurgency from a neighboring country may not share a common ethnicity with the group that they join.

I use this existing data on foreign fighters' ethnic characteristics and geographical origins to approximate the dimensions of embeddedness described in Chapter 2. To

determine the extent to which foreign fighter populations might be structurally embedded into local conflict contexts, I consider whether they traveled from a neighboring or non-neighboring state to reach the conflict zone. Indeed, research shows that individuals form ties on the basis of physical distance, i.e. how close they live to one another (Hipp and Perrin 2009). The expectation is that people create ties with others who are physically close, such as neighbors, coworkers, etc. As such, I expect that foreign fighters who hail from states that neighbor the conflict state are more likely to be structurally embedded into the local conflict context (i.e. have ties to local populations), relative to fighters who have traveled from beyond a neighboring state. The former type of foreign insurgent might benefit from preexisting ties to individuals who live within the conflict zone, thanks to previous travel, migration patterns, etc. Fighters who travel from a non-contiguous state, and possibly from an entirely different continent, are more likely to lack ties into community networks local to the conflict zone. The dichotomous variable *Beyond Neighboring* accounts for whether foreigners traveled from beyond the immediate conflict region to reach a warzone (1 if yes, 0 otherwise).

I use foreign fighters' coethnicity to rebel groups to approximate their cultural embeddedness into a local conflict context. While Malet's (2016) coding of foreign fighters' coethnicity accounts only for ethnic similarities between foreign fighters and members of the rebel group that they join, it is agnostic as to whether ethnic overlap also existed with civilian populations. However, the fact that nearly 75 percent of rebel

groups recruit from ethnic groups suggests that overlap between foreign and local fighters' ethnicities likely corresponds to overlap between foreign fighters' ethnicities and the ethnicities of populations from which the insurgency recruits (Wucherpfennig et al. 2012). What's more, when foreign fighters share a common ethnicity with local rebels, foreigners' abilities to embed into local population networks can work through local fighters. For example, shared language between foreign and domestic rebels can help the latter communicate the embeddedness of the former to local civilians, alleviating some of the cognitive dissonance issues that cultural disembeddedness introduces. In these situations, local rebels have the capacity to act as intermediaries for their foreign counterparts, and close gaps between populations of foreign fighters and local civilians. Foreign fighters that do not share ethnic ties to the majority of the groups that they join, on the other hand, might harbor entirely different worldviews and be unable to communicate in languages indigenous to the conflict zone. The variable Coethnic accounts for whether foreign fighters shared the same ethnicity as the majority of the rebel group (1 if so, 0 otherwise).

Finally, the combination of foreign fighters' coethnicity to local conflict actors and their geographical origins from neighboring or non-neighboring states results in a fourfold typology that matches the matrix I elaborate in Chapter 2 (see Figure 4.5). I create a new categorical variable, Foreign Fighter Type, to capture variation in the extent

to which groups recruit different kinds of foreign fighter populations.¹³ Figure 4.6 shows the distribution of conflicts according to foreign fighter type (alongside the number of conflicts that did not include foreign fighters).¹⁴

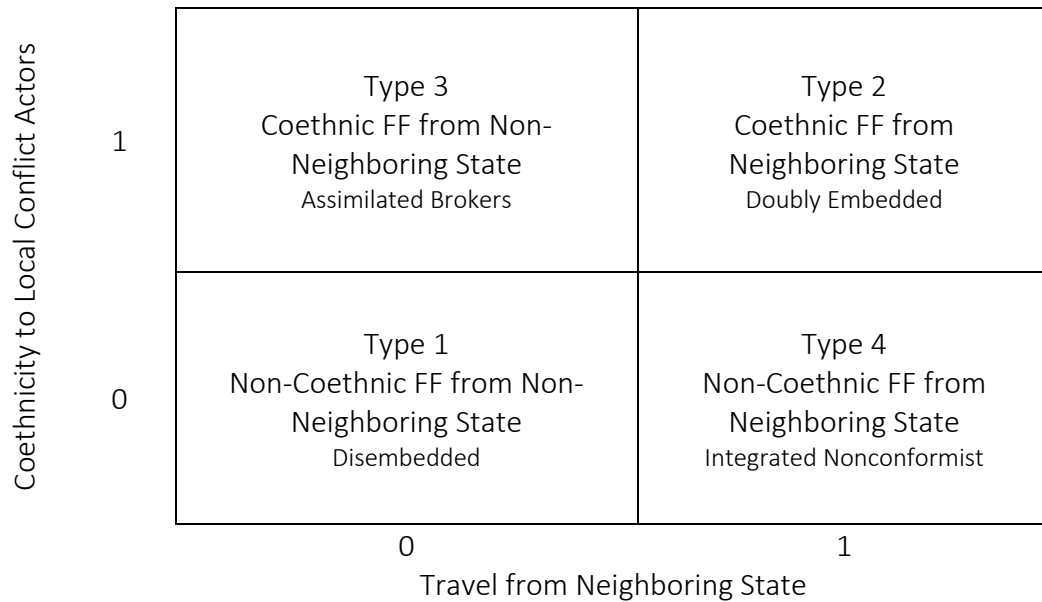


Figure 4.5. Typology of foreign fighter (FF) populations. Based on Malet (2016). The quadrants correspond to those in Figure 2.1 (Chapter 2), representing different configurations of embeddedness along structural (physical distance traveled) and cultural (coethnicity to local conflict actors) embeddedness dimensions.

¹³ The variable takes a value of 0-4. Groups that do not recruit foreign fighters according to Malet (2016) are coded 0. Groups that fall into the respective quadrants of Figure 4.5 are coded 1-4, depending on the embeddedness qualities of their foreign fighter populations.

¹⁴ This new variable reflects the non-mutually exclusive nature of the 3 dichotomous foreign fighter variables (*foreign fighters*; *beyond neighboring* foreign fighters; *coethnic* foreign fighters) that I use in some of the analyses that follow. For instance, even if the *foreign fighters* variable is coded 1 for a particular insurgent-state dyad (indicating the presence of foreign fighters on the insurgent side), both the *coethnic* and *beyond neighboring* foreign fighter type categories might be coded zero. This would be true in the case of rebel organizations that recruit non-coethnic foreign fighters who travel from a neighboring state (what I refer to as “integrated nonconformists”).

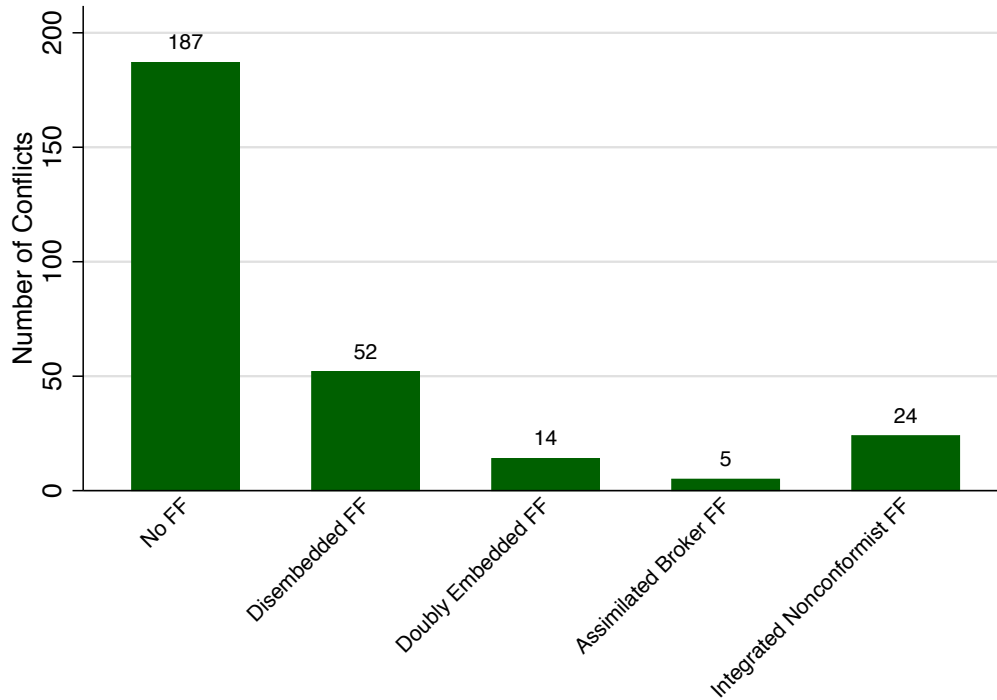


Figure 4.6. Distribution of foreign fighter types across insurgent-state dyads, 1989-2011.
 Type 0 indicates groups with no foreign fighters.

Table 4.1 provides examples of conflicts and rebel groups included in the analysis according to the Foreign Fighter Type variable.

There are notable limitations to the foreign fighter data. First, information is missing on foreign recruits' overall numbers relative to local fighters. While some groups are comprised predominantly of foreigners, foreign recruits are only a minority in

others.¹⁵ Despite this variation, I expect that the cases in Malet's (2016) dataset reflect a certain threshold in terms of size that allows for reasonable comparison.

Second, the data does not account for the timing of foreign combatants' arrival into conflicts. This information is important, since foreigners may have arrived after escalations in civilian victimization. However, most anecdotal evidence suggests that foreign combatants joined prior to groups turning to civilian victimization, and were often influential in the formation of rebel groups (HRW 1997; HRW 2005; Bauters 2012). I therefore do not expect the exclusion of timing information to severely bias the results of the current analysis.

Finally, and as discussed above, there is little way of precisely knowing the extent to which the ethnicity of foreign recruits overlaps with that of civilian populations across conflicts. While the Co-ethnic variable accounts for ethnic similarities between foreign fighters and members of the rebel group, it is agnostic as to whether ethnic overlap also existed with civilian populations. However, the fact that nearly 75 percent of rebel groups recruit from ethnic groups suggests that overlap between foreign and local fighters' ethnicities likely corresponds to overlap between foreign fighters' ethnicities and the ethnicities of populations from which the insurgency recruits (Wucherpfennig et al.

¹⁵ The AFDL in Congo is comprised predominantly of foreign rebels (HRW, 1997). Conversely, foreign fighters represented 3% of the Croatian irregulars' fighting force during the 1991 conflict against Yugoslav aggression (Arielli, 2012).

2012). This indicates that the *Coethnic* variable is likely a valid construct of the mechanisms elaborated above.¹⁶

Table 4.1. Sample of foreign fighter populations in civil conflicts, 1989-2011.

Country	Rebel Side	Start Year	Foreign Fighter Origins*	FF Type	Civilians Killed	Institutions
Liberia	NPFL	1989	Burkina Faso	1	2011	3
Kosovo	UCK	1999	W. Europe	3	<25 ¹⁷	4
Algeria	AQIM	1999	Saudi Arabia	4	162	1
Georgia	South Ossetia	2005	Russia	2	0	4

* Accounts for largest contingent of foreigners, when populations included fighters from a number of countries.

3.5. Research Design & Summary Statistics

Methodology

As described above, the dependent variables that I use in the quantitative test of my hypotheses relate to rebel behavior during civil war, and account specifically for instances of rebel governance and civilian victimization. Taken together, the individual models reflect an attempt to identify those factors that drive actors to engage in particular forms of behavior. Table 4.2 summarizes the hypotheses that I test in this chapter.

¹⁶ Appendix A provides a summary table of the dependent and independent variables used in the analyses from this chapter.

¹⁷ The UCDP dataset does not code the UCK as having met the threshold for inclusion for one-sided violence (25 fatalities). It therefore appears as a “0” in the civilian victimization dependent variable. However, it is highly likely that the rebel group did in fact kill a number of Serbs during the war, although the exact number is contested (see HRW 2001).

The first set of statistical analyses tests for the determinants of rebel governance. I employ ordinary least square (OLS) models because the main dependent variable *govern* from Huang (2016) is a normally distributed count of rebel institutions. As described previously, rebel institutions include executive branches, rebel legislatures, courts and legal systems, civilian tax systems, education and health care systems, police forces, humanitarian relief, media, and foreign affairs. In addition, I perform tests to determine whether groups with and without foreign fighters exhibit varying propensities to establish different types of institutions. As described above, three variables from Huang (2016) capture whether insurgents established electoral, law and order, or social service institutions. The variables *elect*, *law*, and *service* are dichotomous 0-1 variables; I therefore employ logistic regression analysis for models that test the effects of foreign fighters on the kinds of institutions that rebels build during war.

To test for the determinants of rebel violence against civilians, I employ negative binomial models because the structure of the dependent variable (counts of civilian deaths from UCDP one-sided violence datasets) is a non-normally distributed cross-section of annual counts of insurgent-inflicted civilian deaths. This particular modeling approach has two desirable properties. First, it allows me to accommodate the nature of the dependent variable. Second, unlike other event count models such as Poisson regression, the negative binomial specification directly models the presence of over-dispersion in the conditional mean of the dependent variables. If over-dispersed data are

incorrectly treated as having a Poisson distribution, the standard errors of the main coefficients will be biased downwards. Given the extreme level of overdispersion of the one-sided violence variable, I also include OLS models on the log-transformed counts of civilian deaths as robustness tests. Other robustness tests for the tests performed in this chapter are included in Appendix A.¹⁸

¹⁸ In addition to the statistical tests described above, Appendix A includes a battery of robustness tests to confirm the results of the rebel governance and civilian victimization models presented in this chapter. Specifically, I run the rebel governance models using ordered logit and tobit regression, and run the civilian victimization models using zero-inflated negative binomial (ZINB) regression. In addition, I re-run the civilian victimization models omitting potentially influential outliers. By and large, the results of these robustness tests confirm the results of the main regression models presented in this chapter.

Table 4.2. Summary of Hypotheses & Independent Variable Measures

Hypotheses		Independent Variable Measures
<i>Base Hypotheses</i>		
H1a & H2:	Structural embeddedness ties local rebels to civilian populations -> high rebel service provision/governance & low anti-civilian violence	foreign fighters from non-contiguous states (0,1)
H3a & H4:	Cultural embeddedness lowers social/identity distance between rebels and civilians -> high rebel service provision/governance & low anti-civilian violence	coethnic foreign fighters (0,1)
<i>Secondary Hypotheses</i>		
H5a:	Doubly embedded rebels have access to local networks & are socially proximate to local civilians -> high institutionalization	foreign fighter type
H6:	Disembedded rebels have no access to local networks & are socially distant from local civilians -> high anti-civilian violence	foreign fighter type
H7:	Assimilated broker rebels are culturally proximate to local civilians but lack ties to local networks -> limited anti-civilian violence	foreign fighter type
H8:	Integrated Nonconformist rebels are culturally distant to local civilians but have ties into local networks -> limited institutionalization, high anti-civilian violence	foreign fighter type

Summary Statistics

Between 1990-2011, a total of 77 unique insurgent groups (32 percent) included foreign combatants within their ranks, and foreign fighters were involved in 95, or 34 percent, of the conflict dyads identified by the non-state actors (NSA) dataset (Cunningham, Gleditsch and Salehyan 2013). The majority of conflicts that included the participation of transnational insurgents on the rebel side during this time period

occurred in Africa (40), followed by Asia (22), Europe/FSU (18), and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) (15). Figure 4.7 provides an overview of the proportion of civil wars that included foreign fighters, relative to overall trends in the occurrence of civil wars trend from 1990-2011.

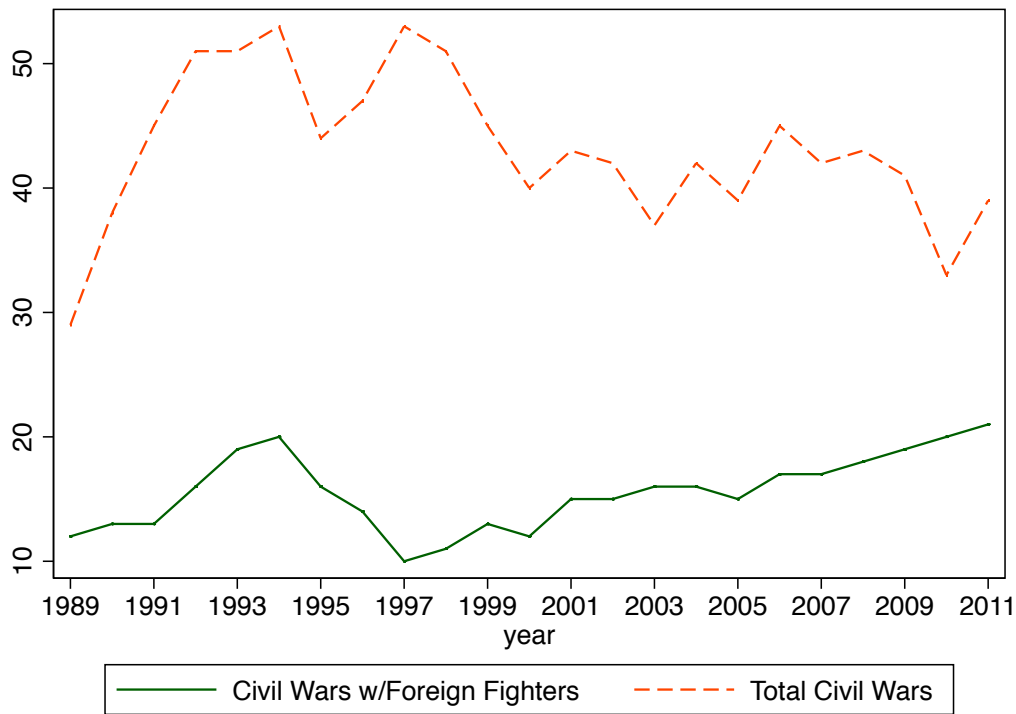


Figure 4.7. Foreign fighters in civil wars, 1990-2011. Based on data from Malet (2016). Graph depicts frequency of civil wars with foreign fighters, relative to the overall frequency of civil wars from 1990-2011.

The data show that the use of foreign fighters has been predominant in non-nationalist conflicts: foreign fighters participated in only 28 percent of the 110 conflicts where rebel groups have nationalist aims. In addition, the data suggest that foreign fighters are particularly prone to joining Islamist conflicts: of the fifty-four conflicts coded as including rebel groups with Islamist aims or ideologies, foreign fighters participated in

59 percent of cases (32 conflicts).¹⁹ Foreign fighters did not participate in any conflicts between 1989-2011 where the non-state actor side was coded as adhering to a leftist ideology. Moreover, foreign fighters appear to overwhelmingly participate in insurgencies that do not receive support from local civilian populations: whereas they participated in 57 percent of conflicts in which rebels did not derive significant support from civilians, they participated in only 25 percent of insurgencies that did rely on this particular resource base.²⁰

On average, groups that recruit foreign fighters kill over six times more civilians than groups that rely predominantly on a domestic fighter base. This difference in means is significant at the $p=0.02$ level. Figure 4.8 shows the difference in civilian fatalities over time caused by groups with and without foreign fighters; groups that recruit foreign fighters demonstrate consistently higher tendencies to cause civilian deaths, relative to groups that restrict their recruitment to local rebels. By contrast, groups with and without foreign fighters appear to attain similar levels of institutionalization, such that the number of institutions does not differ significantly across the two types. Figure 4.9 presents these bivariate relationships graphically.

¹⁹ Data on rebel group ideology is from Wood and Thomas (2017).

²⁰ The variable *civilian aid* is from Huang (2016), and is coded 1 if the rebels derived significant material support from civilians. Forms of civilian contributions captured by this measure include, but are not limited to, the payment of rebel “taxes” or other voluntary or coerced financial donation; or regular provision of in-kind support such as food, clothing, and shelter.

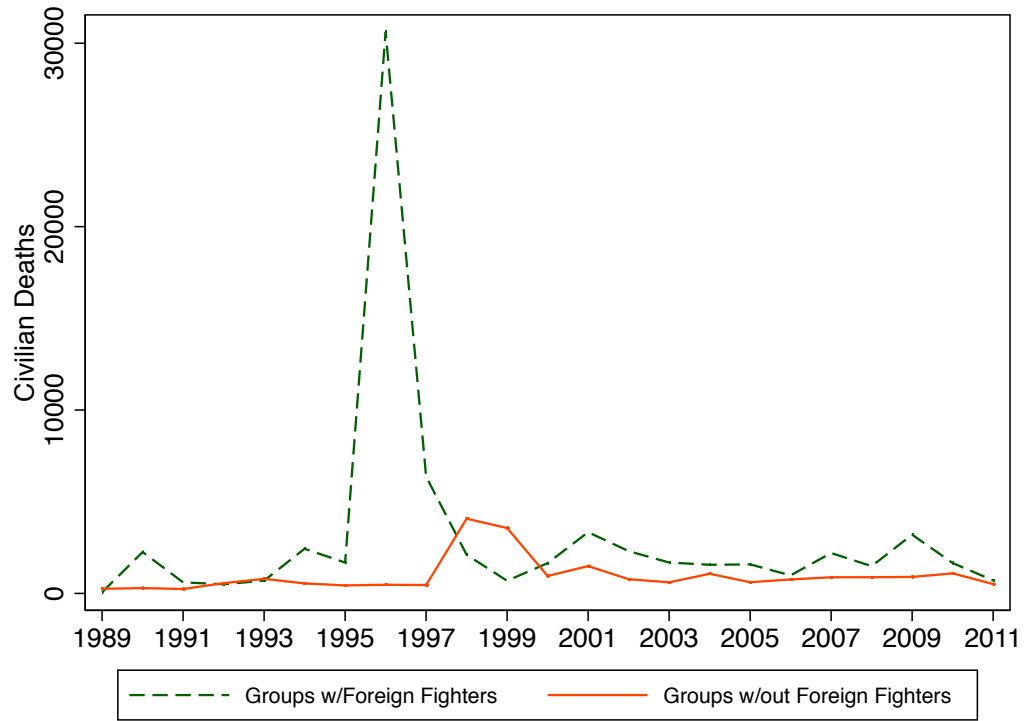


Figure 4.8. Civilian deaths in conflicts with and without foreign fighters, 1989-2011.

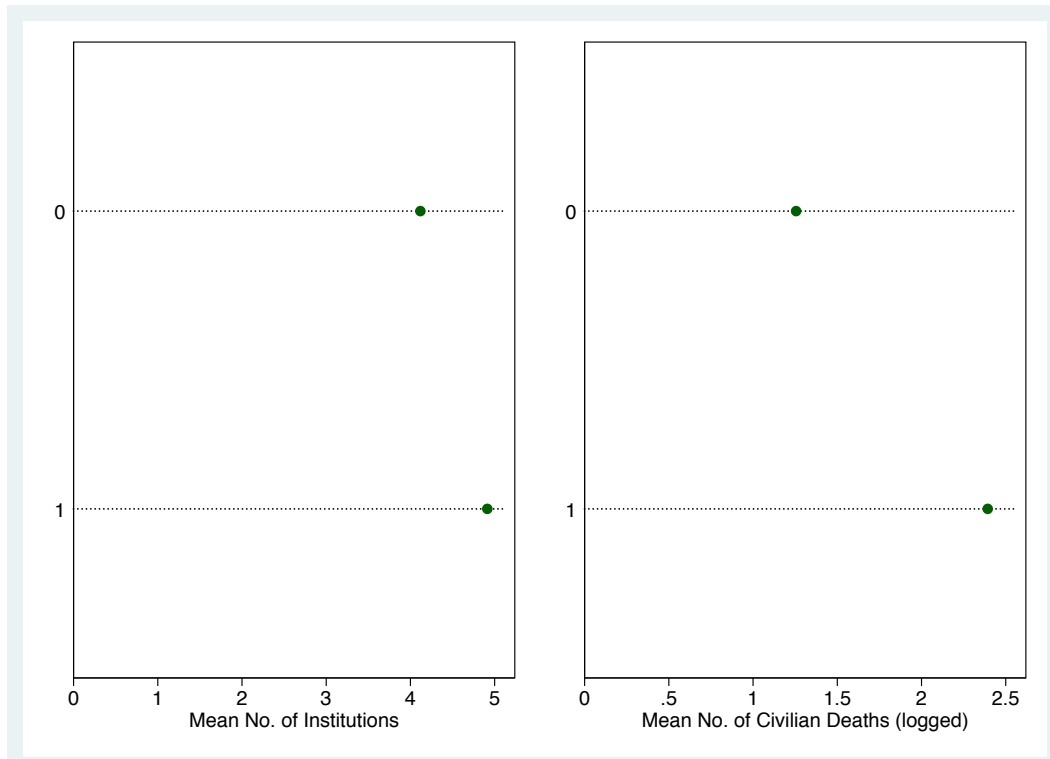


Figure 4.9. Mean annual governance score & counts of civilians killed by groups w/ & w/out foreign fighters. “0” and “1” labels denote groups without and with foreign fighters, respectively.

Additional initial tests of the basic relationship between foreign fighters and patterns of rebel behavior provide interesting results. A set of preliminary models (Models i and ii) in Table 4.3 examine variation in rebel institutionalization and civilian victimization across the dyads in the NSA data from 1989-2006.²¹ I test the general hypothesis that, as a result of their disembeddedness from local conflict contexts, groups that recruit foreign fighters should be less likely to engage in service provision, and more likely to engage in civilian victimization. As controls, I include variables that studies of

²¹ The data on rebel institutionalization are limited to 1989-2006. While data on civilian victimization provided by UCDP extends through 2016, the analyses in Models 1 and 2 are limited to 2006 to ensure reasonable comparison across models of institutionalization and violence.

rebel governance and violence against civilians confirm are significant predictors of behavior. In the rebel governance model, I control for rebel reliance on civilian aid, Marxist ideology, territorial control, and nationalist objectives. Existing studies show that all four variables help to explain the occurrence of rebel governance (Huang 2016; Stewart 2018). I also control for the number of civilians killed by rebel groups, as the insight behind my explanation implies a negative relationship between institutionalization and propensities for abuse. In the civilian victimization model, I control for group- and conflict-level variables that help predict one-sided violence, including rebel strength relative to the state, conflict intensity in terms of battle deaths, government use of anti-civilian violence, and conflict duration (Wood 2010; Hultman 2012; Costalli and Moro 2012). I also control for the conflict country's population density and level of economic growth, as well as for the number of institutions the rebel group builds during the conflict period.

According to these models, the presence of foreign fighters is a significant predictor of both rebel institutionalization and civilian victimization. According to preliminary Model 1 in Table 4.3, insurgencies that recruit foreign fighters actually develop nearly twice as many institutions as groups that have predominantly local fighter bases. The model predicts that groups with no foreign fighters will build an average of 3.7 institutions, compared to 5.7 institutions in the case of groups with local fighter bases. Model 2, on the other hand, shows that groups with foreign fighters have an incident

rate of killing civilians that is nearly eleven times higher than that of groups with no foreign fighters: the model predicts that foreign fighter-heavy groups will kill an average of 195 civilians during their struggle against the state, compared to 17 civilians for groups with no foreign recruits. Contrary to my theoretical expectations, these introductory models thus suggest that groups with foreign fighters are more likely to implement systems of governance and engage in civilian victimization. I discuss the implications of this findings later in this chapter.

Table 4.3. Determinants of Rebel Behavior (Institutionalization & Civilian Victimization)

VARIABLES	Model 1 Rebel Governance (OLS)	Model 2 Civilian Victimization (negative binomial)
Foreign Fighters	2.036** (0.658)	1.988** (0.520)
Civilian Fatalities	-0.149† (0.078)	
Civilian Aid	3.282** (0.576)	
Leftist Ideology	3.624** (0.601)	
Nationalist Conflict	0.951† (0.524)	
Territorial Control	816 (0.554)	
Governance Institutions		-0.394** (0.089)
Rebel Strength		2.909** (0.678)
Conflict Intensity		2.781** (0.656)
Duration		0.253** (0.082)
Islamist		2.299** (0.666)
Gov't OSV		1.472* (0.592)
Population Density (ln)		0.847** (0.287)
Income Growth	0.002 (0.015)	0.087** (0.028)
Constant	0.715 (0.482)	-7.133** (1.901)
Observations	92	92
R-squared	0.54	
Log likelihood		-340.360
X ²		137.49
Probability > X ²		0.000

** p ≤ 0.01; * p ≤ 0.05; † p ≤ 0.10, robust standard errors clustered in dyadid in parentheses.

4.6. Empirical Analysis: Tests of Base Hypotheses

H1a & H3a: When populations of foreign fighters are structurally and/or culturally embedded into local conflict contexts, they are more likely to establish systems of mutual exchange with local populations.

H2 & H4: When populations of foreign fighters are structurally and/or culturally disembedded from local conflict contexts, they are more likely to engage in civilian victimization.

Rebel Institutions

A battery of tests on the subset of dyads that includes foreign fighters evaluates the independent effects of foreign fighter populations' structural and cultural embeddedness on patterns of rebel governance and civilian victimization. The first set of tests uses the non-mutually exclusive, dichotomous *Beyond Neighboring* and *Coethnic* foreign fighter variables from Malet (2016) as approximations of foreign fighters' structural and cultural embeddedness into local conflict contexts, respectively: Models 3 and 4 in Table 4.4 therefore test the effects of structural embeddedness and cultural embeddedness on rebel institutionalization. The results suggest that the measures used to capture the two embeddedness dimensions actually have no statistically significant effect on rebel propensities to build governance institutions. On average, groups that recruit foreign fighters from *beyond neighboring* states do not build significantly more

institutions than groups that use foreign fighters from neighboring states, or groups that do not use foreign fighters at all (groups represented in the 0 category of the variable). Likewise, groups that recruit *coethnic* foreign fighter populations do not exhibit statistically different propensities for institutionalization relative to groups that recruit non-coethnic foreign fighters, or groups that have no foreign fighters in their ranks.

The coefficient for the *Foreign Fighters* variable, however, remains a significant predictor of institutionalization. This is intriguing and confirms that the presence of foreign combatants within the ranks of an insurgency does in fact affect the likelihood of groups engage in governance. Importantly, some of the insurgencies that fall into the “1” category of the *Foreign Fighters* variable are those that recruit non-coethnic individuals from neighboring states (*coethnic FF* & *beyond neighboring FF* both equal 0). This particular type of foreign fighter population – which I call “integrated nonconformists,” as per Figure 4.5 above, may therefore be driving some of the institutionalization linked to the *Foreign Fighters* variable. I explore this dynamic more in the sections that test my secondary set of hypotheses. Moreover, the reasons behind increased propensities for institutionalization among insurgencies that use foreign fighters may have little to do with foreign fighters’ geographical origins and their ethnicities. In other words, the results highlight the merit of further analyzing the motivations of foreign fighters as well as some of their other potentially important qualities. Future research might begin by investigating whether there are qualitative differences between foreign fighters who

travel from distant states and those who come from the immediate conflict region that transcend geography and state-based notions of citizenship. Similarly, are there differences between coethnic and noncoethnic foreign fighters that may in fact have little to do with ethnicity per se?

Table 4.4. Effect of Foreign Fighters on Rebel Institutionalization

VARIABLES	Model 3 Rebel Governance (OLS)	Model 4 Rebel Governance (OLS)
Foreign Fighters	1.689** (0.518)	1.840* (0.802)
Beyond Neighboring FF	0.662 (0.804)	
Coethnic FF		0.465 (0.1068)
Civilian Fatalities	-0.155+ (0.079)	-0.137+ (0.081)
Civilian Aid	3.276** (0.563)	3.264** (0.593)
Leftist	3.627** (0.560)	3.613** (0.755)
Territorial Control	0.821 (0.540)	0.755 (0.541)
Nationalist Conflict	0.944+ (0.510)	0.901+ (0.529)
Income Growth	0.002 (0.015)	0.001 (0.014)
Constant	0.732 (0.474)	0.762 (0.515)
Observations	92	92
R-Squared	0.55	0.55

** p ≤ 0.01; * p ≤ 0.05; † p ≤ 0.10 (two-tailed test), robust standard clustered on dyadid errors in parentheses.

Since the above results show that insurgencies with foreign fighters are likely to build more institutions, relative to groups with no foreign fighters, I examine the impact of foreign fighters on the kinds of institutions rebels build. Does embeddedness, in other

words, influence institution types? Insurgent groups with foreign fighters built electoral institutions in a total of twelve conflicts from 1989-2006 (about 10 percent of all conflicts). By contrast, groups with no foreign fighters built electoral institutions in nine conflicts during this same time period. Cross-tabulation also shows that foreign fighter-heavy organizations built service and law and order institutions in twenty-nine and thirty-four conflicts, respectively. The analysis readily demonstrates close associations between foreign fighters and the creation of each of these types of institutions (see Table 4.5).²²

Table 4.5. Foreign Fighters & Types of Rebel Institutions

VARIABLES	Model 5 Law (logit)	Model 6 Elect (logit)
Foreign Fighters	1.874** (0.693)	1.975* (1.023)
Civilian Aid	1.005 (0.768)	0.203 (0.866)
Leftist	1.997† (1.077)	3.940* (1.783)
Territorial Control	1.322* (0.641)	0.986 (0.851)
Nationalist Conflict	0.302 (0.601)	1.052 (0.754)
Population Density (ln)	0.605* (0.299)	-0.149 (0.376)
Income Growth	0.021 (0.015)	-0.018 (0.015)
Constant	-4.837** (1.272)	-3.972** (1.316)
Observations	92	92

** p ≤ 0.01; * p ≤ 0.05; † p ≤ 0.10 (two-tailed test), robust standard clustered on dyadid errors in parentheses.

²² In the model testing for the effects of foreign fighters on the development of *service* institutions, the variable *Leftist* indicating a rebel group's ideology perfectly predicts success. The coefficient for *Foreign Fighter* is nonetheless positively related to the dependent variable and statistically significant at the p=.05 level, but I do not include the model results in Table 4.5.

In sum, Model 1 and Models 3-6 show that groups that recruit foreign fighters are more likely to build institutions, relative to groups with no foreign fighters. Foreign fighter degrees of embeddedness measured in terms of their geographical origins and coethnicity to the rebel groups that they join, however, are not significant predictors of institutionalization. These findings have two main implications. First, more documentation is needed on the qualities of different foreign fighter populations beyond just their citizenship and rough measures of coethnicity to some local conflict actors. Indeed, the theoretical framework that I elaborate in Chapter 2 suggests that the mechanisms that embeddedness activates far transcend these two surface-level qualities, which may themselves have little, if anything, to do with how foreign fighters conduct themselves in wartime environments. For example, structural embeddedness, or fighters' ties into local conflict networks, confers on local rebels deep responsibilities to civilians on or near the battlefield even during times of fighting. The mechanism is thus more about how local versus foreign rebels experience war (through fluid soldier-civilian identities, in the case of local rebels), rather than about the distance that they have traveled to reach a conflict zone. Cultural embeddedness, in turn, is more about shared understandings of the conflict between rebels and noncombatant populations, as opposed to shared ethnicity per se. In fact, coethnicity to local populations may do little to affect foreign combatants' propensities to establish systems of mutual exchange with local populations if they have never experienced what normal, peacetime life is like in the areas where they are fighting.

Second, the results also speak to the importance of gathering documentation on rebel governance beyond what is currently available. In particular, the fact that groups with and without foreign fighters develop institutions suggests that the qualities of the governance systems that groups establish may differ significantly. In Chapter 2, I highlighted the reality that much of the violence that civilians face during wartime is not reflected in existing civil war datasets. This is particularly true of nonmaterial or nonphysical violence, which can involve “assaults on personhood, dignity, sense of worth or value...” (Scheper-Hughes and Bougois 2004: 1). Governance systems, which embrace informal, non-governmental mechanisms of persons and organizations as well as formal institutions (Rosenau 1992, 4), open the door to the aforementioned social and cultural dimensions of violence that the literature on rebel governance otherwise ignores. Indeed, the systems that rebels build during their struggles against the state may be exclusionary in nature, causing significant damage to certain segments of a local population by eroding their dignity, sense of belonging, value, or worth. The foreign mujahedin who joined the Bosnian Army during that country’s war in the early 1990s, for example, targeted local Bosnian Muslims with near constant harassment in their deliberate efforts to restructure society. Foreign fighters’ attempts at governance instilled even more fear among an already heavily victimized population. As such, though the models in this chapter show that foreign fighters exhibit higher likelihoods of institutionalization relative to groups without foreign combatants, their systems of governance may be insidious in

nature and victimize local populations more than they serve their needs. The findings provide further support to those studies that stress the coercive and predatory nature of some forms of rebel governance (Beardsley and McQuinn 2009), and highlight the need for additional information on the quality of institutionalization.

Rebel Violence against Civilians

I turn now to testing the relationship between foreign fighters and violence against civilians, using data on one-sided violence from UCDP (Allansson, Melander and Themnér 2017). The results from Model 2 in Table 4.3 show that rebel groups that recruit foreign fighters into their ranks are more likely to engage in civilian victimization, relative to groups that adhere to recruiting local fighters. Looking deeper, the data also show significant variation in the extent to which foreign fighter-heavy groups victimized civilians: while they engaged in one-sided in 38 conflicts between 1989-2011, they did not do so in 57 conflicts. Moreover, there is significant variation in levels of civilians deaths across foreign fighter-heavy groups that do abuse civilians (see Figure 4.10). What explains these discrepancies?

Models 7 and 8 evaluate the effect of foreign fighter embeddedness on civilian victimization. As in the preceding set of models related to rebel governance, I use Malet's (2016) data on Beyond Neighboring and Coethnic foreign fighters to capture structural and cultural dimensions of embeddedness, respectively.

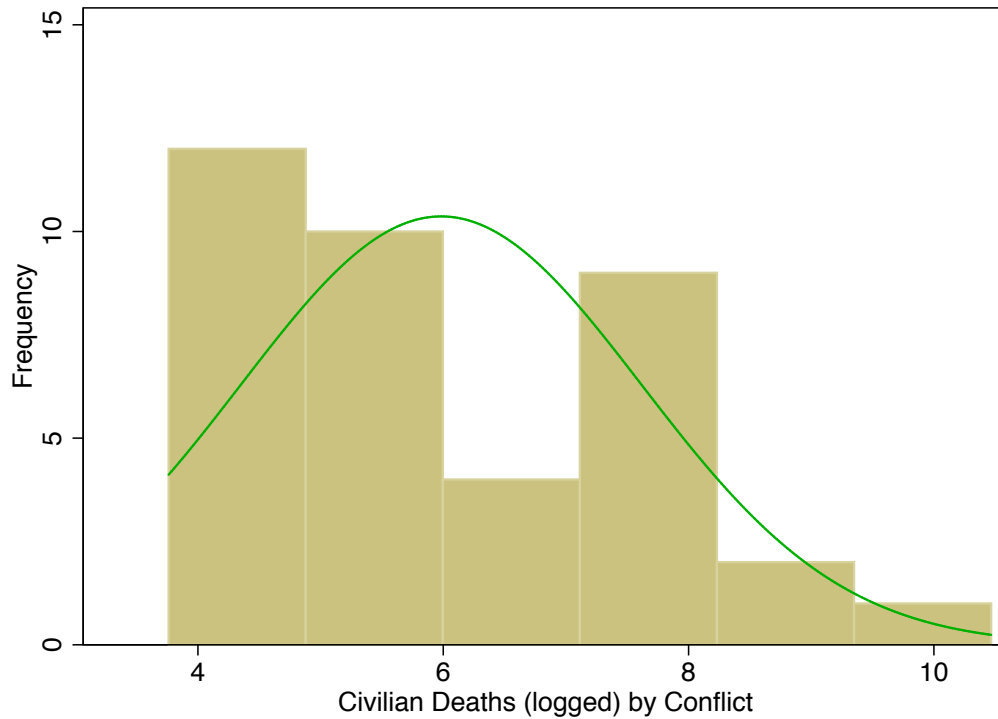


Figure 4.10. Density plot of annual civilian deaths caused groups with FF. Plot includes only the 38 dyads in which groups that recruit foreign fighters killed civilians. Plot excludes instances where groups with foreign fighters killed 0-24 civilians (coded as “0” in UCDP dataset).

In general, the results provide support for Hypotheses H2 and H4, that structural and cultural disembeddedness among rebel groups’ rank and file members increases propensities for civilian victimization. In Model 7, I find that groups with foreign fighters from Beyond Neighboring states are significantly more likely to abuse civilians, relative to groups that only recruit foreigners from neighboring countries: with all control variables set to their means, the model predicts that groups with non-regional foreign fighters kill an average of 219 civilians, compared to 14 civilians in the case of groups that recruit regional foreign fighters. In Model 8, the presence of coethnic foreigners leads to significantly less civilian deaths compared to the presence of non-coethnic foreigners (8 annual deaths by groups with coethnic foreigners, compared 36 for groups with non-

coethnic foreign combatants). Figure 4.10 provides a visual representation of the statistical significance of the two foreign fighter measures meant to capture structural and cultural embeddedness.

Table 4.6. Effect of Foreign Fighters on Civilian Victimization

VARIABLES	Model 7 Civilian Deaths (negative binomial)	Model 8 Civilian Deaths (negative binomial)
Foreign Fighters	0.388 (0.757)	2.154** (0.504)
Beyond Neighboring FF	2.691** (1.041)	
Coethnic FF		-1.404† (0.802)
Rebel Governance	-0.505** (0.117)	-0.328** (0.103)
Rebel Strength	3.203** (0.677)	2.966** (0.753)
Islamist	2.763** (0.728)	2.746** (0.611)
Conflict Intensity	3.104** (0.788)	2.746** (0.714)
Conflict Duration	0.267** (0.092)	0.259** (0.081)
Gov't Violence	1.908** (0.695)	1.283* (0.634)
Population Density	0.916** (0.286)	0.779** (0.288)
Income Growth	0.108** (0.034)	0.080* (0.033)
Constant	-8.098** (1.875)	-7.026** (1.943)
Observations	92	92
Log Likelihood	-338.63	-339.80
X ²	135.57	143.55
Probability > X ²	0.000	0.000

** p ≤ 0.01; * p ≤ 0.05; † p ≤ 0.10 (two-tailed test), robust standard clustered on dyadid errors in parentheses.

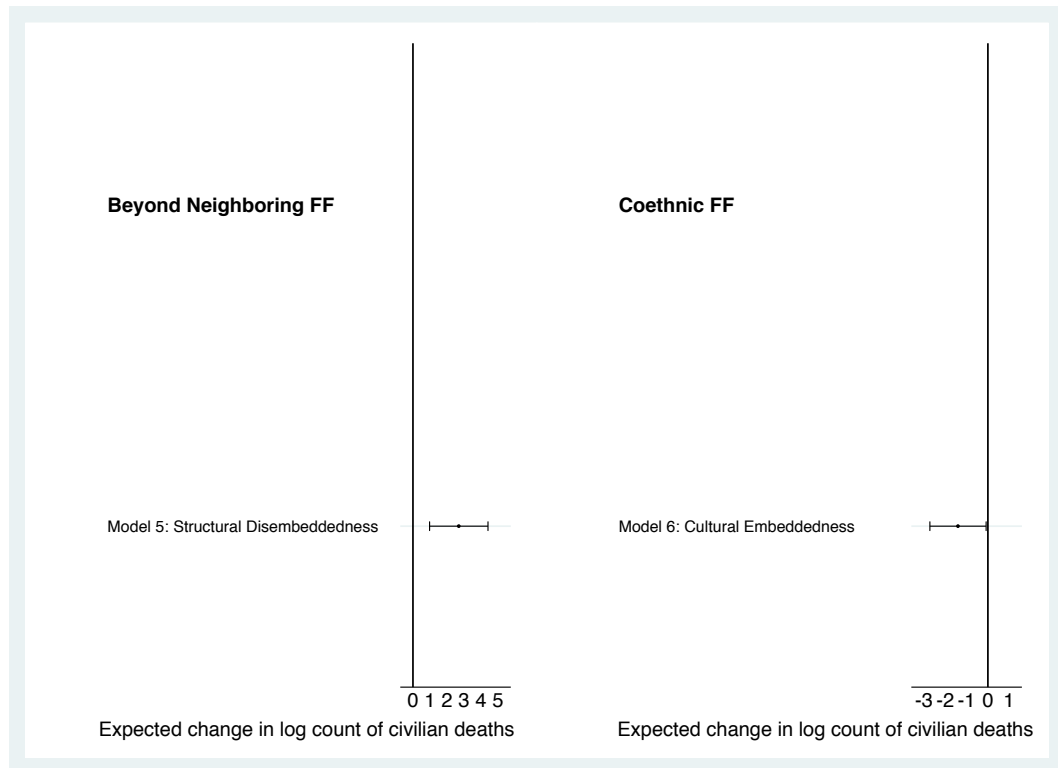


Figure 4.11. Coefficient estimates of foreign fighter variables from Models 7 & 8. Black horizontal lines represent 90% confidence intervals.

To assess the robustness of these results given the extent of overdispersion in the civilian victimization variable, I re-run Models 7 and 8 as OLS regressions using log-transformed counts of civilian deaths as the dependent variable. In the OLS replication of Model 7, the coefficient for *Beyond Neighboring* foreign fighters is positively associated with civilian victimization, but not statistically significant. The same is true of the *Foreign Fighters* variable. However, the OLS replication of Model 8 confirms that while the presence of foreign fighters generally is positively associated with one-sided violence ($p < 0.10$), insurgencies that recruit *coethnic* foreign fighters kill nearly two times fewer

civilians relative to insurgencies that recruit non-coethnic foreign combatants. The coefficient for *coethnic* foreign fighters is negatively associated with civilian victimization, and statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level. Full OLS regression results are included in Appendix A.

In sum, the preceding models of civilian victimization show that rebel groups that recruit foreign fighters who are disembedded from local conflict contexts – either by way of their distant geographic origins or lack of shared ethnicity with local conflict actors – are more prone to deploying lethal violence against civilians, relative to more embedded groups. Importantly, the analyses provide support to the notion that the qualities of foreign fighter populations may in fact matter in anticipating the behavior of insurgencies that they join. The analysis specifically suggests that while the recruitment of outsiders into rebel organizations' ranks does increase the likelihood of violence against civilians overall, this risk decreases when the foreigners are from neighboring states, and particularly when they share ethnic ties to the groups that they join. Structural and cultural embeddedness, in other words, may alleviate the otherwise violence-prone tendencies of foreign fighters even though they do not appear to affect insurgent decisions or abilities to govern. This appears to be especially true of cultural embeddedness. In what follows, I delve more deeply into these mechanisms by considering how different balances of embeddedness along the two aforementioned dimensions affect rebel group behavior.

4.7. Empirical Analysis: Tests of Secondary Hypotheses

Hypotheses 5-8 suggest that different combinations of embeddedness along the two specified dimensions – structural and cultural – lead to different patterns of rebel behavior:

H5a: Rebels that recruit doubly embedded foreign fighter populations are more likely to develop systems of rebel governance, relative to groups with other types of foreign fighter populations.

H6: Rebels that recruit disembedded foreign fighter populations are likely engage in higher levels of anti-civilian violence, relative to groups with other types of foreign fighter populations.

H7: Rebels that recruit assimilated broker foreign fighter populations are likely to engage in higher levels of anti-civilian violence, relative to groups with doubly embedded foreign fighters, but lower levels than groups with disembedded foreign fighters.

H8: Rebels that recruit integrated nonconformist foreign fighter populations are more likely to employ high levels of violence against civilians, relative to groups with other types of foreign fighter populations, and also more likely to develop governance

institutions, relative to groups with disembedded or assimilated broker foreign fighter populations.

To test these hypotheses, I use the Foreign Fighter (FF) Type variable described in Section 4.3. My dependent variables remain the same: govern is a count variable that accounts for the number of governing institutions developed by rebel groups; and civilian victimization is a count variable that accounts for the total number of civilians killed by a nonstate armed group. Table 4.7 presents summary statistics, and provides initial support to my hypotheses: groups that recruit doubly embedded foreign fighter populations, i.e. coethnic individuals from neighboring states, are the least likely to kill civilians and also likely to build the most institutions, relative to other types of groups. However, it should be noted that these groups also exhibit these tendencies relative to insurgents that do not recruit foreign fighters at all (Type 0 groups). This is somewhat puzzling but may simply indicate that doubly embedded rebels act more like local rebels (ie. groups that recruit locally), relative to groups with other types of foreign fighter populations. In fact, the complete model of rebel governance in Table 4.8 shows that there is no statistically significant difference between propensities for institutionalization between local insurgents (those that do not recruit foreign fighters) and those that recruit doubly embedded foreign fighter populations. By contrast, groups with “integrated nonconformist” foreign fighter populations (non-coethnics from neighboring states) create the lowest number of institutions and are also the most likely to kill civilians.

Table 4.7. Summary statistics: Rebel propensities for governance and civilian victimization by Foreign Fighter Type.

Foreign Fighter Type	Average No. of Institutions	Average No. of Civilians Killed
0: No Foreign Fighters	4	118
1: Disembedded FF	6	328
2: Embedded FF	7.6	32
3. Assimilated Broker FF	4.75	132
4: Integrated Nonconformist FF	2.5	1,788

The results from regression models 9 and 10 (see Table 4.8) show that insurgencies that recruit Type 1, 3, and 4 foreign fighter populations (disembedded foreign fighters; assimilated brokers; and integrated nonconformists) are more likely to develop institutions in the service of local populations, relative to groups that do not recruit foreign fighters. Groups with assimilated broker foreign fighter populations do not exhibit significantly different propensities for institutionalization relative to groups that draw primarily on local recruits. This result is likely the product of a low occurrence of insurgents with coethnic foreign fighters from non-neighboring states (5 groups total). A simple cross-tabulation of FF Type and high institutionalization (arbitrarily defined as cases with six or more institutions, see Huang 2016: 75) also shows that groups with no foreign fighters are the most likely to build large numbers of institutions, relative to insurgencies that recruit the four different types of foreign fighter populations. Out of the armed groups that do use foreign fighters, 79 percent of insurgencies that recruit embedded foreign fighters (11 out of 14) become highly institutionalized. This provides

support to Hypothesis 5a, which expects that groups with strong ties into local civilian networks and who share a common understanding of the conflict context with noncombatants populations will be the most likely to develop institutions. However, the results also show that 65 percent of insurgencies with disembedded foreign fighter populations (34 out of 52) also develop a large number of institutions. Again, this points to the need for more detailed documentation regarding the specific qualities of rebel institutions, focused in particular on the extent to which they elicit voluntary versus coerced collaboration with local civilians.

Turning to the other end of the spectrum of rebel behavior, Model 10 shows that groups that recruit foreign fighters are almost all significantly more likely to engage in civilian victimization, relative to groups that rely predominantly on a local fighter base. The only exception is the case of insurgencies with embedded foreign fighters (coethnics from neighboring states), which are less likely to engage in one-sided violence. Type 1 insurgencies, which employ non-coethnic fighters from beyond neighboring states – have incident rates of killing civilians that are nine times higher than locally-resourced groups. Type 3 and 4 groups also report higher incident rates than local insurgencies, by a factor of nine and four, respectively. The models of civilian victimization thus provide particularly strong support for Hypothesis 6, which anticipates that groups with disembedded foreign fighter populations will commit the highest levels of violence, and

also to Hypotheses 7 and 8, which predict elevated levels of violence among groups with assimilated broker and integrated nonconformist foreign fighter populations.

Table 4.8. Determinants of Rebel Behavior (Institutionalization & Civilian Victimization) by Foreign Fighter Group Type

VARIABLES	Model 9 Rebel Governance (OLS)	Model 10 Civilian Victimization (negative binomial)
Foreign Fighter Type*		
Type 1	2.050* (0.907)	2.203** (0.760)
Type 2	1.963** (0.660)	-1.399† (0.865)
Type 3	3.471 (2.651)	2.238* (1.076)
Type 4	1.195* (0.604)	1.604† (0.940)
Civilian Fatalities	-0.133† (0.081)	
Civilian Aid	3.277** (0.561)	
Territorial Control	0.687 (0.544)	
Nationalist Conflict	0.821 (0.511)	
Income Growth	-0.001 (0.014)	
Rebel Governance		-0.403** (0.120)
Rebel Strength		1.991* (0.863)
Islamist		3.140** (0.792)
Conflict Intensity		2.412** (0.839)
Conflict Duration		0.295** (0.095)
Gov't Violence		2.819** (0.667)
Population Density (ln)		0.652* (0.310)
Constant		-5.834** (2.211)

Observations	92	103
R-squared	0.55	
Log likelihood		-361.39
X ²		148.68
Probability > X ²		0.000

*Type 0 groups – those with no foreign fighters – are the reference category. ** p ≤ 0.01; * p ≤ 0.05; † p ≤ 0.10 Robust standard errors in parentheses.

To further compare insurgencies without foreign fighters as well as insurgencies with different types of foreign fighter populations, I test for statistically significant differences between the five levels of the *Foreign Fighter (FF) Type* variable. While the results from Models 9 and 10 in Table 4.8 suggest that the propensities of rebel groups with different foreign fighter types to engage in either institutionalization or civilian victimization are in fact different from zero, they do not discern whether these propensities are *different from one type to another*. This is an important question to answer, given that my hypotheses expect different foreign fighter populations to influence rebel organizations differently depending on their particular configurations of embeddedness.

Table 4.9. Mean No. of Institutions by Foreign Fighter Type (results based on Model 9)

<i>Foreign Fighter Type</i>	0 (no FF)	1 (disembedded FF)	2 (embedded FF)	3 (assimilated broker FF)	4 (integrated nonconformist FF)
Mean No. of Institutions	3.7	5.8	5.7	7.2	4.0

Table 4.9 shows the mean number of institutions built by the different types of insurgent groups, based on the results of Model 9. I highlight a number of important

results from the aforementioned tests on statistically significant differences across levels of the *FF Type variable*. First, the tests show that there is in fact a statistically significant difference between the number of institutions built by insurgencies with no foreign fighters (*FF Type = 0*) and insurgencies with Type 1, 2, and 4 foreign fighters. These types of groups – disembedded, embedded, and so-called integrated nonconformist foreign fighter populations – build significantly more institutions than groups with no foreign fighters. There is no statistically significant difference between the number of institutions built by so-called assimilated broker groups and those with no foreign fighters, suggesting that culturally assimilated but structurally disembedded groups “govern” similarly to local rebels. However, the results also show that there is no statistically significant difference in institutionalization among the four types of insurgencies with foreign fighters. This null finding is in line with results from previous tests showing that *Beyond Neighboring* and *Coethnic* foreign fighter characteristics have no bearing on rebel propensities for govern.

Tests for differences in civilian victimization across the five levels of the *FF Type* variable provide more robust support for my hypotheses. Table 4.10 shows the mean number of civilian deaths caused by the different types of insurgent organizations, based on results from Model 10. In this model, the difference in the number of civilians killed by insurgents with no foreign fighters is statistically different (lower) from the number of civilians killed by groups with disembedded, assimilated broker, and integrated nonconformist foreign fighter populations. There is no statistically significant difference

in the number of civilians killed by groups with no foreign fighters and those with doubly embedded foreign fighter populations, i.e. coethnic individuals from neighboring states. This provides support to the hypotheses that both structural and cultural embeddedness should allow foreign fighters to behave more like “local” insurgents.

Table 4.10. Mean No. of Civilian Deaths by Foreign Fighter Type (results based on Model 10)

<i>Foreign Fighter Type</i>	0 (no FF)	1 (disembedded FF)	2 (embedded FF)	3 (assimilated broker FF)	4 (integrated nonconformist FF)
Mean No. of Civilian Deaths	20.4	184.2	5.0	190.8	101.2

What’s more, difference in means tests also show that there is a statistically significant difference in the number of civilians killed by groups that use different types of foreign fighter populations. Specifically, groups with disembedded foreign fighter populations (non-coethnic individuals from non-neighboring states) kill significantly more civilians on average, compared to groups with doubly embedded foreign fighter populations. The latter type of group also kills significantly fewer civilians than groups that recruit foreign fighters who are disembedded along either the structural or cultural dimensions (assimilated brokers and integrated nonconformists, respectively). However, there is no statistically significant difference in the mean number of civilian deaths among insurgencies with disembedded, assimilated broker, and integrated nonconformist foreign fighter populations.

In short, this last set of tests suggests that dimensions of embeddedness as captured by foreign fighters' geographic origins and coethnicity to the majority of the groups they join better explain rebel propensities for civilian victimization, as opposed to institutionalization. While there is a statistically significant difference in the number of institutions built by groups with no foreign fighters and those with different types of foreign fighter populations, there is no difference in institutionalization across the four levels representing the different foreign fighter types. In terms of civilian victimization, embeddedness along both the cultural and structural dimensions – as opposed to uneven embeddedness along one or the other dimension – appears particularly important in limiting the extent to which foreign fighters influence insurgencies towards one-sided violence.

4.8. Discussion

This chapter provides a macro-level test of the theoretical expectations laid out in the Chapter 2 as it relates to the effect of foreign fighters on rebel behavior. To test my hypotheses on rebel group cultural and structural embeddedness, I use existing data on foreign fighter ethnicities and geographical origins, respectively. I also consider how different configurations of structural and cultural embeddedness shape rebel behavior when foreign fighters are present.

The first set of statistical tests in this chapter evaluates the effects of embeddedness on rebel propensities to develop institutions that serve local populations, and their likelihood to engage in civilian victimization. The results of the preliminary model (Models 1 and 2) show that foreign fighters are associated with higher levels of civilian victimization, but also higher levels of rebel institutionalization. Specifically, models predict that groups with foreign fighters kill 203 civilians annually, and develop on average of 5.7 institutions. Groups with no foreign fighters, by contrast, kill an average of 28 civilians and develop 3.7 institutions. The result regarding rebel institutionalization runs counter to my theoretical expectations, which anticipate that disembeddedness leads to the development of fewer – not more – systems of mutual exchange. Several dynamics might explain this counterintuitive result.

First, foreign fighters may be drawn to insurgencies that have already established themselves as “governors.” Indeed, the data used in this chapter show that foreign fighters and rebel institutionalization are highly correlated, and the results of the statistical models suggest that the causal arrow between the two variables may run in both directions. Foreign fighters might affect rebel groups’ abilities or decisions to govern, but institutions may also be a significant pull factor that draws individuals to a particular conflict. Highly institutionalized groups not only provide essential services to local populations, they also provide extensive benefits to their own members. If an individual has made the decision to fight in a foreign war, they may well select

themselves into organizations that are most likely to provide them with a sense of security, education, and other benefits.

Second, groups might recruit foreign fighters from distant geographies or with different cultural traits for the explicit purpose of restructuring local societies, because they are unable to draw on the active participation of local populations to meet their objectives. As mentioned previously in this chapter, insurgents that seek to restructure entire societies and institutions based on traditions and norms that do not resonate with local narratives and frames are likely to rely on coerced collaboration from local civilians, rather than elicit voluntary contributions. Institutionalization, in other words, is predatory in nature and is likely to be accompanied by high levels of both physical and nonphysical violence, as certain segments of a population are excluded from service provision. Unfortunately, the macrolevel data used in this chapter do not differentiate between qualities of rebel governance as they pertain to voluntary or coerced involvement of local populations. Nor do they capture the nonmaterial forms of violence that may often accompany coercive modes of rebel governance. But the high levels of institutionalization that rebel groups with disembedded foreign fighter populations often reach, and the high levels of violence with which they are also often associated, strongly suggest that these dynamics are at play. I devote the next three chapters to investigating these less directly observable microdynamics of rebel governance and violence.

Models 3 & 4 and 7 & 8 also suggest that variation in foreign fighter populations' levels of embeddedness affect rebel behavior. Specifically, I find that foreign combatants' coethnicity to local rebels and hence local populations dampens propensities for violence, while distant geographical origins lead to higher levels of violence (albeit to a lesser degree). These results provide support to the hypotheses that embeddedness into local conflict contexts – along cultural dimensions in particular – help rebels limit their violence against local populations.

Finally, the last set of statistical tests considers the ways that the two embeddedness dimensions interact to influence rebel relationships with local populations when insurgencies recruit foreigners into their ranks. My expectations here are that different balances of cultural and structural embeddedness inform different balances of cooperative (service-oriented) and contentious (abusive) across different types of groups. Indeed, few, if any groups, engage in only governance, or only violence. Gathering popular support is instead most often the product of delicate balances between establishing mutually beneficial systems of exchange with local civilians and coercion. As expected, models predict that groups who recruit coethnic foreigners from neighboring states (doubly embedded foreign fighters) are the least likely to abuse local populations. These groups are likely to benefit from connections into local civilian networks that offer them the deep local knowledge necessary to gather popular support through promises of cooperation, rather than threats of coercion. What's more, the

values, customs, and norms that these culturally embedded rebels share with local populations brings their needs into alignment with those of civilians, further facilitating the establishment of mutually beneficial systems of exchange. Groups with non-coethnic foreign fighter populations from beyond the immediate conflict region, on the other hand, suffer from the deleterious effects of disembeddedness. Lacking social ties into indigenous social networks as well as shared understandings of appropriate behavior or common needs, these groups turn to violence and are less likely to focus on the establishment of institutions that aim to improve the welfare of local civilians. These findings provide particularly strong support to Hypothesis H6.

4.9. Assessing Alternative Explanations

While I emphasize the social roots of rebel behavior, other studies contend that it is more closely linked to organizational factors, dynamics endogenous to war (such as government violence or conflict intensity), or to the structural context in which rebels engage the state. In the case of governance, these arguments claim that better-organized groups are better able to manage their resources in such a way that allows them to provide services to their members and surrounding populations. For instance, Heger, Jung and Wong (2017) argue that groups with a clear agenda, strong command and control, and accountability mechanisms possess an enhanced ability to govern. Groups with territorial control should also be significantly more likely to provide services to local populations, and secessionist groups are more likely to engage in inclusive service

provision specifically, relative to groups that seek to overthrow the state (Stewart 2018). Larger groups and those that survive long enough to do so also demonstrate higher likelihoods of service provision (Wagstaff and Jung 2017). Moreover, existing studies link service provision to struggles for power between nonstate groups and their state adversaries, and demonstrate positive correlations between services and particular forms of violence such as suicide bombing, attacks on civilian targets, and highly lethal attacks (Heger 2010; Heger, Jung and Wong 2012). Finally, the evidence also broadly suggests that groups who rely heavily on local civilian support, and specifically allow for local populations to contribute to governance, are the most likely to engage in extensive institutionalization (Huang 2016).

Results from the battery of statistical analyses presented in this chapter provide some support for these findings, and also reveal additional possible predictors of rebel governance. In particular, the models in this chapter show that rebels who rely on civilian aid are significantly more likely to provide services to local populations, relative to groups that rely on other sources of support. Rebel governance is also significantly more likely in nationalist conflicts, although the control of territory does not appear to influence propensities for governance. Contrary to previous findings, however, civilian casualties are negatively associated with institutionalization, suggesting that one-sided violence against local populations either impinges on rebels' abilities to credibly develop systems of exchange with civilians, or that the development of service provision institutions

decreases rebel needs to rely on violence to accumulate popular support. Finally, the results also support the notion that Mao's influence might lead leftist insurgencies to deploy systems of governance during war more than other types of groups.

Explanations for rebel violence against civilians contend that victimization is often the product of strategic interactions between nonstate armed groups and the state, or group goals and ideology. Across the models evaluating the impact of foreign fighters on rebel propensities for one-sided violence, the measures for Conflict Intensity, which accounts for numbers of battle deaths, and Government Violence, which accounts for government-inflicted violence against civilians, and Conflict Duration are all positive and statistically significant. This suggests that as battlefield and civilian deaths increase and as conflicts drag on, rebels' intentional attacks on civilian populations will also increase. State-level factors such as large population densities are also associated with more civilian victimization, in line with other studies of rebel one-sided violence.

The models of civilian victimization also show that important organizational-level variables are consistently and significantly associated with lower levels of civilian deaths. First, insurgent groups that engage in governance are less likely to abuse civilians. Second, the analyses show that rebel groups that adhere to Islamist ideologies are significantly more likely to abuse civilians. The relevance of ideology to rebel patterns of violence supports recent studies that demonstrate the importance of accounting for

ideology in the analysis of civil war, insofar as it has instrumental value for groups and also assigns specific kinds of institutions and strategies as groups strive to achieve their objectives (Sanin and Wood 2014). Finally, results show that a rebel group's strength relative to its opponent is also a significant predictor of one-sided violence. A rebel group's capacities may therefore not provide it with enough incentives to restrict violence, but instead interact in important ways with other conflict dynamics such as counterinsurgency strategies to affect civilian victimization (Wood 2010).

4.10. Conclusion

The quantitative analysis in this chapter provides a macrolevel look at how two dimensions of embeddedness affect rebel interactions with civilians: institution-building and civilian victimization. The presence of foreign fighters in insurgency captures variation in embeddedness across groups, and existing data on the characteristics of foreign fighter populations helps to investigate how different dimensions of embeddedness inform patterns of behavior among insurgent organizations.

The findings lend support to the claim that rebel embeddedness in the local context of a conflict is an important predictor of dynamics related to governance and violence. On average, it appears that the addition of combatants from foreign states into the ranks of otherwise locally-grounded rebel groups increases the likelihood of rebel governance and also increases propensities for lethal violence against locals. If the

expectations that I lay out in Chapter 2 are correct, dissonant understandings of a particular conflict's dynamics, reduced abilities to communicate directly with locals, and a dearth of ties into local population networks lead foreign fighter-heavy rebel organizations to turn to violence to force popular support. However, the increased propensities of foreign fighter-heavy groups to build governance institutions, relative to "local" rebels, run counter to my theoretical expectations and suggest a number areas for further investigation. First, foreign fighters may be attracted to groups that provide social or other services. Second, foreign fighter-heavy groups may engage in their own forms of institution-building that do not resonate with local needs and values, and propagate, rather than limit, violence. Thus while groups with foreign fighters may provide high levels of governance, their modes of service provision are likely based on coercion and may be exclusive in nature. I explore these dynamics more carefully in the qualitative case study chapters that follow.

Critically, the specific mechanisms through which foreign fighters influence insurgencies towards or away from violence and institutionalization cannot be understood through statistical methods alone. In particular, the tests in this chapter do not answer the following questions: how do different markers of foreignness (such as ideology, religion, language differences) impact foreign fighters' embeddedness into local conflict contexts, and how might groups' organizational structures condition the influence that foreign combatants have on insurgencies' interactions with civilians?

Moreover, the reasons that foreign fighters choose to join particular insurgencies, or the reasons that armed groups seek to recruit foreign combatants, are likely important factors that influence rebel-civilian relations during war. I address these and other questions in the next chapters, which trace the roots of combatant embeddedness to their behavior on and off the battlefield in the case of the Bosnian war.

Chapter Five: Armed Groups and the Influence of Outsiders in the Bosnian War

5.1. Introduction

The next three chapters focus on the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina (henceforth Bosnia) that lasted from April 1992 to December 1995 and delve specifically into the actions of soldiers in the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina (ABiH). The present chapter introduces the conflict by providing a descriptive summary of the war and the armed actors involved, juxtaposing in particular the local origins and nature of the conflict and the role played by “outsiders”, broadly-defined. These included a variety of actors ranging from paramilitary organizations composed primarily of individuals from Serbia, Croatia, or other neighboring states in the former Yugoslavia; so-called “weekend warriors” (Mueller 2000); foreign volunteers or entire units made up foreign combatants from farther afield than the immediate geographical neighborhood; to military units made up of displaced populations. These various elements were not always self-defined as “outsiders,” but rather were viewed or conceptualized as such by local Bosnians during the war and fall into the various categories specified in Figure 2.1 in Chapter 2. Foreigners from Russia or Greece who joined militias fighting on the side of the Bosnian Serbs, for example, would be considered “disembedded” fighters given their structural and cultural disembeddedness from the local conflict context. Conversely, members of

the Croatian diaspora who joined Bosnian Croat forces for 1992-1995 are representative of “assimilated broker” combatants given their cultural ties to Bosnia’s wartime social fabric and distant geographical origins. As summarized in Chapter 3, I focus in particular on variation in levels of embeddedness across soldiers and units within the ABiH (summarized in Figure 5.1).

Cultural Embeddedness	High	<p>III Assimilated Brokers (17th Krajina Brigade refugee soldiers)</p>	<p>II Doubly Embedded (Local Bosnian Muslim soldiers)</p>
	Low	<p>I Disembedded (Foreign Mujahedin)</p>	<p>IV Integrated Nonconformists (Local Bosnian Muslim Mujahedin)</p>
		Low	High
		Structural Embeddedness	

Figure 5.1. Embeddedness across units and soldiers within the Bosnian Army

In the years following Josip Tito’s death in 1980, rising Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic fomented ethnic nationalism in Serbia (Gagnon 2006). The “Serbian Memorandum,” issued in 1986, promoted the validity of Serbia’s request for territorial integrity, ultimately encouraging the establishment of a state in which all Serbs – and only Serbs – could reside (Cigar 1995). As the sections below explain in more detail, a nationalist form of patriotism emerged that highlighted Serbs’ status as victims, and their

shared future as a nation. A speech by Milosevic in 1989 that referenced Serbian defeat at the hands of the Ottoman Empire in the Battle of Kosovo rallied supporters and renewed the possibility of an independent Serbia, even if through force. Over the next few years, Milosevic's faction consolidated power, creating a "wildfire of nationalism" (Ramet 2006, 363) in which the radical Serb Chetnik movement of the World War II era was revived. A host of nationalist political parties emerged as winners in elections around Yugoslavia, and Serbian plans to annex portions of Bosnia solidified and became public in 1991 (Ramet 2005).

Fighting broke out in Bosnia during late March and the early days of April 1992. The Bosnian government declared a rupture of relations with the Serbs on April 4, when Alija Izetbegovic, head of the Muslim nationalist Party of Democracy Action (SDA), ordered the mobilization of all police and reservists in Sarajevo. In turn, the Serb Democratic Party (SDS) called for the evacuation of all Serbs still living in the city. On April 6, Serbian forces began shelling Sarajevo from the hillsides, and crossed the Drina River from Serbia into Bosnia two days later to lay siege on the predominantly Muslim eastern cities of Zvornik, Visegrad, and Foca. The international community recognized Bosnia-Herzegovina as an independent state on April 7 and 8, and by the middle of April the entire country was engulfed in war. The war lasted over three and a half years, resulting in nearly 100,000 civilian and combatant deaths and more than one million displaced people (Ball, Tabeau and Verwimp 2007). According to the most comprehensive accounts

of war deaths, 66.1 percent of the total dead were Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), 25.6 percent were Serb, and 7.8 percent were Croat.²³ The total number of civilian deaths was close to 40,000 (approximately 40 percent of the estimated minimum number of total deaths), and more than 57,000 soldiers and police died in the conflict (approximately 60 percent of the estimated minimum number of total deaths) (ibid.).

The ABiH was one of three armed groups to emerge out of what were originally Tito's Territorial Defense Forces founded in the 1960s. The other two main groups were the Army of the Serb Republic (VRS), and the Croat Defense Council (HVO). The three sides thus shared a common institutional origin in a Yugoslav system of popular defense. In addition, each armed faction received support from external parties including but not limited to Serbia and Croatia (in the cases of the VRS and HVO, respectively), and included splinter factions and various militias. Many individuals from outside Bosnia joined these latter units, and as these next three chapters will show, contributed to inciting violence throughout the war. Of particular importance to this project is the arrival of a number of foreign combatants from areas beyond the former Yugoslavia who joined the ranks of the ABiH and were eventually consolidated into the El Mudzahid Detachment. A not insignificant number of foreigners also came to Bosnia from places such as Russia, Romania, and Greece to join Bosnian Serb forces, and individuals from various European states participated in the fighting on the Bosnian Croat side. Because

²³ The remaining 0.1 and 1.3 percent are identified as "other" or "unknown" ethnicity, respectively.

my primary focus is on the actions of members of the Bosnian Army in central Bosnia, I do not attempt to provide information on the HVO or VRS in equal measure. However, in order to situate the emergence of the ABiH in proper context, and also to present a more complete picture of the role of embeddedness (or rather disembeddedness) during the Bosnian war, it is important to also describe the composition and actions of the other two sides in some detail.

I organize the rest of this chapter as follows. I begin by outlining my rationale for selecting the Bosnian War and the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina as the main case study in this project. Next, I provide an account of the pre-war context in Bosnia, focusing in particular on the role of ethnicity in the lead up to the outbreak of war. I present demographic data and other evidence showing that there was significant intermingling of Bosnian Muslim, Serb, and Croat ethnicities prior to war breaking out in 1992, particularly in urban areas. This helped to develop strong interethnic social networks in many areas of Bosnia. Section 5.4 describes the various armed groups involved and explain the local roots of each faction, ultimately showing how Serb, Bosnian, and Croat resistance emerged from the same, loosely organized system of local, interethnic territorial defense forces. Section 5.5 then provides an account of the various paramilitary groups involved in the Bosnian war, describing in particular the extent to which foreigners (and other outsiders) were represented in their ranks. The next section (5.6) provides an abbreviated account of the dynamics of contention between the three sides during the

war, particularly as they pertain to the role of foreign combatants or otherwise disembedded units in fomenting violence. The last section concludes. As a whole, the chapter sets the context for the empirical analysis of the effects of combatant embeddedness on armed group patterns of behavior that I develop in Chapters 6 and 7.

5.2. Why Bosnia? Case Selection and Research Design

Several factors motivate the selection of Bosnia as the main case study in this project. First, the combination of the Bosnian war's local character and the formation of units that capture variation in embeddedness across rank and file soldiers make it a paradigmatic case for the study of embeddedness' effects on armed group behavior. Not only did the ABiH include local ABiH soldiers in local units and foreign fighters in foreign units, it also provides cases of displaced refugees forming their own separate units and local Bosnian Muslims joining foreign units. There is thus significant variation in my main independent variable of interest. Second, using the case of the Bosnian army in particular works to support my position that the effects of embeddedness on armed group patterns of behavior are the same for rebel groups and state forces. In other words, the case helps to demonstrate that my theoretical framework is agnostic on the formal institutional qualities of actors. Furthermore, the Bosnian war has special importance in its own right as the first large-scale civil war on European soil since World War II, and the largest massacre in Europe since the Holocaust. It also involved one of the longest sieges in modern history. Because the Bosnian war has been the subject of lengthy and detailed

study since its eruption in the early 1990s, there is a vast amount of reliable data from which to draw, much of it at the local level. Finally, some of the micro dynamics of the Bosnian war constitute an empirical puzzle, as few, if any, of the extant theoretical approaches to armed group behavior during the war can yield an adequate explanation for the range of actions that characterized ABiH soldiers' behavior during the war.

The majority of studies of the Bosnian war focus on dynamics of violence, in support of the notion that inter-ethnic animosities, however activated, motivated most wartime violence. Yet, as some scholarship rightly acknowledges, a narrow focus on ethnic-based hatred misses and cannot account for other types of behavior that was prominent during the war, including positive cross-ethnic contact, relationship maintenance, and solidarity-building, as well as acts of saving and collusion across ethnic lines (see e.g. Andreas 2008; Christia 2008; Berry 2018). What's more, bird's eye view perspectives of the conflict that prioritize ethnic rivalries treat actors – including combatant groups – as undifferentiated wholes. Yet as the next several chapters will show, the ways in which ABiH soldiers engaged civilian populations throughout Bosnia differed significantly across units and geographical space. By focusing on types and degrees of armed actor embeddedness into the local context of the conflict, this project thus adds to the existing literature on the Bosnian conflict in two ways. First, it broadens understandings of the war to account for its non-violent elements, and offers a more complete picture of the various ways that armed groups can engage civilian populations

and their adversaries on the basis of their integration and assimilation into local conflict contexts. Second, it demonstrates how combatant embeddedness influenced certain Bosnian Army units to employ tactics of coercion, as opposed to cooperation, with members of local Bosnian communities, including Bosnian Muslims.

The focus of my case study is on armed group behavior in central Bosnia, particularly the Central Bosnia, Zenica-Doboj, Sarajevo, and Tuzla cantons. In addition to experiencing contention between Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian Serb forces, part of this area was the epicenter of the Croat-Bosniak war, which lasted from October 1993 to February 1994. Central Bosnia, broadly-speaking, is also where the majority of foreign fighters settled, as most other parts of the country were difficult to reach (Mitchell 2008). The 17th Krajina Brigade, or “refugee brigade” was also especially active in this area. Before the war, many of central Bosnia’s major cities exhibited some of the highest rates of ethnic inter-mixing in the country, as I discuss in more detail below. Some, such as Tuzla, became models of interethnic cooperation and anti-war resistance during the war (Amarkolas 2011). In other cities such as Zenica, however, tensions between combatants and civilians were higher, including between ABiH units and Muslim residents. The area thus provides a rich landscape in which to evaluate the effect of combatant embeddedness on their capacity to engage in civil action (Avant et al. 2018) versus anti-civilian violence during the war. Figure 5.1. shows the area of detail that is the focus of the Bosnia case study.



Figure 5.2. Area of detail for case study.

The data for the next three chapters come from more than 40 interviews I conducted with local stakeholders – ABiH war veterans from the 2nd, and 3rd Corps,²⁴ ordinary citizens from central Bosnian towns (included in the area of detail highlighted in Figure 5.2),²⁵ activists, and civil society actors – during two months of field work in Bosnia

²⁴ A small number of interviewed former combatants were members of the ABiH 1st Corps, which was actively mainly in and around Sarajevo.

²⁵ In order to preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of my research participants, I do not disclose the names of towns and villages where I conducted interviews. Given the small-town feel of many of the locations where I conducted my research, disclosing specific locations would risk disclosing the identity of many of my interviewees.

in September and October 2017. I also draw on two volumes of combatant memoirs to complement my interviews with ABiH combatants. The first is a compilation of twenty-four war memoirs written by local Bosnian war veterans, translated from Bosnian into English. The second is a collection of mujahid memoirs, originally written in Arabic by combatants who traveled from the Middle East to fight in Bosnia from 1992-1995. In addition, I draw on a variety of alternate sources that serve as “checks” on the recollections of individual interviewees and on the material included in the memoirs. These include scholarly studies of the Bosnian war, other memoirs or personal accounts of the war, think tank reports, archives and trial transcripts from the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), and CIA documents. Articles from local newspapers that were published during the war are especially useful insofar as they reveal the discourse of various local actors surrounding the issue of foreign combatants.

5.3. The Pre-War Context

Ethnicity in Pre-War Bosnia

Despite the deep ethnic segmentation of its society, ethnic conflict was not the norm in Bosnia prior to the outbreak of violence in 1992. Ethnic Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks all shared the same language, ethnic origins, and lived similar lifestyles. Many Bosnian marriages cross ethnic lines. It was especially in the years immediately preceding the war that the religious and cultural differences that Bosnians otherwise tolerated on a daily basis became master cleavages for contending political agendas and the emergence of nationalist ideologies. As this section will show, many Bosnians were deeply embedded

into cross-cutting, interethnic social networks before the eruption of hostilities in 1992. Although this made it difficult to separate people according to ethnicity during the fighting – at times leading to escalations in violence (see e.g. Weidmann 2011) – individuals’ strong pre-war ties to members of different ethnicities were also critical to the emergence of interethnic systems of wartime exchange (Andreas 2008). Most accounts of the war overlook these latter dynamics, particularly those low-level exchanges and instances of civil action that are in part the focus of this case study.

In contrast to Croats and Serbs, Bosnian Muslims historically saw themselves (and were seen by others) as a “nationality” with no nation. Though more numerous than their Serb and Croat counterparts, they lacked geographic and cultural centers of gravity, and were defined more by what they were not – neither Serb nor Croat – than by what they represented. Despite the expansion of Muslim political, religious, educational, and economic organizations towards the end of the nineteenth century, the three dominant ethnic identities of Serb, Croat, and Muslim continued to coexist peacefully within the frameworks of their own institutions. As Bosnian Muslims became more secular, with most drinking alcohol and exhibiting only a limited knowledge of the Koran, ethnic differences remained largely undistinguishable during this time.

Though the process of nation-state consolidation that swept Europe towards the turn of the century bypassed Bosnia, its peoples continued to share language, historical

experiences, economic conditions, and other important facets of culture. The common cultural development of the Muslim (Bosniak) and non-Muslim (Croat and Serb) populations grew out of shared, pre-Ottoman memories, customs, and beliefs as well as a common Slavic origin and geographic intermixing. Ultimately, these dynamics gave rise to what historians refer to as a “cult of good neighborliness” (Burg and Shoup 1999, 19). After World War II, communist policies strived to create an urban working class that recognized but relegated ethnic identity to a subordinate role (Pickering 2006). Together with socialization, experimentation, and elements of balancing and control, Yugoslav elites effectively used modernization to cultivate communal cooperation across the Balkans.

The extent to which various regions of Bosnia exhibited nationalist tendencies before the war varied significantly. Eastern Bosnia in particular was historically considered the most bitterly contested zone in the country. In the nineteenth century, this area was the scene of a Serb peasant revolt against Austrian conscription. During World War I, the region’s Muslims fell victim to Serb violence, while Austrian forces fiercely attacked Serbs. All sides committed atrocities in Eastern Bosnia during World War II (Donia and Fine 1994, 118). Central Bosnia – the focus of this case study – was by contrast a hub of multiculturalism, especially in the urban centers of Sarajevo, Zenica, and Tuzla. Within these three urban areas, the three communities of ethnic Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks were interspersed in a way reminiscent of “leopard spots” (Burg and

Shoup 1993, 25). Rural areas, on the other hand, were more ethnically homogeneous than urban centers, and rural Bosnians often harbored resentment towards city-dwellers. Many existed with minimal interethnic contact (Bringa 1995). The fact that settlement patterns varied little across time also suggested that ethnic relations in Bosnia were deeply rooted in the past, foreshadowing the intense difficulties that policies centered on the separation and consolidation of populations along territorial lines would face. Figure 5.3 shows the distribution of ethnic communities in 1991, and indicates the extent of interethnic embeddedness prior to war's outbreak in 1992.

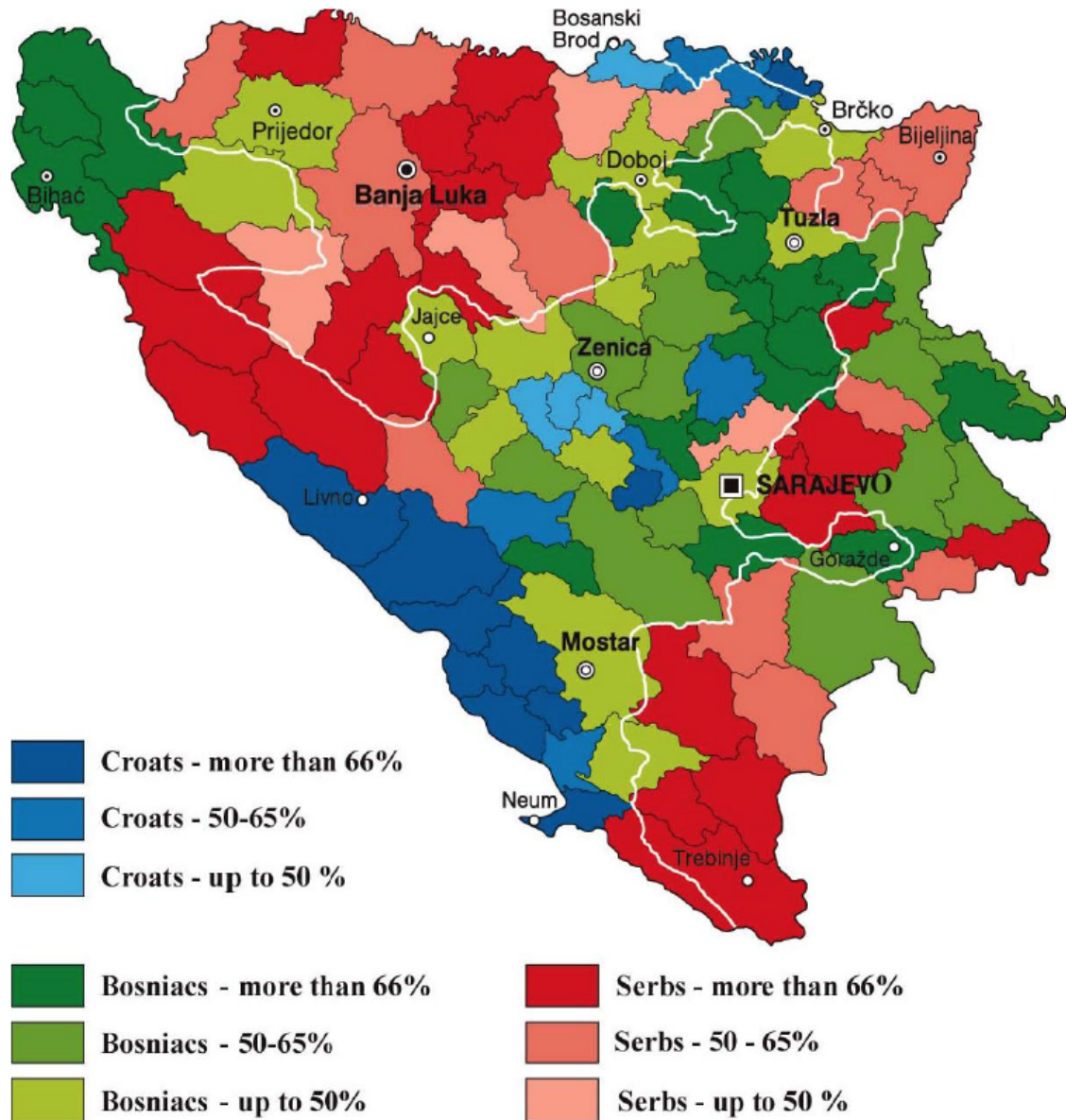


Figure 5.3. Distribution of ethnicities in Bosnia, 1991. Based on data from the Bosnian Institute, 2010.

Descent into Nationalist Politics

In the period immediately following Tito’s death in 1980, a large portion of Bosnia’s urban population self-identified as “Yugoslav.” As a civil identity, being “Yugoslavian” reflected the “integrative effects of interethnic contact in a multiethnic

setting” (Burg and Shoup 1999, 29), and the rising propensities of Muslims, Serbs, and Croats to identify as Yugoslav. The number of people who supported the idea of a common state was growing, and represented the emergence of a civic culture in Bosnia. Nevertheless, identification as “Yugoslav” was far less prevalent in smaller cities and towns, and nearly nonexistent in rural areas. The total number of “Yugoslavs” remained relatively small (8 percent of the population in 1981, and 5 percent of the population on the eve of war in 1991), and confined to the cities.

Importantly, political development did not keep pace with the economic and cultural advances that characterized the Titoist period and opened the door for the victory of nationalist parties in 1990. By the 1990s, elections in Croatia and Slovenia had already installed independence-oriented governments and rising extreme nationalism in Serbia – including the repression of the Albanian minority in Kosovo – dimmed any prospects of Bosnia seeking to remain part of a Yugoslav state. Ultimately, the Serbian leadership’s manipulation of perceptions of threat to Serbian populations in the late 1980s purposefully provoked and fostered fear among an otherwise ethnically mixed and tolerant population. People responded by voting overwhelmingly for nationalist candidates and parties even when they did not support their aims (Gagnon 1994/5), engaging in voting patterns described as “negative voting.” Citizens voted for one party in order to obstruct the victory of another, but not on the basis of a platform’s or candidate’s appeal (Burg and Shoup 1999, 57).

Exceptions to nationalist patterns of voting were somewhat prevalent in urban centers, such as the working-class city of Tuzla in central Bosnia. A coalition party was victorious there in the 1990 elections, and Tuzla experienced some of the highest levels of interethnic cooperation in the early phases of the war (Armakolas, 2011). But on the whole, the overwhelming victory of nationalist parties throughout most municipalities reflected the increasing polarization of Yugoslav society generally, and Bosnia specifically. While the republic had been on the cutting edge of multiculturalism prior to Tito's death, and embraced an outward-looking desire to join European civic society, local and regional tendencies toward secession ultimately prevailed by the late 1980s.

The creation of a new Serb-majority state by the conservative Serb coalition in 1990 elevated Serbian nationalism to the point of destroying the old, multi-ethnic Yugoslavia (Gagnon 1994/5). Nationalist leaders and competing elites stoked divides by drawing selectively on traditions and mythologies to construct particular, divisive versions of history that satisfied their interests. On the Serbian side in particular, a coalition of actors joined together to provoke conflict along ethnic lines, creating a political context where individual interests were redefined as the survival of the Serbian people. Serb conservatives' demonization of other ethnic nationalities provoked confrontations and violent encounters along ethnic lines, threatening to undo the

nascent civic culture of individual republics, and contributing to the polarization of society along ethnic lines. War would soon follow.

The Militarization of Politics and Outbreak of War in Bosnia

Elections in Croatia brought Franjo Tudjman and his nationalist Croatian Democratic Community party to power in 1990. Croatian-controlled businesses proceeded to evict thousands of Serbian workers, increasing resentment and alienating and disenfranchising non-coethnics. Milosevic, in turn, encouraged Serbian activists to push for autonomy from Croatia, and organized a referendum in Serbian areas in which over nearly all Serbs voted for self-determination (Donia and Fine 1994, 224). Tensions continued to rise until May 19, 1991, when Tudjman scheduled a referendum on the question of independence from Yugoslavia. 94 percent of Croats voted in favor, while the majority of Serbs boycotted the vote. Clashes between Serbian irregulars and Croatian militias escalated that summer, reaching the intensity of full-blown war between Croatian forces and the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) by the fall. JNA bombardment of Croatian cities displaced large portions of Croatia's population, leaving Milosevic's forces free to resettle conquered areas with Serbs or others who supported the claims of a greater Serbia. The two sides reached a fragile truce after UN interference in January 1992, inaugurating the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) mission that would remain in the former Yugoslav states for years to come.

The Croatian war spilled over into Bosnia in several ways. First, Serbs from Krajina and Croatian troops made cross-border incursions into Bosnia to advance their nationalist claims there. Second, the JNA used Bosnian territory as a staging ground for attacks into Croatia, such that by early 1992 the JNA had established a virtual protectorate in Bosnia (Donia and Fine 1994, 227). By the time of the ceasefire in January 1992, the JNA was well positioned to take over much of the Bosnian countryside. Bosnia eventually declared its independence following a referendum held on February 29-March 1, where over 62 percent of the republic's voters cast ballots in favor of independence. Serbian politicians and generals viewed the move as a concrete step towards war. Barricades went up in Sarajevo the following day, prompting protests in the city and a peacefully rally that attracted as many as 100,000 people in Mostar (Burg and Shoup 1999, 118). Alija Izetbegovic, the Bosnian president, formally declared independence from Yugoslavia on March 3, 1992.

In the days that followed, armed confrontations between JNA reservists and irregular forces of Muslim (Bosniak) and Croat origin increased dramatically. Fighting broke out in the northern city of Bosanski Brod and other areas near the Bosnia-Croatia border, as local Croats attempted to block the entry of JNA forces into Bosnia with the support of their Muslim neighbors. The central city of Doboj devolved into near-anarchic conditions by the second week of March, and most of Herzegovina (western Bosnia) was engulfed in violence by the end of the month as Serbs began the ethnic cleansing of

Croat villages in the region. The war's first massacre of Muslims occurred on April 2-3 outside the eastern city of Bijeljina. The engagement of Serbian forces from outside Bosnia, particularly those commanded by Zeljko Raznjatovic (Arkan), was a major contributing factor to the war's early escalation, provoking a call from the international community as well as Izetbegovic to bring the hostilities to a halt. When the former officially recognized Bosnia's independence on April 6, Serbian forces mounted a full invasion of eastern Bosnia, sending in Arkan's forces as well as JNA reservists from Serbia. Fighting spread to Sarajevo, with the JNA entering the conflict there on April 8, 1992. Figure 5.3 depicts the territories of Bosnia and Croatia controlled by Bosnian Serb and Serbian forces in the early months of the war.

Serbian nationalist politicians became infamous from the war's outset for employing paramilitaries to commit some of the most gruesome acts of violence against non-Serb populations in Bosnia. These forces also played a significant role in convincing Bosnian Serb civilians that their Muslim and Croat neighbors posed a real threat. Extremist media sources propagated narratives harkening back to the persecution of Serbs during the Second World War, and some politicians even ordered the unearthing of old Serb graves as evidence of the brutal violence to which they had been subjected at the hands of Muslims and Croats (Berry 2018, 118). Serbs likened their situation to that of the Jews during the Holocaust, framing themselves as victims (Ramet 2005). Efforts to create distance and foster fear and animosity between neighbors, friends, and even

family members along ethnic lines were deliberate strategies of Milosevic's nationalist program.

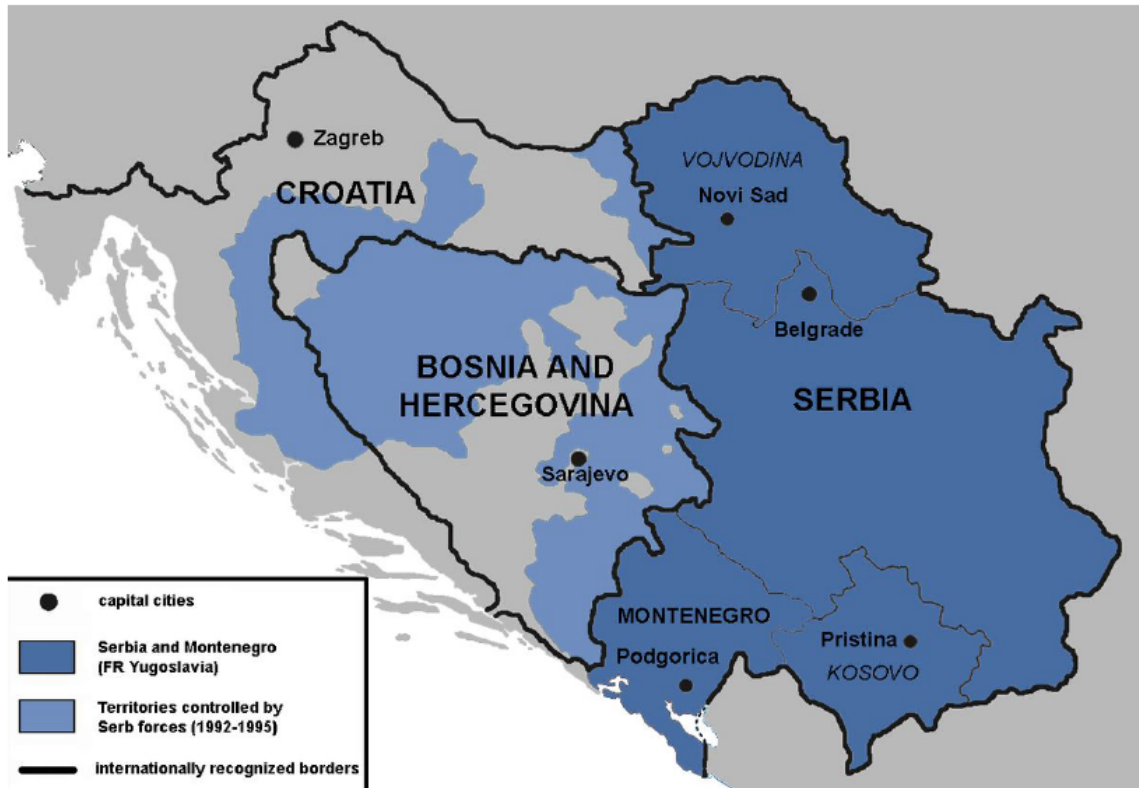


Figure 5.4. Serb areas of control, July 1992.

Though the violence spread quickly as a result, there were notable instances of efforts to quell the effects of ethnic polarization and stem the tide of violence. Burg and Shoup (1999, 129), for example, cite events in a number of Bosnian cities to highlight interethnic cooperation in the early days of the war: in Bijeljina, local Serbs tried to stop a massacre of their Muslim neighbors by Arkan's forces, and were themselves killed by Serbian irregulars. In Goražde, residents established a "citizen's forum" to ward off ethnic

violence, and the town remained relatively calm despite the violence in other parts of eastern Bosnia. The defense of the central city of Tuzla was organized independently of the Bosnian government, and involved the participation of Muslims, Serbs, and Croats. Muslims and Croats also cooperated in the town of Vareš to keep ethnic tensions in check, and were also able to keep the peace in Fojnica until 1993. A local JNA commander in northwest Bosnia reached an agreement with other local leaders in various towns to implement a cease-fire, and a Muslim mayor collaborated with an SDS police chief to set up joint patrols in Doboju.

History shows that these efforts did not succeed in preventing an outbreak of total war in Bosnia by 1992. Burg and Shoup (1999) suggest that this was because all sides had been preparing for all-out war even before open hostilities began. The SDS and the JNA did so by arming the Serb population and relocating weapons caches and military bases. The JNA had also likely set up siege positions in the hills surrounding Sarajevo well before active fighting broke out. There were also signs of war preparation on the Muslim side, for example the organization of the Muslim Green Berets in 1991. By 1992, Bosnia had become a virtual armed camp.

As this section shows, the eruption of hostilities in Bosnia in 1992 was largely attributable to political instability and to the ambitions and fear-inducing rhetoric of nationalist leaders, particularly Milosevic's vision of a "greater Serbia." It was not the

direct result of underlying ethnic tensions between Bosnia's Muslim, Serb, and Croat populations. In fact, the extent of cross-cutting, prewar ethnic networks throughout Bosnia and a history of peaceful coexistence made the eruption of war puzzling to many Bosnians: war came as a surprise to most ordinary Bosnians (Maček 2009). Many organized or engaged in simple acts of resistance early on. In Sarajevo, for instance, people of different ethnicities joined together to defend their homes from Serbian sniper and artillery attacks. Bosnian women responded to the erection of barricades in the city by serving traditional Bosnian food, their way of rejecting the war (Berry 2018, 121). Even in the case of Bosnia's Serb population, 1991 analyses of what a potential civil war would look like in former Yugoslavian states suggested that "not even all Serbs would be united behind [a rump Serbian force]" (CIA 1991).

The extent of Bosnian society's embeddedness in interethnic prewar social networks would have significant effects on the evolution of war at the local level. Most of the men who mobilized as part of their territorial defense groups in 1992, for instance, did so to defend their homes, families, and friends, not a particular ethnic group. What's more, soldiers and civilians – especially on the Bosnian Muslim side – began the war similarly as victims, and would thus experience the conflict through similar lenses throughout its duration. Although intense levels of interethnic violence did in fact characterize the war in most places, many soldiers in the Bosnian Army also engaged in civil action to continue to build interethnic solidarity across front lines, or to maintain

their prewar relationships with people of other ethnicities. As this chapter describes below, these actions stood in sharp contrast to the behavior of foreign soldiers who did not benefit from a deep embeddedness in Bosnia's prewar social fabric.

5.4. Inside the War: The Evolution of Armed Factions

All three sides that would emerge as major contenders during the Bosnian war – Serb, Croat, and Bosniak forces – to some extent drew on the system of territorial defense designed and implemented by Josip Tito in the 1960s. The system, described as “small infantry units organized by municipalities,” depended on loosely defined command and control structures and resembled the territorial defense forces of Sweden, Switzerland, and West Germany, among other countries (CIA 1991, 2). It relied primarily on latent, as opposed to standing, forces that included “a broad spectrum of citizens... in preparations for military and civil defense tasks... projecting a comprehensive or ‘total’ response of the people to war” (Menderhausen 1980, 2). Although territorial defense forces were considered republican – as opposed to Yugoslavian – forces, and therefore responsible to Croatian, Bosnian, or Serbian authorities depending on their location, their membership was ethnically mixed.

By late March 1992, Bosnian Serb and supporting forces enjoyed an overwhelming advantage over their Bosnian Croat and Bosnian Muslim adversaries, particularly in terms of weapons and personnel. The JNA had approximately 90,000

troops in Bosnia, maintained control of armories and ammunition stockpiles, and could also rely on fighter planes, tanks, artillery, and thousands of additional troops staged in neighboring Serbia. A number of paramilitary groups were also at the disposal of Serbs. These forces significantly outgunned Croatian territorial defense forces, which at the start of the war consisted of approximately 12,000 troops based throughout Western Herzegovina. These contingents would initially form an alliance with the nascent Bosnian army, which also grew out of a conglomeration of territorial defense forces. Croatian forces fighting in Bosnia received a steady supply of weapons from Croatia, and also benefitted from direct assistance from Hungary, Italy, and Germany. They too, had a sizable cache of weapons stashed in Bosnia by the start of hostilities in 1992.

During this early period, the forces that were to consolidate into the Army of Bosnia (ABiH) consisted of about 50,000 individuals. The Bosnian side was hopelessly outgunned by the JNA and its allies, and initially defended its territory using only small arms, hunting rifles, and whatever weapons people had hidden in their homes. Bosnian defenses also suffered significant disadvantages as a result of a UN-imposed arms embargo that obstructed the passage of additional arms and weapons into the republic, and because it lacked any direct access to the Adriatic Sea or to any other country. The greatest asset of the ABiH at the outset of war was its multiethnic composition, and the strong fighting spirit of its soldiers who mobilized to defend their homes. Serbs as well as Croats held important command positions alongside Muslims, and its ranks included

people who believed in and were ready to fight for a multinational Bosnian state (Donia and Fine 1994, 240).

Serbian Forces

The Serbian government, under the leadership of Slobodan Milosevic, was responsible for arming the forces of extremist Serbs in Bosnia for the duration of the conflict. Members of various paramilitary groups and what eventually became the Army of Republika Srpska (VRS) received training and weapons from Serbia, and the JNA also contributed troops and logistical support to secessionist Serbs. As early as 1991, Milosevic began engineering the transfer of Bosnian-born JNA officers back to their native republic to ensure that the JNA would serve as an ethnic Serb military force within Bosnia when independence came. The JNA worked to relocate units, depots, and military industries away from Muslim- and Croat-majority areas, and took a liberal view of the formation of all-Serb volunteer units within its ranks. Such activities dated back to as early as December 1990, well before the eruption of hostilities in Bosnia in April 1992 (CIA 2002, 129).

As Croatian forces intervened in Bosnia in the spring of 1992 and threatened Bosnian Serbs in Herzegovina, the JNA joined forces with Serbian TO troops. The latter consisted of approximately 60,000 loosely organized individuals, and operated mainly under the control of local municipal officials. Police forces belonging to the Bosnian Serb Ministry of Internal Affairs also mobilized in support of Serb war aims, and controlled

approximately 15,000 individuals who worked under the authority of local municipalities, in conjunction with military elements including JNA commanders (CIA 2002, 130). Until its formal dissolution in May 1992, the JNA provided direct support to Serb attacks and occupations throughout Bosnia and helped orchestrate the siege of Sarajevo and a number of early captures of Serbian objectives. By May 20, when the JNA was formally dissolved, its headquarters and formations stationed in Bosnia became the core of the VRS.

The VRS moved quickly to explicitly spell out its war aims and codify its objectives for securing the Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina's future borders. This area was redesignated as Republika Srpska, which Serb forces would fight to transform into an independent, territorially contiguous republic that would one day join the Federal Republic of Serbia. A critical, albeit unstated, additional war aim was that only Serbs were to populate Republika Srpska. The systematic way in which Bosnian Serb forces would carry out ethnic cleansing operations throughout the war suggested that this aim likely came as an order from the very top (CIA 2002, 141).

The VRS was a well-equipped fighting force, at least relative to Bosnian forces. Commanded by General Ratko Mladic, it consisted of 250,000 troops at the start of the Bosnian war and had in its possession tanks, armored personnel carriers, and fighter jets. The armed group also received occasional support from the Yugoslav Army (VJ), the JNA's

successor in Serbia and Montenegro, though the token combat units sent to help the VRS's operations in Bosnia never had more than 2,000 individuals at any given time. As the next section describes in more detail, Serbian forces also received substantial assistance from paramilitary groups. In fact, as many as fifty-six distinct groups worked in support of the Serbs during the war, comprising between 20,000 to 40,000 individuals at any given time (UN 1992).

The Serbian government's call-up of JNA reservists to defend Serb civilians in Bosnia in 1991 has been described as "one of the most massive campaigns of draft resistance in modern history" (Gagnon 2006, 2). Of those who were called upon to fight, most went into hiding in Serbia or fled the country altogether. In Belgrade, nearly 90 percent of the young men who were mobilized refused to serve; that figure was between 50 to 80 percent across Serbia as a whole (ibid.). In other words, Bosnian Serb forces were not comprised of passionate young men seeking to defend Serb lands in Bosnia, but rather of forcibly drafted Serbs living in Serbia who had connections to Bosnia. Perhaps as a result, Serbian forces dealt with extremely high desertion rates during the war (ibid.; Burg and Shoup 1999, 84).

Croatian Defense Forces

In the early phases of the Bosnian war, Bosnian Croat forces consisted of two main formations: the Croatian Defense Council (HVO) and the Croatian Armed Force (HOS). By almost all accounts, the two sides were more rivals than allies, and competed

for influence within the Bosnian Croat political scene. By late summer 1992, the HOS eventually lost out to the HVO, which benefitted from the full backing of Tudjman and the Croatian Army. The HOS had generally been more willing to accept Muslims into its ranks, relative to the HVO, which advocated for territorial partition of Bosnia along ethnic lines.

Fully-formed HVO units emerged almost immediately following the war's onset in April 1992, complete with officers, staffs, organizations, and weapons (CIA 2002, 134). Although the overall organization was ethnically mixed in some regions, its command structure was comprised almost exclusively of Bosnian Croat officers. The group fell directly under the command of Tudjman in Zagreb, making it for all practical purposes an extension of the Croatian Army.

The primary military objective of the HVO was to secure the Bosnian Croat population in Bosnia so as to ensure political autonomy in the near term. To achieve this goal, Croatia worked to organize and arm indigenous Bosnian Croat military units, while also deploying troops from the regular Croatian Army. Towards the end of 1992, when tensions increased between Bosnian Muslims and Croat around issues concerning the nature and makeup of an eventual Bosnian state, tensions boiled over into active conflict. The fighting that pitted Bosnian Croat and Muslim forces against one another beginning in January 1993 devastated much of central Bosnia and created new waves of refugees.

The fighting also provided Bosnian Serbs forces the opportunity to play their rivals off one another, viewing all-out war between Bosnian Muslim and Croat forces as a window to securing critical battlefield objectives. The Bosnian-Croat conflict slowed and drew to a close by February 1994, as negotiators from the U.S. pieced together a framework peace accord that refocused the attention of the Bosnian Muslims and Croats on their Bosnian Serb enemy.

As was the case for many local Bosnians who mobilized in response to Serb aggression, HVO units fought quite literally in their own backyards as entire towns and villages went to war. At the HVO's inception, the forces available for recruitment came from territorially based JNA Territorial Defenses, which ranged in capacity from ordinary citizens with shotguns to more organized and better-equipped part time soldiers. As fighting increased first in Croatia and then in Bosnia from 1991-1992, Croat inhabitants of many central Bosnian villages mobilized into village-guard formations to defend against attack. These were primarily local men who served on a volunteer basis, did not wear uniforms, and were armed with personal weapons. The formations were frequently multiethnic in character, especially in the war's early phases, and included primarily Bosnian Croats and Muslims.²⁶ The fighters' shifts typically consisted of ten-day stints at

²⁶ This was particularly true of the HOS, whose motto during its existence was "Croatia to the Drina, Bosnia to the Adriatic." The group, however, disintegrated in August 1992 after its leader, Blaž Kraljević, and eight staff members were assassinated by HVO soldiers. It was eventually absorbed into the Bosnian Army and the HVO at the beginning of the Croat-Bosniak war, with most Bosnian Muslim members joining the former.

some convenient location in each individual soldier's hometown, and time on the front lines (Schrader 2003, 32). Their main task of Bosnian Croat forces was to protect strategic facilities within HVO-controlled territory, including telecommunications structures, hospitals, factories, and storage areas. Each municipality in Herzegovina (western Bosnia) received orders to establish such village guards.

The Bosnian Army

The third side to fight in the Bosnian war, and the focus of this study, is The Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (henceforth ABiH or Bosnian Army). From its origins during the Bosnian war, the ABiH was a predominantly local organization. It drew heavily on the Yugoslav system of territorial defenses to mobilize small bands of fighters in defense of Bosnian territory in 1992, and its original fighting units were organized territorially (Hoare 2004, 18-19). These territorially based defense forces that existed in Muslim-majority areas of Bosnia would ultimately become the institutional basis for the defense of the Bosnian state from 1992-1995.

The history of the ABiH's roots in territorial defense, and its subsequent evolution into a national military, is important insofar as it highlights Bosnia's highly localized system of defense as it entered the war. As the preceding sections of this chapter suggest, this was not so different from how the HVO, and to a lesser extent VRS units, were initially structured. Indeed, all three armies that would eventually oppose one

another grew out of the same mode of organization inspired by Tito, based on the Yugoslav doctrine of general popular defense (Bougarel 2006).

In the spring of 1992, the majority of the Bosnian army consisted of local villagers and townspeople who had taken up arms in defense of their immediate homes, often using personal weapons. The organization's local character made it such that soldiers were often reluctant to leave their home territory, and the nascent Bosnian government faced significant challenges in its attempts to build a cohesive military force that could automatically encompass the entire Bosnian territory. The fact that units were primarily funded through municipal funds, as well as by local public companies and diaspora clubs, also impinged on the development of the ABiH as a truly mobile and offensive force (Bougarel 2006, 3).

At the war's outset, President Izetbegovic allowed each municipality to mobilize their TO forces at their discretion. In the early months of the war, the ABiH was thus a multi-national organization, with 20 percent of personnel of Serb and Croat nationality (Hoare 2004, 52). As the war wore on, however, an increasing number of Serbs and Croats shifted sides, increasing the ethnic homogeneity of all three armed groups, including the Bosnian Army.

Though the ABiH eventually morphed into a Bosniak/Muslim national army, it never attained total ethnic homogeneity and explicitly rejected the calls of some to turn it into a vehicle for spreading Islamic fundamentalism. In fact, a booklet published by the ABiH press center in 1994 entitled *The Spiritual Force of Defence* argued against discrimination against non-Muslim soldiers, and against pressuring non-Muslims to accept Islamic values (Hoare, 2004: 106). Subsequent publications would reiterate this goal: “The Bosniak Muslims do not want an Islamic state. They want a normal state in which Islam will also be free” (ibid.: 104). Nevertheless, a handful of individual ABiH units did trend towards religious definition and struggle. These included, among others, the 1st Corps’ 17th Muslim Light Brigade, headquartered in Pazaric; the 2nd Corps’ 9th Muslim Liberation Brigade, headquartered in Smoluca, and the 3rd Corps’ 7th Vitezka Muslim Liberation Brigade, headquartered in Zenica (CIA 2002).

At the start of the war, the Bosnian Army consisted of approximately 40,000 loosely organized individuals. In the spring of 1992, it had established nine regional commands scattered throughout the republic, which were further subdivided into 103 municipal headquarters (CIA 2002, 132).²⁷ By the summer of 1992, the territorial defense detachments that had served as the foundation of the ABiH were re-subordinated to individual corps according to their geographical locations, such that combatants continued to serve in the general vicinity of their hometowns and with others from their

²⁷ These commands were located in Sarajevo, Dobojo, Cazin, Prijedor, Livno, Mostar, Visegrad, Tuzla, and the Sandzak in Serbia (CIA, 2002).

hometowns. The brigades continued to evolve as additional fighters and material became available, including Muslim refugees displaced from their homes in places such as Prijedor, Kozarac, Jajce and the surrounding region. The incorporation of displaced persons who were no longer tied to a specific locality led to the creation of smaller units, usually battalions, that could be deployed as desired to increase the mobility of ABiH detachments (Schrader 2003, 36). Two of these battalions (the 1st and 7th) would eventually consolidate into the 17th Krajina Brigade in November 1992 (Sivac-Bryant 2016). By mid to late 1992, a total of six corps covered the entire republic and assumed specific geographical zones of responsibility, and a seventh was added in 1993. (see Figure 5.5).²⁸

²⁸ A seventh corps was added in 1993, when the 3rd Corps was split in two (leading to the creation of the 7th corps). The 7th Corps was headquartered in Travnik.

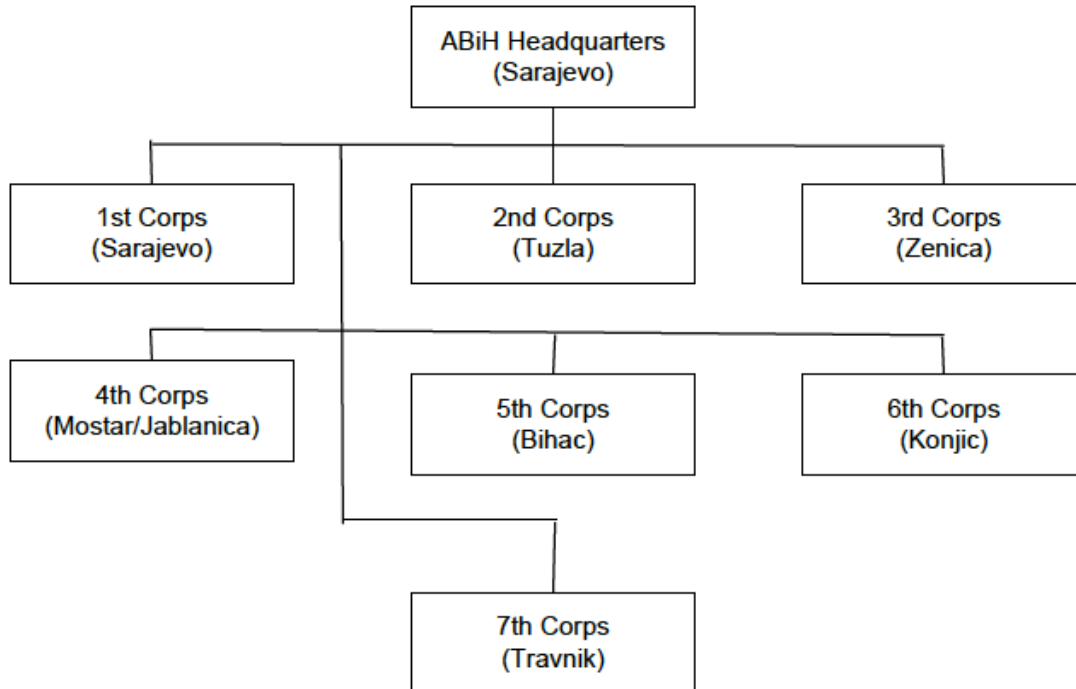


Figure 5.5. Organization of the ABiH by 1993. Chart shows names of individual corps and headquarters location (in parentheses). Sources: Based on Schrader (2003, 36).

A number of factors impeded the ability of the ABiH to develop effective command, control, and communication capabilities. Perhaps the most prominent challenge came from the fact that most units were composed of predominantly part-time “citizen” soldiers who served where and when it was convenient (Schrader 2003, 42). Most units were comprised of comrades from the same village, and part-time soldiers often mixed their military duties with their roles in civilian life. Many, for instance, continued to pursue their quotidian occupations when not deployed to the front lines. The lack of barracks also made it such that ABiH soldiers often returned home to sleep after actively fighting on the front lines. The next two chapters show how the proximity of fighters to their prewar quotidian routines, as well as the localized nature of

indigenous ABiH units led to unique dynamics behind as well as across front lines, and stood in sharp contrast to how foreign ABiH soldiers experienced the war.

As the next section describes in more detail, another significant challenge to ABiH command and control capacity arose out of the presence of a number of special purpose and paramilitary units not under the control of local chains of command. Groups such as the Green Berets, the Patriotic League, and various foreign fighter units fell under the control of national-level or otherwise non-local authorities, and were also often accused of committing war crimes. In addition, brigades composed of displaced persons – such as the 17th Krajina Brigade based in Travnik – appear to have introduced instability to central Bosnia in particular, as an increasing number of outsiders degraded the interethnic trust that had otherwise kept the peace between local residents. Of particular concern to ABiH leadership were units that operated in the 3rd Corps' area of responsibility in Central Bosnia. In particular, the 7th Muslim Brigade was an elite unit comprised of Bosnian Muslims devoted to Islamic fundamentalism. Its troops often dispersed into platoon-sized formations to serve as assault forces in critical areas or provide reinforcement to undermanned units (Schrader 2003, 48). The unit also had close ties to foreign fighters, or mujahedin, which I discuss in greater detail below. These groups that evaded the command of local authorities were responsible for staging holdups of various UN and other humanitarian convoys passing through Central Bosnia, and also committed various

other crimes ranging from murder, robbery, and extortion to arson and black marketeering (ICTY 2006).

5.5. Paramilitary Groups and “Outsiders” in the Bosnian War

The Bosnian war involved high levels of so-called “mercenary activities” (UN 1994). During the conflict, experts reporting to the United Nations described the presence of foreign combatants throughout the country, in the ranks of Serbian paramilitary groups, units belonging to the Bosnian Army, and to a lesser extent in the Croatian ranks. UN reports characterized the situation as follows: “on the Serbian side there are mercenaries from the former Soviet Union, chiefly the Russian Federation, whereas the combatants on the Muslim side include mercenaries from Islamic countries” (ibid., 26). On the Croatian side, officials maintained that various units did not include mercenaries, but “volunteers of Croatian origin or descendants of Croatian emigrants, who... can be regarded as Croats” (ibid.) were present. These foreign volunteers operated in conjunction with regular military formations such as the VRS, ABiH, or HVO, but were often loosely organized and acted on an ad hoc basis or individually on the battlefield. As this section will show, the arrival of various types of disembedded outsiders was associated with varying levels of instability, and in some cases their operations were often engineered for the explicit purpose of inciting otherwise reluctant locals to violence.

Foreigners' motivations for traveling to former Yugoslav states during the war varied widely, and as such local forces used them in different ways. Many, for instance, fought for personal glory, to improve their social standing, or simply to experience the thrill of fighting. This was the case of many disembedded outsiders that joined the side of Bosnian Serb forces. Others mobilized for some ideal or sense of righteousness, for example in the case of members of the Croatian diaspora representative of "assimilated brokers," Type 3. Still others were dubbed "weekend warriors" for their part-time participation in the conflict (Mueller 2000). It was especially easy for Serbs or Montenegrins to cross into Bosnia for a handful of days, take part in a battle or raid, loot local households, and return home to their families and work (Mueller 2004). These individuals typically lacked direct connections into local social networks in Bosnia, and their opportunistic motivations for fighting suggest that they also lacked cultural or identity ties to local conflict actors in Bosnia. In fact, some groups of foreigners existed for the sole purpose of plundering aid convoys (Frost 1993). Finally, the war also attracted a number of outsiders who fought explicitly in support of ideas espoused by one side or another. The HOS in Croatia, for instance, attracted neo-Nazis from other states because of its often-radical rhetoric and historical association with the Ustaša, a Croatian fascist group from the Second World War (Geiger 1994). The Arab fighters who eventually became part of the El Mudzahid Detachment in the Bosnian Army were motivated primarily by a call to duty to protect local Bosnian Muslims massacred at the hands of non-Muslim forces; the Bosnian war was the logical next phase in global jihad

that pitted Islam against Christianity. I consider these latter types of foreign fighters as “disembedded” – Type 1 – foreign fighters due to their structural and cultural disembeddedness from the war’s local social fabric.

This section is divided in three parts, each one describing how so-called outsiders participated directly in the Bosnian war in support of each side. I describe the extent to which Bosnian Serb, Croat, and Muslim forces included foreigners in the ranks of their ordinary forces or as part of paramilitary groups, as well as the reasons that such fighters became a part of the war. As the following paragraphs show, and as the next section develops in more detail, disembeddedness was often associated with increasing hostility and violence, and significantly disrupted the otherwise profoundly local character of the Bosnian war.

Disembedded Forces Supporting the Bosnian Serb Side

The most active and violent groups supporting Bosnian Serb war aims – those controlled by Vojislav Seselj and Zeljko Raznatovic (better known as Arkan) – drew primarily on individuals from inside Serbia, often former prisoners or individuals active in criminal networks. For the most part, these paramilitary groups acted locally, confining their actions to a single county to which they had been directed to protect local Serbs. The intention of Bosnian Serb leadership from the start of the war was to form volunteer forces within Bosnia, which would operate under the command of a local leader who presumably had local command and control. But the initial instigators of violence would

come from outside Bosnia proper, most often from neighboring Serbia. In an interview with a German newspaper in 1991, Seselj stated that his troops would be sent to “crisis areas” in Croatia and Bosnia from Belgrade: “if there are 20 to 30 Chetniks in every village, this is sufficient to encourage the people there” (Der Spiegel 1991). Local political leaders sometimes took it upon themselves to invite paramilitary groups from Serbia into their counties to help mobilize civilians towards violence (Rodrigue 1992). The purpose of these paramilitary groups that originated in Serbia thus seems have been to incite violence within Bosnian communities, where locals would have been unwilling to perpetrate the levels of violence and atrocity that eventually characterized Serbian action during the war.

In addition to these groups, a number of paramilitary groups fighting alongside Serb forces consisted of individuals drawn from states beyond the former Yugoslavia (UN 1994). Although most were Russian mercenaries, other individuals also came from Ukraine, Romania, and Greece to fight against Bosnian Muslims and Croats. These groups of fighters were occasionally referred to as *kontraktniki* (contract soldiers) (Arielli 2012). Although most have gone unidentified, analyses of the war suggest that they were responsible for a range of abuses during the war, including mass murder, rape, robbery, and theft (Koknar 2003).

Some of the foreigner-heavy units working alongside the VRS were recognizable by the one-piece, black uniforms that they wore with black berets or flight caps (Koknar 2003). Most of them operated in eastern Bosnia, primarily in those areas that witnessed some of the most intense violence, including the mass killings of Bosnian Muslims. For example, accounts from the war suggest that Russian war veterans of the war in Afghanistan worked with Arkan's volunteer guards, as well as with the White Eagles, two paramilitary units responsible for committing some of the war's worst atrocities. The Greek Volunteer Guard (GVG) also became a regular fighting unit on the Bosnian Serb side, and was eventually fully integrated into the Vlasenica-based Drina Corps of the Serb Army (ibid.). Members of the brigade were implicated in the massacre of 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men, women, and children in Srebrenica in July 1995, although none were formally indicted or prosecuted by the war crimes tribunal (Howden 2005).

Disembedded Forces Supporting the Bosnian Croat Side

According to figures published by the Association of Foreign Volunteers of the Croatian Homeland War (Udruga Stranih Dragovoljaca Domovinskog Rata), nearly 500 volunteers from thirty-five countries served in the various Croatian military formations during the war – both in Croatia and Bosnia. Most came from European countries or the United States, many with some type of military background. Records show that foreigners on the Croatian side had served either in the French Foreign Legion, for example, or in the U.S. military (UN 1994). These foreign volunteers served on most fronts where Croatian forces were active from 1991 to 1994, although most were gone

by the war's end in 1995. The Croatian government actively denied the presence of foreign mercenaries throughout the war, claiming that any volunteers regarded as foreigners were in fact Croats "by virtue of the principle of *jus sanguinis*" (ibid., 24). By most accounts, they would therefore be considered Type 3 foreign fighters, or so-called "assimilated brokers".

In Bosnia specifically, foreign volunteers on the Croatian side were sent to fight with Croatian paramilitary units in central Bosnia and in Herzegovina in the west and south (Arielli 2012). Like the Russian volunteers who fought with Bosnian Serbs, it was possible to identify foreign volunteers on the Croatian side through their distinct uniforms, in many cases the beret badges that they had acquired during service with their own national armies. Testimonies of some former combatants show that foreigners often joined multi-ethnic units where "Croats, Muslim, [Croatian-]Serbs, foreigners, and women served together" (Gaston Besson, as quoted in Arielli 2012, 10). For some foreigners who joined Croatian forces in their struggle against Serb forces in 1991, the desire to stand by Bosnian comrades influenced their decision to then go fight in Bosnia in 1992 (ibid.).

Other accounts, however, point to the violence-prone nature of the foreign volunteers who joined the HVO or HOS: "Apart from a few, the foreigners in these mercenary units behaved and fought atrociously during the war in Croatia" (Cy

Mackintosh, as quoted in Arielli 2012, 12). Foreign “mercenaries” who joined HOS units allegedly engaged in ethnic cleansing operations in areas along the Dalmatian coast, and ran camps where civilians were tortured, raped, and killed (UN 1992).

Disembedded Forces Supporting the ABiH

The foreign fighters – “Arabs” or mujahedin as local residents called them²⁹ – that crossed into Bosnia to join the ABiH were one of the largest and most difficult to control “private armies” that fell under the command of the ABiH’s 3rd Corps. While numbers vary according to sources, it is likely that approximately 1,000-2,000 individuals traveled from the Middle East and North Africa to join the ABiH beginning in 1992.³⁰ The first foreign combatants likely arrived sometime in mid-1992, and ended up in central Bosnia where they first integrated into Travnik’s territorial defense structure. While their exact path into Bosnia remains contested, in particular due to the fact that Bosnia was at the time under a strict arms embargo and little material or human traffic was allowed into

²⁹ The terms “Arabs” and “mujahedin” were used loosely in Bosnia during the war to describe foreign fighters coming from Arab countries, but also local Bosnian soldiers who joined foreign fighter units and tried to resemble them physically and in manner of dress. At times, the HVO even used the term to designate the ABiH as a whole, or just the ABiH 3rd Corps, 7th Brigade (UN, 2006: 114). Here, I use the term “mujahedin” to refer to foreign combatants who traveled from beyond Bosnia to fight in the war, and “local mujahedin” to refer to local Bosnian Muslims who joined the foreign detachment.

³⁰ Analysis suggests that the foreign fighter contingent of the ABiH never amounted to more than one percent of the total fighting force, despite Serb and Croat claims to the contrary (BBC 2015). The exact number of foreign combatants who came to fight on the Bosnian side during the war has been difficult to evaluate given their movements on the battlefield, and the large number of local Bosniaks who joined their unit. While they stood out with their traditional Arab clothing, many locals who joined them adopted their style of dress and physical appearance, namely growing long beards. Large numbers of refugees who joined units in Central Bosnia also made it difficult for locals to discern foreign fighters from displaced persons, many of whom joined the mujahedin unit (UNICTY 2006: 118).

the country, most accounts suggest that foreigners passed through Italy then Croatia before arriving in Bosnia (Al-Qatari and al-Madani 2002). Many arrived as members of humanitarian organizations and therefore did not register with local authorities in Bosnia. By May 1992, they had formed two main camps in Zenica and Mehurici, and smaller groups of foreigners also established themselves near Mount Igman outside of Sarajevo and in Turbe in the Lašva Valley in central Bosnia (Kohlmann 2004, 24). The camps provided housing for the mujahedin and their families, and were also used as training facilities for military tactics and religious indoctrination. Most camps took on the structures of similar camps established in Afghanistan and Pakistan during the mujahedin's struggle against Soviet forces.

Despite the publicly stated objectives of Bosnian leadership during the war regarding the establishment of a multiethnic and secular ABiH, the foreigners who traveled to Bosnia from the Middle East and North Africa were motivated primarily by their religious convictions. Their purpose was to help those they considered their fellow Muslims, especially in the defense of Islam and to help create an Islamic state. Many came directly from Afghanistan and sought to continue their jihad, this time against Christians (Serbs and Croats) who were committing atrocities against Bosnian Muslims (Schindler 2007, 118). The foreigners were culturally, linguistically, and outwardly different from their Bosnian counterparts, and did not readily assimilate or integrate into the local context. I therefore consider them Type 1 – disembedded – foreign fighters.

Efforts to spread fundamentalist Islamic religious beliefs worked to distance the mujahedin from Serb and Croat populations, as well as the moderate Muslims who made up the bulk of Bosnia's Muslim population. Many foreign fighters expressed surprise after their arrival in Bosnia at the fact that "local Muslims were fighting simply to protect their homes, not in a jihad" (Moore 1992).

Nevertheless, the pairing of military and religious education and training that the mujahedin offered to local Bosnians granted them limited popular support, even if it was primarily among young, disheartened military-age men. In fact, as many of half of the soldiers belonging to the El Mudzahid Detachment were local Bosnian villagers who had come into contact with the unit's foreign members and subsequently joined it. Documents from the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) cite that the El Mudzahid detachment included men who had deserted other ABiH units composed of local soldiers, individuals who had never joined the army formally, and disaffected minors (UN 2006). Those who deserted regular units regularly cited disorder and lack of discipline as a primary motivation for joining the detachment of foreigners, while others said that they joined for religious reasons.³¹ For some local Bosnian men in central Bosnia, religion seemed like the only way out given their country's desperate state; this segment of the population found it easier to accept foreign fighters because of the religious education that the detachment provided (ibid.). Foreign fighters' training

³¹ Alic, Saban. "Testimony of Saban Alic," July 17, 2007, ICTY Archives.

regimes exposed local Bosnians to global Islamist teachings, and also provided them with basic military skills and improved war-fighting capabilities that the ABiH had been otherwise unable to confer to its recruits (Donnelly, Sanderson and Fellman 2017). As such, members of the mujahedin gained early credibility among certain cadres of the Bosnian forces, and foreign combatants were able to recruit a substantial number of local Bosnians into their unit. A separate Mujahedin brigade, the aforementioned El Mudzahid detachment, would eventually grow to around 1,500 men, and included foreign as well as local combatants. Local Bosnian Muslim members of the El Mudzahid detachment are representative of Type 4 – “integrated nonconformist” – soldiers.

From their arrival, the battlefield behavior of foreign combatants differed significantly from that of local Bosnian Muslim soldiers in local ABiH units. In particular, studies of the mujahedin’s involvement in the Bosnia war describe the “unyielding philosophy of violence” that foreign fighters applied to not only Croat and Serb forces and civilians, but also to UN soldiers and humanitarian workers (Kohlmann 2004, 86). By the summer of 1993, foreign combatants’ reckless behavior created conflict with local Bosnian Muslim forces as well. While the ABiH attempted to keep looting and ethnic scapegoating to a minimum, mujahedin fighters and their leaders exacerbated the problem. Indeed, a deputy commander of the Bosnian Army argued that “[the foreigners] commit most of the atrocities and work against the interests of the Muslim people. They have been killing, looting, and stealing” (Colonel Stjepan Siber, as quoted in Kohlmann

2004, 90). Their unofficial stature caused friction with civilian authorities, for instance when they threatened local Muslim judges or vandalized social spaces in cities such as Travnik and Zenica. As the war wore into its second year, the mujahedin were less and less integrated into the ABiH, and took on the characteristics of yet another guerrilla band with an independent agenda.

By August 1993, the 3rd Corps' leadership created a separate unit called the El Mudzahid detachment that recognized the contingent of foreign combatants as an independent, self-controlled battalion within the ABiH's boundaries (UN 2006, 111). The unit's creation came on the orders of Bosnian president Alija Izetbegovic, and was largely a reaction to the heightening risk that mujahedin were posing to both the 3rd Corps and the ABiH's general command (ibid., 156). Records show that commanders of regular ABiH units actively resisted being held accountable for the unlawful combat methods that the mujahedin employed, including the killing of Croat and Serb civilians and the torture of captured enemy soldiers (ibid., 157). Often, the mujahedin took part in combat operations as an autonomous entity, acting primarily as irregulars. One of their common practices was to go into liberated areas to gather war booty (ibid., 170).

As the number of foreign recruits grew, their area of operations in central Bosnia expanded into the Jablanica and Konjic regions, and also reached into Mostar. Accounts from the war suggest that the El Mudzahid soldiers frequently spearheaded ABiH attacks

on Serb and Croat forces, and served as the main effort in a large number of critical operations. As I introduced above, popular perception of mujahedin fighters in Bosnia varied. Local Bosnian troops in particular appreciated the combat experience of the foreign fighters, many of who had prior fighting experience in places such as Afghanistan. Foreign fighters were motivated by an elevated willingness to die in battle, a reputation that struck fear into the hearts of opposing forces and that thus granted the ABiH a significant battlefield advantage. From the lens of many ABiH soldiers, the mujahedin therefore provided important material and moral support to the war effort. When local Bosnian Muslims left their regular units to join the El Mudzahid Detachment, other soldiers regarded them as especially brave, given the heightened risks that fighting with this particular unit entailed.³² Moreover, some foreign fighters who had arrived ostensibly as aid workers also provided basic services to local populations in need (UN 2006, 116), gaining them the limited trust of some local Bosnians beyond just their local comrades in arms. Local Bosnian Muslims who joined their unit were given food for their families, as well as other basic supplies such as oil to light lamps.

For the most part, however, foreign fighters' different ways of fighting and strict interpretations of Islam alienated them from the local conflict context. Although some local ABiH soldiers admired their comrades who deserted regular units to join the mujahedin, others shunned those who made the decision, as did their family members.

³² Ibid.

The mujahedin were infamous for using tactics considered as “violent and dangerous” that did not comply “with the most basic rules of international humanitarian law” (UN 2006, 9). They fought with more ferocity and brutality than local Bosnian soldiers (in some cases foreign fighters returned from battle brandishing their opponents’ severed heads), and many desecrated Orthodox and Catholic churches and regularly pillaged local communities (Malet 2013, 188). The El Mudzahid detachment gained a reputation of being the most violent unit of the Army’s other Muslim units (Schindler 2007, 164-165).

Civilians living in places such as Zenica and Travnik where mujahedin presence was heaviest largely rejected the presence of foreign fighters during the war. Indeed, the goal of building a Muslim state in Bosnia did not resonate with locals’ ideas of Islam and went against the ways that Bosnians practiced religion. Many Bosnian Muslims, for instance, were in disbelief that their foreign guests abstained from pork and alcohol, both longtime parts of Bosnian cuisine and culture. Negative attitudes towards foreign mujahedin fighters grew stronger as the war wore on and Bosnians began to acknowledge the potentially insidious effects of their jihadist guests.

Finally, another important unit composed of “outsiders” that existed within the Bosnian Army’s organizational structure was the 17th Krajina Brigade, a unit made up almost entirely of “refugee soldiers.” As introduced in Chapter 3, the unit was formed in exile in the wake of Bosnian Serb ethnic cleansing operations in Prijedor, Kozarac, and

surrounding areas in northwestern Bosnia (Bosanska Krajina) from May to August 1992. As men imprisoned in the notorious Bosnian Serb-run concentration camps of Omarska, Keraterm, Manjača, and Trnopolje made their way to central Bosnia and then on to continue a life of exile in Croatia or other countries that agreed to take in Bosnian refugees (Vulliamy 1994; Gutman 1993), it was decided that they would form a military unit that would eventually return to Bosnia and fight their way home (Sivac-Bryant 2016). Wealthy members of the Bosnian diaspora living in Western Europe financed their training, and continued to serve as the unit's backbone for the duration of the war. Given the "dispossessed" and "dislocated" state of these soldiers after having been victims of intense Bosnian Serb violence, the participation of some Bosnian diaspora members, and these soldiers' continued cultural attachment to Bosnia's social fabric, I consider them Type 3 – "assimilated broker" soldiers. Importantly, members of this unit stand out as structurally disembedded outsiders relative to local ABiH soldiers in regular units because they were no longer fighting in defense of their hometowns and in close proximity to their prewar social networks, as was the case for members of other units.

Accounts of the Bosnian war suggest that the 17th Krajina Brigade was one of the best and most mobile units in the Bosnian Army (Bryant 2004; Sivac-Bryant 2016). Its members primarily included Bosnian Muslim refugees from the aforementioned areas of northwest Bosnia, but also volunteers from Slovenia, Germany, and other neighboring countries who had gathered in Croatia in May 1992. The unit's journey back to Bosnia

began in July 1992, when most its members arrived in the central Bosnian town of Travnik. During this time, other non-Serbs from Bosanska Krajina were routinely dumped at the Bosnian-Serb front line before being forced to walk through disputed territory and across Mount Vlasić to Travnik. By the end of that summer, the city was overwhelmed by refugees, and the arrival of members of the 17th Krajina Brigade intensified the sense of invasion that engulfed it. In the fall of 1992, Bosnian Serb forces unleashed a full-scale attack on the town of Jajce, some twenty miles northeast of Travnik, prompting a second wave of refugees (Maas 1992). A large number of these refugees also joined existing units of the ABiH, in many cases the 17th Krajina Brigade. For much of the war, Travnik remained the main base for this unit's soldiers, as well as the main place where large numbers of forcibly displaced Bosnian Muslims sought refuge.

5.6. Embeddedness and Combatant Behavior during the Bosnian War

In this section, I begin to explore the links between combatant embeddedness and armed actor behavior towards local populations during the Bosnian war. I focus in particular on how local dynamics affected the use or avoidance of violence, with particular attention to how levels and types of embeddedness influenced the behavior of ABiH combatants.

As the preceding sections of this chapter emphasize, although the conflict in Bosnia took on a distinctly local character, armed groups relied on the participation of

outsiders to varying degrees. Serb forces committed the overwhelming majority of lethal and non-lethal abuses during the war. However, it is also clear that combatants from the Bosnian Muslim and Croat sides committed their share of murder, torture, rape, and wanton destruction and pillage throughout Bosnia. Oftentimes, these atrocities were the result of private quarrels and rivalries that had little, if anything, to do with the official position of the war's political leaders (HRW 1992). But it was also regularly the case that select groups of so-called "outsiders" directly carried out high levels of violence, or played a significant role in either instigating locals to commit violent acts against those they knew or setting foreign combatants up for violence. These realities point to the importance of actors' embeddedness into local conflict contexts when it comes to understanding micro-dynamics of combatant behavior.

As the preceding section describes, the Bosnian Serb campaign of ethnic cleansing began as early as April 1992 in eastern Bosnian and Herzegovina and relied significantly on non-local paramilitaries, most often individuals who were both structurally and culturally disembedded from Bosnia's social fabric. After paramilitary troops composed primarily of non-Bosnian Serbs aided by JNA units from Serbia occupied predominantly Muslim cities, local militia and SDS activists followed up by carrying out most cleansing operations (Burg and Shoup 1999, 174). These patterns of outsider-organized and instigated violence followed up by locally-led abuses would come to characterize most of the violence that Bosnian Serb forces carried out.

Most research on the Bosnian war falls short of stressing the fact that many local Serbs were not uniformly eager to take part in ethnic cleansing campaigns (Gagnon 2006). Although neighbor-on-neighbor and friend-on-friend violence was rampant in many areas, accounts from the war also suggest that many of the instigators of Serb cleansing operations did not come from the towns and cities about to be cleansed. As part of the process of improving mobilization, for example, thousands of prison inmates were released in Serbia to go fight in Bosnia. To many, it seemed as though “all the scum of Serbia” had migrated to Bosnia to commit atrocities (Ron 2000, 299). This is important, as it highlights the role of disembeddedness in facilitating violence, and the barriers that social embeddedness – via ties into social networks and shared understandings of appropriate behavior – pose to committing acts of violence. It appears as though Bosnian Serb military leadership acknowledged as much.

Dynamics related to disembeddedness within the ABiH also worked to fuel instability and in some cases violence in certain parts of the country. Two groups of “outsiders” are particularly important in this regard: the displaced soldiers of the 17th Krajina Brigade and the large number of refugees that flocked to Travnik, and the arrival of foreign fighters from the Middle East and North Africa (the mujahedin described above) to Travnik and other areas in central Bosnia. Demographic shifts that occurred during the war had a significant impact on restructuring local social networks of civilians,

and also degraded the “local” character of many ABiH units. Reports suggest that approximately half of Bosnia’s pre-war population was displaced from their homes during the conflict, leading to significant shifts in population distribution (UNHCR 1998). While more than one million Bosnians (around 27 percent of the population) fled the country altogether, many others moved to camps for internally displaced persons or to other regions where family and friends had homes. These movements contributed to increasing ethnic homogenization and urbanization throughout the country, and also led to heightening resentment of “outsiders” even among individuals of the same ethnicity (Gagnon 2006, 3). Population displacement led many women to take on new roles that would have been considered atypical in the prewar era, while men joined territorial defense forces or regional armies away from their homes to continue fighting (Berry 2018, 139). The 17th Krajina Brigade is one such example.

The large number of internal refugees posed both a problem and opportunity to Bosnia’s military leadership. While space in which to relocate displaced persons was limited, displaced men of military age were viewed as an opportunity from a military perspective. The destruction of their homes motivated revenge, and provided a pool of active potential fighters from which the ABiH could continue to grow its ranks. While some of these refugees joined existing units throughout Bosnia on an ad hoc basis, others formed new mobile units – such as the 17th Krajina Brigade – tasked with purely offensive missions (Schrader 2003, 4). In the early phases of the war, mobilization based on

preexisting territorial defense units had created units that were largely defensive in nature; many TO members refused to leave their homes and thus limited the ABiH's offensive capabilities. But influxes of refugees and the formation of units composed of "refugee soldiers", as well as an increasing number of foreign fighters from the Middle East and North Africa, made the possibility of offensive action a reality for the Bosnian Army. Ultimately, these shifts would also contribute to escalations in violence where units of disembedded outsiders were active.

Perhaps most demonstrative of these dynamics is the eventual outbreak of active conflict between Croat and Muslim forces in Central Bosnia in 1993, where "each house and street was a frontline" (Sivac-Bryant 2016, 43). As I describe earlier in this chapter, the fall of Jajce to Serb forces in October 1992 created an influx of Muslim refugees into Travnik, whose population in 1991 was relatively evenly balanced between Bosnian Muslims and Croats (45 and 37 percent of the population, respectively). The sudden increase of Muslims residents from outside Travnik increased tensions between otherwise local Croats and Bosniaks, and minor skirmishes often escalated into full-blown violence. More than 30,000 Muslim refugees also arrived from Banja Luka, Prijedor, Kotor Varoš, Donji Vakuf, and Prozor. These displaced populations settled into the outskirts of nearby Zenica and Bugojno and created additional problems with the local population; locals often found themselves needing to act to protect their communities from new comers. What's more, the fact that some refugees joined local ABiH units in these areas,

and that an entire unit of displaced Bosnian men from Bosanska Krajina had organized and based itself in Travnik, made local Croat communities nervous (Schrader 2003). Even in places where Bosnian Muslims and Croats had coexisted peacefully after the outbreak of hostilities, the newcomers were perceived as something of a threat. Soldiers from the 17th Krajina Brigade were never perceived “locals” despite their origins as Bosnians, highlighting the increased tensions that “assimilated broker” combatants might introduce into a local conflict context, relative to doubly embedded combatants that benefit from cultural and structural embeddedness.

To be clear, the internal displacement of populations within Bosnia did not only have deleterious consequences. Berry (2018, 137-138), for example, discusses how the uprooting of millions from their homes spurred the creation of new social networks and gender roles. Women in particular established new ties with others in refugee camps, or with new neighbors if they relocated to different parts of the country. For the most part, however, the displacement of populations increased tensions across Bosnia’s various regions. In the context of a brutal war, people were largely suspicious of outsiders, particularly if a sudden, large influx of newcomers upset preexisting ethnic balances. Importantly, the large wartime demographic shifts also significantly impacted the composition of Bosnian army units by disrupting their local qualities and introducing non-local soldiers into otherwise local units.

During the spring and summer of 1992, the presence of foreign combatants in central Bosnia was also becoming more visible. Detachments made up of foreign fighters were responsible for what is likely the largest share of atrocities carried out by Bosnian Muslim forces in central Bosnia. Schindler (2007, 165) notes that:

The imported fighters quickly won a reputation as the most brutal and bloodthirsty of all the jihadi units serving [in the Bosnian Army]. They viewed non-Muslims as infidels and seldom bothered to distinguish between enemy soldiers and noncombatants; neither did they seem to play any of the rules that governed most of the Bosnian war, when cease-fires were frequent and, occasional massacres notwithstanding, fraternization with the enemy – who often turned out to be your prewar neighbor – was a daily occurrence.

Unlike most other units of the Bosnian Army, the El Mudzahid detachment regularly engaged in kidnapping Croat civilians and soldiers in areas around Travnik and Zenica. Prisoners of war were often tortured and brutally killed, and even Muslim civilians underwent daily harassment in areas near mujahedin bases. The local members of the El Mudzahid unit – who I categorize as “integrated nonconformist” soldiers – participated in regular attacks with their foreign comrades. However, whereas foreign fighters appeared mostly willing to attack very well-defended positions at high risk, local mujahedin refrained from actively sacrificing themselves on the battlefield. When interacting with members of Bosnia’s non-Muslim population, local Bosnian Muslims in the detachment often wore hoods to help identify villagers who were then shot by foreign mujahedin. As the next chapters will show in more detail, the entire unit posed a substantial threat to civilians in central Bosnia, including moderate Muslims.

This cocktail of disembeddedness – fostered by the arrival of displaced Muslim refugees into central Bosnian municipalities, and the bolstered presence of foreign mujahedin – substantially increased the number of hostile incidents between Muslims and Croats in Central Bosnia, eventually contributing to the outbreak of hostilities in January 1993. Indeed, some historians contend that the eruption of large-scale fighting between Croat and Muslim forces was not the result of a coordinated plan by either party, but rather the end result of an increasing number of random, unconnected, and short-lived episodes engendered by heightened levels of distrust between the two communities (Schrader 2003, 70).

The disembedded units active in all three sides of the Bosnian war had a deeply disruptive impact on wartime dynamics throughout central Bosnia and beyond. In the case of the Bosnian Army, this was true of units composed of foreign fighters and those that included large numbers of internally displaced persons. One former commander of the HVO put it this way: “the Croats and Muslims, the local ones, would never have entered into a conflict were it not for the influx of these refugees who sought a space for themselves, having lost their own in Western and Eastern Bosnia” (UN 2000). The El Mudzahid detachment and the extremist ideology that it introduced to central Bosnian towns also had a deeply disruptive effect on the local evolution of the war. The great majority of local Bosnians came to view these foreigners as over-zealous and outright

dangerous. As the next two chapters show, this cultural dissonance prevented the development of mutually beneficial systems of exchange between ABiH members and local civilians, and heightened anti-civilian violence in particular areas.

5.7. Conclusion

This chapter portrays the conflict in Bosnia from 1992-1995 as a profoundly local one, in line with other studies of the war (see e.g. Moore 2013, 42). From the standpoint of the combatants, particularly those who became soldiers in the ABiH, mobilization as part of pre-war territorial defense forces meant that most individuals never fought far from their homes or workplaces. This made the embeddedness of armed actors – the extent to which combatants were integrated into local community networks, and assimilated into the local Bosnian culture and tradition – particularly visible, and especially important in shaping their actions on and off the battlefield. The local nature of the war and of the ABiH in particular also made the disembeddedness of foreign fighters especially noticeable and insidious.

In the case of the Serbs, it appears as though leaders deliberately relied on the recruitment of disembedded individuals to commit acts of violence in Bosnia. Outsiders then incited locals to commit abuses. Although the overwhelming majority of paramilitary combatants came from neighboring Serbia, it appears as though they often lacked direct ties into local population networks in the towns and villages where they

operated. Accounts of violations of international humanitarian law – ranging from killings of civilians, torture, rape, property destruction, to looting – is alleged in the vast majority of wartime and post-war reports that feature discussions of paramilitary groups. These paramilitary groups that originated outside of Bosnia were particularly useful to Serb military and political leaders for two reasons. First, they reduced the chances that perpetrators of violence would be recognized, therefore allowing for the greater use of illegal violence (UN 1992). Second, they contributed greatly to inciting local Serbs to commit acts of violence in their own communities. Importantly, it is unclear whether violence would have escalated to the levels that it did without the early participation of paramilitary groups formed outside of Bosnia proper.

The disembeddedness of the mujahedin was especially visible throughout the war's evolution, and contributed to the perpetration of atrocities by particular units of the Bosnian armed forces. Like the paramilitary troops that operated in support of Bosnian Serb forces, El Mudzahid soldiers were often used as shock troops, inflicting high levels of violence and destruction in the areas that they attacked. Although local actors – combatants, civilians, and politicians alike – initially embraced these individuals as assets in the struggle against a more powerful Serb opponent, popular support faded quickly as the war wore on. The mujahedin's divergent and intolerant interpretations of Islam, relative to local Bosnian tradition kept them largely isolated from local populations, with the exception of disillusioned ABiH soldiers and more easily radicalized youth. Their cruel

behavior towards Bosnian Muslim civilians as well as non-Serbs damaged the reputation of the Bosnian Army, and served as fodder for Serb and Croat opponents who tried to feed the world an image of the organization as a radical Islamist force in the heart of Europe.

In the next two chapters, I trace the relationship between dimensions of embeddedness and interaction between members of the Bosnian Army and local populations. Chapter 6 presents evidence of local (doubly embedded) and foreign (disembedded) soldiers' structural and cultural embeddedness into Bosnia's wartime social fabric, as well as a description of the two intermediate categories of "assimilated broker" and "integrated nonconformist" soldiers. Chapter 7 then links embeddedness to combatant actions and behavior during the war. In the case of local soldiers belonging to regular ABiH units, I show how integration into pre-war social networks (structural embeddedness) and a shared understanding of the war between soldiers and civilians fostered civil action and the emergence small-scale systems of exchange. The experiences of foreign combatants, whose understanding of the war as an irredentist jihad and lack of direct ties into local Bosnian communities alienated them from the local context, relied primarily on coercion and overt violence to meet their objectives. Local mujahedin, who were tied into local social networks but harbored alien interpretations of the Bosnian war as a religious conflict, and the "refugee soldiers" of the 17th Krajina Brigade both exercised more restraint in terms of indiscriminate violence against civilian

populations, relative to disembedded foreign soldiers. However, neither type of soldier demonstrated high propensities to engage in civil action or mutually beneficial exchange with local populations, as was the case for doubly embedded local soldiers from regular ABiH units.

Chapter Six: Evidence of Embeddedness in the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina

6.1. Introduction

As the previous chapter describes, the war in Bosnia from 1992-1995 took on profoundly unique local dynamics – some describe it as a series of distinct conflicts that featured different alliances and actors at varying points in time (Moore 2013, 42; Kalyvas and Sambanis 2005). Patterns of armed group mobilization also contributed to the evolution of these local dynamics in important ways. When Bosnian Serb forces staged their first attacks in Bosnian territory in Spring 1992, each of the warring sides adopted an organizational framework “inspired by the Yugoslav doctrine of ‘general popular defence’” (Bougarel 2005, 2). The framework reinforced the internal cohesion of small units, as friends, siblings, and coworkers from the same villages drew up arms to defend their homes. The localized mobilization of not just the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina (henceforth ABiH or Bosnian Army), but also the Army of Republika Srpska (VRS) and the Croatian Defense Council (HVO), made it so that friends and neighbors from the pre-war years who ended up on opposite sides of the frontlines occasionally crossed paths during the war. For most of the war, those who fought in the Bosnian war would do so alongside and against their friends and neighbors.

Although the piecemeal amalgamation of local territorial defenses led to the formation of a largely undisciplined group of combatants prone to abuse “by self-willed elements at the local level” (Hoare 2004, 75), it also led to more positive micro level dynamics that extant accounts of the Bosnian war largely neglect. Specifically, the sudden mobilization of ordinary citizens through preexisting territorial defense units made it such that the majority of combatants spent the majority of their wartime experiences fighting close to home. In the case of the Bosnian Army, soldiers often returned home for the night amid the fighting, or spent one- or two-week periods on the front broken up by a handful of days spent at home. For a typical soldier, proximity to the front lines also meant that she might encounter a neighbor or friend from the pre-war days fighting for another side. More often than expected, these encounters led to small-scale exchanges, or what some scholarship refers to as civil actions: “nonviolent strategies that promote deeper engagement with stakeholders” (Avant et al. 2018, 2). At a more macro level, collaboration across sides even led to the evolution of a black market trade that helped civilians survive sieges in places such as Bihać and Sarajevo (Andreas 2008). Ultimately, fighters’ pre-war connections facilitated the creation of spaces of normalcy in the midst of a highly abnormal situation, and in many respects dampened trajectories of violence in important, but often overlooked, ways.

As early as 1992, the Bosnian Army’s ranks experienced an influx of foreign combatants from the Middle East, North Africa, and to a lesser extent Europe. Most were

integrated into the Army's 3rd Corps, headquartered in the central Bosnian city of Zenica. These fighters, colloquially known to local Bosnians as the mujahedin, belonged to a unit called the El Mudzahid detachment that engaged in particularly brutal acts of violence during the war (Tziampiris 2009; UN 2006). In addition to fulfilling military objectives, the foreigners who joined the Bosnian Army also pursued goals of religious transformation, showing little solidarity with the secular objectives of Bosnia's native population. While desperate citizens in war torn Bosnia initially accepted foreign fighters' military contributions and their offers of humanitarian assistance, they became resentful of the mujahedin's sustained and intensifying attempts to introduce intolerant religious practices into their daily lives. Foreign combatants and Bosnian civilians lived largely in isolation from one another throughout the war, in sharp contrast to the mutually beneficial relationships that evolved between local Bosnian Muslim soldiers and Muslim civilians.

My argument would expect different qualities of civilian-combatant interactions to have evolved depending on the local versus foreign composition of ABiH soldiers and units. Specifically, the structural and cultural embeddedness of local units should have facilitated mutually beneficial cooperation with members of local communities, ranging from simple acts of civil action to more complex forms of governance and also support for fighting. Conversely, foreign units' disembeddedness from Bosnia's social fabric along

these two dimensions should have impeded cooperation and increased propensities for violence between the units and the local populace.

Dynamics from the Bosnian case shed light on the micro dynamics that underlie the correlations identified in the statistical analysis, and provide support for these expectations. The case shows that the extent to which armed actors were integrated and assimilated into the social fabric of the conflict shaped the quality of exchanges that were possible with civilians, and also with actors fighting across front lines. Among local soldiers in the ABiH, prewar social ties allowed combatants to carve out spaces for civil action with members of other warring factions. There were also few, if any, distinctions between soldiers and civilians, who experienced the war in similar ways because of their common origins in 1992 as victims of aggression. The identity of local ABiH combatants passed fluidly from soldier to mother, father, or other peacetime roles, and back again. The identity of foreign combatants, on the other hand, was fixed in the pursuit of jihad and their wartime roles as agents of violence. Their freedom in this regard, relative to local soldiers whose close kin and other social relations remained embedded in the conflict context, incentivized violence.

The next two chapters address these dynamics. In this chapter, I present detailed evidence of ABiH combatant embeddedness. First, I situate local ABiH combatants according to their structural and cultural embeddedness in the Bosnian conflict context. I

find evidence of embeddedness in various places, especially in the ways that local Bosnian soldiers experienced the war through a fluid soldier-civilian identity. Second, I situate foreign ABiH combatants according to their levels of embeddedness along the two aforementioned dimensions. Unlike local soldiers, foreign combatants experienced the war almost exclusively as warriors disconnected from local civilian populations. Their understanding of the conflict as an existentialist clash of religions severely undermined predominant local objectives and experiences. The evidence of embeddedness and disembeddedness, which I gather from interviews with Bosnian war veterans, local and foreign soldiers' written memoirs of the wars, media reports from the war, and the secondary literature on the Bosnian war, presents two starkly different pictures of how local and foreign soldiers were integrated and assimilated into Bosnia's wartime context. While Bosnian soldiers in the ABiH saw the object of defense as geographically defined (i.e. they mobilized to defend their homes, villages, and towns), foreign soldiers saw the object of defense in religious terms (i.e. they mobilized towards irredentist jihad, or "armed struggle against non-Muslim occupation of historically Muslim lands (Mitchell 2008, 809)). Finally, a third section explores the embeddedness of so-called "integrated nonconformist" soldiers (refugee soldiers in the 17th Krajina Brigade" and "assimilated broker" soldiers (local Bosnians who joined the El Mudzahid Detachment). As Chapter 7 shows, the extent to which soldiers were tied into local civilian populations, and shared common understandings of the war with them, significantly shaped the quality of combatant-civilian interactions from 1992-1995.

6.2. Situating Actors: Evidence of Embeddedness among Local ABiH Soldiers

Measuring embeddedness poses significant challenges. Generally speaking, the term refers to the extent to which individuals fit in or stand out from a particular context. As I introduce in Chapter 2, focusing on the presence of foreign fighters – an intermediate actor category that by definition stands apart from what is considered “local” to a particular place – serves as a useful starting point. In Bosnia, the foreigners who traveled to the Balkans in defense of Bosnian Muslims stood apart from local fighters in important ways. They spoke different languages, their uniforms carried different insignia than other ABiH units, their long beards stood in sharp contrast to local Bosnians’ typical grooming standards, and they never partook in the Bosnian tradition of sharing house-made rakija (a popular fruit brandy), among other activities. In other words, the mujahedin were “foreign” in many more respects than just the strict, state-centric definition of foreign fighters might imply. They were disconnected not just structurally from Bosnian life (via a lack of social ties to Bosnian individuals, in most cases), but also culturally by way of language, tradition, and practice.

Moreover, a complete contextualization of foreigner fighters’ disembeddedness requires describing how local soldiers in the Bosnian Army themselves were embedded into the local conflict context. What types of connections did they have to local communities? What did their cultural connections to Bosnia actually consist of, and look like? It would be an oversimplification to state that Bosnian members of the ABiH were

culturally and structurally embedded into the local conflict context simply because they were Bosnian. Before addressing the disembeddedness of foreign fighters in the Bosnian Army, I thus begin with a description of local soldiers' (embedded combatants) embeddedness into Bosnia's social fabric.

Local Soldiers: Structural Embeddedness

Numerous and strong ties of kinship, friendship, and other interpersonal relationships embedded ABiH soldiers structurally into the war's social fabric. Ibrahim³³ was married, the father of two children, and owner of a cafe shop in the town of Gornji Vakuf when the war broke out in 1992. He considered everyone his friend in the mainly mixed Croat-Muslim village: Croats, Muslims, even the few Serbs who lived there. Such ethnically mixed social networks were typically the norm among the town's residents.³⁴ Like many Bosnian men (and some women) at the time, Ibrahim mobilized as part of his local territorial defense unit in Gornji Vakuf when tensions began to rise in April 1992. His unit consisted largely of people that he already knew – mainly Muslims but some Croats too – and remained that way for most of the war. During that time, he lived most often with his soldiers, usually within 150 meters of his house where his wife, mother, and children remained. Sometimes he went home to sleep, and other times he was deployed to join units on the frontlines or farther afield in places such as Travnik, Zenica, and

³³ I do not use interviewees' real names in an effort to keep their identities confidential.

³⁴ Interview # 114, September 2017.

sometimes Sarajevo. On those occasions when his unit was at the front, it was not uncommon for him to recognize Croat friends from before the war who had joined the HVO. The frontline, he described, was often just a street; the Bosnian Army would be on one side, and the HVO or Serbs on the other. Though the two sides engaged each other in firefights regularly during the war, causing significant casualties, Ibrahim recalls that guaranteeing the safe passage of civilians was sometimes as simple as calling out to the other side to not fire their weapons.³⁵

Ibrahim's experience as a soldier in the Bosnian Army is not unique. Most of Bosnia's war veterans from the ABiH were called up within the framework of their territorial defense units, which included their friends, neighbors, and family members. When I asked them about how they initially mobilized in the spring of 1992, many replied that "the war found them." The outbreak of active hostilities was unexpected in Bosnia, even though most people had watched events unfold first in Slovenia and then in Croatia. The men (and fewer women) who eventually made up the ABiH had held regular jobs up until the day they took up arms – they were mechanics, teachers, cafe owners, students, salespersons. Most had families, and of those who did not have the means or opportunity to send them out of the country, the only way to protect them was to become a soldier; there was no other real alternative. One soldier from Sarajevo put it simply: "people protected their hearths" (Maček 2009, 207).

³⁵ Ibid.

Despite their new roles as soldiers, local combatants in the ABiH saw themselves first and foremost as people in relationships with others, many of whom remained in Bosnia. Ordinary civilians saw them as such too. When war veterans recalled joining the ABiH, they talked about doing so with their brothers, to protect their younger siblings, or as parents who had to continue providing in some way. They were never just “soldiers.” The proximity of their families to the front lines was critical to shaping how members of the ABiH understood their roles as soldiers. For (mostly) adult males throughout Bosnia, their responsibilities on the front lines were difficult to separate from their responsibilities to their families. The brief account of Ibrahim’s experience in the opening paragraphs of this section provides an example of this dynamic. When he went home to sleep, he passed back into his role as father, husband, and son, despite the fact that the front line was not a few hundred meters away in his hometown of Gornji Vakuf. The wartime experiences of local soldiers are thus best understood through the lens of their responsibilities to their immediate social networks (particularly to those with whom they shared kinship ties), in addition to their responsibilities to the army (and by extension the “national” cause). For those who mobilized in their towns and villages in 1992, the social roles of soldier, father, brother, son, friend, neighbor, client, etc. were all interchangeable.

The story of Minela, who I interviewed in Sarajevo at a veterans' protest camp in the fall of 2017, stands out in this respect. Minela was 28 when the war started, and the mother of a four year old boy. She described her life before the war as carefree: she lived with her young son, mother, and brother in Ilijas. She had her own shop, worked as a journalist, and traveled whenever and wherever she liked. When tensions began to rise in late 1991, she joined local territorial defense forces to "protect [her] younger brother," who at the time was a reserve police officer in Ilijas. The group was not a formal military unit at that time, and each volunteer took turns protecting his or her hometown.³⁶ As tensions grew into war, Minela moved her family to Visoko, about 10 kilometers to the north; it was the only way she could stay close to her brother, she remembers, whose unit had deployed there. It was also the only way for her to continue making money to buy food for her family. In her words, she "just wanted to be close to [her] brother, feed my child in the best possible way. While I was in the Army, my kid had something to eat. And I was close to my brother."³⁷

After the war, Minela published a memoir of Bosnian Army soldiers' experiences, including her own account of her time as a soldier in Visoko. Her story shifts continuously back and forth between her time on the front lines and periods of leave when she would return home to her mother and son:

³⁶ Interview 104, September 2017.

³⁷ Ibid.

Two, three days of leave... Home! To wash off the stench of battle. To repatch my trousers, shirt, and thoughts... Revel into a stupor in the smile of the little boy, the hugs of the small arms, the game. The game is interrupted by the sharp sound of banging on the door... An order! Report to unit... I have enough time for a big kiss and a firm embrace of the little man then my mother's body must swiftly slip into the uniform of a saboteur.³⁸

Many other soldiers later characterized their experiences during the war in relation to their responsibilities to family members and friends. Another man that I spoke with shared his experiences, highlighting the fluidity between his roles as a soldier in the ABiH and as a friend to Serbs and Croats he knew from before the war but had joined the other sides in 1992. In Zenica, where he was stationed as a member of the 3rd Corps, Orthodox organizations would help soldiers follow up on the wellbeing of their friends who had joined opposing armed groups: "Orthodox priests and elders became connections between individuals on opposing sides... We never went around in an army uniform, when we went to see [them]. We would go to these organizations to make sure our friends on the other sides were ok."³⁹

Although there was a deliberate effort on the part of nationalist leaders to disembed ordinary Bosnians from their interethnic prewar networks, most remained staunchly integrated in them even through the most violent fighting. In fact, Maček's (2009) powerful account of soldiers' and civilians' experiences during the siege of

³⁸ *The Blind Man's Mirror*, "Me Again."

³⁹ Interview 125, October 2017.

Sarajevo describes how this fine line between responsibilities on the front lines and those to family members eventually frayed to the point of making desertion understandable. The war stopped making sense to those who remained grounded in the social fabric of their prewar lives: they began to understand why some neighbors had never taken up arms, or why some fellow combatants were giving them up. In other words, local soldiers' deep embeddedness into everyday life in Bosnia shaped their shifting understandings of the war.

The overwhelming majority of ABiH soldiers who survived the war experienced loss. Many were gravely wounded, and an even greater number experienced the death of a friend, neighbor, or family member. Few, however, publically justified these personal losses through nationalist lenses, by framing deaths as having been worth it in the name of an anti-Serb or anti-Croat cause. Instead, most felt that the losses of human life, especially of those they knew, were senseless. Some of these expressions appear in the written memoirs of ABiH soldiers: "The convoy heading to the end of the world took my wife and children... I do not know where I belong, nor do I know where my home and country is. I am clueless [about] what I have fought for..."⁴⁰ A particularly common theme in the memoirs of local Bosnian Army soldiers is the pain of mothers losing children in the war. Civilians and fellow combatants did not view soldiers as just fighters, but as sons, fathers, and brothers. Critically, local Bosnian soldiers mourned the deaths of their fellow

⁴⁰ *The Blind Man's Mirror*, "Jakub."

soldiers as social losses. Fallen soldiers were people who had been in relationships with others. Their deaths left children without a father, mother, or both; or mothers without their sons and daughters (Maček 2009).

One war veteran's story is powerful in its tragic unfolding, but also in the extent to which it is representative of how most local ABiH soldiers framed the war and its trauma as the loss of personal relationships. Vedran joined his local territorial defense force at the age of fourteen when the war started in April 1992. Because he was so young, he could have avoided joining but he did so to stay close to his brother, who was part of a unit in Hadzici near Sarajevo. The next month, his brother was killed. What hurt him the most, he recounted, was that his brother's kids would be left without a father; his dying words had been for Vedran to take care of them.⁴¹ To remove himself from the trauma associated with his brother's death, Vedran moved to another unit in Hrasnica, a little over 100 kilometers away. He had a friend in that unit, and spent the rest of the war moving around other areas of central Bosnia. He recalls seeing mothers, children, sometimes entire families in the towns that he liberated, and says now that he fought the war for them, not for himself or to avenge his brother's death.

Although the war eventually forced more and more ABiH units to operate as offensive forces and thus move away from the areas where they originally mobilized,

⁴¹ Interview 101, September 2017.

their internal composition did not change. For the most part, soldiers remained with the people they had first picked up arms with – people from their hometowns. This created strong bonds within units. Of the ABiH war veterans that I interviewed, all forty of them expressed having had close ties to others in their units, and to having deeply trusted their fellow soldiers. Some described the time spent with their units as “living like a family,” “[they] were all brothers.”⁴² Most of the trust was based on preexisting relationships; soldiers knew many of their fellow soldiers from before the war, and trusted these individuals over others with whom they had not shared prewar ties. There was also solidarity in knowing that nearly everyone who had mobilized to join the Bosnian Army was fighting for the same reasons, in particular for their families and the people of their hometowns.⁴³

As the preceding chapter describes, although the ABiH eventually became a relatively homogeneous Muslim-majority force, it grew out of a multiethnic conglomeration of territorial defense forces. This means that at some point, usually in the war’s first year, most Bosnian Muslims in the ABiH served alongside Bosnian Croats and to a lesser extent Serbs. Given political calls for national solidarity based on “them” versus “us” distinctions, this should have led to significant mistrust between soldiers of different ethnicities, even within units. Although some units cleansed their ranks of non-

⁴² Interviews 102 and 107, September 2017.

⁴³ Interview 109, September 2017.

Muslim soldiers, this did not occur on a massive scale. Because most units consisted of individuals who knew each other, i.e. who belonged to the same prewar social networks, ethnicity was less threatening. One soldier from the 1st Corps in Sarajevo described his experience with fellow Serb soldiers in the ABiH this way: "... there were no cases of someone turning his back on you or running... It might be because they knew who they were with and were not feeling threatened or afraid... If you had a Serb with you, you knew for sure who he was" (Emir, as quoted in Maček 2009, 214-215). In other words, local Bosnian soldiers felt safe within their units not because of shared ethnicity, but because of shared social ties: prewar structural embeddedness fostered trust.

Ibrahim, whose story begins this section, lost his mother and several cousins during the war, and his daughter was seriously wounded. Despite the trauma and loss, he reopened his cafe in 1995 and described how many of his friendships with Croats from Gornji Vakuf just picked up where they had left off three years earlier. Given the evidence of soldiers' deep structural embeddedness in the Bosnian context during the war, this may not come as a surprise. The town as a whole, however, is now more firmly divided into Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian Croat than it was in 1992; the local elementary school, for example, has separate entrances for Bosnian Muslims and Croats. The war placed significant strain on intimate ties of family and neighborhood, and many civilians and combatants alike reevaluated old relationships and formed new ones over the course of the war. The point here is certainly not to deny that the war changed social networks and

redefined embeddedness in some ways; it caused people to question the relationships that made up their social networks before the war, and to reevaluate who was worthy of trust or morally decent. Soldiers, like civilians, became deeply immersed in a new normal of questioning everything about their prewar lives, including their relationships to others.

This questioning and process of constantly reevaluating one's position and role in the war, as well as shifting conceptualizations of the enemy, defined what it meant to experience the war as a "local." Soldiers and ordinary citizens existed in a state of cognitive dissonance whereby the choices that they made in specific situations were often contradictory. For many local soldiers and Bosnian civilians, their private experiences of the war were as much about betrayal as they were about saving and rescuing (Maček 2009). The intense disruption that the war wreaked on their lives created "unavoidable conflicts between expectations and norms and the conduct they observed and in which they participated" (ibid., 192). International as well as national actors and narratives on the official and diplomatic levels, however, did not adopt this particular interpretation of experiences of the Bosnian war. Official discourses remained largely confined to neat nationalist explanations that justified systematic violence. But privately, the personal experiences of ordinary civilians and Bosnian soldiers defied such narratives and undermined rationalizations that excused atrocities, instead affirming the relevance of variegated interpersonal connections on which Bosnian society was based. Throughout the conflict, ABiH combatants remained deeply integrated into their prewar

social networks. This endowed them with roles and responsibilities that transcended their new occupations as soldiers; they were never “just combatants.” These dual roles based on preexisting relationships, as well as their fluid soldier-civilian identities, made them experience war in a way that was unique to those who were part of the local social fabric before the violence began. As later sections of this chapter will show, it would have been simply impossible for foreign combatants to view and experience the war in Bosnia through the lens of a local Bosnian soldier. Their point of reference was entirely different, and most importantly, also foreign.

Local Soldiers: Cultural Embeddedness

Chapter 2 describes cultural embeddedness as the extent to which individuals share deep-rooted beliefs and assumptions about the world (Goldberg. et al. 2016). During the Bosnian war, the cultural embeddedness of ABiH combatants describes the extent to which soldiers shared common beliefs and assumptions about Bosnia generally and the war in particular, as well as some common moral framework regarding what was considered normal or appropriate action during the war. The Bosnian war context was highly fluid: what people implied when they spoke of what was normal during the war wavered between peacetime and wartime references (Maček 2009). In many respects and cases, intense violence destroyed the social norms that had characterized the local context across Bosnians towns and villages before 1992, radically changing what was considered “normal.” Nonetheless, ordinary Bosnians regularly remembered and turned to prewar norms as the ideal of how life should be (ibid., 9).

One of the prewar norms that appears to have shaped how ordinary Bosnians, including combatants in the ABiH, experienced the war is the relatively irrelevant role that ethnicity played in how Bosnians identified themselves before 1992. As many studies of the Bosnian war correctly describe, national identity was continuously renegotiated during the war, in large part as a result of rumors and accounts of betrayals in the media. But large numbers of Bosnians, even as soldiers, did not share the nationalist views of political elites and military leaders. In fact, when people joined their local territorial defense forces, and later the Bosnian Army, they were unclear on whether the units were ethnically homogeneous, or whether they represented all nationalities (Croat, Serb, and Muslim). Of the individuals that I interviewed, nearly all recalled having joined defensive formations that originally included Croats and some Serbs, in addition to Muslims. Separate and overt Croat, Serb, and Muslim consciousness did not emerge until well into the conflict. What's more, the identity of the "enemy" shifted over time for local Bosnian soldiers and civilians alike. In certain parts of Bosnia and at certain times of the war, it was the Croats. In northwestern Bosnia, some Muslims became the enemy. Serbs were a more constant enemy throughout the war's duration. People who had lived in Bosnia before the war understood that the enemy was produced by the war, not the other way around, and that the divisions that began to emerge between Bosnian Croats, Serbs, and Muslims were products, not causes, of the war itself.

When I asked veterans how national or religious identity influenced their wartime experiences, most recalled having identified as Yugoslavian before the war, primarily when asked for census purposes. Identity was for the most part irrelevant, and before the war most people did not ascribe fervently to any particular nationality. Of the interviewees who claimed they identified as Muslim before 1992, “Muslim” referred mostly to the ways that they occasionally practiced religion. Beyond attending the local mosque or celebrating Ramadan, the pre-war Muslim identity of my interviewees had little effect on their day-to-day lives. One combatant who identified as Muslim before the war recalled: “Before, since most of my friends were Serbs, we all respected each other’s religions... In Yugoslavia it was all about brotherhood, not religion.”⁴⁴ Another described his prewar view of identity as follows: “Before the war nationality wasn’t important. Everyone was friends. I had a lot of friends whose nationalities I didn’t even know. No one was interested in stuff like that.”⁴⁵ Some respondents took pride in what they considered their modern approach to identity and especially to being Muslim in the years before the war: “...everyone practiced religion their own way, but we were all Yugoslavian. Muslims here are much more modern.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Interview 112, September 2017.

⁴⁵ Interview 113, September 2017.

⁴⁶ Interview 118, October 2017.

As the preceding section describes, another type of identity played a critical role in defining the wartime experiences of local ABiH soldiers: combatants had fluid identities as both soldiers and civilians. To some extent, this fluid civilian-soldier identity is important in a structural sense, in that it is evidence of ABiH combatants' strong ties into networks of noncombatants during war. But it is also evidence of the extent to which local ABiH soldiers were culturally embedded (ie. assimilated) into the same local conflict frame or narrative as civilian populations. Soldiers shared many of the same fears as ordinary Bosnians, experienced similar threats, and were deeply involved in reevaluating their own identities, as well as their choice to remain on the frontlines. The purpose of the war itself was constantly under question. In other words, Bosnian soldiers and ordinary civilians were deeply immersed in the wartime renegotiation of how to position themselves in relation to the conflict. For soldiers, their "warrior" identity was hardly fixed but instead frequently interchangeable with their civilian identity. As one war veteran put it, soldiers "were like one body" with civilian populations.⁴⁷

Many ABiH war veterans became soldiers in 1992 or earlier because they were subjected to war-related violence, or had relatives, neighbors, or friends who had become victims. For people in Gornji Vakuf, Travnik, Bugojno, Tuzla, Sarajevo and throughout the rest of Bosnia, the war began on whatever day people were shelled or fired on. People did not add the shellings and killings up to being "war" until war was well

⁴⁷ Interview 120, October 2017.

underway: “war arrived only in retrospect, as people made sense of the past in relation to recent events” (Maček 2009, 199). These origins as victims and then defenders of hearths deeply embedded soldiers into a common outlook on the war, and shaped their understandings of what was at stake in the war: their homes, social networks, livelihoods, and more. Soldiers shared these understandings with civilians.

Evidence of ABiH soldiers’ immersion into the non-warrior identity, despite their roles as soldiers, appears in the ways that war veterans talk and write about their wartime experiences. The written war memoirs of Bosnian Army soldiers rarely reference the word “warrior” or “soldier.” Nor do they heavily reference the enemy as Serb or Croat. Instead, some of the most common terms include “mother”, “life”, “wounded”, “tears”, “death”, and “blood”.⁴⁸ As the preceding section explains, local soldiers experienced the war in traumatic and tragic ways; it was first and foremost a time of loss, and one fraught with reevaluation of morals and even of the decision to pick up arms in the first place. Many of the actions that people took in specific situations were contradictory. During interviews, for example, many of the veterans I spoke with expressed the deep moral dilemmas that they experienced from 1992-1995. For some, their role as a soldier became a burden as the war wore on. One man, Mirza, joined a unit in Sarajevo that eventually removed Serbs and Croats from its ranks on the orders of their commander. At this point, he lost his motivation to fight:

⁴⁸ *The Blind Man’s Mirror.*

I discovered that I hadn't come here to fight against Serbs. I [was fighting] against Fascist ideas, in my heart anyway. A lot of my friends had similar views. [The anti-Serb] narrative is a very different narrative from what I had imagined the Bosnian Army would be when I joined. After the war ended, I discovered that my army was never what I'd imagined it to be.⁴⁹

Eventually, many local ABiH soldiers began to understand that Serb and Croat soldiers were likely in a situation similar to their own. One man, for instance, told me that "the Serbs who I knew cried. They didn't want to go into the Serb army."⁵⁰ As the fighting wore on, soldiers recall becoming more conscious of growing discrepancies between the nationalist doctrines pushed by political leaders, and their experiences on the ground. Those who harbored the strongest nationalist sentiments were often those who had left Bosnia before fighting broke out or during the war's early months, or political leaders not involved in combat. In other words, the Bosnian Army's foot soldiers rarely identified personally as strong nationalists. Today, this is particularly evident in the grievances of war veterans who feel the Bosnian government has abandoned them. Those who received the greatest benefits after the war, they argue, are those who spent the war in

⁴⁹ Interview 128, October 2017.

⁵⁰ Interview 131, October 2017.

Croatia or Germany and came back after the Dayton Accords to rise to prominent positions in government, most often as nationalists.

The two preceding sections provide evidence that local soldiers in the ABiH were deeply embedded into Bosnia's social fabric before and during the war, along both structural and cultural dimensions. Four main themes stand out as the strongest evidence of local ABiH soldiers' deep embeddedness into Bosnia's social fabric. First, the evolution of the ABiH from a conglomeration of originally territorially-organized units made it so that soldiers stayed strongly integrated in their prewar social networks that included non-combatants. Their responsibilities during war were not just as soldiers, but also as fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, clients and neighbors. Many also continued to feel a strong sense of responsibility to those in their social networks, including individuals who had joined opposing armed forces. Second, local soldiers' enduring ties of kinship and friendship deeply affected how local soldiers experienced the war, and how they framed loss. Soldiers' deaths were not viewed as sacrifices to a "Muslim cause," but rather as the gradual destruction of prewar social networks.

Third, the fluid soldier-civilian identity that soldiers maintained throughout the war often blurred distinctions between combatants and non-combatants on the Bosnian Muslim side. Civilians and soldiers shared a common understanding of what was at stake

in the war: their homes, relationships, and livelihoods. Those who donned Bosnian Army uniforms began the war as victims in the same way as ordinary civilians did; the war for Bosnian soldiers and civilians alike began on the day that they were shot at or their towns and homes were shelled. Civilians and soldiers, in other words, were bound together by common wartime experiences and understandings, and soldiers did not see themselves exclusively as “warriors”.

Finally, civilians and soldiers were embedded in the ambiguities of war to an extent that only locals can experience. They shared a common understanding that nationality was largely irrelevant in day to day life, and that it was not a cause, but rather a product, of the war. This approach to religion and nationality originated in the norms and customs that characterized life in prewar Bosnian society. When nationality did become relevant, as people became victims of violence or were increasingly subjected to the nationalist propaganda of political leaders and state media, they questioned and reevaluated it more than they accepted it in unwavering terms of “us” versus “them”. The identity of the enemy also shifted through time and space: the enemy did not produce the war, but was a direct product of the war. The normative categories of “war” and “peace” are challenged in war, where they are often contingent on one another and in constant flux. The experiences of people whose social networks, norms, and traditions become the setting of the violence and are destroyed by war best reflect these

ambiguities. As the next section shows, these local experiences stood in sharp contrast to how foreign soldiers in the Bosnian Army's experienced the war.

Local Bosnians' embeddedness into a social fabric where personal ties were valued over nationality, and where civilians and soldiers appeared to share a common understanding of war's ambiguities, rather than frames of mind that divided people into "us" versus "them" dichotomies, challenges the reality of contemporary Bosnia's fragile ethnic peace. How did the country end up divided along ethnic lines in what many consider a negative peace? When the war ended, the physical and economic fabric of Bosnia's people had been destroyed, as had their social networks. The extent of the destruction on all three fronts was something that Bosnians could only begin to grasp when it was safe for them to come out of hiding, free of the fear of being struck by a stray bullet or shell. By staying embedded in what remained of their social networks during the war, and in common memories of what prewar life in Bosnia looked like, many Bosnians had somewhat successfully held on to a semblance of normality in the highly abnormal context of war. But when people walked out into the streets after the Dayton Agreement was signed, their relief was mixed with the terrible disappointment that their hopes and ideas of what peace would look like did not resemble the broader, post-war political context. Elite narratives of the conflict had created a domestic political environment where ethnicity was now the only politically relevant identity, despite people's private experiences of the war that resisted its relevance.

Surely, the extent to which Bosnians – ordinary citizens and combatants alike – were victimized and experienced trauma during the war also contributed to the heightened relevance of national identity in the postwar phase, often at the personal level. In the post conflict reconciliation and peacebuilding phase, politicians have been quick to use victim commemoration ceremonies opportunistically to revive nationalist fervors, and war memorials have become barriers to repairing and restoring prewar relationships (Toe 2016; Clark 2013). But opportunities to draw on the extent to which many local combatants from all three sides had at one point been structurally and culturally embedded into Bosnia’s prewar social fabric have been largely missed. Yet as the next chapter will show, strong ties into ethnically mixed social networks and fluid civilian-soldier identities led a not insignificant number of Bosnian Army soldiers to engage in civil actions that could help foster peace at the local level across Bosnia’s towns and villages. Politicians in Bosnia do not draw attention to these nonviolent actions, as anti-war messages are not the ones that keep them in power in the political system created under Dayton.

6.3. Situating Actors: Evidence of Disembeddedness among Foreign ABiH Soldiers

Foreign Soldiers: Structural Disembeddedness

Somewhat surprisingly, entry into Bosnia was not difficult for those who came from the Middle East, North Africa, or Europe to fight on the side of Bosnian Muslims. Most traveled via Italy and then Croatia with the help of Muslim charity organizations,

and then took buses to the Bosnian border where they crossed either as humanitarian aid workers or through smuggler routes. Bosnian Army intelligence documents describe that “the channels for their arrival... went through the Republic of Croatia, majority of them came from Western Europe and Great Britain and they have the passports from these countries.”⁵¹ Other documents list the names of prominent individual jihadi financiers in Zagreb, London, Vienna, Milan, and Torino, all of whom helped foreign fighters gain passage into Bosnia (Kohlmann 2006). Policing the border was a difficult task for international and local forces during the war, due in large part to the massive flows of refugees exiting Bosnia. However, many Bosnians today – ordinary civilians, war veterans, and analysts alike – still express surprise at the number of foreign fighters that did make it in, considering the strict arms embargo that was in place at the time and the overall dearth of people actually coming in.

When the Bosnian war started in 1992, another conflict had come to a close: Kabul fell to a coalition of Afghan mujahedin, marking the end of the jihad in Afghanistan. Migratory fighters who had traveled to the central Asian country to wage war against the Soviets in the name of Islam sought new fronts in which to continue their struggle. One opened in Bosnia, among a handful of other states. The strategy of the mujahedin in Bosnia would be to take part in the war between Serbs, Croats, and Bosnian Muslims,

⁵¹ Review of the Information on Activities of the Persons from Afro-Asian Countries Directly Before the War and During the War in the Territory of BiH Republic.” Report written by the BiH administration of the Military Security Service – Department for Analytical and Informative Affairs.” Sarajevo, May 6, 1995.

and to transform the war into a religious conflict (Kepel 2003). Although Bosnia in 1992 presented itself as a logical continuation of the jihadist struggle, most of the Arab-Afghans who were at the forefront of the movement of volunteer soldiers to Bosnia had never heard of the country: it was “truly a foreign land” to most of them (Kohlmann 2004, 19). Nevertheless, their objective in Bosnia was clear: as in other jihads, the vision of the foreign fighters that came to Bosnia was premised on the belief that a virtuous and just society could only materialize if Bosnian society at large adhered to Shari’a law. More than the creation of an “Islamic state,” their goals for Bosnia was to advance an “Islamic order” that folded together governance based on Islamic law and the faithful practice of precepts from religious texts at all levels of society (Tibi 1998, 41). In other words, they sought to construct an entirely new sociopolitical order in Bosnia. As for the treatment and incorporation of non-Muslims in Bosnia, the mujahedin’s approach was also clear. Their military commander during the war, Abu Abdel Aziz Barbaros, put it this way: “The best [scenario] is the establishment of a state for the Muslims by any means... The worst scenario is to have a mixed state or a mixed parliament of a mixed government between the Muslims and Christians” (Hussein 2018).

The exact nature of Bosnian foreign fighters’ relationship with the Bosnian government during the war is often disputed. When it became clear at the outset of the conflict that Western governments would not come to the aid of Bosnian Muslims, President Alija Izetbegovic reached out for help from the Islamic world. Along with the

money and weapons that states such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Kuwait, and Libya provided, foreigners also began arriving to Bosnia (Pena 2005). For the duration of the war, the controversial presence of mujahedin soldiers among the ranks of the Bosnian Army was tacitly consented to both by Bosnian political and military leaders, as well as by the international community. The reasons for this were primarily pragmatic, as there is little evidence in support of claims that Bosnian Muslims would have supported the radical religious and ideological views of these fighters (Mustapha 2013). But the military aid and fighting prowess that they offered were welcomed and cautiously appreciated, particularly in the war's early months and years when Bosnian Muslim were severely outgunned by their Serb and Croat opponents. At the end of the war, some of the foreign fighters received citizenship from Izetbegovic's government as a form of martial honor for their services (Zosak 2010). As the rest of the section will show, however, the relationships between foreign fighters and Bosnia's wartime leaders, on the one hand, and foreign fighters and Bosnian society at large, on the other, were dramatically different. For the ordinary citizens in places such as Zenica and Travnik who lived in close proximity to mujahedin bases and interacted with them on a nearly daily basis, the mujahedin instilled fear and deep apprehension.

As the preceding chapter describes, foreign fighters came from a variety of locations, and with different levels of previous fighting experience. Those who came from Afghanistan were already "proven" fighters and had developed strong ties amongst

themselves in the context of the jihadist struggle against Soviet forces. These fighters considered the “cream of the Arab mujahideen from Afghanistan” (Kohlmann 2006: 1) primarily took up leadership positions once in Bosnia, commanding smaller units of foreign fighters and to a lesser extent local recruits, as I discuss below. Younger fighters saw Bosnia as their proving ground. They came from Algeria, Egypt, and Lebanon, among other places in North Africa, the Middle East, and Western Europe (Kepel 2003). These rank and file mujahedin varied greatly in terms of nationality, age, ethnicity, and war-fighting capacity, and joined the war on an individual basis. Many of them were under police scrutiny in their home states and had criminal records, hinting at their isolation from the societies that they were leaving behind (Azinovic 2007). Occasionally, there were tensions between the older generation of experienced foreign fighters and newcomers to the jihadist cause, particularly those that came from outside the Middle East and North Africa and were often seen as “hotheads” (El Mundo 2005). Nevertheless, the addition of new radicals to a struggle in the heart of Bosnia was considered instrumental to the broader jihadist cause, and all of the mujahedin ostensibly shared a common sense of purpose in this respect. They saw their mission in Bosnia as the active defense of their “brothers and sisters” who were being victimized by the non-Muslim enemy, and every foreign volunteer was an essential contributor to this cause (Kohlmann 2006). Bosnia provided an environment where trained jihadists from Afghanistan could mingle with less sophisticated but dedicated volunteer warriors from Western Europe and around the world.

Initially, foreign volunteers in the Bosnian Army operated largely out of the control of the Bosnian military. The majority of them settled in the central city of Zenica, as most other parts of the country were prohibitively hard to reach (Mitchell 2008). However, as the number of foreign fighters grew, the mujahedin were consolidated into the El Mudzahid detachment in August 1993, which loosely fell under the command of the Bosnian Army's 3rd Corps, also headquartered in Zenica. From that point on, the extent to which the foreign detachment coordinated its activities with the rest of the ABiH remains controversial, given that the mujahedin committed numerous and serious war crimes. According to ICTY testimony, over the duration of the war the El Mudzahid detachment was "heavily involved in combat activities" with the ABiH (ICTY 2001), even though many Bosnian Army leaders claim that the mujahedin acted according to their own devices and did not answer to any Bosnian military authority (ICTY 2004). In reality, there was an increasing level of coordination between local ABiH units and the foreign detachment as the war wore on even if local commanders were reluctant to employ them, as one stated: "they are superb fighters... But you can't argue with them. It's best to have nothing to do with them" (Kohlmann 2004, 127). A U.S. Central Intelligence Agency military analysis of the war summarizes the involvement of the mujahedin in Bosnia's war as follows:

They were unable to transform the war into a jihad in any meaningful way because the term struck no chord in the local Muslim population, as it had among the Afghans. In general, Bosnian Muslims viewed their conflict with Serbians and Croats in a very different light (CIA 2002, 386).

Foreign fighters' isolation from the rest of the Bosnian Army was both purposeful – their brutality on the battlefield could be militarily effective but also did a disservice to the Bosnian Muslim side, which sought maintain the image of victim in the war against the Serbs – and a byproduct of their lack of direct ties into local population networks, lack of practical skills such as language fluency, and their dissonant understandings of the war, relative to local actors. These factors also alienated them from civilians, including Bosnian Muslims. Foreign fighters saw local Bosnians as impure Muslims who needed to be educated in the ways of radical Islam; their purpose in Bosnia was not just to defeat the enemy militarily, but also bring religious education to local Muslims. This latter objective required some form of local legitimacy, making the recruitment of local Bosnians into the El Mudzahid detachment an important component foreign fighters' activities during the war. Local recruits, they believed, would help them disseminate their ideological message (Mitchell 2008).

The El Mudzahid camps in the villages of Mehurići and Orašac and elsewhere in the vicinity of Zenica had posted armed guards at the entrances to prevent outsiders from entering (UN 2006, 117-118). When unit members were out in public, they were recognizable in particular ways: “[their] ignorance of Serbo-Croatian, the local language; the lack of any Bosnian or Croatian insignia on [their] military fatigues; and the Chinese markings on [their] AK47 rifle” (Vigodda 1992). Local residents from Zenica also recall

seeing different groups of fighters within the main mujahedin camp: one comprised largely of foreign combatants, and the other of local Bosnians – mainly refugees or deserters – who had joined the El Mudzahid detachment. These locals eventually grew beards and adopted the foreigners’ style of dress, such as donning red-and-white checkered keffiyas around their necks. Of note, many of the local Bosnians who joined the mujahedeen unit wore masks during attacks and when interacting with members of local communities (unlike their foreign combatant counterparts), suggesting that they preferred to conceal their identities (UN 2006, 304). Combatants from the El Mudzahid detachment moved around in Toyota all-terrain vehicles, as opposed to on foot like most other Bosnian Army soldiers. Journalists who covered the war, as well as local civilians, noted specifically that members of the detachment were “anxious to maintain their independence” and that “communication with [them] was all the more difficult since no one had access to their camps or was well received there” (ibid., 230).

Unlike local Bosnian soldiers who in many cases remained deeply integrated into their prewar social networks and constantly reevaluated their decisions to mobilize and stay in uniform, defections were more limited among foreign soldiers. This was partly due to their extremist ideologies and strong allegiance to the Islamist cause, which studies link to reduced rates of defection and desertion (Gates and Nordås 2015). But another reason for their low defection rates was their lack of ties to outside populations and the absence of “safe havens” that might welcome them. Deserting to uncontested rough

terrain, UN bases, or other state or nonstate armed groups was not a valid option during the war (Richards 2018). Few members of the El Mudzahid detachment would therefore have had anywhere to desert to; their wartime social networks were confined mostly to relationships they had with other foreign fighters, and to a more limited extent with the local Bosnians who had joined their units. But these latter individuals often faced social isolation themselves for switching to the El Mudzahid unit, as I explain in the next section, and were shunned by local community members for joining a unit that was not highly regarded by local Bosnians (Schwampe 2018). As such, any ties to local Bosnians that foreigners did develop during the war did not extend into civilian networks. Exiting Bosnia altogether also posed significant challenges, and would likely have been more complicated than entering the country given that the recruitment networks in place only helped foreigners reach the battlefield, not leave it.

In addition to the recruitment of local Bosnians into their units, foreign fighters attempted to establish ties to native Bosnians through marriage. Newspapers from the war, for instance, describe how some foreign fighters employed techniques such as forced marriages, kidnappings, and the occupation of homes to obtain citizenship (Pomfret 1996). A Bosnian Croat villager from the Travnik area recalled the following about foreign mujahedin in his testimony to the ICTY: “They were foreigners until they arrived [in Bosnia]. Once they had arrived, they no longer were foreigners; they took

Muslim wives. They would have two or three of them. Some would go to – to their homes, and they would stay together with them.”⁵²

These ties, however, were not intended to integrate foreign fighters into existing civilian social networks, but rather to draw civilians out of them. Forced marriages in particular were undertaken to create radical Islamist communities that would remain isolated from Bosnian society at large. One such example is the settlement in Donja Bocinja, located approximately 12 kilometers to the north of Zavidovici in central Bosnia. After the expulsion of the town’s Bosnian Serb inhabitants in September 1995, members of the El Mudzahid detachment took over the homes of Bosnian Serbs and moved in with their families. Strict Islamic law governed the town’s affairs: women wore veils and long black robes, men had long beards, and inhabitants were forbidden from speaking to visitors. A sign along the road into the village at one point read “be afraid of Allah” (Jeffrey 2000). Other such communities emerged in other areas of central Bosnia.

In sum, the mujahedin who traveled to Bosnia from 1992-1995 stayed disconnected from local Bosnian society, both operationally as a fighting force and socially in relation to communities of Bosnian civilians. This isolation was mostly deliberate and helped the mujahedin fulfill their goal of irredentist jihad in Bosnia. By maintaining their operational distance from the Bosnian Army’s regular leadership

⁵² Pranjes, Zdravko, “Witness: Zdravko Pranjes (Open Session)”, January 13, 2004, ICTY Archives.

structure, detachments of foreign fighters were freer to employ the overly brutal military tactics they believed were justified in an existential struggle against a non-Muslim enemy. What's more, they saw themselves as morally superior to local Bosnian Muslims, who were not educated to live their lives in accordance with the tenets of radical Islam. Their ties to local Bosnians were thus limited to Bosnian Army deserters recruited into the El Mudzahid detachment, and to those forced into marriage with mujahedin fighters.

Foreign Soldiers: Cultural Disembeddedness

Foreign combatants' starkly different vision for post-war Bosnia relative to local Bosnians, as reflected in the previous section's opening quote by mujahedin commander Abu Abdel Aziz Barbaros, is suggestive of their cultural disembeddedness from the local context of the Bosnian war. While the majority of local actors, perhaps in particular from the Bosnian Muslim side, primarily sought a return to a multi-ethnic state, the visions of the mujahedeen foresaw an exclusionary regime that prioritized Islam at the expense of other religions and cultures. As Mitchell (2008) explains, the defense of Muslim civilians and the expansion of Muslim-controlled territory throughout Bosnia were strategic objectives that foreign and local elements of the Bosnian Army had in common. Unlike the mujahedin, however, Bosnian Muslim leaders and soldiers remained committed – both publicly and privately – to a multiconfessional state. These divergent visions highlight foreign combatants' disregard for the local norms and values in which ordinary Bosnians were grounded before the outbreak of war in 1992, and came to define their wartime experiences.

Local Bosnians' memories of mujahedin fighters in the Bosnian army highlight the extent of their cultural disembeddedness. One Bosnian war veteran's memoirs, for instance, includes the following descriptions of the men that came to fight in Bosnia from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, and other Islamic countries: "Dark-skinned guys. Genetically conditioned... They have war in their blood... They do not speak our language, but harbor an affection for our people and our country superior to ours... They have no fear of wound... They desire death..."⁵³ Other accounts of the war refer to them as "Islamic militiamen" who spoke in "heavily accented Persian Gulf Arabic" (Hedges 1995; see also UN 2006, 277 ff.), and as "alien to local forces" (Bellamy 1993), "wild" (Brown 1995), and "unpopular with local Muslims" (Bellamy 1995). Local Bosnians also referred to the mujahedin as the "bearded bogymen of the Bosnian war" and the "kiss of death" (Eager 1993). To many ordinary Bosnians, they "stuck out like penguins in the desert" (Vulliamy, 1994 as quoted in Schrader, 2003, 52).

Another marker of foreign fighters' cultural disembeddedness was their lack of knowledge of the local Bosnian language. Local ABiH combatants pointed repeatedly to foreign combatants' deficiencies in this respect: "They cannot understand our language... They cannot understand us either" (Eager 1993). The inability to communicate directly with local populations was often the first barrier that came between them and Bosnian

⁵³ *The Blind Man's Mirror*, "Me."

civilians. Local combatants often heard, rather than saw, that foreigners were present in their ranks: “I heard first, then I saw one Arab on our side. And he was too loud, he would yell something in Arabic.”⁵⁴ These dynamics likely reinforced the strength of the mujahedin’s vision as it made it even harder to communicate with “impure” local Muslims.

Unlike Bosnian soldiers who experienced the war through fluid soldier-civilian identities, foreign fighters experienced the war through their singular dedication to jihad: their participation in the conflict was defined on the basis of religion, not geography or social ties, as it was for local soldiers who defended their homes and families. Specifically, foreign combatants’ identity as “warriors” was fixed, and often so overbearing as to invite comparisons to “psycopaths” (Gates and Podder 2015). They became infamous for their battle cries that struck fear into their opponents, as one local Bosnian member of the El Mudzahid detachment recounted: “The Mudzahid would line us up... there were about 500 of us, and in a megaphone they would record us yelling... Then before a battle or entering a town, they would turn on the recording and blast the 500 voices. It was scary, and people would run away.”⁵⁵ Such over-zealousness was infrequent among local ABiH soldiers serving in regular units; as the previous sections on local soldiers describe, most did not experience the war much differently from civilians. They never saw themselves as

⁵⁴ Interview 129, October 2017.

⁵⁵ Interview 119, September 2017.

zealots engaged in an uncompromising pursuit of religious ideals. This cultural clash in the ways that local and foreign ABiH soldiers experienced the war highlights the extent to which foreign fighters' understandings of the war undermined indigenous understandings. Mujahedin fighters pursued goals framed within the same religious conflict narratives that had also guided their participation in conflicts elsewhere, such as Afghanistan or Chechnya, and showed little solidarity with native Bosnians' wartime experiences.

The fatalism that undergirded foreign fighters' experiences of the Bosnian war alienated them from local Bosnian fighters and civilians. Before arriving in Bosnia, foreign fighters received a handbook of sorts that instructed them to understand that the place, timing, and manner of their deaths had been predetermined. Unlike local soldiers, who mobilized to defend their hearths, foreign soldiers described their motivations for joining the Bosnian Muslim side as "fighting in the name of Allah" (Schindler 2007, 168). According to some studies of the Bosnian mujahedin, these fighters exhibited a decreased sense of self-preservation, relative to local soldiers, and thus a heightened sense of risk-taking in battle (Mitchell 2008). One Bosnian Muslim summed it up as such: "[the mujahedin] come here full of ideals about dying in battle and going to paradise. Bosnians are not stupid. We want to live for Islam, not die for Islam" (Kohlmann 2004, 91).

The enemy's identity was also constant to foreign fighters, not amorphous and every-changing as it was to local soldiers. Specifically, foreign combatants were guided by the belief that Croats and Serbs had produced the war by attacking Bosnia's Muslim population. Religious divisions were therefore not a product of the war, as many local Bosnians believed, but a direct cause of it. In their memoirs of the conflict, foreign fighters framed the Bosnian war as the struggle of "righteous Mujahideen" against Serbs and Croats, neatly breaking down the conflict into an "us" versus "them" struggle. Their writings make frequent references to "god", "Serbs", "battle", "Muslims", "Allah", "mujahideen" and "killed," terms that rarely appear in the war memoirs of local fighters (al-Qatari and al-Madani 2002). In fact, the most common theme throughout mujahedin memoirs is that of martyrdom: foreign fighters celebrated the deaths of their Arab "brothers in religion"⁵⁶ who died at the hands of Bosnian Serb or Croat forces and would be rewarded by God as a result of their sacrifice. Unlike what is found in local soldiers' memoirs, the sensation of loss and trauma is largely absent from foreigners' writings. Violence was a source of celebration and war an opportunity for revenge, rather than a source of doubt and reevaluation of the decision to take up arms. When foreign fighters wrote about Bosnian civilians in their memoirs, they emphasized their plight as victims of war, but also the need to "teach them about their religion."⁵⁷ One fighter from Yemen recalls the signature of the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995 as "the sad day that

⁵⁶ *From the Stories of Arab Martyrs*, "Egyptian emigrants."

⁵⁷ *From the Stories of Arab Martyrs*, "Mohammed Hassan."

brought news of the cessation of hostilities in Bosnia, and the agreement of the Serbian, Croat, and Muslim parties to a cease-fire.”⁵⁸

Although local Bosnians were also terribly disappointed in the peace fostered by the Dayton Accords in 1995, it was for entirely different reasons. Foreign fighters envisioned an ideal end to the war as one where non-Muslim forces had been militarily defeated and Bosnia was transformed into an Islamic state. Ordinary Bosnians, on the other hand, had envisioned the end of the war as a return to the prewar life people remembered. Social networks were at the heart of this life, but had been so extensively destroyed that many people continued to struggle with the war’s most distressing aspects even in what was being called peace (Maček 2009, 202). An Islamic state would have been even more anathema to local Bosnians than the disappointments of post-Dayton reality.

In sum, foreign fighters’ wartime experiences and their objectives of irredentist jihad clashed strongly with local understandings of the war. Their cultural disembeddedness in this regard reinforced their isolation from Bosnian society, which they experienced on account of their lack of direct ties to members of local communities. While they made efforts to integrate and gain local legitimacy via the recruitment of local

⁵⁸ *From the Stories of Arab Martyrs, “Fayez Belhagoum, Abu Hudhayfah Al-Batar, Yemen”*

soldiers and to a lesser extent marrying local women, the foreign combatants remained alienated from local Bosnian soldiers and civilians alike.

6.4. Situating Actors: Evidence of Embeddedness among “Integrated Nonconformist” and “Assimilated Broker” Soldiers

Local Mujahedin Soldiers: “Integrated Nonconformists”

Efforts to “go local” are an important component of foreign fighter groups’ strategies in otherwise domestic conflicts. As Chapter 2 explains in the context of so-called “integrated nonconformist” armed groups, locals have important access to social networks, provide local legitimacy, and can help to disseminate the ideological perspective around which foreign fighters seek to re-frame a conflict. In this sense, local recruitment in and around the municipalities of Travnik and Zenica was important to leaders of the El Mudzahid detachment. Typically, local Bosnians joined the mujahedin unit with their friends, and the transition was never made out to be a “big deal.” Saban Alic, a local mujahid, testified that he did not go through any formalities before joining “the Arabs”: “A friend of mine had already gone there and he came to my home to pick me up, and I just went with him. There was no paperwork. I didn’t say anything to anyone, and nobody actually asked me anything.”⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Alic, Saban. “Testimony of Saban Alic,” July 17, 2007, ICTY Archives.

Recent studies have found that many of the local Bosnian Muslims who joined the ABiH's foreign detachment were deserters from other ABiH units composed primarily of local soldiers or disaffected youth from Travnik and Zenica who had not previously mobilized towards armed action (Schwampe and Senninger 2019). For local men, principal motivations for joining the mujahedin unit included dissatisfaction with the disorder and lack of organization pervasive among regular ABiH units, and religion.⁶⁰ Indeed, while the majority of Bosnian Muslims had not been particularly devout Muslims in the years leading up to the war – at least as far as foreign fighters saw it – the state of desperation that engulfed the local populace once the war started drove some to turn to religion. As such, wartime developments better explain the mobilization of local Bosnians into the foreign detachment than do conditions at the war's onset (Kalyvas and Kocher 2007). The religious education that the El Mudzahid detachment offered its soldiers was particularly attractive to local Bosnian villagers whom the war's treachery had turned pious. However, older Bosnian Muslims who considered themselves religious "did not approve of [the El Mudzahid Detachment's] strict approach to religion" (Schwampe and Senninger 2019) and often dismissed the decisions of younger Bosnian villagers to join the mujahedin as a mistake.

Recent evidence collected through interviews of former local members of the El Mudzahid Detachment suggest that there was a tension between individuals who left

⁶⁰ Ibid.

their regular units to join the foreign unit, and other members of Bosnian society. Specifically, it appears that young locals adopted foreigners' ideas of jihad Shariah law as a tool of youth empowerment against established communal norms. Many, it seemed, were out to instigate social outrage and considered joining a unit of disembedded outsiders as a way of doing so (Schwampe 2018). For others, the strict religious doctrine that foreign mujahedin introduced into the local context was a direct juxtaposition to the lack of courage, indiscipline, and inequalities that they experienced as members of the regular ABiH. It therefore appears that wartime dynamics (such as the evolution of what some considered a corrupt cadre of officers within the ABiH) uprooted some local soldiers from an understanding of the war centered around the defense of homes and prewar social networks. To local mujahedin, the war became a religious conflict – much as it was for their foreign counterparts.

Importantly, the uncompromising anti-Croat and anti-Serb rhetoric and frames of the foreign mujahedin did not influence locals to join the El Mudzahid Detachment. Although local mujahedin accompanied their foreign counterparts on missions that resulted in large-scale atrocities, the evidence suggests that this behavior resulted from the “socialization of local Bosniaks into [the El-Mudzahid Detachment’s] Manichean worldviews after they joined and did not reflect their original motivation to join the group” (Schwampe and Senninger 2019, 35). Local mujahedin also did not cite revenge against the Bosnian Serb and Croat population as a reason for joining the foreigners but

focused instead on their grievances against officers in the Bosnian Army for not doing enough to protect the local population. Once a part of the detachment, locals remained with the unit in its isolated training camps; they did not return home on breaks from the front lines in the same way that local soldiers in regular ABiH units did. Alic, the local mujahid quoted earlier remembers the following: “I didn’t leave the camp, not even to go back home. I spent the entire time there.”⁶¹ As such, the extent of local mujahedins’ structural embeddedness into social networks of local civilians likely decreased over time.

Over time, the El Mudzahid detachment’s recruiting efforts targeting the local population became more systematic and professional (Schwampe and Senninger 2019). For instance, the group established training camps and religious “workshops” where they could formally screen locals. The result was the incorporation of more ideologically committed local fighters who also had access to local knowledge and could serve as a signal to other local Bosnians that the detachment had at least some minimal level of local support (ICTY 2007; Schwampe 2018). El Mudzahid leaders, who were always foreigners, approached local imams in Travnika and Zenica and asked them to contribute to the religious workshops. Local religious leaders were particularly useful when they themselves spoke Arabic and could communicate directly with both foreign fighters and potential local recruits. One such imam from Travnik interviewed by Jasper Schwampe in the summer of 2016 recalled the following: “They had heard about me [...] and I was

⁶¹ Ibid.

interesting to them because I spoke Arabic and was also educated in religious matters. They asked me [...] to teach the population their way of Islam and to fix the local thinking” (Schwampe and Senninger 2019, 40). Foreign fighters led the military component of the workshops, including physical training and demonstrating fighting techniques, but preferred to leave the important task of spreading their message and way of thinking to willing local religious leaders who already benefitted from local legitimacy.

Nevertheless, joining the El Mudzahid detachment still brought significant humiliation upon those who made the decision to switch groups. Many of the dissatisfied local Bosnian soldiers who left their regular ABiH units to join foreign fighters did so when outright desertion was not an opportunity on account of social sanctioning and the shame that they would endure for having left the army. But most of the local Bosnian communities from which they hailed did not view the foreign unit as an acceptable alternative to the Bosnian Army, implying that many of the locals who did join the El Mudzahid detachment still faced the significant social shame that they sought to avoid by deserting in the first place (Schwampe 2018). What’s more, local mujahedin themselves acknowledged the persistent schism that separated foreign and local fighters within the El Mudzahid Detachment: one soldier clarified the difference as follows to Schwampe: “there is a difference between fighting next to each other as individuals and fighting next to each other as groups. The mujahedeen were a group that fought next to us, but we did

not mingle with them on an individual level” (Schwampe and Senninger 2019, 47). There was thus a certain amount of distrust between local Bosnian mujahedin and their foreign comrades that further confirms the need to consider local and foreign mujahedin as distinct sets of actors.

In short, what little evidence does exist on “integrated nonconformist” soldiers within the ABiH – local Bosnian Muslims who joined the El Mudzahid Detachment – suggests that these individuals harbored a different understanding of the Bosnian War, relative to local soldiers in regular army units. This different understanding, however, was most often a product of wartime dynamics – not of prewar conditions – and therefore speaks to the importance of considering how actors’ embeddedness changes in response to wartime violence, group dynamics, and the presence and visibility of influential disembedded actors. The foreign mujahedin capitalized on local soldiers’ grievances and established structures to further disembed them from local Bosnian society. Local actors, in other words, can be socialized into accepting and eventually spreading the otherwise non-resonant frames that foreign fighters introduce to a conflict context. Local soldiers’ structural embeddedness was strategically valuable to the El Mudzahid Detachment; its leaders depended on locals to spread the unit’s ideological message, boost recruitment, and provide critical local knowledge. As the next chapter discusses, the combination of structural embeddedness and cultural disembeddedness influenced local mujahedin

towards violence, albeit in different ways and to different degrees than disembedded foreigners.

Refugee Soldiers of the 17th Krajina Brigade: “Assimilated Brokers”

The information available on the “refugee soldiers” of the Bosnian Army’s 17th Krajina Brigade is significantly more limited than the evidence presented above regarding local soldiers in regular ABiH units and foreign and local soldiers within the El Mudzahid Detachment. Nevertheless, this section provides a brief description of the extent to which the soldiers from Bosanska Krajina who ended up in central Bosnia were culturally embedded into Bosnia’s wartime social fabric, but structurally disembedded from their local social networks (making them so-called “assimilated broker” combatants).

The “army of the dispossessed,” or the Bosnian Army’s 17th Krajina Brigade, was defined by the quest to return home to the town and villages of northwestern Bosnia (Sivac-Bryant 2016). As the preceding chapter explains, the brigade was formed in exile and with the support of the Bosnian Muslim diaspora living in Slovenia, Germany, and other western European countries. It provided hope for return to displaced Bosnian soldiers, many of whom had been victims of Bosnian Serb prison camps. Because of their uprooting from their home communities, the soldiers of the 17th Brigade experienced the war differently from local soldiers in regular ABiH units who generally fought in close proximity to their hometowns. While social networks were still important to the displaced soldiers, the nature of the networks made them different the ones on which

regular ABiH soldiers depended. “Refugee soldiers” wartime social networks took on a transnational character and developed new forms of social relatedness (Carsten 1995) that made return a real possibility. Unlike local soldiers in other ABiH units whose wartime experiences were divided between time on the front lines and times at home, the displaced soldiers of the 17th Krajina Brigade held on to only mythical representations of their prewar homes, which in most instances were destroyed. They were thus mostly structurally embedded into Bosnia’s wartime social fabric via memories and images of home and relationships, rather than direct connections to either. The social capital on which they relied during the war was not local insofar as their prewar social networks had been all but destroyed, but drew instead on relationships created outside of Bosnia proper, and that extended well beyond the boundaries of Bosanska Krajina. Soldiers in the brigade commonly referred to themselves as “vagrants”, “voyagers”, people “with nowhere to go” (Vulliamy 1995b).

The 17th Krajina Brigade’s motivation of returning home provides evidence of its soldiers’ strong embeddedness into the shared set of norms and values through which the majority of Bosnian Muslims experienced the war. As preceding sections of this chapter explain, most Bosnian soldiers lived the war through fluid civilian-soldier identities in part due to the common goal of defending and eventually returning to their homes and prewar lives more generally. The stories and conversations of refugee soldiers revolved around what they would do when they reached their homes and was therefore

not all too different from the conversations of soldiers in regular ABiH units. Zijad Anđelića, a soldier in the 17th Krajina Brigade, recounted the following to a journalist during the war:

After all the killing, there are only two things... Home, and time. Home, because that is where we have to be in the end. And time, because that's what it takes to get there. I've stopped counting the time since I last saw home; I think it's three years we've been living in the forests. All I can count are the days until I get back. They burned our houses but they can't burn the land... This war is the war to go home (Vulliamy 1995b).

But unlike local ABiH soldiers who fought close to home for most of the war and could return there periodically, the war became the entire life of a refugee soldier. There was significantly less intertwining of their warrior roles and their positions as civilians. Another soldier interviewed by journalist Ed Vulliamy during the war explains: "I lost everyone and everything. And I keep every one of those memories deep inside me... When war is your whole life, you have to know what you are fighting for. And I know: I'm fighting for a normal life – to go home" (Vulliamy 1995a). Members of the brigade acknowledged that the war was in many ways their only "home," in part because the victimization that they had endured had changed them to the point of not recognizing their prewar selves. The violence and trauma of spring and summer 1992 had permanently set them apart from what they considered "normal" people: "This war is the only home we have, and we can't see the changes in ourselves while we are here. But when we meet normal people, you can see them... I don't know how to talk to people [anymore]" (Vulliamy 1995b).

Importantly, many of the refugee soldiers in the 17th Brigade were betrayed and victimized by members of their prewar social networks, oftentimes people whom they had considered neighbors and friends. The intimate nature of the violence in northwest Bosnia therefore also contributed to the destruction of soldiers' prewar networks and instilled in them a deeper motivation for revenge that was often absent from the wartime experiences of other ABiH soldiers, including those who became local mujahedin. Compared to local soldiers in regular units, displaced soldiers of the 17th Brigade likely harbored a clearer image of who the "enemy" was in this war. As this next chapter suggests, this likely contributed to lower levels of civil action on the part of "assimilated broker" soldiers, at least relative to local soldiers who continued to fight in or near their hometowns. Nevertheless, the unit's soldiers never ascribed to the grand, nationalist cause extolled by Bosnia's political leaders: most of them were adamant in expressing that they were not fighting "for some total power in Bosnia" (Vulliamy 1995a). This suggests that most of them remained embedded in an understanding of the war shared by most ordinary Bosnians, one shaped first and foremost by the objective of returning home to what life had been like before 1992.

In short, as is true for "integrated nonconformist" soldiers, the case of "assimilated broker" soldiers shows how dynamics endogenous to war contribute to changing the extent to which actors are embedded into a conflict's local social fabric. Embeddedness is not a static state in war but shifts according to various wartime

dynamics. The two aforementioned categories of armed actors help to take such shifts into account and contribute to a more complete understanding of the role of embeddedness in shaping combatant behavior during conflict.

6.5. Conclusion

As the experiences of embedded soldiers described at the outset of this chapter shows, the men and women of the Bosnian Army who served on the front lines and were most exposed to the dangers of war were often the least nationalistic members of Bosnia's population. They had the moral and social capital to question the integrity and virtuousness of what politicians from all sides deemed a "grand national cause." There were, however, soldiers in the ABiH who experienced the war altogether differently. One notable exception were members of the El Mudzahid detachment – both its foreign fighters and local mujahedin – who saw the war as a venue through which to expand global jihad to the Balkans. In many respects, the foreign soldiers in this unit – disembedded soldiers – were the most "nationalist" of the Bosnian forces. They were warriors whose allegiances and responsibilities during the war stayed fixed on the pursuit of jihad and liberating Muslim lands from Christian occupiers. The foreign fighters who came to Bosnia saw an opening in 1992 to convert a secular state in the heart of the European continent into a radical, Islamic society. Their clear visions for the role of Islam in Bosnia and their broader understanding of the conflict, however, did not resonate with the overwhelming majority of ordinary Bosnians.

Local ABiH combatants – embedded soldiers – lived the war as soldiers and civilians. Though they wore uniforms and brandished weapons, their wartime responsibilities went beyond protecting their fellow soldiers to also protecting their homes and families. Nationalistic or religious objectives thus took a secondary, tertiary, or sometimes no role at all in their motivations to fight. Bosnian soldiers remained deeply integrated in their civilian social networks, returning home periodically to resume their roles as brothers, mothers, fathers, sons, and daughters. They checked up on their friends who had joined “enemy” forces. All too often, the identity of the enemy itself was unclear or fluid. Albeit privately more so than publically, it was hard for soldiers to clearly define national causes; just or unjust violence; and other concepts that neatly divided war and peace. Local soldiers experienced war fluidly and through what were often blurred lenses.

The wartime experiences of local mujahedin – so called “integrate nonconformists” – and refugee soldiers in the 17th Krajina Brigade – so-called “assimilated brokers” – fell somewhere in between the experiences of embedded and disembedded soldiers. Wartime dynamics related to how ordinary Bosnian Army units were organized and run prompted disgruntled local soldiers to join the foreign-led El Mudzahid detachment, which they believed would provide them with the discipline and opportunity for combat that sought out as soldiers. For other local villagers, desperation

led them to turn to religion, and subsequently participation in the El Mudzahid detachment that offered religious as well as military training. These soldiers maintained ties into local population networks, and as such could dispense valuable local knowledge and help foreign fighters with recruitment. But they came to harbor a wholly different interpretation of the Bosnian War as an existential religious conflict, a view that alienated them from the rest of Bosnian society. Wartime dynamics also impacted the ways that refugee soldiers experienced the war. Specifically, intense victimization at the hands of Bosnian Serb forces dismantled preexisting social networks, pushing residents of Bosanska Krajina into exile where they developed ties to the Bosnian Muslims diaspora in western Europe, making their objective of a return “home” a reality. Though exposure to violence fostered a deeper sense of revenge and a clearer definition of who the enemy was among these soldiers, relative to non-displaced Bosnian soldiers, refugee soldiers still shared the goal of returning home with soldiers in regular ABiH units. The nationalist frame pushed by Bosnian political leaders did not resonate strongly with them, either, though they would become one of the army’s most effective units.

Despite being difficult to observe, blurred divisions and fluid identities often characterize how individuals privately experience war. In many cases, it is likely that these experiences offer a more complete picture of war. By seeking them out and accounting for them through the lens of embeddedness, we gain a better understanding of a

conflict's microdynamics. I turn to these in the next chapter, particularly as they concern the qualities of combatant-civilian interactions during the Bosnian war.

Chapter Seven: Impacts of Embeddedness on Soldiers in the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina

7.1. Introduction

The previous chapter situated combatants in the ranks of the Army of Bosnia Herzegovina (henceforth ABiH or Bosnian Army) according to their levels of structural and cultural embeddedness in the local social fabric of wartime Bosnia. Specifically, I showed that local soldiers – embedded combatants – experienced the war through fluid soldier-civilian identities, and remained firmly integrated and assimilated into civilian networks and understandings of the war. In this chapter, I link their embeddedness to their behavior during war, in particular their activation of preexisting connections to engage with and demonstrate solidarity with members of opposing forces, ultimately contributing to the preservation of relationships and the dampening of local violence. Local soldiers were also able to develop pervasive, if rudimentary and informal, systems of exchange with local civilians. By contrast, foreign soldiers – disembedded combatants – experienced the war through fixed warrior identities and a focus on irredentist jihad, which kept them isolated from local communities. Their understandings of the war as an existential religious struggle were wholly anathema to how native Bosnians experienced and understood the conflict. In turn, the intermediate categories of local mujahedin – integrated nonconformist combatants – and refugee soldiers of the 17th Krajina Brigade – assimilated broker combatants – held some ties to Bosnia’s local social fabric but were

disembedded along either cultural (in the case of local mujahedin) or structural (in the case of refugee soldiers) dimensions.

This chapter focuses on the micro-level observable implications of my theoretical framework, including nonphysical forms of violence and the civil actions, or nonviolent strategies to promote deeper engagement with stakeholders, that conflict actors undertake but are neglected by most macro-narratives of conflict (Avant et al. 2018, 4). In addition to more “formal” services such as providing security or things like education, which the civil war scholarship (among other subfields) commonly associate with governance, recent studies of civil war’s microdynamics also call attention to explicit efforts to “reduce or prevent violence, provide safe havens, resolve and transform conflicts, build solidarity, or simply maintain or deepen relationships” (ibid., 6). These civil actions reflect the agency of various actors as a function of their claims to authority and their relationships with other actors. As such, they are not very different from other actions that scholars consider indicators of governance, including the establishment of rule of law or the provision of public goods ranging from health care to environmental services (Rotberg 2002). The types of civil actions in which ABiH soldiers engaged, and their interactions with local populations, mostly fall under the category of the aforementioned informal “efforts,” although I discuss more formal exchange at various points. Because of their deep embeddedness into Bosnia’s social fabric that the previous chapter describes, local soldiers (embedded combatants) were often successful at

reaching across frontlines to build solidarity, maintain prewar relationships, and transform the evolution of the conflict's in minor ways throughout Bosnia's varied geography. The chapter's focus on the microdynamics of combatant-civilian interactions also highlights the nonmaterial forms of violence in which armed actors engage during wartime. Attention to "nonphysical" forms of violence that civilians endured during the Bosnian war provides a more complete picture of how foreign fighters (disembedded combatants) in particular engaged local populations during the Bosnian war.

The rest of this chapter proceeds as follows. First, I trace the relationship between ABiH soldiers' levels of structural and cultural embeddedness to their wartime behavior. Behavior ranged from a demonstrated eagerness to abide by prewar norms and maintain prewar relationships even across ethnic lines, to abuse and atrocities. I focus on ABiH soldiers' interactions with soldiers from opposing forces as well as with members of local civilian populations. While embedded soldiers were largely successful in engaging in civil action that helped build solidarity across sides, maintain relationships, and reduce intensities of violence in some areas, foreign soldiers' disembeddedness incentivized violence. Past exposure to violence and the destruction of prewar social networks shaped the behavior of refugee soldiers, but this group of combatants maintained more restraint when it came to inflicting indiscriminate violence, compared to disembedded foreign fighters. Integrated nonconformist soldiers, or local mujahedin, participated in violence with their foreign counterparts, albeit often indirectly or by masking their physical

appearance. The second section explains how soldiers' embeddedness affected civilian perceptions of ABiH units. Local communities for the most part saw the men and women in regular ABiH uniforms as one of them, but held radically different opinions of foreign ABiH soldiers and the local Bosnians that joined their unit. Civilians' acceptance and rejection of embedded and disembedded combatants, respectively, played a large role in determining the nature of civilian-combatant relationships. To further explore these dynamics, the third section focuses on ABiH combatant-civilian interactions in four locations across Bosnia. In Sarajevo and Tuzla, cities proud of their multiethnic character, ABiH combatants experienced the war through fluid civilian-soldier identities, and maintained strong ties with local communities. Their embeddedness helped carve out spaces of normalcy and dampen violence in minor, albeit important, ways. In Zenica and Travnik, members of the El Mudzahid detachment attempted to impose strict Islamist traditions on local civilian communities and the presence of structurally disembedded refugee soldiers contributed to heightened instability. Combatant-civilian interactions in these latter cities were tense, in many cases even between ABiH soldiers and Bosnian Muslim civilians. The fourth section addresses alternative explanations of combatant behavior as they pertain to the Bosnian war, and the last section concludes the chapter.

7.2. Impacts of Embeddedness: The Actions of ABiH Combatants

How did the embeddedness of ABiH combatants into Bosnia's local social fabric affect their behavior during the war, specifically their propensities to engage in civil

action and the ways in which they interacted with civilian populations? The existing literature on the Bosnian war suggests that patterns of ethnic settlement, geographical location, and strategic interaction between opposing sides drove military violence against civilians at a macro level (Costalli and Moro 2012; Weidmann 2011). However, these explanations cannot explain the war's microdynamics, particularly those instances of cross-ethnic exchange, aid, or solidarity that dampened violence in many areas throughout Bosnia. They explain how ordinary Bosnians experienced the war publicly, but cannot account for how they did so privately. What's more, macro-level narratives cannot explain why certain elements of the Bosnian Army were well received by Muslim and other civilians in certain areas, but remained unpopular in others. Civilian acceptance of combatant groups was arguably as important as battlefield dynamics in determining where mutual exchange could take place, and where levels of abuse could remain low. In what follows, I highlight the role that embeddedness in informing the quality of ABiH combatant behavior from 1992-1995.

Civil Action among Embedded Local Soldiers

As some scholarship on the Bosnian war demonstrates, the interethnic nature of Bosnia's prewar social networks influenced the behavior of armed actors on the battlefield, which ultimately impacted how ordinary Bosnians experienced the war. Andreas (2004, 2008), for example, demonstrates how illicit trade contributed to peace and stability in wartime Bosnia by sustaining several cities' civilian populations through the emergence of a black market. In Sarajevo, the increasing stability and predictability of

siege lines helped solidify cross-line trading routes and relationships that transcended ethnic divisions (Andreas 2008: 65). The experience of a young Bosnian Serb who was smuggled out of Sarajevo during the siege sheds light on how interethnic, prewar social networks facilitated exchange. According to Andreas (2008), the man was taken to a designated handoff site at the frontline in Grbavica, and picked up by another car from the Serb side. During the exchange, the two drivers exited their vehicles and embraced warmly. They were brothers-in-law, but their ethnicities had landed them on opposite sides of the front lines in 1992. These types of exchanges, characterized by “a willingness to abide by a minimal level of respect in order to maximize engagement with others” (Avant et al. 2018: 6), were not limited to Sarajevo or to members of criminal organizations and smugglers; they also occurred between combatants active throughout Bosnia. For example, Burg and Shoup (1999) describe the frequency with which soldiers from opposing sides exchanged cigarettes and food near the front lines. Schindler (2007, 165) also states that one of the “rules of the game” in Bosnia’s war included fraternization with the enemy. While instances of interethnic across-the-frontlines contact were a proven facet of the war’s reality, few studies attempt to understand their logic and how they affected the war’s microdynamics.

I consider these frontline exchanges as instances of wartime civil action, in large part because they reflected a reluctance to engage in violence on the part of combatants, and an openness to maximizing engagement with prewar friends, coworkers, or

neighbors who had joined opposing forces. In many instances, these exchanges also contributed directly to civilian survival during the war (Andreas 2008). Civil actions by local ABiH soldiers during the war were a product of native Bosnians' deep embeddedness into the local context; they were examples of what Bosnians considered as acceptable behavior before the outbreak of hostilities, and what many continued to deem acceptable during war. In other words, embedded ABiH soldiers' dialogue with VRS or HVO soldiers across front lines, their exchanges of jokes and cigarettes, and their decisions to allow civilians safe passage represented attempts to live a "normal life" and be "normal people" in spite of the war (Maček 2009, 5).

Over the course of my interviews with ABiH war veterans, I came across many instances of such exchange. When ABiH soldiers who were both structurally and culturally embedded into Bosnia's wartime social fabric engaged in small-scale trade with other combatants across the frontlines, they drew on their prewar social networks. Encounters would take place mainly at night. For instance, one soldier from the Army's 2nd Corps active mainly in the Tuzla canton recalled: "It's funny, but at night, we would yell across the front lines to one another. It was like half-friendship. They were joking around. The Serbians were joking, we were joking, it was a friendly thing."⁶² Other units operating close to the front lines had similar experiences. One soldier from the 3rd Corps in Central Bosnia recalled of his comrades: "they would sit there and talk to each other

⁶² Interview 110, September 2017.

across lines. They'd all been neighbors. All of the local people were together.”⁶³ The soldiers themselves acknowledge that this kind of behavior was surprising, given the intensity of the violence that characterized the war. Another man, who left the Bosnian Army during the war and fled to Canada, recounted his experiences as a soldier in the 1st Corps in and around Sarajevo to reporter as follows: “This war is a strange thing. During the day we shoot at each other in order to kill each other. In the night, we trade and we drink from a distance of 15 metres, listening to each other’s songs” (Grouev 1995). Civilians who witnessed soldiers’ interactions also recalled the exchanges. For example, a Catholic priest from a village near Travnik in central Bosnia described soldiers’ relations and behavior during the war to me this way:

Our soldiers and the Muslim soldiers would actually frequently share cigarettes. The hostility wasn’t always as intense as it was made out to be. The soldiers had normal relations among one another – they would share stuff, when they weren’t fighting. They didn’t trust each other completely, but enough to exchange a pack of cigarettes for something else.⁶⁴

Despite high levels of wartime violence, many Muslim soldiers who served in regular ABiH units continued to think about their friends from before the war, actively

⁶³ Interview 111, September 2017.

⁶⁴ Interview 105, September 2017.

showing concern for their well-being. A man who served as a radio operator in the Bosnian Army's 3rd Corps, for instance, recalled taking the time to catch up with his childhood friend who had joined Republika Srpska forces: "I would ask for my friend over the radio, some guy would go fetch him, and then we'd talk... We'd ask [each other] how we were doing. It's hard to think badly about any of them, regardless of who they fought for during the war. We didn't care."⁶⁵

The quality of local ties developed in the prewar era and that survived the eruption of hostilities made such civil actions possible for local soldiers who fought close to home. Because most soldiers' peacetime social networks had included people of all three major ethnicities, either through ties of kinship, friendship, or work, they could identify commonalities between themselves and members of opposing armed forces, even during the fighting. The mutual respect and civility with which embedded ABiH soldiers considered one another contributed to building small-scale, isolated instances of solidarity. Fraternization with the enemy, as some have called it (see e.g. Schindler 2007), also conformed to norms of appropriateness in Bosnia that dated back to before the war. While one of the soldiers quoted above describes the war as "strange" when thinking back to the intermittent patterns of fighting and casual banter in which soldiers often engaged, most ordinary Bosnians were not surprised to hear of soldiers engaging with

⁶⁵ Interview 125, October 2017.

others across front lines. In Bosnia, it had always been considered “civil” and a part of everyday life to interact with individuals of other nationalities or ethnicities.

These civil actions on the part of embedded combatants contributed to maintaining – and in some cases deepening – prewar relationships in wartime Bosnia and to further eroding the distinction between soldiers and civilians. When a regular soldier from the Bosnian Army met with his friend or coworker from before the war who had joined Bosnian Serb or Croat forces, they were not so different from a Bosnian civilian who continued to interact with their Serb or Croat neighbors. It proved that civilians and soldiers shared a common understanding of the war, grounded in prewar interethnic social networks where nationality was largely irrelevant.

In addition to maintaining relationships and building interethnic solidarity in the midst of violence, local and embedded ABiH combatants also contributed directly to the security and survival of ordinary Bosnians. Accounts of the war are rife with examples of armed soldiers from all three sides protecting those they knew. Some openly protected their non-coethnic prewar friends and neighbors in front of their fellow soldiers, while others did so covertly so as not to be scorned by their peers. One woman from a central Bosnian town, for example, remembers Bosnian Army soldiers placing signs on the doors of Bosnian Croats they knew to protect them from raids. When the soldiers were local to

the areas they operated in, the likelihood that one of them would step in to protect an acquaintance was higher than when soldiers were non-local to an area.⁶⁶

Despite the divisive rhetoric and actions of political leaders during the war, the preceding account and numerous memoirs of the Bosnian war suggest that local Bosnian soldiers regularly demonstrated their agency by resisting violence (see e.g. Broz 2004). Although such acts of resistance often occurred in isolation and in unorganized fashion, they provide evidence that social embeddedness creates opportunities for local actors to activate social capital based on trust and reciprocity even in the most violent contexts. The violent social capital that armed actors develop and rely on during wartime, in other words, does not completely erase the nonviolent social capital that has been built up in peacetime. For many soldiers in the Bosnian Army that I consider “embedded” combatants, the Bosnian Serb or Croat civilians they encountered were not just “the enemy;” the chances that they were friends, neighbors, clients, schoolmates, or even relatives were high given that most of these individuals fought close to their hometowns. The civil – or nonviolent – actions of ABiH soldiers thus often occurred alongside the uncivil, or violent, action that most accounts of the Bosnian war highlight. Bonds that had been considered mundane in prewar Bosnian society became important to the actions of native Bosnian soldiers, insofar as they incentivized more tempered responses to noncoethnics on and off the battlefield.

⁶⁶ Interview 100, September 2017.

At their most basic level, the civil actions that local ABiH soldiers undertook during the war as a result of their deep embeddedness into Bosnia's peacetime social fabric enhanced space for human interaction. They helped to preserve prewar social ties and reduce violence in isolated, albeit significant, instances. Though these actions and the effects that they had on Bosnia's wartime social fabric did not bring an end to Sarajevo's siege or stop the destruction of towns and villages and their people, they invigorated a spirit that was critical to governance during the war. Importantly, they also had obvious and significant impact on the lives of those involved. In short, the civil actions in which local soldiers engaged when they were on and away from the frontlines were rooted in the mundane, quotidian relations around which their prewar lives were organized. They also reflected a common purpose shared with civilians, to defend and protect their homes and social ties and to survive the war.

As the next section describes, foreign soldiers were embedded in an altogether different understanding of the war, where warrior identities were fixed and ties to civilian populations were nonexistent. Foreign soldiers could not foster space for civil action because their lives were not built on quotidian and other connections that were part of Bosnia's prewar social fabric. Compared to local ABiH soldiers, their behavior on and off the battlefield was characterized by high levels of violence, and devoid of the civil actions that defined many local soldiers' wartime experiences.

Coercion and Violence among Disembedded Foreign Soldiers

The coercive behavior of foreign fighters in the Bosnian Army was born of their understanding of the Bosnian war as an existential conflict between religions. Their approach to the war did not resonate with local frames. Foreign soldiers' fixed warrior identities in particular stood in sharp contrast to local soldiers' fluid soldier-civilian identities, and lowered barriers to violence against both enemy combatants and civilians alike. Many local Bosnians – civilians and soldiers alike – feared foreign fighters, or were not at ease with their presence. One man from central Bosnia remembered that he “was afraid sometimes more of them than of Serbs or Croats, because we have that language, the same language, same history, same culture. I knew they didn't have personal or emotional connections to people.”⁶⁷ Another native Bosnian soldier who came into contact with members of the El Muzahid detachment recalled: “They are not part of our world, they are not us! When I saw them, or had to take them places, I was scared. They went around screaming ‘Allahu Akbar,’ they looked different, they did not speak Bosnian.”⁶⁸ An officer of the 17th Krajina Brigade interviewed during the war said the following: “If we stopped fighting with the Croats and Serbs tomorrow, our next fight would be with the [mujahedin]. We are Muslim but we are different from these people. We're Europeans... Everybody in Bosnia likes to sing and drink” (Eager 1993).

⁶⁷ Interview 105, September 2017.

⁶⁸ Interview 103, September 2017.

As Mitchell (2008) describes, foreign fighters in the Bosnian Army engaged in small-scale irregular warfare against military and civilian targets: their objective was to “undermine their adversaries’ military efforts by attacking key strategic positions and terrorizing civilian populations” (2008, 818). Their unit became infamous for its violence against captured enemy combatants, members of local humanitarian organizations and UN peacekeeping forces, and local civilians. Particularly shocking to local residents were the extra-lethal modes of violence that foreign combatants deployed, behavior from which most local soldiers refrained (see e.g. UN 2006).⁶⁹ For instance, the detachment became infamous for decapitating or dismembering captured opponents, torturing prisoners of war, and killing UN soldiers and aid workers (Tziampiris 2009). By almost all accounts, foreign fighters became a significant liability for the Bosnian Army. Studies of their involvement in Bosnia’s war describe their “unyielding philosophy of violence,” and a deputy commander of the Bosnian Army once commented during the war that “[the foreigners] commit most of the atrocities and work against the interests of the Muslim people. They have been killing, looting, and stealing. They are not under control of the Bosnian Army and they must go” (Colonel Stjepan Siber, as quoted in Kohlmann 2004, 90). Their unofficial stature also caused friction with civilian authorities, for instance

⁶⁹ Lee Ann Fujii defines extra-lethal violence as “physical acts committed face-to-face that transgress shared norms and beliefs about appropriate treatment of the living as well as the dead” (2013, 411). The practices that fit the definition are context-dependent in that what is considered extra-lethal violence is contingent on shared understandings of what do and do not constitute excessive ways to kill and subdue. In Bosnia, actions carried out by foreign mujahedin often transgressed what were typically considered appropriate ways to treat enemy combatants and civilians alike, though they were not the only armed faction responsible for carrying out such atrocities (see e.g. Fujii 2017).

when they threatened local Muslim judges or vandalized social spaces in places such as Travnik and Zenica (ibid.). While disembodied foreign fighters were not the only ABiH soldiers to commit atrocities, the manner by which they did was more regular and indiscriminate, as well as significantly more jarring in terms of their application of extra-lethal violence. Charges brought against the detachment and its leaders after the war ranged from “theft, aggravated theft, usurpation of identity, manslaughter, murder, rape, insubordination, falsification of official documents, abuse of power, fraud, and desertion” (ICTY 2006, 247).

A number of factors appear to link foreign fighters’ use of extreme violence to their disembodiedness from the Bosnian war’s social fabric. One concerns their stakes in the conflict, which differed significantly from those of local Bosnian soldiers including local mujahedin that I describe as “integrated nonconformist” combatants. Specifically, the foreign fighters in Bosnia’s army were warriors through and through. Most of those who traveled to Bosnia to fight did so with the expectation that they would die fighting; their warrior identities rewarded martyrdom and thus surviving to experience a post-war Bosnia was not of primary importance to them, as it was to local soldiers who served in regular ABiH units. One foreign mujahid noted this contrast between foreign and local soldiers from such units: “...when we stage an attack, the Bosnians come with us but they don’t want to die. They go forward and then they turn back again... just when they are willing, the Bosnians want to go back home. They want to live” (Kohlmann 2004, 91). If

foreign fighters did survive the conflict, most expected to leave Bosnia having done their part to bring jihad to Europe's borders. The goal of foreign mujahedin fighters would be to move on to wage holy war on another foreign battlefield. As the previous chapter explains, many had fighting experience in Afghanistan, and their memoirs give reason to believe that Bosnia was but one stop on a journey that involved numerous holy wars.⁷⁰ Among younger foreign fighters, combat in Bosnia was a means of gaining the credibility, connections, and experience in jihad that veteran foreign fighters had obtained in Afghanistan (Donnelly, Sanderson and Fellman 2017). In other words, foreign fighters in the Bosnian Army were strongly detached from the local context, as far as both the present and future of Bosnia were concerned.

Evidence of this detachment and its influence on foreign fighters' more violent behavior, relative to local Bosnian soldiers in regular units, appears in historical accounts of the war and in local soldiers' recollections of their foreign comrades' behavior. Schindler (2007, 163), for instance, maintains that the mujahedin fighters who came to Bosnia from abroad became infamous for their "suicide charges into enemy gunfire." They were employed as shock troops because they were unafraid to die; regular ABiH soldiers were often aghast at the brazenness and fearlessness with which foreign soldiers would enter fierce battles, and attributed their behavior to their quests to become

⁷⁰ Al-Qatari, Hamad & Majid al-Madani. 2002. *Min qisas al-shuhada' al-'arab* [From the Stories of Arab Martyrs]. (www.saaaid.net)

martyrs.⁷¹ One war veteran who served in a regular Bosnian Army unit composed of other local soldiers described foreign fighters' wartime experiences as follows: "they can't live without war. When they left here, they went somewhere else. They would always ask if we wanted to go to war with them [somewhere else]. They did not care whether they lived or died."⁷² A Bosnian Serb captured by the El Mudzahid Detachment and interviewed during the war highlighted this difference between local and foreign combatants in the ABiH:

I don't fear facing Bosnians in the battlefield for they and I fight to live. However, I am not prepared to face those men in black [El Mudzahid fighters] who fight to die... The chance of getting out of combat with a Bosnian alive is reasonable. But it's almost nil while fighting those lunatics who want to seize martyrdom (Ghanem 2016).

In addition, foreign combatants' isolation from local Bosnian social networks made them approach civilians as well as enemy soldiers differently from local Bosnian soldiers who had ties into local communities. According to one local Bosnian war veteran who fought for a time with members of the El Mudzahid detachment, foreign ABiH soldiers "were more dangerous. They would enter houses and kill everyone, without mercy. They didn't forgive."⁷³ The inability to forgive – or more generally to relate to – ordinary Bosnian civilians, whether or not they were fellow Muslims, is a powerful indicator of how foreign soldiers' social distance from members of local communities

⁷¹ Interview 129, October 2017.

⁷² Interview 119, September 2017.

⁷³ Ibid.

may have incentivized violence. Such wanton destruction was less frequent among ABiH units composed primarily of local soldiers, who felt little distance between themselves and civilians. Many of the Bosnian Serbs and Croats that they were supposed to be fighting against had just months ago been their friends or neighbors. Foreign fighters, on the other hand, lacked any prewar referent to the local populations in their midst.

Foreign soldiers' elevated levels of brutality during the Bosnian war also stemmed from their singular perception of who the "enemy" was. Unlike most local soldiers, with the notable exception of refugee soldiers in the 17th Krajina Brigade, ideas of "the enemy" changed frequently during the war according to time and place. Foreign mujahedin, on the other hand, saw the Bosnian war as setting forth the narrative that there was a war between Islam and Christianity. Aimen Dean, who traveled from Saudi Arabia to fight in central Bosnia as a young teenager in 1994, explains that the mujahedin interpreted the expressions of nationalism put forth by Serbian leaders as expressions of mainstream Christianity (Urban 2015). Therefore, there was no question that Bosnian Serbs and Croats were in fact the enemy in a religious war; that only their elimination could save Bosnia's Muslims. The religious education that foreign fighters dispensed during the war perpetuated this understanding of the war, further separating members of the El Mudzahid detachment from other ABiH units.

Finally, the extent to which foreign fighters' acts of violence were publicized or drawn out stands in sharp contrast to how local ABiH soldiers reacted to committing acts of violence. As other studies of the war explain, many of the things that local Bosnian Army combatants did in their roles as soldiers were things they preferred to not talk about; they induced trauma and elicited shame among many of the men and women who made up the Army's ranks. In fact, Maček's (2009) anthropological account of the siege of Sarajevo explains that many Bosnians who had been or were soldiers "kept a low profile." Being a soldier in this context was often not an identity that ordinary Bosnians wanted to make public. Soldiers were often haunted by violence, having either watched their fellow soldiers die, experienced the near certainty of having killed others, or witnessed the devastation of their hometowns.

Foreign mujahedin, by contrast, were infamous for making and distributing videos of their attacks, parading their victims, and sometimes even returning from the front brandishing the severed heads of their opponents (Kepel 2003). Their brutal over-zealousness, compared to local soldiers in regular ABiH units, originates not only in the particular ideology to which these radical Islamist fighters adhered, but also in their disconnect from the local social fabric. Whereas violence and brutality seemed to invigorate the foreign fighters in Bosnia's Army, it demoralized local soldiers and in many instances drove them away from violence (Maček 2009).

Balanced Embeddedness: The Behavior of “Integrated Nonconformist” and “Assimilated Broker”

ABiH Soldiers

Certain soldiers within the ABiH fell into neither the “disembedded” nor the “embedded” combatant categories. Above, I describe how disembeddedness guided the behavior of the El Mudzahid Detachment’s foreign soldiers. However, their behavior was different from that of local Bosnian mujahedin, who were still tied into local social networks despite their acceptance of foreign fighters’ ideological interpretations of the Bosnian War as an existential religious conflict. There were in fact important differences between the foreign and local members of the detachment, aside from the fact that the former took on leadership roles and the latter served primarily as rank and file soldiers. Foreign and local mujahedin in the El Mudzahid Detachment conducted attacks together, putting local Bosnians in the unit in close proximity to foreign fighter-led violence, and at times participating directly in violence. For example, according to local mujahedin interviewed after the war, disembedded foreign soldiers appeared more willing to attack well-defended Bosnian Serb and Croat positions, relative to local mujahedin who often took a more “pragmatic” stance and exhibited less willingness to sacrifice their lives in such attacks.⁷⁴

That said, evidence from the war also confirms that foreign fighters often made use of local mujahedin’s local knowledge during attacks. Saban Alic, who joined the

⁷⁴ Jasper Schwampe, personal correspondence, January 16, 2019.

foreign detachment after deserting from the 306th Brigade in January 1993, remembers that he was often chosen to go on missions or to participate in attacks because of his knowledge of the local terrain: “somebody was looking for a local who would be familiar with the terrain, someone pointed to me and said I was local.”⁷⁵ But local mujahedins’ roles transcended mere responsibilities to serve as escorts. In fact, stories from the war suggest that local Bosnians accompanied foreign mujahedin on attacks against civilians in Croat-majority villages in the Bila Valley of central Bosnia. They wore hoods to mask their appearance (UN 2006), and helped their foreign comrades identify Croat villagers who were then shot by the latter.⁷⁶

Though it is difficult to substantiate informal testimony concerning the participation of local Bosnians in these attacks given the sensitive nature of the situations, what anecdotal evidence does exist provides insight into how local mujahedins’ specific configurations of embeddedness affected their participation in violence. First, the fact that local Bosnians involved in these attacks covered their faces with masks or “black socks covered with mud” (UN 2006, 304) suggests that it was important to them to disguise their true identities. Local villagers who saw them dressed as such referred to them as “ninjas.”⁷⁷ The foreign soldiers who accompanied them, by

⁷⁵ Alic, Saban. “Testimony of Saban Alic.” July 17, 2007, ICTY Archives.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Marijanovic, Berislav. “Witness: Berislav Marijanovic,” February 11, 2004, ICTY Archives.

contrast, did not wear face coverings, as suggested by witnesses who recalled seeing “matt-skinned foreigners who did not speak Bosnian-Serbo-Croatian well” during attacks (ibid.). Local mujahedin may have been afraid that villagers would have recognized them, a scenario that might have invited retribution against family members or even against them later in the war or in the war’s aftermath. Indeed, one ICTY witness described the local villagers who participated in attacks with foreign mujahedin as follows:

They had insignia showing that they were members of the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and they were wearing masks because these young men from those villages who had grown up among them would recognise them. That’s why they wore those masks. They were from neighbouring villages.⁷⁸

Local Bosnians in the El Mudzahid detachment did not benefit from the anonymity that might have incentivized violence among disembedded foreign fighters, and thus had to take deliberate steps to conceal their identities when participating in violence.

Second, there is evidence to suggest that while local Bosnian mujahedin – so-called “integrated nonconformists” – provided local knowledge to their foreign comrades in the way of identifying non-Muslims who would then be shot, it appears as though they refrained from direct participation in violence on some occasions. Such situations beg the question why local mujahedin would not themselves shoot villagers who they knew were Croats and Serbs, rather than turning the task over to foreigners. Local mujahedin may have been reluctant to do so given their prior relationships with non-Muslims in the

⁷⁸ Ibid.

prewar era. Foreign fighters, suspecting as much, may have therefore purposefully spared local mujahedin from shooting those they knew for fear that forcing them into too much intimate violence might have led to desertions and harmed already tenuous levels of local legitimacy. What's more, the same logic regarding fear of future retribution against self or members of one's social network may also have raised barriers to violence for local mujahedin. In short, while local mujahedins' interpretations of the conflict may have incentivized violence, their structural embeddedness into civilian social networks limited the extent to which they participated directly in acts of violence.

Unlike local Bosnian soldiers in regular ABiH units, the refugee soldiers from the 17th Krajina Brigade – “assimilated broker” combatants – held more concrete visions of the “enemy” as a result of their prior exposure to intense violence. Structural disembeddedness among the cadre of displaced soldiers instilled in them a drive to return home that transcended what embedded soldiers who fought close to home experienced. General Alagic, commander of the Bosnian Army's 7th Corps, described the refugee soldiers as follows: “someone who stands between them and their home is their enemy” (Vulliamy 1995a). This dedication to return, and in some cases the heightened need that refugee soldiers felt to avenge their pasts, made the entire brigade one of the Bosnian Army's most effective units on the battlefield. The army's leadership turned it into one with purely offensive capabilities, in contrast to the majority of other units that were defensive in nature. Not having their own homes to defend engendered a sense

that the only way for these displaced soldiers to operate was as an offensive unit: “they had the courage of those with nothing to lose, with nowhere else to go” (McDonagh 1995). This gave them the spirit of what some would call a “liberation movement within the Bosnian Army (Sivac-Bryant 2016, 46).

It is likely that exposure to violence, which led to their structural disembeddedness from Bosnia’s social fabric, also lowered barriers to violence among refugee soldiers of the 17th Krajina Brigade. Memories of the ethnic cleansing and their missing family members were constantly present: “during [offensives], we only had to think of those tortured family members in the camp to have the courage and will to continue the fight” (Sivac-Bryant 2016, 49). Unlike local soldiers from regular ABiH units, who experienced the war through fluid civilian-warrior identities, the identity of refugee soldiers was fixed in their warrior role. This made them particularly effective and lethal fighters. However, when the unit achieved the objective of operating “on their home ground” in Bosnanska Krajina the summer of 1995, memories of their experiences overwhelmed them and soldiers rediscovered “feelings of vulnerability and the fear of losing his life” (ibid., 60). Structural re-embeddedness, in a sense, ripped away the aura of invulnerability that had motivated displaced soldiers during war when they were fighting far from home.

Moreover, accounts of refugee soldiers' encounters with other victims of violence during the war suggest that they were still able to feel some sense of solidarity with other victimized Bosnians, even Bosnian Croats and Serbs. Upon meeting Croat women who had lost their husbands to the war in the vicinity of Vitez, Sivac-Bryant writes the following:

...what followed was not the usual crude exchange of words that often takes place across front lines, but a strange, thoughtful silence... It was not that they suddenly felt guilty for fighting, but the words of the Croat women suddenly brought home to them the fact they they had no families to return to in Travnik (2016, 44).

Such silence, though different from the civil action in which regular local soldiers engaged during the war, is a reflection of refugee soldiers' continued cultural embeddedness into Bosnia's social fabric, which set them apart from disembedded foreign fighters who felt no such solidarity with non-Muslims.

Compared to the El Mudzahid Detachment, in particular its contingent of disembedded foreign soldiers, the 17th Krajina Brigade engaged in limited levels of violence against civilians and captured enemy combatants during the war (UN 2006). Refugee soldiers' structural disembeddedness instilled a near unparalleled drive to return home, as well as a heightened thirst for revenge, relative to local Bosnian soldiers who served in regular units and fought close to home. These two factors contributed to lowering barriers to violence for displaced soldiers, turning the unit into a lethal offensive force that led other army units in regaining critical territory throughout central Bosnia.

However, soldiers' identities as Bosnians and the solidarity that they still felt with other victims of violence – regardless of ethnicity – limited their propensities to engage in indiscriminate violence. As was the case for “integrated nonconformist” local mujahedin, partial disembeddedness from Bosnia's social fabric set “assimilated broker” soldiers apart from doubly embedded local soldiers by distancing them from Bosnian society. Nonetheless, the ties that these actors retained to the local social fabric – either through ties into local community networks or the shared goal of returning home – often de-incentivized violence.

7.3. Impacts of Embeddedness: Civilian Reception of Armed Actors

Embeddedness and Civilian Acceptance of Local Soldiers

As the previous chapter explains, most Bosnian Army soldiers who served in regular units continued to see themselves as “people in relationships,” despite their uniforms and weapons. Civilians saw them as such too. Ordinary Bosnians during the war recognized the strong prewar ties that continued to bind together locals who had ended up in the ranks of opposing armed forces in the spring of 1992. They either witnessed them interacting, or soldiers would share stories with them when they came home between shifts on the front lines.

Many of Bosnia's war veterans from the ABiH describe that civilians and soldiers during the war existed as “one body.” Earlier, I described the extent to which native soldiers were all embedded in the same prewar social fabric. This was true from a cultural

perspective – civilians and soldiers shared a common understanding of the war and of the enemy’s often blurred nature – and structurally – civilians and soldiers were embedded in the same social networks that dated back to the prewar period. There were, therefore, few major differences between civilians and ABiH soldiers in Bosnia’s war, and solidarity between the two sets of actors was by most accounts strong. Today, however, many of the Bosnian Army’s war veterans are disillusioned by how politicians and the Bosnian population generally have forgotten about the war that ended more than twenty years ago. Many feel abandoned. When the war ended, most could not return to their previous jobs or positions given the extent of destruction, and many also did not receive the benefits that they had been promised by Bosnia’s political leaders.

The current state of veterans in contemporary Bosnia is somewhat surprising, given not only their actions in defense of the country from 1992-1995, but also the extent of to which the lives of soldiers were so closely intertwined with those of local civilians during the conflict. The previous chapter explains this intertwining in detail, in particular the fact that soldiers began the war as civilians forced to defend their hearths, family, and friends. In the paragraphs that follow, I show how civilians’ and soldiers’ deep embeddedness into the Bosnian social fabric influenced civilian perceptions of those that wore the Bosnian Army uniform.

Civilians played a critical role in the wartime experiences of local Bosnian Army soldiers, as revealed in two different ways during my interviews with ABiH war veterans. First, most native soldiers characterized their decisions to mobilize in 1992 in reference to the Bosnian people. For many eventual soldiers, taking up arms was the only means of defending family members, friends, and in many cases Bosnian civilians at large. Mahmud from Gornji Vakuf in central Bosnia, for example, stressed the central role of civilians in his experiences during the war: “we defended them, so of course they were important. We defended our mothers, our wives, our kids, our houses.”⁷⁹ One man from Travnik reflected: “We went to war for [civilians]. My kids were civilians. My mother was a civilian. I knew everyone in my town.”⁸⁰ Civilians felt similarly: another soldier from the 3rd Corps told me that “civilians would see [soldiers] as their own children. Everyone had a child or children who became a soldier in the war.”⁸¹

Bosnian Muslim civilians and soldiers were inextricably linked during the war. This was true even when passing ABiH units did not have direct ties into particular communities. When fighting “away from home,” soldiers from ABiH units were regularly invited into civilian homes, taking advantage of the hospitality to sleep, take showers, eat, and partake in social interaction that gave them temporary respite from the brutal

⁷⁹ Interview 121, September 2017.

⁸⁰ Interview 107, September 2017.

⁸¹ Interview 117, October 2017.

reality of the front. This was as true for native Bosnian soldiers from the 2nd Corps, operating in the Tuzla Canton, as for those from the 3rd Corps and 1st Corps, operating in Central Bosnia and Sarajevo, respectively. In the central city of Bugojno, for example, one 3rd Corps war veteran recalled the largely cooperative relations his unit had with Croat civilians who had stayed behind during fighting between Bosnian Croat and Muslim forces from 1993-1994. Soldiers from his unit helped local families collect firewood and access other basic necessities. When this soldier's wife gave birth to their twin sons in 1993, he went to an "open kitchen" run by local Croatian families, where they provided him with everything from diapers to blankets.⁸²

Second, civilians were important to ABiH soldiers insofar as they provided combatants with a sense of "normalcy" during the war, one that was rooted in Bosnia's prewar social fabric. This was possible especially because many soldiers returned home between breaks on the frontlines, as the previous chapter explains. As the preceding paragraph suggests, soldiers interacted regularly with members of their prewar social networks, particularly in the case of those whose families had been unable or unwilling to flee when war began in 1992. Many soldiers waited impatiently for breaks from the front, when they could return to their families in spite of the state of desperation in which they also lived.⁸³ Many of the men and women veterans who I interviewed were fathers or

⁸² Interview 115, October 2017.

⁸³ *The Blind Man's Mirror*, "Me Again".

mothers, and an even greater number were sons and daughters, brothers and sisters.

Time at home grounded them in a semblance of their prewar lives, even if the feeling was fleeting.

The situation was slightly different for the “assimilated broker” combatants that made up the 17th Krajina Brigade. Like soldiers who served in regular ABiH units, refugee soldiers also started the war as civilians. However, their status changed after exposure to extreme violence and the near complete destruction of their social networks. From the moment they became “displaced” and went into exile after their release from the notorious Bosnian Serb-run prison camps, soldiers in the 17th Brigade no longer experienced the war as “people in relationships.” What’s more, their non-local nature in Travnik and other areas of central Bosnia caused local civilians to regard them as “outsiders.” Like the tens of thousands of civilian refugees who also settled in the central Bosnian town, the presence of soldiers from the 17th Krajina Brigade destabilized the existing balance between ethnic Bosniaks and Croats, and led to heightened instability. The reservation with which local civilians from Travnik received the refugee soldiers highlights the local nature of the Bosnian war, and the importance and relevance of embeddedness to wartime dynamics.

Disembeddedness and Civilian Rejection of Mujahedin Soldiers

The mujahedin who established bases near the central Bosnian cities of Zenica and Travnik instilled fear in ordinary Bosnians from their arrival 1992. As one of their

leaders, an Arab by the name of Abdul Aziz, declared in an interview with a Western news media outlet in 1993, the foreign fighters had two duties in Bosnia: “the first is jihad and the second dawa, which means to correct Islam” (Hogg 1993). Both of these objectives were alien to local Bosnian civilians’ – including Bosnian Muslims’ – understanding of the war, and contributed directly to their victimization at the hands of foreign fighters.

Stejpan Neimarevic, a Catholic priest in the village of Guca Gora, remembers foreign soldiers driving around in small Toyota trucks shouting “Allahu-Ekber,” which intimidated the Croat population and increased tensions with local Muslims as well as Muslim refugees who had come to central Bosnia from Bosanska Krajina and elsewhere (ICTY 2000). He believes that the religious chants were meant to provoke reaction from local populations, so that the foreigners could then justify attacking. Soon after their arrival, incidents of violence against local Catholic religious figures and civilians more generally began to increase.

The mujahedin were responsible for driving over 200 Croatians from their homes in the central Bosnian village in June 1993, and for desecrating the interior of a Catholic monastery. Neimarevic described the extent of the destruction: “[There] was... verse from [the] Koran in Arabic, and there were all sorts of things written on the doors – there was a sheet with a quotation from the Koran. The church was all ransacked... Then the

main painting in the altar... had water poured over it" (ICTY 2000, 22004). British forces from the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) evacuated Guca Gora's surviving civilians and engaged with soldiers from what they called the "Mujahedin Battalion." Vaughan Kent-Payne, the commanding officer of the British troops involved in the rescue, said later that the foreign soldiers were "way more aggressive" than local Bosnian troops, and throughout the war frequently opened fire on the UN's white vehicles (Urban 2015).

Neimarivic, the Catholic priest in Guca Gora, later recalled that "[w]e were never physically nor mentally ready for a conflict with Muslims. We conversely wanted to live at peace with them, and during my last days in Guca Gora when I talked to people, they told us that... the Muslims would never attack us" (ICTY 2000, 21996). The introduction of foreign soldiers disrupted this common understanding that had otherwise existed between local Bosnians of different nationalities in central Bosnia. In nearby Travnik, foreign fighters helped to drive out thousands of non-Muslims and unsuccessfully tried to impose Sharia law on the city's remaining inhabitants. They were also involved in a number of additional atrocities, including the kidnapping and beheading of enemy combatants and local Christians.

Most local Bosnians did not understand why people came from other countries to fight a war in Bosnia. For ordinary Bosnians, the war was a severe disruption of normal life, and most people sought out a return to prewar normalcy and longed for an end to the

fighting. When they came across soldiers who were clearly foreigners – they could tell them apart based on their physical appearance or the languages that they spoke – they could not identify with their dedication to war and to eliminating non-Muslims. In the case of foreign soldiers in the ABiH, ordinary Bosnians could not comprehend why outsiders had come to fight Bosnian Serbs and Croats because of religion. To most Bosnians, the motivation of these foreigners was as foreign as the individuals themselves. Another Catholic priest from the Travnik area contextualized his view of foreign fighters in the Bosnian Army as follows:

Local Muslims before the war were closer to Croatians, than they were to Muslims who came from other countries. Imagine being a Croatian soldier, and seeing a person from a whole different country, and they're here to fight you because you're Catholic. The relationships were just different between the foreign [soldiers] and the locals. We just couldn't understand why they came to fight here. There was no common understanding.⁸⁴

As a result of their alien understanding of and approach to the Bosnian war, foreign fighters were not absorbed into the local scene; local Muslims found their fanaticism hard to swallow and their behavior on the battlefield frightening (Kepel 2003). Their devotion to the warrior identity, and to radical interpretations of Islam in particular,

⁸⁴ Interview 105, September 2017.

alienated them from local communities. Their perpetual isolation from the broader Bosnian population was not only a result of their non-resonant conflict frames, but also of the tactics and overall behavior that foreign fighters adopted in their attempts to spread their ideological convictions. They were not simply content to “live and let live,” often engaging in active proselytizing and attempting to impose their lifestyles on the local population through intimidation and force (Mitchell 2008). The deep schism that existed between foreigners’ and local Bosnians’ understanding of the war – the cultural disembeddedness between the two sides – fostered rampant violence.

Importantly, the harassment and violence deployed by the Bosnian Army’s foreign soldiers was not limited to targeting non-Muslim populations in Bosnia. In many cases, particularly in central Bosnian towns such as Travnik and Zenica, Bosnian Muslims were foreign fighters’ most common targets of harassment, given that other nationalities had been forced to flee after their arrival. Reports published during the war, for instance, describe members of the El Mudzahid detachment as “terrifying the population they claim to defend by attempting to enforce an Islamic code on a population traditionally lax about religious observance” (Hogg 1993). Foreign fighters closed cafes in Zenica that sold alcoholic beverages, and forced women to cover their limbs when out in public. When local youths were bathing in a river in the city, members of the El Mudzahid detachment fired over their heads and ordered them to put their clothes back on. On another

occasion, they kidnapped a young boy whose mother was wearing shorts, and only returned him to his family after she had gone home to change (ibid.).

While some native Bosnians, soldiers in the 3rd Corps and those who eventually joined the El Mudzahid detachment in particular, appreciated the combat experience of the foreign fighters, the majority of ordinary locals showed little, if any, affinity towards their foreign guests. The overwhelming majority of local Bosnians rejected the idea of building a Muslim state in Bosnia, a goal that many fighters who came from Arab states imported to the war. Muslim civilians were in disbelief that foreign soldiers abstained from pork and alcohol, both longtime parts of Bosnian cuisine and culture (Kohlmann, 2004). As the war wore on, popular rejection of the mujahedeen grew stronger: “When they first came here we appreciated it... They wanted to fight and die. Moslem people here are very tolerant. It’s okay if they want to do their bit but they shouldn’t push their ways onto us” (Brown 1995). Another woman from central Bosnia described her impression of the foreign fighters this way: “Now we are afraid of them and fed up. Moslem people here are very tolerant... They shouldn’t push their ways onto us” (ibid.). Because the lifestyles and systems of exchange that foreign fighters attempted to establish in Bosnia during the war did not take into account the indigenous Bosnian identity, their claims to authority were never grounded in local legitimacy.

As the preceding chapter describes, local Bosnians who joined the El Mudzahid Detachment – so-called “integrated nonconformist” combatants – faced significant social stigma for having deserted to a unit that most of Bosnian society considered “radical.” Once local villagers from the vicinity of Travnik and Zenica had joined the foreigners, surrounding populations made few, if any, distinctions between them and foreign extremists. In fact, ICTY testimony suggests that ordinary civilians were eager to make the distinction between “extremists” – who they did not consider part of the Bosnian Army – and regular units that included local soldiers: “people in [the Bila Valley of Central Bosnia] were keen to emphasise that the soldiers were extremists and not regular [ABiH] troops” (UN 2006, 306).

Finally, evidence from the war also suggests that military leaders deliberately employed foreign fighters and the El Mudzahid unit more broadly to commit violence that local soldiers may have been reluctant to engage in. In Bosnia, practices of ethnic cleansing by all three sides were not a by-product of the fighting, but rather “the purpose of the war” and necessary in the competition for territory (Sadowski 1995). Although the Bosnian Army may have looked down on the overly violent behavior of the mujahedin, the decision to employ them in spearheading attacks indicates a “willingness – however reluctantly – to harness the strategic effects of mujahidin atrocities” (Mitchell 2008, 822). These dynamics imply that Bosnian Army leadership may have acknowledged – rightly – the reluctance of local units to commit atrocities that would grant their side a strategic

advantage, and turned to foreign forces to fill the gap. This particular point does not speak directly to the role of disembeddedness in lowering barriers to violence, but more directly instead to the impact of embeddedness on raising barriers to violence.

7.4. Embeddedness at Work: Comparing Civilian-Combatant Relationships across central Bosnian Municipalities

Ordinary Bosnians across the country's cities, towns, and villages experienced the war in deeply different ways. As the previous sections of this chapter demonstrate, the quality of interactions that developed between Bosnian Army soldiers and civilian populations depended on soldiers' embeddedness into local social fabrics. Moreover, local soldiers exhibited significantly higher propensities to engage in civil actions such as cross-ethnic aiding and saving, solidarity-building, and dialogue relative to foreign combatants. In this section, I build on the evidence presented above to demonstrate how these dynamics played out in four different locations. Specifically, I compare combatant behavior and combatant-civilian interaction in Sarajevo and Tuzla, on the one hand, and in Zenica and Travnik, on the other.

At a macro level, patterns of victimization across these four municipalities varied considerably. As Bosnia's largest city, and also in its role as the capital, Sarajevo's population experienced the highest number of wartime deaths, especially in the war's first two years. More than 10,000 people lost their lives in Sarajevo over the course of

the war. The central city of Zenica experienced the second highest number of total deaths among these four municipalities (1,398 total), followed by Travnik (1,259 total deaths), also in central Bosnia. Both of these cities fell within the area of operations of the Bosnian Army's 3rd Corps, and were the closest to the El Mudzahid detachment's bases and training centers. Of the four cities that I examine in this chapter, Tuzla experienced the lowest number of wartime deaths (1,026 total). Figure 7.1 breaks down the total deaths on a per capita basis across the war's four years.⁸⁵ With the exception of Sarajevo, which for the reasons cited above experienced the highest number of wartime deaths across all Bosnian municipalities (RDC 2008), data on wartime deaths across these four municipalities provides initial corroborating evidence to the hypothesis that areas with foreign fighters experienced higher levels of violence, relative to those where combatant units included primarily local soldiers.

⁸⁵ The data on total deaths by municipality come from the Research and Documentation Centre of Sarajevo (RDC), under the auspices and financial support of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (RDC 2008; Costalli 2013).

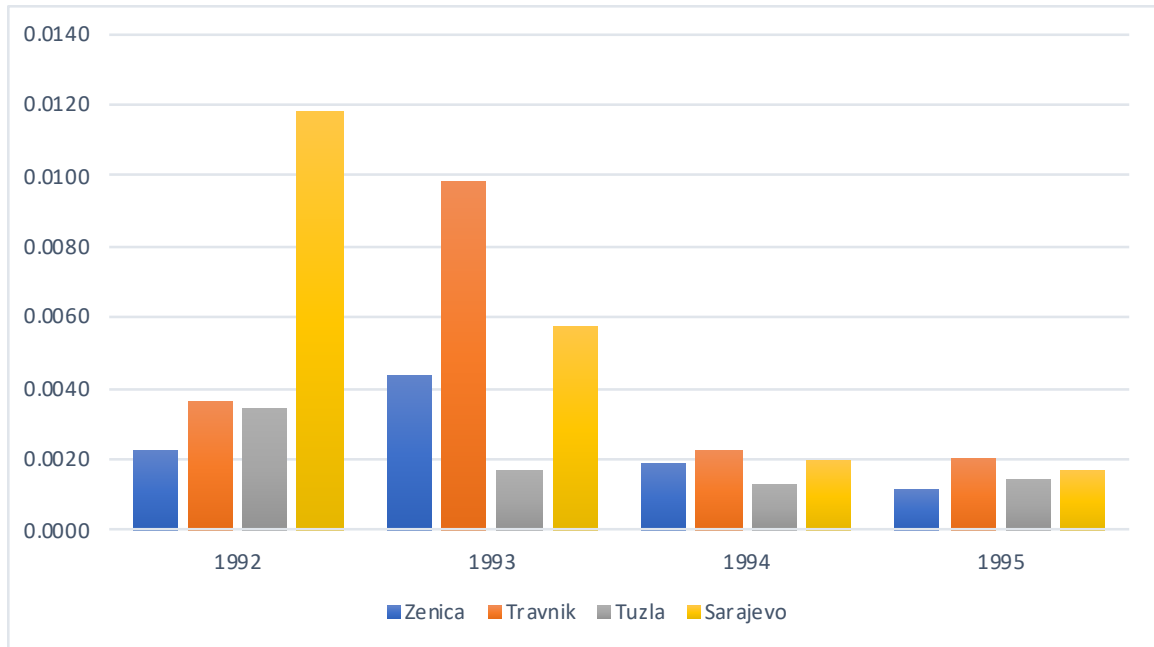


Figure 7.1. Total per capita deaths by municipality, 1992-1995.

Tuzla and Sarajevo

Sarajevo and Tuzla are Bosnia’s largest and fourth largest cities, respectively. Although the dynamics of the war were very different in each of the two cities, ABiH units composed primarily of local soldiers were responsible for their defense. In this sense, the relationships that soldiers had with local civilians who remained during the war are comparable. Before the war, both cities boasted rich histories of interethnic collaboration and harmony. While Sarajevo was and continues to be the country’s cosmopolitan hub (it hosted the Winter Olympic Games in 1984), Tuzla’s identity centers on its industry. Before the war, it was referred to as one of Bosnia’s “red cities,” connoting a preference and nostalgia for the socialist period under Tito. In the 1991 census, Tuzla had a population of 130,000: 47.6 percent of the city’s residents identified as Muslim; 15.4

percent as Serb; 15.5 percent as Croat; and 16.7 percent as Yugoslav. By comparison, Sarajevo had a population of 360,000 in 1991: 50.5 percent of its residents identified as Muslim; 25.5 percent as Serb; 6.7 percent as Croat; and 13 percent as Yugoslav. Both cities had higher than average rates of inter-ethnic marriage, compared to other Bosnian municipalities.

Sarajevo and Tuzla were subjected to siege conditions during the war. Sarajevo's siege, which lasted from April 5, 1992 to February 29, 1996 was the longest in modern history. A total of 13,952 people were killed in the city during the war, and it endured extensive damage to its infrastructure. Sarajevans were cut off from basic supplies, and survived on humanitarian relief and their own ingenuity. With help from the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) and militia groups such as the Patriot League, however, the ABiH's 1st Corps never allowed Serb forces to completely take over Sarajevo. In addition, the actions of ordinary civilians and community organizations were critical to Sarajevo's survival during the siege (Berry 2018). Tuzla's siege, by contrast, lasted ten months and took the lives of 1,000 of the city's residents. Although conditions severely limited the flow of basic goods into the city, its people and infrastructure were largely spared the widespread violence that afflicted Sarajevo. During the war, Tuzla became known as "the last bastion of harmony" in Bosnia (Pomfret 1993), and is considered a prominent success story of local actors coming together to defuse conflict (Burg and Shoup 1999; Armakolas 2011). The territorial defenses that mobilized in

defense of Tuzla and its surrounding villages in 1992 were consolidated into the Bosnian Army's 2nd Corps.

ABiH combatants from the 2nd and 1st Corps in Tuzla and Sarajevo, respectively, experienced the war through fluid civilian-soldier identities. During the Sarajevo siege, there were countless examples of soldiers shifting back and forth between their responsibilities on the front lines and those at home with their families. Maček (2009, 191) aptly describes this reality: "the distinction between civilians and soldiers dissolved when civilians were constantly shelled and shot at by snipers and soldiers spent two-thirds of their time at home doing civilian chores." The soldiers I interviewed who were part of the Bosnian Army's 1st Corps in Sarajevo considered themselves as one with civilians: "There was no difference between us. Everyone would help each other... When one soldier was out fighting, another went home. Civilians would bring us food from their homes, if they had it."⁸⁶ Soldiers' origins as victims of aggression and defenders of their homes, and their ensuing wartime experiences as fighters but also fathers, brothers, sisters, and mothers embedded them in an understanding of the war that civilians also shared. In places like Sarajevo, this understanding was not limited to Bosnian Muslims. Amela, a soldier in the 1st Corps, remembers having been invited into the homes of Bosnian Serbs and Croats at various points during the war. She described the Bosnian

⁸⁶ Interview 120, October 2017.

Army during the war years as follows: “We were the people’s army. Not the Muslim army, the people’s army. We held the flag of the Bosnian people, all Bosnians.”⁸⁷

As previous sections of this chapter explain, local ABiH soldiers’ structural embeddedness into interethnic social networks that dated back to the prewar period also had important effects on exchanges that occurred during the war. Adnan, for example, was eighteen when the war started for him in Sarajevo and he was called up to join his local territorial defense group. In addition to recounting his wartime experience as divided between shifts on the frontlines and time spent living at home with his parents, he remembers the shifting nature of interactions that occurred between soldiers from opposing sides. In the war’s first year, most fighters cursed one another across enemy lines. But by the beginning of the second year, “the traffic started to change.” There was increasing trade across front lines, some of it organized by local criminal organizations, but a significant portion facilitated by local soldiers who organized exchanges on their own. Adnan believes these exchanges were possible because people (Bosnian Serbs, Croats, and Muslims) had lived together and built lasting relationships before the war. In other words, local soldiers capitalized on their prewar social capital to access goods that ultimately contributed to civilians’ survival during the siege. Soldiers were able to

⁸⁷ Interview 104, September 2017.

organize exchanges across the front lines not because of their capacities for organization, Adnan insists: “we were not good at organization. It was more about personal ties.”⁸⁸

The situation in Tuzla was not very different. The individuals who volunteered to take up arms in 1992 to defend their homes continued in many respects to experience the war as civilians. According to an ABiH war veteran interviewed by Calori (2015), “if you were a soldier [in Tuzla], and you came home to rest, you left the weapons outside the city, on the frontlines, with the Army. And in the city you were a normal civilian, with no weapons” (15). Ilija, another member of the Army’s 2nd Corps, remembers having a hard time getting food despite his position as a soldier (Ilija Jurisić, in Broz 2004). When food did manage to find its way into the city despite siege conditions, he and his fellow soldiers distributed it to their families and friends. His memory of the war is not about combat against enemy Croat and Serb forces, but rather about how his prewar social ties and Tuzla’s dense, interethnic social network helped him and his family and friends survive the war.

During the war, a local alliance between the ABiH and Bosnian Croat HVO forces controlled Tuzla. The brigades defending the city were multiethnic in nature, more so than in most other Bosnian municipalities. In fact, studies of Tuzla’s defense from 1992-1995 report that a significant number of Bosnian Serbs were eager to join the police and

⁸⁸ Interview 128, October 2017.

territorial defense forces that mobilized in the city's defense in the spring of 1992. The composition of the ABiH 2nd Corps during the war was approximately as follows: 70 percent Muslim; 17 percent Croat; 1 percent Serb; and 10 percent Bosnian (Calori 2015). An undivided local police force controlled by the local government in Tuzla also contributed to the maintenance of trust and security among the city's residents (Calori 2015). In other words, the defense of Tuzla and the aims of the ABiH 2nd Corps focused on providing a system of collective defense, rather than protecting a singular ethnic group.

As Tuzla's mayor, Selim Bešliagić stated after the war, "the most important thing we had to do [when war broke out] was defending human rights, with no discrimination over nationality" (quoted in Calori 2015, 16). The men and women who mobilized as part of local territorial defense units and were then consolidated into the Bosnian Army's 2nd Corps made up Tuzla's prewar workforce: Tuzla's workers, in other words, defended the city often regardless of their ethnic background, and the overwhelming majority of 2nd Corps soldiers went to the front lines with their colleagues of varied ethnicities (ibid.).

My interviews with soldiers from the ABiH's 2nd Corps in and around confirmed that many of them fought alongside their Serbian friends from before the war. Emir, who worked in a factory in Tuzla before the war, remembers that a large number of Serbs from his neighborhood stayed behind when war erupted in the spring of 1992, and that a

lot of them died on the Bosnian side fighting in Tuzla's defense.⁸⁹ I asked ABiH war veterans from the 2nd Corps about their wartime contact with members of opposing armed forces. One man told me that fraternization across sides was actually a relatively frequent occurrence during the war:

[soldiers] would sit there and talk to each other across lines. They'd all been neighbors. Soldiers used to make friendly decisions – for example we won't shoot until this or that. [Bosnian Serb] soldiers would tell Bosnian soldiers in advance of their operations. That's what happened a lot in Čelić, in Gradačac [Tuzla Canton] too. All of the local people fought together.⁹⁰

Another described his experience during the war as follows, highlighting the tensions that increased when non-local Serbs were sent in to attack Tuzla's neighboring towns and villages: "Whatever we did, we would contact each other about beforehand. But I think when Serbs starting coming in from different areas, these individuals are probably the ones who started killing local Muslims."⁹¹

⁸⁹ Interview 116, September 2017.

⁹⁰ Interview 111, September 2017.

⁹¹ Interview 123, October 2017.

Like soldiers from the Bosnian Army's 1st Corps who defended Sarajevo, those who mobilized from Tuzla into the 2nd Corps also experienced the war through fluid civilian-soldier identities. Emir, who mobilized to defend his home in Tuzla, explains why the frequent contact that he had with ordinary Bosnians was a normal part of being a soldier during the Bosnian war: "A lot of fighters have families and kids. Usually, one member of every family would go to war, and the rest would stay behind. We would [all] help each other."⁹² Responsibilities were thus not limited to just one's own family, but often also to helping members of a fellow soldier's family. The social networks in which soldiers from Tuzla had been embedded before 1992 remained relevant throughout the fighting, and bound them to civilian populations. As was the case for soldiers serving in the 1st Corps, there was often little difference between how local ABiH soldiers and their civilian family members and friends experienced the war.

In May 1995, more than 70 youth were killed when surrounding Serb forces shelled a crowded outdoor café in the Kapija neighborhood of Tuzla. Shells continued to rain down on the city for the three days that followed, and it was not until July 1995 that the ABiH 2nd Corps captured Mt. Ozren, from where Serb forces had been shelling the city. A prison guard in Tuzla during this time recalled with pride how local Muslim forces and civilians treated the Serb prisoners of war responsible for the Tuzla massacre (Milink

⁹² Interview 116, September 2017.

Perkić, in Broz 2004): rather than seeking revenge, Muslims from Tuzla inquired about the individual prisoners that they knew. The guard, Milinko, remembers it this way:

Although there had been great divisions in Bosnia, the real interactions among people were never stopped. When someone needed to see to someone on the other side... they would always find a Serbian friend to help, just as the Serbs had their friends among the Croats and Muslims”(Broz 2004, 193).

Zenica and Travnik

Zenica and Travnik are both located in central Bosnia’s industrial zone. Heavy industry in Zenica in particular made the city an early and frequent target of Serb shelling in 1992, causing limited civilian casualties. Before the war, the city boasted approximately 145,000 residents according to the 1991 census: 55 percent identified as Muslim; 15.7 percent as Serb; 15.5 percent as Croat; and 10 percent as Yugoslav. Travnik, a smaller city, had about 70,000 residents that same year and was more equally divided between Bosnian Croats and Muslims: 45 percent identified as Muslim; 37 percent as Croat; 11 percent as Serb; and 5 percent as Yugoslav. Both cities were largely spared extensive damage during the war, although their residents were also the victims of siege conditions during the limited Muslim-Croat war that lasted from October 1992 to February 1994. Many Bosnian Croats and Serbs fled Zenica and Travnik during the war, and the two cities are now overwhelmingly majority-Muslim (84 and 66 percent Muslim, respectively).

Zenica and Travnik hosted significant numbers of Muslim refugees from besieged Bosnian towns during the war; Travnik in particular hosted thousands of refugees (mainly

Muslims and some Bosnian Croats) from Jajce, who fled in the aftermath of Serb offensives in the fall of 1992. It was also home to the refugee soldiers of the 17th Krajina Brigade. The influx of refugees and displaced soldiers was a source of concern for the cities' Bosnian Croat residents and armed forces, who were reluctant to allow in waves of displaced persons that would upset the city's ethnic balance in favor of Muslims (Burns 1992). As I discuss later in this section, the influx of displaced populations to Zenica and Travnik, who local residents viewed as "outsiders," is one of two dynamics related to disembeddedness that contributed to heightened tensions and violence in central Bosnia.

The second dynamic related to disembeddedness in Travnik and Zenica pertains to the presence of foreign fighters and the El Mudzahid Detachment. The two cities fell under the operational zone of the Bosnian Army's 3rd Corps,⁹³ and Zenica served as the Corps' headquarters. As the two previous chapters describe, the majority of foreign fighters who joined the Bosnian Army and consolidated into the El Mudzahid detachment settled in and around Zenica and Travnik. As such, the local populations in these two cities had much more regular and frequent contact with foreign combatants as well as local Bosnians who joined them, compared to ordinary Bosnians elsewhere. Relationships between mujahedin in the ABiH and local civilians, especially Bosnian Muslims, were

⁹³ When the 7th Corps was formed in February 1994, its headquarters were in Travnik.

radically different from the interactions that characterized combatant-civilian interactions in places like Tuzla and Sarajevo.

Many civilian memoirs of the war from Travnik and Zenica include references to the mujahedin presence. Stana, for instance, who worked in Zenica's general hospital at the beginning of the war remembers the arrival of foreign Muslim soldiers vividly:

They looked scary, with long hair and beards. They wouldn't even let Muslim girls wear short skirts or go out with their heads uncovered... The mujahedin who were wounded and treated here used to bow and pray several times a day. I would get a chill every time I saw those scenes (Stana Čančarević, in Broz 2004).

Other local Bosnians from the area had similar impressions of foreign soldiers. Families from Zenica recounted with fear the looting and pillaging that became rampant after the arrival of outsiders. Those that lived close to the unit's camp recall suffering significant harassment. Many Catholics, for example, were beaten, robbed, and driven from their homes by "Islamic militiamen" who spoke in "heavily accented Persian Gulf Arabic" (Hedges 1995; see also UN 2006, 277 ff.). Towards the end of the war, instances of women being kidnapped to serve as the wives of "mercenary Islamic soldiers" also became more common (Schork 1996).

The actions of the El Mudzahid detachment in and around Zenica and Travnik were geared towards creating a Muslim state in Bosnia. To achieve this goal, foreign soldiers employed a strategy based on a mix of coercion and service provision. According

to figures in aid manifestos published during the war, more than 6,000 orphans in Central Bosnia received financial assistance from the Islamic aid agencies that facilitated the flow of foreign combatants into Bosnia. In return, the children were sent to religious schools run by members of the El Mudzahid detachment, where they learned about the implementation of Sharia law and were taught to denounce Islam's enemies (Lloyd 1994). The foreigners engaged in a nuanced balance of aid and coercion to achieve their objective of shifting the war's local trajectory towards one that extended global jihad to Bosnia: the provision of basic services was often contingent on civilians giving in to foreigners' aggressive demands. The systems of exchange that they established in Zenica and Travnik were therefore not mutually beneficial, but coercive and exclusive in nature. As an example, consider this declaration made by Arabic mujahedeen with vans full of food upon their arrival in Travnik during intense fighting between Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian Croat forces:

Kids, we know you are hungry and you wish to have a chocolate. Chocolate will be received by kids who are not going to attend teaching of mevlud, and chocolate will be received by kids who are not going to attend teaching of kabura sehid.⁹⁴ Guys who are practicing these new things will not get a chocolate (Senad Agic, as quoted in Azinovic, 2012, 7).

In other words, culturally disembedded foreign combatants used governance as a tool to win over civilian populations and spread their understandings of Bosnia's war, but

⁹⁴ *Mevlud* and *kabura sehid* are religious teachings that ran contrary to the Mujahedin's radical interpretations of Islam. *Mevlud* is a way in which memories of the Prophet Mohammed live on through Islamic societies. The tradition recalls and celebrates the birth of the Prophet through the recital of poems, which have been a key part of the devotional life of Ottomans for centuries.

services were limited to those who acquiesced to foreigners' demands that did not resonate with local customs.

Local civilians in and around Zenica and Travnik resisted the presence of foreign fighters. Active resistance solidified as foreigners' repression of Croat and Serb civilians in Zenica and Travnik became more overt: Catholic churches in surrounding villages were desecrated, and religious figures such as priests were kidnapped and abused on some occasions (Chazan 1993). Ordinary civilians staunchly rejected foreign combatants' religious interpretations and practices, and strived to maintain the secular traditions in which both cities were embedded before their arrival. Their success is evident in the ways that journalists described Zenica. Although the city had the reputation of being the stronghold of Islamic fundamentalism in Bosnia because of the El Mudzahid detachment's soldiers, it did not feel like a bastion of radical Islam once one was there: "short skirts and jeans outnumber long robes and headscarves by 5-1. The nightlife is noisy and relaxed. Alcohol is for sale in the city's many restaurants and bars" (St. Louis Post-Dispatch 1995). Civilians also actively protested the presence of foreign soldiers and their harsh treatment of the city's Serb and Croat residents. In February 1993, several thousand Bosnian Muslims organized a demonstration in front of Zenica's municipal building, shouting "bring back our Serb neighbors" and "we want peace" (BBC 1993a). Protests against Muslim religious extremism took place again in May and grew in frequency over the rest of the year (BBC 1993b).

The contentious relationships that evolved between local Bosnians and foreign ABiH soldiers in Zenica and Travnik may initially appear counterintuitive, given that foreigners and the Middle Eastern humanitarian organizations to which they had connections provided ordinary civilians with goods and services that regular ABiH units could not provide. In the early months of the war, fighters and civilians alike welcomed the foreign help with open arms. Food, medicine, school supplies, and other basic services were in short supply from the beginning of the war, and the foreigners' battle savviness and fearlessness in confrontations with opposing forces were much-admired qualities. But the political damage that they were doing to central Bosnian cities outweighed the military advantages and limited humanitarian assistance that they provided. By 1995, city leaders in Zenica were actively pushing for their removal from the local area (St. Louis Post-Dispatch 1995). A spokesman for the city of Zenica interviewed during the war described the mujahedin to a reporter: "They tried to plant trees here, palm trees, which can't grow in Bosnia. Only apple trees grow here" (Naudet 1994).

Accounts from the war in Travnik and Zenica hint at how two interrelated dynamics linked to disembeddedness led to increased harassment and violence against local residents. By the war's second year, Travnik and Zenica were engulfed in what newspapers called a "spate of Muslim terror" (Chazan 1993). Whereas the outbreak of war in 1992 had not greatly affected most of the Bosnian Croat and Serbs from Travnik

and Zenica who had stayed in their homes, the influx of various “outsiders” – foreign and otherwise – led to sudden upticks in beatings and kidnappings. Most residents blamed “embittered refugees,” on the one hand, and “volunteers from Islamic countries,” on the other, for the increases in violence. Olga, who lived in Travnik during the war, remembers how tensions increased with the arrival of refugees and foreign fighters to her city:

Local people weren't pushing for these levels of violence and animosity between Croats and Muslims. In Travnik, many Croatian families accepted Muslims refugees... But eventually, these new arrivals began to cause problems. They had been forced to leave their homes by Serbs and wanted to get revenge for the violence to which they had been subjected. It didn't matter who the target of the revenge was, so long as they got revenge. Before the arrival of these displaced Muslims, Croats and Muslims in Travnik had gotten along fine. Travnik during the war was just full of people from outside – from other towns in Bosnia and from other countries. These foreigners in the Bosnian Army wanted to change the local dynamics that had previously allowed Croats and Muslims to live in peace with one another. They brought in radical narratives that didn't resonate with the locals who remained.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Interview 106, September 2017.

Two interconnected mechanisms are likely relevant in explaining the role of disembeddedness as a driver for violence in these two cities. On the one hand, the foreign Muslim soldiers who settled in and around Travnik and Zenica were deeply disembedded along both structural and cultural dimensions from the local conflict context. Because their interpretations of Islam and the ways that they practiced religion were so antithetical to ordinary Bosnian Muslims' largely secular lifestyles, threats and harassment were the only tools at their disposal as they tried to win over local Bosnians. Their inability to speak the local language and their radical ideological convictions prevented them from cultivating relationships with most local Bosnians. Had the frames that they attached to the conflict resonated more with the local populace at large, their need to rely on coercion likely would have decreased. What's more, their understanding of the Bosnian war as an existential clash of religions left no place for Bosnian Serbs and Croats in a postwar society and thus precluded peaceful interaction with those segments of the population.

At the same time, victimization and forced displacement incentivized violence among the internally displaced Bosnians from northwestern Bosnia who ended up in Travnik and Zenica, in particular the "assimilated brokers" that made up the 17th Krajina Brigade. Suddenly bereft of their homes, jobs, and social networks, refugee soldiers had little left to lose and saw many non-Muslims who stood between them and their homes as legitimate targets of vengeful violence. Displaced Bosnians who resettled in Zenica and

Travnik had been completely uprooted from their prewar lives: as victims of intense violence, they became structurally disembedded from their local contexts. Bosnians from Travnik and Zenica described the Bosnian Army units that many displaced Bosnian men joined as “guest units... whose courageous and fearless nature is borderline lunacy.”⁹⁶ Displaced persons’ newfound disembeddedness lowered their barriers to violence, and Bosnian Army leadership capitalized on the dynamic by training “refugee” units as purely offensive detachments. In addition, some of these displaced Bosnians in central Bosnia were ripe targets for further radicalization by foreign Muslim soldiers. In Travnik in particular, they were frequent targets of extremism, so-called “pawns of radical fundamentalism” (Rhodes 1993). A local Bosnian Croat commander later made direct links between this cocktail of disembeddedness and the eruption of large-scale Muslim-Croat conflict in central Bosnia:

The circumstances which arose through the aggression of the Serb army brought in many refugees and displaced persons from Krajina and Eastern Bosnia into the area, so that the population began to increase rapidly and... evil things began to take place. There were excessive incidents, there were thefts, there was looting, and all the kind of things that didn’t take place previously, and what took place now was very ugly (ICTY 2000).

In sum, the sharply different ways that Bosnian soldiers and civilians experienced war in Zenica and Travnik, on the one hand, and in Sarajevo and Tuzla, on the other, point to the role of embeddedness in shaping the microdynamics of conflict. The point here is that most local Bosnian soldiers experienced the war in the same ways that

⁹⁶ *The Blind Man’s Mirror*, “Me Again”.

ordinary civilians experienced it. A significant exception are the young men who joined the El Mudzahid Detachment, and the refugee soldiers of the 17th Krajina Brigade. But the majority of local soldiers who spent the war in regular ABiH units were the victims of the same sieges that impacted the lives of civilians; soldiers' responsibilities and allegiances lay as much to their brothers in arms as to members of their social networks in the towns and villages that they defended. Local Bosnian Army soldiers framed their participation in the war through the lens of protecting human rights and Bosnian people at large. For foreign soldiers who were based mainly in Zenica and Travnik, the war was about protecting Muslims through the elimination of other nationalities and religions. Amela, a soldier with the 1st Corps in and around Sarajevo, explained what she considered to be the main difference between local Bosnian soldiers and those who came from abroad to participate in the war: "In the war, your first neighbor, regardless of religion, was more respected than someone you didn't know, who may have shared your religion."⁹⁷ The wartime experiences of native Bosnian soldiers, in other words, were greatly influenced by their personal ties that dated back to the prewar era. These ties trumped affiliations defined on the basis of nationality or religion. Social ties and an understanding of the war grounded in prewar Bosnian society's ethnic tolerance encouraged or facilitated civil actions on the part of soldiers and contributed directly the preservation of relationships and to dampening violence.

⁹⁷ Interview 104, September 2017.

In contrast, Amela becomes disheartened when she thinks back to the role that foreign ABiH soldiers played in Bosnia's war:

These strangers, they could get away with things that Bosnian soldiers couldn't get away with. It's impossible for a foreigner to love my country more than I do. Most of them came for money. They wanted to fight. This was my war, my brother's war. We fought for the tears of our mothers, our children. Foreigners can't know the mentalities of a population and were just looking for war.⁹⁸

Many Bosnian Army war veterans share this impression of the foreign fighters who made up the El Mudzahid detachment. Some, in fact, do not even consider these foreigners as true "soldiers." For local Bosnian Muslims, a soldier during the war was an individual who, like them, had been shot at or whose home had been shelled in the spring of 1992. Soldiers were people who had picked up a weapon to defend their hearths, their kin, and their friends. A foreign soldier, one war veteran told me, was someone who could come to any city or village in Bosnia and kill anyone because they didn't have any ties to anyone there: they hadn't gone to school with people in that village, and wouldn't have to live in that town when the war finally came to an end.⁹⁹ Indeed, the overwhelming majority of

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Interview 111, September 2017.

foreign mujahedin fighters were either killed in battle or left when the war ended in 1995. Ordinary Bosnians, on the other hand, had to stay and live in the mess that many believe outside forces had created. This was also true of so-called “integrated nonconformist” combatants – local Bosnians who joined the El Mudzahid Detachment – and of so-called “assimilated broker combatants – the 17th Krajina Brigade’s refugee soldiers.

7.5. Assessing Alternative Explanations for Combatant-Civilian Interactions during Civil War

Macro-level patterns of ABiH violence varied significantly across Bosnia’s geography, and are largely attributable to factors such as Serb military objectives and strategy, proximity to borders, the presence of industry or resources, and ethnic composition broadly-speaking (Weidmann 2011; Costalli and Moro 2012). Of these, ethnicity-based approaches comprise the bulk of the literature on the Bosnian war and locate the causes and evolution of the war – including levels of violence – in the ethnic groups themselves. In particular, accounts of the war that focus on the “ethnic fears” argument situate the roots of the violence in elite manipulation and ensuing participation in violence by the ethnic masses (Gagnon 2006). In other words, political elites and state-controlled media perpetuated particular narratives of ethnic “others” to incite fear and violence (see e.g. Posen 1993). When crisis erupts, as it did in the Balkans in the early 1990s, the insecurities and opportunities that it engenders inflames the public’s fear and

hatreds. Once activated, these fears drove Serbs to kill Muslims, Muslims to kill Serbs, etc. From 1992-1995, war itself, so the argument continues, brought out ordinary Bosnians' latent fears and prejudices and pushed people towards acting according to master cleavages based around ethnicity.

At first glance, these arguments offer intuitive and compelling accounts of persistent and escalatory violence during the Bosnian war. But they leave open a number of important questions. For example, what explains the large number of ordinary Bosnians who did not participate in violence? Kalyvas (2006) offers that the most commonly-followed strategy in war is actually neutrality, manifested as acquiescence to whatever side is in power. Indeed, Gagnon (2006) states that many people in Bosnia chose silence as the "least evil option." Second, and most relevant to the study at hand, arguments that center on the role of ethnicity – however organized and activated – as the primary driver of ordinary Bosnians' allegiances and ensuing behavior, cannot make sense of the many instances of cross-ethnic saving and solidarity- and relationship-building in the midst of violence. In other words, they cannot explain the logic behind the civil actions formed part of ABiH soldiers' behavioral repertoires.

Existing explanations of the evolution of violence during the Bosnian war, for the most part, take a bird's eye view of the conflict. From afar, it is easy to mistake causes for consequences, particularly insofar as the role of ethnicity is concerned. But as my

argument and previous studies of ordinary Bosnians' private experiences of the war suggest (see e.g. Maček 2009), ethnic divisions were the unfortunate outcome of conflict in the Balkans, not its source. What's more, many existing explanations address ethnic groups – Bosnian Croats, Serbs, and Muslims – as uniform and unitary masses; there is no distinction, in the words of Lee Ann Fujii, between “the more ambitious and the more passive” (2013, 9). Treating ethnic groups as undifferentiated masses not only misses the emergence of important intragroup cleavages and active conflict, but also instances of cross-ethnic collaboration and cooperation.

What the evidence presented in these chapters suggests is that preexisting hatreds did not exclusively drive people away from or towards violence in the case of the Bosnian conflict. Moreover, while elite manipulation did in fact succeed in inciting many ordinary Bosnians to high levels of violence, it did little to affect the resilience of many others who resisted violence. Instead, the experiences of local Bosnian soldiers and Bosnian civilians – in particular their private experiences of the war – were grounded in the extent to which they were culturally and structurally embedded into Bosnia's social fabric dating back to the prewar era. As such, a theory that is based on social interaction presents a more complete picture of the Bosnian war, particularly as this concerns its microdynamics and the simultaneous activation of violent and nonviolent relational capacities. Bosnian soldiers in the ABiH engaged in a wider range of social interaction than theories focused singularly on violence recognize; the instances of cross-ethnic

solidarity-building, interethnic dialogue, and mutual exchange with local civilian populations were based on prewar social ties and shared understandings of the Bosnian war, not simply ethnicity. Embeddedness, in other words, explains why “holistic fighting communities” (Wood 2003) characterized by blurry soldier-civilian boundaries emerge in some conflict contexts, and not others.

When it comes to the violence-prone characteristics of foreign fighters, alternative arguments might point to the role of organizational or ideological factors. From an organizational perspective, foreign combatants may have been more prone to engaging in counterproductive acts of violence because they fell out of the control of the Bosnian Army; indeed, evidence from the war does suggest that Bosnian Army leadership did not maintain as complete command and control over the mujahedin, as they did over other ABiH units (see e.g. Kepel 2003). In fact, the decision to place the El Mudzahid detachment at arm’s length from the Bosnian Army’s central leadership was a deliberate decision given the unit’s record of brutality. However, the threat that foreign fighters posed to the ABiH in terms of agency loss is insufficient to explain why they interacted so differently with local populations and failed to accumulate popular support, relative to their local soldier counterparts. Most importantly, evidence from the war suggests that the violence-prone characteristics of the mujahedin were actually qualities that Bosnian Army leadership desired of the foreign combatants, and that foreign units may actually have been more under the control of Bosnia’s political leadership than typically

acknowledged (see e.g. Schindler 2007). Bosnian Army records refer specifically to the inability of local forces to carry out sufficient levels of violence necessary to achieve some strategic objectives, most notably those related to ethnic cleansing (Mitchell 2008). As such, the ABiH may not have experienced much, if any, loss of agency by accepting foreign combatants, if the intended purpose of their recruitment was to inflict higher levels of violence. This points more to the role of disembeddedness, rather than organizational factors such as agency loss, in inducing violence.

From an ideological perspective, others might argue that foreign fighters were more prone to violence, relative to local ABiH soldiers, simply because of their ideological convictions. Specifically, this is the argument that some members of armed groups act on “normative commitments” prescribed by ideology that are not reducible to strategic reasoning (Sanín and Wood 2014). Bosnian foreign fighters’ commitment to jihad, as exemplified by their experiences in other conflict arenas such as the anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan, their religious rituals before engaging the enemy, and religious education and indoctrination provide some support to this argument. Yet while jihadist ideology may have played a role in making them more violent than local soldiers, it too is insufficient in explaining discrepancies in foreign and local soldier behavior. I point to two reasons in particular. First, the evidence suggests that there were differences in levels of violence inflicted by the El Mudzahid’s foreign and local fighters, who presumably adhered to the same ideological interpretation of the conflict. If ideology alone had been

the main driving factor behind mujahedin violence, we would likely have seen more equal levels of violence between foreign and local mujahedin. Instead, dynamics related to embeddedness – such as the need to conceal their identities and fear of retribution from members of their social networks – better explain why local mujahedin may have limited their violence, relative to disembedded foreigners.

Second, ideology cannot fully explain why members of the El Mudzahid Detachment – particularly foreign fighters – victimized local Bosnian Muslims. In this case, the extent to which a particular ideology resonates with local conflict frames may be more important than ideology alone. In the Bosnian context, ideology likely worked indirectly via disembeddedness to incentivize violence between foreign fighters and local Bosnian Muslims. Foreign fighters' focus on irredentist jihad and their view of the Bosnian war as a struggle to reclaim Muslim lands was not how Bosnian Muslims understood the war. For local Muslims, the conflict was a secular struggle to defend their homes and social relationships from external aggression. They did not seek to restructure Bosnian society to reflect an Islamic order, and as this chapter shows, many of them acted deliberately to defend not only their co-religionists but also Bosnian Croats and Serbs. Had the jihadist narrative resonated with local Muslims' understanding of the war, the anti-Muslim violence that people in places such as Zenica and Travnik experienced would likely have been significantly lower or absent altogether. Bosnian Muslims actively

resisted the presence of foreign fighters, which incentivized the latter to use coercion to achieve their objectives of reforming the local population.

Finally, prominent theories of civil war violence point to the role of desperation in explaining why groups turn to civilian victimization. In this argument, anti-civilian violence of the sort that the El Mudzahid Detachment committed in central Bosnia results from desperation to win in protracted wars of attrition (Downes 2006). However, much of the violence and atrocities implicating the unit occurred in the latter half of the war, when the Bosnian Army had gained on Bosnian Serb forces and was no longer considered the weakly-armed and poorly-organized “peasant rebellion” that described it during the war’s early years. Therefore, though the logic of desperation might well explain certain instances of civilian victimization that took place early in the war, it cannot explain the timing of later instances of violence. What’s more, the logic suggests that the most poorly armed – and thus most desperate – units of the ABiH would have been the most prone to resort to anti-civilian violence. But the El Mudzahid Detachment was one of the army’s most well-resourced units, in terms of personnel and access to weapons. According to the desperation logic, the mujahedin detachment would have committed less violence, relative to other units within the ABiH.

Evidence related to the actions of other armed groups involved in the Bosnian war provide further support to my argument regarding the impact of social embeddedness on armed group patterns of behavior. Certain accounts of ethnic

cleansing, for instance, view the violence as crimes committed by small groups composed primarily of outsiders: “small... bands of opportunistic marauders... many of these participants were drawn from street gangs or from bands of soccer hooligans” (Mueller 2000, 42). Witnesses to and victims of the violence in locations throughout Bosnia provide varying testimony as to whether they recognized perpetrators as locals; while some Bosnian Muslims vividly recall recognizing armed people as individuals they had known before the war, others do not recall recognizing a single individual among attacking Serb forces (Lieberman 2006). For example, witnesses in the Foča region of southern Bosnia testified that “Serbs from outside Bosnia were among the soldiers who were involved in their arrest, expulsion, detention, or abuse. Numerous victims reported hearing their accents, which were clearly not the Bosnian dialect” (HRW 1998).

The Bosnian war’s local character posed significant challenges to commanders on all sides; as this and previous chapters describe, combatants were often reluctant to leave their home territories (Bougarel 2004). To help overcome the paralyzing feelings of belonging and the urgency of defending hearths and kin, military commanders from all sides deliberately replaced local forces with outsiders, effectively moving local fighters away from their home environments to increase the efficiency of attacks. This was also true among Serb forces. A Human Rights Watch report provides examples:

The Crisis Committee knew that the local Bosnian Serb forces would not... achieve their aims without outside support, and so arranged for reservists, paramilitaries, and even regular units of what was previously called the

Yugoslav People's Army from Serbia and Montenegro to assist the Bosnian Serb forces in conquering the region (HRW 1998).

When I asked one ABiH war veteran from the vicinity of Kakanj in central Bosnia about the origins of members of the Bosnian Serb forces who attacked his village, he explained the following: “[Serb commanders] would switch them around. For example, Chetniks [Serbs] that were from X were moved to Y. And the ones from Y were put in Z. So the Serbs that were around [my village] were not [local] Serbs.”¹⁰⁰ Another man in his unit had similar memories:

The Serb [units] were moved around so much because the towns were so small, and everyone knew each other. Not all Serbs were Chetniks – some wanted to stay in their town with their friends. So... for war to happen, and for people to want to fight, they switched people around. People were more aggressive that way, whereas they probably would not be aggressive in their own hometown.¹⁰¹

In short, even accounts of the actions of non-Bosnian forces emphasize the role that armed actor embeddedness plays in influencing levels of violence. The reality on the ground was that preexisting social ties from the prewar era were important in limiting

¹⁰⁰ Interview 131, October 2017.

¹⁰¹ Interview 132, October 2017.

violence, specifically individual propensities for committing acts of violence. They were also important in incentivizing people – including ABiH soldiers – to resist violence, albeit in isolated instances. Military leaders on all sides viewed embeddedness as a barrier to achieving their strategic objectives linked to ethnic cleansing, which required the perpetration of violence. Leaders took steps to mitigate the counterproductive effect that social embeddedness had on the execution of military operations, in many cases by employing disembedded outsiders and adding them to their ranks. This is interesting, particularly in light of recent findings in the civil war literature that embeddedness is critical to other important military objectives, specifically organizational resilience (Parkinson 2013). To survive in times of crisis, armed groups must be able to rely on noncombatant networks for critical tasks that make effective fighting possible. Local actors who are deeply embedded into social networks proximate to the battlefield via strong and diverse ties to local populations contribute to resupplying and financing an armed group and provide it with the ability to operate covertly. During the Bosnian war, military leaders' drive to rely on disembedded forces may thus have relied on partially flawed or incomplete logic.

7.6. Conclusion

The proposition that soldiers from the Bosnian Army interacted with local populations on the basis of ancient hatreds or ethnic fears is not borne out by the evidence presented in these chapters. Instead, the evidence shows that factors related to

structural and cultural embeddedness, i.e. the extent to which soldiers were integrated into interethnic social networks dating back to the prewar period and shared a common understanding of the war with local civilian populations, influenced the actions that they took on and off the battlefield. For local soldiers who served in regular units and spent most of the war defending their homes and towns, wartime experiences did not differ much from civilian experiences. The fluid soldier-civilian identities of embedded soldiers kept them grounded in their prewar social networks, and in their understanding of the war as a defense of their homes and social ties – not as a religious struggle to reclaim Muslim lands. This embeddedness incentivized civil actions such as aiding and rescuing non-coethnics, and dialoguing and building solidarity across front lines. Embedded combatants' actions that resisted violence worked to preserve relationships across ethnic lines and dampened hostilities in many important, albeit isolated contexts. The great majority of local Bosnian Muslim soldiers and civilians existed as a holistic fighting community.

Foreign soldiers, on the other hand, experienced the war through fixed warrior identities and ideological convictions that did not resonate with local understandings of the war. Their detachment from Bosnia's social fabric – structurally as well as culturally – incentivized violence even against members of Bosnia's Muslim population. Their efforts at service provision were woefully unsuccessful, largely because their adherence to radical forms of Islam proved so alienating to local communities. In the dyadic foreign

soldier-civilian context, interactions between combatants and noncombatants were reminiscent of Kalyvas' (2006) captive civilian model characterized by coercion.

Though the balance of available evidence allows for more nuanced process tracing of the links between full (dis)embeddedness and armed group behavior, the Bosnia case study chapters also provide insight into how different balances of embeddedness along the structural and cultural dimensions influence the behavior of intermediate actor categories – so-called “assimilated broker” and “integrated nonconformist” combatants. Specifically, the cultural disembeddedness of local mujahedin who joined the detachment of foreigners and the structural disembeddedness of refugee soldiers in the 17th Krajina Brigade lowered barriers to violence, relative to embedded soldiers serving in regular ABiH units. For local mujahedin, adherence to foreign fighters’ conflict frames solidified the enemy identity of Bosnian Serbs and Croats; there was no place for them in a postwar Bosnia. For refugee soldiers, exposure to violence instilled in them the need to avenge their family members’ deaths, and also confirmed to them that non-Muslims in Bosnia were the enemy. However, certain factors kept both types of soldiers tied into Bosnia’s wartime social fabric and therefore de incentivized some violence. Local mujahedin limited their direct participation in violence and concealed their identities when participating in attacks perhaps for fear of retribution later in the war or in the postwar phase; they were still tied into local social networks even though they face social shame for having joined the poorly regarded EI

Mudzahid Detachment. In turn, refugee soldiers – as native Bosnians – were still capable of feeling a sense of solidarity with other, non-coethnic victims of wartime violence. The drive to return home also persisted as their main motivation to fight, as it did for most native soldiers from other units.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

“We are separated on paper, not in real life.”

- Imam Maslic, Bosnian Muslim student in Travnik, December 2018

8.1. Introduction

This study has examined the quality and extent of armed group embeddedness to understand why combatants engage in a range of actions on and off the battlefield during war, particularly when it comes to interacting with civilian populations. When fighters have many strong, diverse ties into local civilian population networks and share a common understanding of the conflict with these noncombatants, so-called holistic fighting communities emerge. Those who have joined armed groups active in their own “backyards,” so to speak, experience the war through fluid civilian-soldier identities and maintain responsibilities to their fellow combatants as well as to members of their prewar social networks. Their needs are often in line with those of civilians. This deep embeddedness raises barriers to violence, and incentivizes nonviolent interaction ranging from informal instances of civil action to the establishment of more formal systems of exchange. By contrast, combatant disembeddedness isolates armed groups from surrounding populations and makes the cultivation of relationships – and thus nonviolent interaction – more complicated. Dissonant conflict frames relative to indigenous understandings of the conflict, different languages, and a lack of direct ties into social

networks alienate culturally and structurally disembedded fighters from the conflict's social fabric. For disembedded fighters, identities are more fixed around warrior mentalities and civilians become captive to their objectives and needs.

I organize this last chapter as follows. Section 8.2 begins by describing my theoretical framework centered on combatant embeddedness to explain the range of combatant behavior during war and summarizes the dissertation's main findings. Section 8.3 outlines the theoretical and practical implications of the project, including areas for future research on social embeddedness and civil war. Finally, Section 8.4 concludes by contextualizing my findings in light of contemporary Bosnian politics and society.

Section 8.2. Social Embeddedness, Foreign Fighters, and Combatant Behavior in Civil War

Three overarching questions motivated this study: 1) At the macrolevel of analysis, why do insurgencies establish institutions and why do they engage in civilian victimization? and (2) how do degrees of embeddedness among foreign fighter populations influence the propensities of insurgencies to govern versus abuse local civilians? (3) At the microlevel of analysis, how do local soldiers experience war differently than foreign fighters – gravitating towards nonviolent or violent interaction – and what role does embeddedness play in shaping these different wartime experiences?

In trying to answer these questions, I find that the literature on armed group behavior during civil war – ranging from governance to civilian victimization – does not sufficiently consider the social capacities and resources with which groups enter a conflict, nor does it sufficiently disaggregate these groups to account for the variegated nature of the rank and file. Though theories of rebel governance and violence alike have indirectly acknowledged the importance of rebel embeddedness, they have not explicitly examined how the social context in which an insurgency operates influences it towards or away from a range of different interactions with local populations. What’s more, few studies jointly explore insurgent propensities towards governance and anti-civilian violence within the framework of a single study, and often limit themselves to understanding only macrolevel dynamics. In response to these limitations, this study has elaborated and applied a theoretical framework that emphasizes the role of two dimensions of social embeddedness in facilitating nonviolent and violent interaction between rebels and other local conflict actors at both the macro and micro levels of analysis.

Insurgencies and their members do not emerge, mobilize, or operate in a social vacuum. Specifically, individuals join an armed group that has mobilized for war as people in relationships: they are sons, brothers, mothers, fathers, sisters, and daughters in addition to being neighbors, friends, clients and schoolmates. Naturally, they might also be immersed in antagonistic or rivalrous relationships with others. The picking up of

weapons does not erase these ties, but instead continues to affect soldiers and rebels in important ways throughout war, even as they form new sets of relationships in their new roles as combatants. Similarly, combatants do not mobilize for war without a certain set of understandings, values, and customs formed over time and that guides their everyday behavior. Before the war, some may have adhered to a specific set of religious practices and beliefs. For others, religion may have played a minimal role in their quotidian existence. An affiliation to a particular ethnic group and the quality of interethnic relations in their village or town may have guided their interactions and shaped how they viewed others. Importantly, the set of understandings with which combatants enter a conflict may resonate strongly with those of local noncombatant populations, or they may be wholly alien to local traditions and frames. Attention to these dynamics – the extent to which combatants are embedded into set of relationships and shared understandings of appropriate behavior before and during war – illuminates the social logic behind combatant behavior during war.

These dynamics point to the importance of two separate dimensions of embeddedness, which capture the extent to which individuals stand out from or fit into a local conflict context. The first dimension, structural embeddedness, speaks to the importance of social ties and integration into webs of social relationships. The second dimension, cultural embeddedness, speaks to individuals' cultural fit with respect to that context, or the extent to which they share deep-rooted beliefs and assumptions about

the world with others around them. Both dimensions, I argue, are important to understanding how militant groups behave during war, and the strategies that they draw on to accumulate popular support.

Importantly, the degree to which members of an armed group are “local” to the conflict context in which they fight varies significantly. While some may have lived their entire lives in that particular context, others may be newcomers. The former is likely to be strongly embedded into the local social fabric in the ways described above – via strong ties to other local actors and shared beliefs and assumptions about the world, relative to surrounding noncombatant populations. Newcomers, on the other hand, may be outsiders insofar as they lack any direct ties into local civilian networks and base their behavior on a set of beliefs, traditions, or values that is beyond the scope of local customs. I propose that investigating the presence of foreign fighters in the ranks of armed groups involved in intrastate struggles is a meaningful way of understanding the impacts of embeddedness on conflict dynamics, including rebel behavior on and off the battlefield.

As such, foreign fighters should add a level of complexity to rebel-civilian interactions and the ways that rebels behave in war more generally. Specifically, they should be less embedded into the local social fabric of a conflict along both structural and cultural dimensions, relative to local fighters. Foreign combatants may be unable to

communicate with local residents in their native language, they may adhere to an entirely different set of beliefs about the world and may also bring in their own unique interpretations of the struggle that they are joining. What's more, foreigners are unlikely to be deeply tied into local social networks in the ways that local fighters are. They may thus lack important access to local knowledge, and also be less tied down by non-warrior responsibilities such as those to family members who remain in the warzone. Foreign fighters stand out more than local fighters, which has important implications for the way that they interact with local populations and the strategies that they adopt in conflict more broadly.

Structural and cultural embeddedness impacts the way that soldiers and rebels experience conflict, most importantly by blurring the lines between combatants and noncombatants. When fighters are local to a conflict context, they are more likely to pass seamlessly between their warrior roles and the civilian roles that defined their lives before the outbreak of active hostilities. These individuals fight "in their own backyards", making contact with prewar social connections highly likely. From a social standpoint, even people who grew up or worked together but end up on opposing sides of a front line may not be so far removed from one another during war. Preexisting social relationships, in other words, pull or push combatants in various directions during war, sometimes reinforcing their roles as fighters, but at others inducing them to resist

violence or maintain restraint in fulfillment of their civilian roles and for the sake of protecting social ties.

“Belonging” to a particular population and claiming a common cultural identity with that population is key to rebel groups seeking popular support and local legitimacy. When an insurgency’s claims originate directly from the populace and general area from which it recruits its members, it is likely to be strongly embedded along cultural dimensions. This strong cultural alignment also reduces boundaries between combatants and noncombatants, and often brings the needs of the latter in line with the objectives of the former. Culturally embedded armed groups are more likely to see members of the civilian population as partners and natural allies, and the feeling is likely mutual among civilians. On the other hand, cognitive dissonance between members of an armed group and local populations should erode trust between the two sets of actors. Some disembedded rebels may introduce dissonant ideologies or conflict frames to a struggle and seek to force these new ideas on an unwilling population. This is often the case when jihadist foreign fighter populations enter otherwise secular conflicts, as evidenced in Chechnya’s ongoing struggle for independence from Russia, the Afghan civil war of 1992, the Iraqi insurgency in 2003, and the 1990s war in Bosnia between Muslims, Croats, and Serbs.

Along these lines, my theoretical framework leads to the expectation that structural and cultural embeddedness should open doors to nonviolent interaction between combatants and civilian populations. Disembeddedness along these same dimensions should incentivize violence and also make nonviolent interaction less likely. Armed groups that rely on a predominantly local base of recruits can draw on their prewar social capital to seek popular support via promises of service to local populations in return for voluntary compliance, eventually building up systems of mutual exchange. The social isolation of armed groups that recruit large numbers of foreigners, by contrast, will make the establishment of institutions based on voluntary contributions from civilians more complicated, and lead them to rely more on coercion. If foreign fighter-heavy groups do establish institutions, their systems of governance are likely to be predatory and violent in nature, and representative of efforts to restructure local society against public will. A macrolevel implication of my theoretical framework is therefore that levels of anti-civilian violence should be higher among insurgencies with foreign fighters. In turn, levels of institutionalization should be more elevated among groups relying on embedded cadres of fighters, although foreign fighter-heavy groups may also install their own institutions that do not respond to local needs. The quality of rebel institutions, and the extent to which they resonate with local conflict frames, is thus as important to understand as the presence of institutions itself.

The theory also has important microlevel implications. Specifically, local insurgents may be more likely to engage in civil actions such as aid, rescue, dialogue, and solidarity-building across a conflict's dividing lines, relative to disembodied actors. Their social capital from before the war that values trust and reciprocity does not disappear in war, but often works alongside the relational dynamics that activate violent capital. This local social capital is likely absent among foreign fighters, who are more prone to relying exclusively on wartime social capital due to their isolation from networks of noncombatants. Most macrolevel narratives of conflict miss these types of interactions, but there is no reason to believe that they do not work alongside violence in the fog of war. Overall, social embeddedness has important consequences for the trajectory of armed group behavior during war.

Foreign Fighters & Rebel Governance versus Civilian Victimization

In examining patterns of rebel institutionalization and anti-civilian violence from 1989-2011, I find that insurgencies with foreign fighters are in fact more likely to engage in civilian victimization. Moreover, insurgents that recruit structurally disembodied foreign fighter populations, ie. foreign fighters from beyond the immediate conflict region, are especially more likely to engage in one-sided violence against local populations. Culturally embedded insurgencies, ie. those that recruit foreign fighters that share a common ethnicity to the majority of the group that they join, are less likely to engage in such violence, relative to groups that use non-coethnic foreign fighters. These findings are important: they show that although insurgencies with disembodied recruits

(foreign fighters) are in fact more likely to engage in civilian victimization, they also show that not all foreign fighter populations are created equal and that degrees of embeddedness (foreignness) matter. Moreover, the results from statistical analyses also show that groups with doubly embedded foreign fighter populations – coethnic individuals from the immediate conflict region – are the least likely to engage in anti-civilian violence. The finding is an important confirmation of the role of embeddedness in de-incentivizing violence.

However, the statistical analysis of global insurgencies also shows that foreign fighter-heavy rebellions are more likely to build institutions in the service of local populations, relative to groups with no foreign fighters. This finding contradicts the expectations of my theoretical framework, but highlights other important dynamics at play when disembedded individuals join an otherwise domestic insurgency. Specifically, the correlation between foreign fighter-heavy insurgencies, which are significantly more likely to engage in civilian victimization, and rebel governance speaks to the importance of considering the quality of rebel governance in addition to its mere presence. While a number of qualitative studies have already made significant contributions in this regard, large-n data on rebel governance does not capture the nature and specific characteristics of rebel institutions. Important questions are therefore still unanswered. For instance, are the institutions that foreign fighter-heavy groups implement during war exclusive in that they only target certain segments of a population? Are they predatory in nature,

such that they force compliance from civilians, but are not based on voluntary contributions? Moreover, the findings from the statistical analysis are unable to discern whether foreign fighters may be more attracted to highly institutionalized rebellions because of the very services that they provide, rather than actually influencing these groups towards service provision. Without more fine-grained data on foreign fighters, including their timing of entry into conflicts, it is difficult to confirm the direction of this particular relationship.

The Case of Soldiers in the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina

The in-depth analysis of the Bosnian case provides crucial insight into the mechanisms linking embeddedness to the types of interactions in which combatants engage during war. Most native Bosnians who joined the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the spring of 1992 were deeply embedded both structurally and culturally into the local social fabrics. The extent to which people had maintained ethnically mixed social networks in the years preceding the war and the general irrelevance of identity made war a surprise more than an inevitable outcome. Soldiers took up arms to defend their families, homes, and towns, and even as the war progressed were never completely isolated from their noncombatant networks. The enemy's identity was often fluid and dependent on time and place. Local soldiers maintained responsibilities as warriors but also as friends, mothers, fathers, sons, brothers, neighbors, and clients. Many had friends who had joined the ranks of opposing armed forces. These fluid soldier-civilian identities kept local soldiers who served in regular units that fought close to home grounded in

their prewar identities and social networks; they did not experience the war all that differently from civilians who stayed behind. As a result, embedded soldiers' wartime experiences were a seemingly continuing process of evaluating and reevaluating their new roles. By day they would be on the front lines shooting at enemy soldiers, but at night would exchange cigarettes with those same soldiers, listen to music, and sometimes even joke around. On other days, local soldiers would spend breaks from the front lines at home with their families to rest, shower, and often fulfill of mundane tasks and responsibilities. This deep embeddedness into Bosnia's social fabric influenced specific behavior and types of interactions that were absent from the behavioral repertoires of foreign combatants in the same army.

Foreign soldiers, on the other hand, were socially isolated from the local environment. To them, war was the desired outcome in a global struggle of Muslims against Christians; Bosnia was simply the next frontline in that war. Rather than being committed to the defense of Bosnian towns and their residents, the group of mujahedin considered themselves as vanguards of an ideology that did not resonate with local frames and prized their own objectives over those of local Bosnian Muslim forces. Disembedded mujahedin remained isolated from local actors, whether these were communities of Bosnian civilians in places like Travnik and Zenica, or from other Bosnian Army units made up mainly of local soldiers. They operated on the basis of a moral superiority relative to local Bosnian Muslims, which encouraged proselytization rather

than tolerance. Their disembeddedness and separation from local actors was thus deliberate: military leaders and local forces in the Bosnian Army were put off by the ultra-violent tactics that the El Mudzahid detachment deployed on and off the battlefield and preferred to distance themselves from them organizationally. The mujahedin in turn preferred isolation to integration into networks of civilians that held impure visions of Islam and lived impure lives. Though they recognized the importance of at least attempting to cultivate ties to locals in order to enhance their local legitimacy, they focused on disillusioned young Bosnians who had themselves deserted local units. When these locals did join the foreign detachment, they were often shunned by members of their communities. As such, the El Mudzahid detachment remained for all intents and purposes strongly detached from the local wartime context in Bosnia. Foreigners in the Bosnian Army experienced the war through fixed warrior identities, free of responsibilities to civilians who stayed behind despite the violence. Their lack of ties and interpretations of the conflict incentivized violence, whether it was directed at “enemy” civilians or at local Bosnian Muslims in the form of harassment and fear tactics.

Importantly, the Bosnian Army also provides examples of the two intermediate actor categories that I build into my theoretical framework: “integrated nonconformist” (local mujahedin) soldiers, who were culturally disembedded from Bosnia’s wartime social fabric when they adopted foreign fighters’ jihadist narrative, but still maintained ties into local population networks and were thus structurally embedded; and

“assimilated broker” (refugee) soldiers who were structurally disembedded from the social fabric after exposure to violence, but were still motivated to “return home” in much the same way that ordinary local soldiers were throughout the war. Process tracing of the links between balances of embeddedness and these groups’ behaviors during the war provides support to the idea that some level of integration or assimilation into wartime social fabrics de-incentivizes violence. While these type types of combatants did not exhibit propensities to engage in nonviolent civil action during the war, they engaged in limited levels of indiscriminate violence, relative to their disembedded foreign fighter counterparts.

Section 8.3. Theoretical & Practical Implications

Theoretical Implications

The purpose of this project is to understand the social context of war, and how social embeddedness specifically among fighter groups influences the ways that they interact with other actors on and off the battlefield. It offers three contributions to theory: one focused on the role of foreign fighters in civil war, another focused more on the general role of embeddedness in war, and the last focused on microlevel approaches to studying civil war. First, the research provides an important addition to the growing literature on foreign fighters in civil conflicts. As the findings from the quantitative and qualitative analyses show, the addition of this intermediate actor category has important influences on the quality of armed group-civilian interactions with civilians during war. Most importantly, the presence of foreign fighters in the ranks of insurgencies poses

heightened risks to civilians during war. While foreign fighters may bring in wanted military resources, namely individuals dedicated to warfighting and with previous fighting experience, their detachment from local conflict actors and contexts incentivizes violence that local fighters might otherwise avoid. This suggests that rebels who recruit this particular kind of combatant may face tradeoffs in terms of organizational effectiveness and popular support. Groups that include combatants who have few, if any direct ties into local communities and who bring with them ideas and behaviors that run contrary to local understandings of a conflict are unlikely to benefit from high levels of active popular support. The results linking foreign fighters to heightened violence thus complement other findings that associate insurgent reliance on external resources to increased civilian victimization (Salehyan 2009; Stewart and Liou 2016). External support often has strong deleterious effects on rebel-civilian relations, regardless of its nature (foreign safe havens, control or foreign territory, or foreign human resources). Further research will need to evaluate more comprehensively the impact of all different types of external support to better understand how each kind of support either individually or jointly impacts rebel-civilian relationships.

The findings also speak to the importance of better understanding the impact of external support on insurgent propensities for institutionalization. Thus far, Huang (2016) demonstrates that foreign aid is unrelated to rebel governance. The findings in this study, however, suggest that particular types of foreign aid – foreign human resources

specifically – may in fact influence rebels to develop institutions. This may be due to a number of dynamics, which I briefly explore above and in Chapter 4. First, foreign fighters may be more prone to joining insurgencies that are already highly institutionalized, casting doubt on the direction of the relationship. Second, foreign fighters may bring in additional resources that help rebels develop institutions. The addition of more fighters with superior military experience, for example, may allow insurgents to divert more of their local resources (including local members) to cultivating relationships with civilian populations and ultimately the development of institutions. In this case, we might observe separate roles for foreign fighters and local fighters within an insurgency: whereas the former might be deployed to secure military objectives on the battlefield, the latter might be tasked with engaging members of the local populace and addressing civilian needs. If this dynamic were in fact at play, it would provide further support to my argument that embeddedness incentivizes and eases the development of systems of service provision by rebels, whereas disembeddedness lowers barriers to violence. Finally, it may be the case that the institutions that foreign fighter-heavy groups develop do not serve local populations in a mutually beneficial way, but instead force compliance through threats. This was the case in places like Zenica and Travnik in Bosnia, where mujahedin provided goods and services to local Bosnian Muslims in return for strict adherence to radical religious practices. Importantly, these dynamics also speak to the importance of gathering more disaggregated data on rebel governance systems that captures the quality of the institutions they develop.

What's more, the study highlights what is often the mixed nature of foreign fighter groups: not only do foreign fighter populations enter a conflict with different qualities – depending on their origins, for example – but the units that they establish once on the battlefield often include local fighters. Recent research has started to investigate the relationship between foreign fighter groups and local recruits (Schwampe 2018; Schwampe and Senninger 2019). However, there are still important avenues open for future research that investigates the recruitment practices of foreign fighter groups during war, as well as the different roles that foreign versus local combatants may play within the same unit.

Second, the project and its findings speak to the importance of considering the social context of war to understand the range of behaviors in which armed groups engage, focusing on social embeddedness in particular. The focus on state-centric approaches to foreign fighters is only one, macrolevel way of conceptualizing embeddedness. But while degrees of foreignness on the basis of an individual's citizenship is convenient insofar as it is an observable dimension of embeddedness, being judged a foreigner often extends beyond simplistic definitions of citizenship. In fact, the struggle over who is a local and who is a stranger is often itself the driver of conflict (Jackson 2006). What's more, a number of other factors unrelated to foreign fighters likely affect the extent to which an insurgency and its members are considered "local."

Even insurgencies that limit their recruitment to citizens of the state in which they fight might experience fluctuating levels of embeddedness over time and space. For example, embeddedness might shift as insurgencies gain and lose territory, and as their areas of operation expand throughout the country or subnational region. Similarly, the recruitment practices of various insurgencies might vary in reach. While some might recruit from across the entire territory of a particular state, others might limit their efforts to a particular region. Finally, organizational objectives might provide clues into how insurgencies value embeddedness and thus pursue integration and assimilation into local populaces. The difference between groups that seek to control territory versus those that seek to control populations is likely important in this regard.

Embeddedness might thus be captured in a number of different ways. Across groups, accounting for objectives is likely to yield important clues into how embeddedness or the drive to become embedded affects behavior. Here, we might account for differences between groups pursuing secessionist objectives versus those seeking the overthrow of a central government. In order to succeed, groups with territorial objectives must appeal to the populations that will inhabit the new state if the insurgency is successful. The theoretical framework might thus imply that secessionist groups should push more for social embeddedness into their local conflict environment, relative to non-secessionist insurgencies. This is in line with recent findings that show

that secessionist groups are more likely to develop inclusive institutions, relative to non-secessionist groups (Stewart 2018).

Territorial control might also be an indicator of embeddedness, suggesting that groups with greater control should be more likely to govern, rather than indiscriminately abuse, local populations. For example, groups that seek to control populations but not territory per se might be the quintessential example of disembedded insurgencies. Their roving nature precludes the need for popular support beyond the membership of the organization itself, and survival might very well depend on remaining isolated from outside populations. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda serves as a useful example of such armed groups. The organization, which seeks to create its own Acholi society separate from the Acholis of northern Uganda, forces its members to commit atrocities against members of their own social networks in order to destroy ties to outside communities (Baines 2014). Groups that place a strong emphasis on social isolation, autarky, and the control of populations face few barriers to committing violence against non-members, and also have little to no incentives to construct institutions in the service of outsiders.

Finally, the findings from an in-depth analysis of the experiences of local versus foreign soldiers in the Bosnian Army speak to the importance of focusing on microlevel interactions to gain more complete understandings of conflicts. Understandably, the civil

war scholarship has thus far focused predominantly on relational dynamics that activate violence (Kalyvas 2006). As I discuss in Chapter 2, fratricide is more common than fraternization in the context of war, and intimacy between individuals during peacetime often leads to civilians ratting each other out in wartime. However, it would be unrealistic to assume that individuals' social capital that values nonviolent relational capabilities, such as trust, reciprocity, and influence (Lin 1999) disappears when war breaks out. The nonviolent interactions in which local Bosnian Army soldiers serving in regular units engaged with civilians as well as enemy combatants across front lines speaks truth to this notion: individuals and even groups use their agency to resist or de-escalate violence all the time in conflict (Avant et al. 2018; Fujii 2009; Luft 2015). Even though they may not bring an end to war, the nonviolent microlevel dynamics of conflict are nevertheless important to study alongside violent microdynamics. They may weaken the narratives and recruiting efforts of radical elements that promote war, bring energy to local nonstate efforts to provide governance during war, and help maintain relationships that will be crucial to rebuilding the social fabric once the conflict ends (Avant et al. 2018).

Given the frequency and extent of mass killings during the Bosnian war, the political conditions that reified certain narratives, and even the contemporary context of ethnic division – particularly in the political realm – the evidence of nonviolent action and cross-ethnic dialogue, aid, and solidarity-building that I present in Chapters 6 and 7 appears somewhat surprising. However, there are several reasons to trust the data. First,

the Bosnian context is not the first to be cited as an example of a wartime environment in which people did not always adhere to prescribed narratives or avoided proscribed action despite repressive political conditions. In her powerful analysis of individual action in the context of the Rwandan genocide, Lee Ann Fujii outlines a series of metadata that convinced her that people were being honest with her over the course of interviews, ranging from admissions of wrongdoing that they did not have to make, to talking openly about jealousies or conflicts with others, to not always taking the opportunity to point the finger at others (Fujii 2009, 120). I experienced many dynamics similar to the ones Fujii describes in the course of my interviews with Bosnian Army war veterans. While they openly shared memories of their nonviolent interactions with enemy soldiers, they also did not deny that these were the exception, rather than the norm. Fraternization with the enemy was common, but firefights and shelling the enemy were more common. It was after all, a war. Moreover, many of the individuals I interviewed referred to Bosnian Serb forces as “Chetniks,” a term that many Bosnian Muslims applied to Bosnian Serbs to create social distance between the two groups (Andreas 2008). The behavior of Bosnian Army soldiers was therefore not immune to the macronarratives of the war that pitted one nationality against others, even though their embeddedness into prewar social networks and experiences of the war through fluid civilian-soldier identities also activated nonviolent social capital that allowed for the types of interactions that I highlight.

Second, this is not the first study to highlight action that goes against the ethnic hatred thesis that often describes the Bosnian war. In fact, it is not uncommon for historical as well as political analysis of the conflict to mention or emphasize the extent of cross-ethnic cooperation and fraternization between soldiers specifically (Andreas 2008; Schindler 2007). Anthropological and sociological studies recount in detail the individual or group-level nonviolent actions that ordinary people took to reject and resist inter-ethnic violence, as do countless memoirs of the war (Maček 2009; Armakolas 2011; Berry 2018; Broz 2004). Interviews of Bosnian Army deserters published in newspapers during the war also include evidence of the same types of exchanges that my interviewees talked about, and trial testimony from the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) includes witness statements attesting to the fact that the addition of “outsiders” specifically led to hostility and instability in contexts of otherwise peaceful interethnic coexistence. Historical accounts of the Bosnian Army’s evolution also reference local soldiers’ reluctance to fight “far from home”, strengthening claims that their embeddedness in civilian networks imbued them with responsibilities that complicated their warrior roles (Hoare 2004).

Finally, hearing many ordinary Bosnians today describe their interethnic social networks and discuss their impressions of nationality’s irrelevance in everyday life makes the material discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 less surprising. Ordinary Bosnians were pushed into war involuntarily in 1992; it caught most people by surprise. Many of the

politicians who push narratives of ethnic division today fled Bosnia when the war broke out, returning to positions of political power in the post-Dayton era where the military confrontation is still frozen along ethnic lines. As a result of the agreement, which has been described as a “construction of necessity” (Keane 2001, 61), appeals to nationality keep these political leaders in power today in spite of the fact that many Bosnians’ private lives contradict the outward, public impression of ethnicity’s relevance. In speaking to Bosnian war veterans today, the lasting resentment is not directed at those who fought with Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat forces, but at those in political power who avoided war and whose political survival today depends on dividing, rather than uniting, Bosnia’s people.

Practical Implications: Counterinsurgency & Statebuilding

The findings from this study suggest a number of implications for policymakers and practitioners at the state and international levels. Specifically, it contributes to policy research on counterinsurgency and statebuilding, as well as to efforts dedicated to post-conflict reconciliation. From a counterinsurgency perspective, the findings from the statistical analysis in particular suggest that government forces should be aware of the vulnerabilities that foreign fighters may expose with respect to an armed group’s relationship with the local populace. Groups with large numbers of foreign combatants are unlikely to benefit from high levels of popular support, and may thus be susceptible to collapse in the face of well-resourced state strategies that aim to “win the hearts and minds” of civilians. What’s more, the hyper-violent tendencies that foreign fighters

introduce into otherwise local armed groups are likely to create divisions between local and foreign factions, making foreign fighter-heavy organizations more susceptible to fragmentation and eventual defeat. This is likely to be especially true of groups that recruit non-coethnic foreign fighters from beyond the immediate conflict region. For foreign fighter-heavy insurgencies that recruit coethnic foreign insurgents from neighboring states, however, these vulnerabilities may not apply, and groups may behave more like “local” organizations and benefit from similar levels of local legitimacy. In other words, while it is important for policymakers to anticipate the risks that the recruitment of foreign fighters poses to local civilian populations, it is also critical to assess where foreign combatants are coming from in order to intervene in the most violence-prone environments more effectively. Finally, the findings speak to the importance of continuing efforts to limit foreign fighting in general. Overall, armed groups that actively recruit foreign fighters or that attract this type of combatant pose significantly higher threats to the physical integrity of noncombatants, relative to groups that do not include any foreign fighters in their ranks.

The findings regarding foreign fighters and patterns of rebel governance are also relevant to practitioners of statebuilding. Huang (2016) finds in her work that wartime contexts in which insurgencies established institutions are more likely to experience democratization in the aftermath of war, relative to contexts where rebel governance was nonexistent. The quality of those institutions, however, remains in question and it is

unclear whether rebel institutionalization by groups that include foreign fighters leads to similarly high levels of postwar democratization, as when local groups engage in wartime governance. If my expectations are correct that the governance systems of foreign fighter-heavy groups are unlikely to rely on principles of inclusion and to be based instead on threats and coercion, the quality of postwar governance might also be severely degraded. In fact, the institutions that violent, foreign fighter-heavy groups establish may correlate to increased levels of authoritarianism in conflicts where they are not defeated. Again, this suggests that policymakers should pay close attention to not only the membership bases of insurgencies during war, but also to the quality of the institutions that they develop. Foreign fighter-heavy groups may not only threaten the livelihoods and rights of civilians during war, but long into the postwar future.

Practical Implications: Post-conflict Reconciliation

The study suggests that practitioners involved in post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation might look to the microdynamics of specific conflicts to identify actors who have demonstrated their agency to engage in nonviolent action even in the most violent of contexts. In Bosnia, many civilians and soldiers alike used their agency to resist violence. Despite their role as violent actors, by definition, individual members of armed groups who are deeply embedded into the local social fabric of a conflict have the capacity to activate nonviolent forms of social capital during war, and generate relational processes that might engender peace in the long term (Avant et al. 2018). Although their interactions with prewar friends who had joined Bosnian Serb or Bosnian Croat forces

were isolated and usually revolved around mundane issues such as exchanging cigarettes or listening to music together, these actions can engender dialogue that might then lead to discussions and understandings of more serious issues. There are various sets of processes that lead to peace, and informal interactions such as those in which ordinary, embedded local actors engage in the midst of violence remain a relatively untapped resource (Muggah and Krause 2009; Paffenholz 2010). Speaking with former combatants after their demobilization and probing for their memories of such interactions may therefore be a fruitful step in the reconciliation process.

In Bosnia, as in many other postwar contexts, it is the horrors of war that are most often memorialized. However, monuments to mass atrocities and other war crimes, while important insofar as they force us to remember victims and acknowledge the human capacity for violence that war activates, also work to cement divisions and often obstruct reconciliation. More robust reconciliation strategies might therefore focus on memorializing the nonviolent interactions in which ordinary citizens engaged in spite of the violence. These events, which albeit most often occur in uncoordinated and isolated fashion, are what holds social fabrics together and remind us instead of the human capacity for peace. Drawing attention to the small-scale acts of fraternization that characterized so many soldiers' experiences during the Bosnian war has thus been a missed opportunity. War veterans were robbed of their voice after the war, and the personal impact that the war had on their lives remains a part of their private

experiences, even today. Giving them space to make their complete set of wartime experiences public can be an important component of efforts to create peace.

Section 8.4. Bosnia in Perspective

When I first began this project, I had little understanding of the powerful influence that being “local” could actually have on being a soldier in wartime. I am not sure that I could have completely described what it meant to even be “local”, let alone what types of wartime interactions the descriptor might lead to. The literature speaks of enhanced “access to local knowledge”, or “low cognitive distance”, but what did that imply, practically speaking? What does embeddedness and social proximity actually look like on the ground? When I prepared for and then began field work in Bosnia, the intent was to probe Bosnian Army soldiers and civilians on their impressions of the foreign soldiers they encountered or heard about during the war. While they shared their thoughts and memories on the subject, they also shared stories that I did not expect. Almost all of the veterans I interviewed had stories about returning home to rest in between shifts on the front lines, often to care for family members who had not fled. They were fathers, brothers, and sons as much as they were soldiers in a newly formed army. Nor did I expect to hear war veterans tell me about their cigarette exchanges with enemy soldiers, or their encounters with friends from before the war who had joined Bosnian Serb or Croat forces. Many of them experienced a near constant reevaluation of

their roles as soldiers, likely as a result of the fluidity with which they passed from the frontlines back to their families, neighbors, and friends.

Most of the stories and analysis that we hear about the Bosnian war emphasize the macro-narrative of ethnic violence and hatred. Many embrace a conventional understanding of war as ordered and in pursuit of some national end, pitting all Bosnian Muslims against all Bosnian Croats and Serbs. Conventional ideas of war also make neat distinctions between civilians and combatants, where the former spends time sheltering at home and the latter are confined to the battlefield. These coherent stories and images of war often take shape after a war, when private experiences become public and ultimately official and shared (Maček 209, 195). In Bosnia, political leaders immediately interpreted events throughout the former Yugoslavia in terms of conflict between national groups. As the war progressed, the international media and authorities in Bosnia isolated specific instances of violence as particularly significant. The events that received the most exposure and were most exploited by politicians were those that involved the massacre of members of one ethnic group by the military forces of another: the shellings of the central Markale market in Sarajevo in May 1992, ethnic cleansing of 6,000 Bosnian Muslims in Prijedor and Višegrad, the mass murder of over 900 non-Serbs in Zvornik, the massacre of over 8,000 men and boys in Srebrenica in July 1995, and countless others. The atrocities legitimated nationalist modes of thinking and helped many soldiers compartmentalize their role as combatants and separate themselves from

their civilian roles, as they organized the war into sides with specific political aims. This is the picture of the war that most accounts paint.

However, macrolevel vantage points, including the one with which I began field work in Bosnia, blind people to the realities of war. Bosnia's war in the early 1990s is no exception. The ordered view of both interstate and intrastate conflicts as occurring along neat, macrolevel cleavages was hardly how the situation played itself out on the ground in Bosnia. National solidarities and oppositions were a product of the war, not its cause, and while the violence and animosities were very real and devastated hundreds of thousands of lives, the intensity of the conflict varied by location and over time. The identity of the enemy shifted, and soldiers and civilians often saw little, if any, differences between themselves. The war for ordinary Bosnians began on the day that their homes were attacked or they were shot at, or when disruptions of peacetime life eventually added up to what they believed looked and felt like war, usually only in retrospect. Such experiences are not the publicized aspects of war, but instead remain private for most of those who live through them.

Privately, the war lost its meaning for many Bosnian Army soldiers. They were first and foremost people in relationships to others, as evidenced by their memories of their time split between home and the front lines, and the interactions and dialogue in which they sometimes engaged with former neighbors and friends who had joined opposing

forces. This is not to say that they were never involved in killing or other forms of violence – many were as they fulfilled their new roles in the army. What is important to acknowledge, however, is that nonviolent action in the form of solidarity building across lines through the sharing of cigarettes, isolated instances of rescue and aid, and mundane dialogue between members of Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian did occur alongside the violence. In other words, the close proximity in which Bosnian Muslims, Serbs, and Croats lived before the war, and the relatively small role that ethnicity and national identity played for most Bosnians in the prewar era, activated relational dynamics that led to nonviolence. These interactions often occurred alongside the violence, albeit at significantly smaller scale and in isolated incidents. But they are nonetheless important because they did work to dampen animosities at the microlevel, and helped to maintain relationships. Though macro-narratives and even many microlevel accounts of the war often ignore them, the existence of such small-scale nonviolent interactions provides an invaluable resource for efforts aimed at post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation.

Perhaps some of the strongest testimony to the importance and enduring relevance of ordinary Bosnians' private experiences of the war lives on in the perspectives that younger generations have of ethnicity and nationality. Many Bosnians today – especially young students who are often forced to study under the “one roof, two schools” policy where different ethnicities study at separate times or in separate

wings of buildings – have developed lives in parallel to the public, ethnically divided reality that politicians push. Nationalist politicians stoke ethnic divides that many ordinary civilians actively resist. One student from a school in Travnik, quoted at the outset of this chapter, acknowledged to a reporter recently that “[politicians] don’t want us to socialize in school, so we go to cafes after class and hang out together there” (Surk 2018). Other students in Jajce, further north, protested the proposed segregation of Bosniak and Croat school children by staging protests in 2016 and 2017 (Lakic 2018). Another student from the school in Travnik said “we understand each other, and there are no differences between us outside of school” (Surk 2018). The way that students today talk about their friends of other nationalities is reminiscent of how war veterans from the Bosnian Army spoke about their neighbors and friends from before the war who had joined opposing forces. The fact that many schools in contemporary Bosnia are segregated along ethnic lines is disheartening and reflects the macrolevel cleavages along which politicians and military leaders organized the war for their political and personal gain in the 1990s. It is also a sign that although Bosnia is far removed from its war of 20 years ago, certain forces are still pushing against peace. The stark contrast between contemporary Bosnians’ personal experiences of this tentative and fragile peace, and the nationalist rhetoric and policies that defines public life, strongly resembles the contrast that existed between Bosnian soldiers’ and civilians’ private versus public experiences of the war. While a resolution of divisions beyond the Dayton context is still elusive, the personal interactions of people then and now speak to the power of social

embeddedness and its potential to lead societies away from violence and towards nonviolence.

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Appendix A

Supplementary Materials to Chapter 4, “Macro-Level Implications: The Effects of Foreign Fighters on Rebel Governance & Civilian Victimization”

This appendix provides materials in support of the statistical analysis contained in Chapter 4, including summary tables and regression tables showing the results of various robustness tests. All analyses are run in Stata 13.0.

A.1. Summary Statistics

Table A1. Summary statistics for dependent and independent variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Rebel anti-civilian violence	282	328.436	2186.38	0	35,126
Rebel institutions	122	4.418	3.098	0	10
Foreign fighters	282	0.336	0.473	0	1
Beyond neighboring FF	282	0.202	0.402	0	1
Coethnic FF	282	0.067	0.251	0	1
Foreign fighter type	282	0.677	1.204	0	4
Civilian aid	122	0.615	0.489	0	1
Leftist ideology	226	0.106	0.309	0	1
Islamist ideology	226	0.239	0.427	0	1
Nationalist conflict	226	0.487	0.501	0	1
Rebel strength	282	1.791	0.784	1	5
Territorial control	280	0.325	0.469	0	1
Conflict intensity	282	0.199	0.400	0	1
Conflict duration	282	3.528	3.922	1	23
Government violence	282	0.518	0.501	0	1
Population Density (<i>ln</i>)	281	3.940	1.273	1.510	6.036
Income Growth	255	-0.129	11.924	-64.996	30.357

A.2. Robustness Test for Rebel Governance Models

To test the robustness of the results presented in Chapter 4, I conducted a number of additional tests to assess rebel propensities to establish governing institutions. First, to reduce the sensitivities in the *govern* variable while also reducing skewness, I employ a more blunt ordinal variable measuring rebel institutions. The variable, *govern2*, is also from Huang (2016) and ranges from 0 to 3. I use ordered logit regression in models that employ *govern2* as the dependent variable. Following Huang (2016), I tested the validity of the proportional hazards assumption for ordinal logistic regressions. I find that the reduced *govern2* variable does not violate this assumption, and that ordered logistic regression is thus another appropriate estimation method in this particular case. The results are presented in Table A2 below and are in line with those from the OLS regression presented in Chapter 4 (see Tables 4.4 and 4.5). While the coefficient for *foreign fighters* is slightly smaller than in the main analysis (1.904 vs 2.036), the effect is still substantial, positive, and statistically significant at the $p < 0.01$ level. Also, as in the main analysis from Chapter 4, the variables *beyond neighboring foreign fighters* and *coethnic foreign fighters* are both positively associated with rebel institutions, but the coefficients are not statistically significant.

Table A2. Ordered logit model regression results

VARIABLES	Model A1 <i>Reb. Gov.</i> (ord. log.)	Model A2 <i>Reb. Gov.</i> (ord. log.)	Model A3 <i>Reb. Gov.</i> (ord. log.)
Foreign Fighters	1.904** (0.659)	1.644** (0.587)	1.893* (0.744)
Beyond Neighboring FF		0.644 (0.739)	
Coethnic FF			0.026 (0.847)
Civilian Fatalities	-0.117+ (0.067)	-0.125+ (0.067)	-0.116+ (0.069)
Civilian Aid	2.906** (0.663)	2.920** (0.653)	2.904** (0.068)
Leftist	3.068** (0.597)	3.117** (0.622)	3.066** (0.677)
Territorial Control	0.791+ (0.470)	0.805+ (0.452)	0.788+ (0.458)
Nationalist Conflict	1.053* (0.474)	1.068* (0.460)	1.050* (0.478)
Income Growth	-0.009 (0.013)	-0.007 (0.013)	-0.009 (0.013)
Observations	92	92	92

** p ≤ 0.01; * p ≤ 0.05; † p ≤ 0.10, robust standard errors clustered in dyadid in parentheses.

I also replicate the above models using tobit regression, which accounts for censoring of the dependent variable at both the lower and upper bounds – i.e. it accounts for the fact that by design the number of institutions cannot be lower than 0 and higher than 10. The results from the tobit models appear in Table A3, and are also in line with results from the main analysis included in Chapter 4. While the presence of foreign fighters predicts rebel institutionalization, the type of foreign fighter populations that groups recruit – individuals from the immediate conflict region and those who share ethnic ties with the majority of the group– is unrelated to governance.

Table A3. Tobit model regression results

VARIABLES	Model A1 <i>Reb. Gov.</i> (tobit)	Model A2 <i>Reb. Gov.</i> (tobit)	Model A3 <i>Reb. Gov.</i> (tobit)
Foreign Fighters	2.364** (0.733)	2.137** (0.668)	2.134** (0.848)
Beyond Neighboring FF		0.425 (0.864)	
Coethnic FF			0.547 (1.125)
Civilian Fatalities	-0.145+ (0.084)	-0.148+ (0.085)	-0.132 (0.085)
Civilian Aid	3.719** (0.658)	3.709** (0.652)	3.700** (0.666)
Leftist	3.938** (0.655)	3.940** (0.652)	3.918** (0.657)
Territorial Control	0.893 (0.566)	0.896 (0.556)	0.819 (0.557)
Nationalist Conflict	1.138* (0.568)	1.131* (0.555)	1.079+ (0.570)
Income Growth	-0.004 (0.017)	-0.004 (0.017)	-0.005 (0.017)
Constant	0.040 (0.686)	0.058 (0.681)	0.099 (0.709)
Observations	92	92	92

** p ≤ 0.01; * p ≤ 0.05; † p ≤ 0.10, robust standard errors clustered in dyadid in parentheses.

A.3. Robustness Tests for Civilian Victimization Models

I conduct a number of additional tests on rebel propensities for civilian victimization in order to confirm the robustness of the results derived from the series of negative binomial regressions performed in Chapter 4. Table A4 provides the results of the OLS regression using log-transformed counts of civilian deaths as the dependent variables. These models help to address concerns related to the overdispersion of the civilian victimization data. These models replicated Model 5 and 6 from Chapter 4.

Table A4. OLS regression with log-transformed dependent variable

VARIABLES	Model A4 Civilian Deaths (ln) (OLS)	Model A5 Civilian Deaths (ln) (OLS)
Foreign Fighters	0.676 (0.814)	1.978† (1.029)
Beyond Neighboring FF	0.808 (1.095)	
Coethnic FF		-2.105* (0.951)
Rebel Governance	-0.203** (0.073)	-0.141* (0.070)
Rebel Strength	0.912* (0.296)	1.020** (0.383)
Islamist	0.487 (0.824)	0.303 (0.811)
Conflict Intensity	1.607* (0.692)	1.414* (0.663)
Conflict Duration	0.301** (0.060)	0.290** (0.058)
Gov't Violence	0.599 (0.528)	0.560 (0.481)
Population Density	0.626** (0.211)	0.581** (0.198)
Income Growth	0.000 (0.023)	0.008 (0.026)
Constant	-3.518** (1.012)	-3.659** (1.000)
Observations	92	92
R-squared	0.49	0.51

** p ≤ 0.01; * p ≤ 0.05; † p ≤ 0.10, robust standard errors clustered in dyadid in parentheses.

Due to limited data availability, the sample size for the main analysis is relatively small, which may make results particularly sensitive to outlier observations. An analysis of standardized residuals, hat values, and Cook's distance values reveals that one conflict dyad in particular – AFDL-Congo – is potentially influential. Accordingly, I re-

estimate my main models after removing the influential observation. The coefficient on the main predictor variable (*foreign fighters*) is slightly smaller than in the main analysis (1.880 vs. 1.988), but is still statistically significant and positively associated with civilian victimization at the $p < 0.01$ level. Moreover, the effect of foreign fighters from *beyond neighboring* states on rebel use of anti-civilian violence becomes even more substantial (3.506 vs. 1.960), and also becomes significant at the $p < 0.01$ level. The coefficient on the predictor for *coethnic* foreign fighters becomes slightly smaller when omitting the potentially influential AFDL observation (1.340 vs. 1.540), but is still statistically significant and negatively associated with civilian victimization, as in the main models from Chapter 4. I therefore choose to leverage the larger, complete dataset in the main analysis to preserve degrees of freedom, and am confident that the results from the main analysis are not compromised by potentially influential observations.¹⁰²

¹⁰² I also account and adjust for outliers by using the *nbadjust* command in Stata 13.0, which adjusts or removes outliers of a variable assumed to have a negative binomial distribution. I do not present the results of these models here, but they also confirm the findings in the original analysis from Chapter 4, as well as the results of the various robustness tests included in this appendix.

Table A5. Negative binomial models of civilian victimization w/out outliers

VARIABLES	Model A6 Civilian Deaths (neg. bin.)	Model A7 Civilian Deaths (neg. bin.)	Model A8 Civilian Deaths (neg. bin.)
Foreign Fighters	1.880** (0.579)	-0.508 (0.617)	2.067** (0.566)
Beyond Neighboring FF		3.506** (01.004)	
Coethnic FF			-1.340+ (0.805)
Rebel Governance	-0.384** (0.092)	-0.487** (0.111)	-0.324** (0.103)
Rebel Strength	2.800** (0.716)	2.714* (0.661)	2.884** (0.8010)
Islamist	2.272** (0.667)	2.912** (0.701)	1.989** (0.606)
Conflict Intensity	2.727** (0.638)	2.934** (0.698)	2.710** (0.694)
Conflict Duration	0.258** (0.083)	0.299** (0.096)	0.261** (0.081)
Gov't Violence	1.445* (0.589)	1.962** (0.660)	1.281* (0.626)
Population Density	0.824** (0.293)	0.804** (0.287)	0.767* (0.291)
Income Growth	0.082** (0.030)	0.096** (0.032)	0.077* (0.034)
Constant	-6.861** (2.011)	-6.980** (1.901)	-6.845** (2.070)
Observations	91	91	91
Log Likelihood	-327.41	-324.68	-326.90
X ²	104.36	142.81	100.77
Probability > X ²	0.000	0.000	0.000

** p ≤ 0.01; * p ≤ 0.05; † p ≤ 0.10, robust standard errors clustered in dyadid in parentheses.

Finally, to address the possibility that structurally different processes are responsible for a number of the zeroes in the main dependent variable of civilian victimization, I use a zero-inflated negative binomial (ZINB) regression to replicate the main analyses. These results are presented in Table A6. In the negative binomial

component of Model A7, which replicates Model ii in Table 4.4 (see Chapter 4), the coefficient for *foreign fighters* becomes substantively smaller (1.224 vs. 1.998), but is still statistically significant and positively related to civilian victimization. Though the coefficient for *beyond neighboring* foreign fighters is no longer statistically significant in the negative binomial portion of the regression, the coefficient for *coethnic* foreign fighters becomes substantially larger relative to its value in Model 6 from Chapter 4 (-2.247 vs. -1.540), and its statistical significance increases to the $p < 0.01$ level (from $p < 0.05$). These results confirm the findings in Chapter 4: groups with foreign fighters are more likely to abuse civilian populations, relative to locally-resourced groups, but that those that recruit coethnic foreign combatants are less likely to engage in civilian victimization, relative to rebel groups that recruit non-coethnic individuals from abroad.

The estimates of the logit inflation component of Models A9-A11 also provide interesting results. The logit inflation stage does not account for levels of civilian victimization ranging from zero to the variable's maximum value, but rather determines the possibility that some zero observations are "excess zeroes" in that they originate from different structural processes (Long 1997). In all three models, the logit inflation estimates of the *foreign fighters* variable are significant and negatively related to the absence of one-sided violence. What's more, the presence of foreign fighters from *beyond neighboring* states appears to foster conditions that make the absence of civilian victimization unlikely. This provides further support to the hypothesis that

disembeddedness incentivizes violence, and that foreign fighters specifically encourage rebel organizations to use violence. The logit inflation estimates of Models A9-A11 also suggest that rebel groups face less need to engage in civilian victimization when they develop institutions: anti-civilian violence is unlikely to occur in conflict where rebels govern the local populace. One-sided violence is also unlikely to occur in conflicts where rebels are significantly weaker than the government, in sparsely populated areas, and when conflicts end quickly after they begin as a result of military defeat of rebels.

Table A6. ZINB models of civilian victimization

VARIABLES	Model A9 Civilian Deaths (neg. bin.)	Model A10 Civilian Deaths (neg. bin.)	Model A11 Civilian Deaths (neg. bin.)
Foreign Fighters	1.224** (0.321)	1.816* (0.852)	1.455** (0.304)
Beyond Neighboring FF		-0.434 (0.894)	
Coethnic FF			-2.247** (0.695)
Rebel Governance	-0.141 (0.091)	-0.039 (0.129)	-0.030 (0.096)
Rebel Strength	1.434** (0.308)	1.600** (0.598)	1.346** (0.256)
Islamist	0.418 (0.685)	-0.605 (0.865)	-0.207 (0.676)
Conflict Intensity	1.896** (0.420)	1.348* (0.613)	1.758** (0.388)
Conflict Duration	0.060+ (0.032)	0.116* (0.046)	0.049 (0.033)
Gov't Violence	1.105** (0.362)	0.276 (0.680)	0.648 (0.453)
Population Density	0.161 (0.286)	0.150 (0.334)	0.029 (0.234)
Income Growth	0.076** (0.017)	0.077* (0.034)	1.663 (1.268)
Constant	0.724 (1.619)	0.411 (2.310)	1.663 (1.268)

Logit inflation			
Foreign Fighters	-1.183† (0.608)	2.363 (2.231)	1.589† (0.815)
Beyond Neighboring FF		-17.771* (6.923)	
Coethnic FF			1.200 (0.930)
Rebel Governance	0.220* (0.092)	2.394* (1.048)	0.187* (0.095)
Rebel Strength	-0.960** (0.353)	-2.452† (1.496)	-0.910** (0.348)
Islamist	-0.877 (0.873)	-15.806* (6.304)	-0.717 (0.896)
Conflict Intensity	-1.027 (0.698)	-12.365* (5.832)	-0.956 (0.703)
Conflict Duration	-0.329** (0.111)	-0.649† (0.357)	-0.331** (0.115)
Gov't Violence	-0.438 (0.615)	-12.881* (5.172)	-0.436 (0.614)
Population Density	-0.787* (0.397)	-4.609* (2.338)	-0.722† (0.373)
Constant	7.049** (2.296)	29.126* (14.719)	6.792** (2.160)
Observations	92	92	92
Log Likelihood	-309.23	-318.22	-303.58
X ²	146.79	81.71	206.86
Probability > X ²	0.000	0.000	0.000