Recruitment practices of Europe's last guerrilla

Ethnic mobilization, violence and networks in the recruitment strategy of the Kosovo Liberation Army

By

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Introduction[1]

On November 28, 1997, three masked armed men appeared in front of thousands of Kosovo Albanians at the funeral of a teacher killed by Serbian forces in the village of Ludeviq, in the region of Drenica. They had come to call for the end of the peaceful resistance against the Milošević's regime and introduced themselves as rebels of the Kosovo Liberation Army (Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës, UÇK, from now on KLA). As the man who had read the communiqué took off his mask, the crowd chanted, "UÇK, UÇK, UÇK!" Several young men followed them, begging to be taken in the group.[2] For the following three months after the funeral in Drenica, reporters ran into the guerrillas, often masked and in scarce numbers, guarding checkpoints in rural Kosovo, but by the spring of 1998 scenes like the one in Ludeviq became a norm in several areas in Kosovo.

As Milošević' stepped up the counterinsurgency and violence engulfed much of Kosovo, thousands of young Albanians young flooded the KLA's local headquarters, demanding weapons and a chance to join its ranks. Hundreds of immigrants in the United States and Western European capitals donated money to buy weapons for the KLA.[3] It seemed that the KLA had risen to prominence and unprecedented strength overnight. An organization of a handful of individuals who engaged in sporadic attacks against Serb forces for four years since the early

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[2] "Fjala e Ushtarëve të UÇK-së në Varrimin e Mësuesit Halit Geci në Llaushë," Zëri I Kosovës, Nr. 45 11. 12. 1997 and Abrashi, Fisnik and Ylber Bajraktari. "UÇK: Emergence from illegality?" Koha Ditore, Dec. 1, 1997, pp. 2
[3] Sullivan, Stacy. Be Not Afraid for You Have Sons in America: How a Brooklyn Roofer Helped Lure the US Into the Kosovo War. and Hockenos, Paul. 2003. Homeland Calling. Exile Patriotism ad the Balkan War. Cornell University Press, pp. 177-261

1990s,[4] in 1998 had over 25,000 members.[5] What triggered the rapid success of recruitment in the KLA? Can ethnic solidarity and reaction to state violence be the main explanatory factors? Do more subjective elements, such as the rebels' strategies and their implementation, provide additional and relevant explanations for its quick growth?

With the exception of a few authors, the majority of the political science literature on rebel recruitment in an asymmetric war suggests that participation in a rebellion is conditioned by a mix of material or social endowments[6] - whether monetary compensation or status - and coercion.[7] This type of explanation fails to consider the dynamics between large-scale state violence[8] and the ethnic homogeneity of its target.[9] The evidence of this research shows that successful recruitment is the result of a competition between the parties in conflict, in which they test the power of loyalty or brute force. It is a race between winning the support of the civilians caught in the middle and achieving their submission. In this sense, this essay follows a recent perspective in the civil war literature that analyzes recruitment as a dynamic process shaped by recruiters and recruits, besides structural factors such as the type of counterinsurgency and ethnicity. Since the focus on individual participation is largely at the center of most theories, the literature has somewhat lost sight of the rebel organization as an active participant in the recruitment process. This paper restores agency to the rebel organization and brings to the fore the perspectives of rebel commanders who see recruitment into their organization as a function of supply and demand. The organization and the recruitment strategies, as well as the tactics

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[4] Interview with Xhavit Haliti, an early organizer and a KLA political representative

[5] Interview with Rexhep Selimi, an early organizer and a member of the KLA. His claims are corroborated by the International Organization for Migration, which facilitated the registration of former combatants after the war.

[6] Humphreys and Weinstein. "Who fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War."

[7] Kristine Eck. "Raising Rebels."

[8] Kalyvas, Stathis and Matthew Kocher. "How 'Free' is Free-Riding?"

[9] Gates, Scott. "Recruitment and Allegiance."

employed to attract recruits, appear to form a crucial part of what seems to be a two-way process. By broadening the current recruitment debate to give the rebel organization agency, we may gain a better understanding of the logic that drives recruitment in guerrilla organizations and their subsequent development. The findings may carry implications that go well beyond the scholarly discussion and have an impact on policy, questioning the effectiveness of the counterinsurgency strategies while surveying the effects of the methods used.

The choice of the KLA as a case study is somewhat arbitrary, but also ideal for several reasons. The now-disbanded guerrilla force fought an asymmetric war against much superior Serbian forces in Kosovo, in eventually triggering an international intervention, and the case provides a unique opportunity to understand the dynamics of recruitment when rebels' goal is not necessarily to build a force to win the war militarily. The KLA, whose operations lasted six years, spanning different political contexts, is a successful liberation movement. A focus on the KLA allows the study of temporal variation in recruitment, as the guerrilla gained momentum, and the relation of this variation with different types of violence used by the Serbian counterinsurgency. Because the KLA was an ethnic movement, it allows a deeper understanding of the functioning of ethnicity in the recruitment effort.

Although focused only on recruitment, this paper also partially fills a gap in the literature on guerrilla movements, since the KLA is an understudied case. While there is a growing postwar literature on the KLA in Albanian consisting mostly of autobiographies and hagiographic biographies or general narratives, it is not translated in any language. In English, a few journalists' accounts by Tim Judah, James Pettifer, Miranda Vickers, Janine Di Giovanni,

Chris Hedges and Stacy Sullivan,[10] provide useful information for general readers who are interested in the Kosovo war, but simplify the emergence of the KLA and gloss over important local dynamics. A recent effort by Henry Perritt[11] to produce a serious study of the KLA suffers from the use of selective sources.

In this essay, I relied on qualitative methods to research the recruitment question to lay the groundwork for future quantitative research. My choice of qualitative research methods is in part influenced by time constraints and limited resources to construct a representative sample of the former KLA combatants to survey. Secondly, without previous work and accurate qualitative data to explain the KLA's recruitment process, any attempt to construct a quantitative research instrument and measurement devices will be deeply flawed. Though qualitative methods are believed to be less generalizable than quantitative methods, in this case the former allow for more in-depth information on specific case studies. In this study I employ new data collected through open-end interviews with about 20 senior members of the KLA and other political actors that lived through the war in Kosovo. The interviews are supplemented by a detailed review of historical events and analysis in the years preceding the war in Kosovo, newspaper reports, as well as International War Crimes tribunal testimonies and memoirs compiled and written in the war's aftermath. They are all used to reconstruct the narrative of recruitment in Kosovo and to trace its logic and evolution. According to former KLA commanders, recruitment changed over time to adapt to the situation on the ground and the political context. The KLA's recruitment

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[10] Tim Judah's "Kosovo: War and Revenge," Yale University Press, 2002; James Pettifer's "Kosova Express: A Journey in Wartime," University of Wisconsin Press, 2005; Miranda Vickers' "Between Serb and Albanian: A History of Kosovo," Columbia University Press, 1998; Janine Di Giovanni's "Madness Visible: A Memoir of War," Vintage, 2005; Chris Hedges' chronicles in New York Times and Foreign Affairs since 1997; Stacy Sullivan's "Be Not Afraid, for You Have Sons in America: How a Brooklyn Roofer Helped Lure the US into the Kosovo War," St. Martins Press, 2004.
[11] Henry H. Perritt, Jr's "Kosovo Liberation Army: The Inside Story of an Insurgency," University of Illinois Press, 2008

strategy was influenced or favored by discriminatory state policies, an ethnically and ideologically homogenous population, failure of nonviolence movement to yield political results, high poverty rates, scarce government engagement in rural areas and disproportional and indiscriminate state violence. These variables would be difficult to identify through quantitative methods. Though the findings in this essay are primarily based on qualitative research methods, limited quantitative data from a demobilization survey with former combatants conducted by the International Organization for Migration in 1999 will be used to show the interaction between ethnicity and violence with recruitment.

The paper is divided in five parts. The first section considers the main findings in the literature on rebel recruitment in general and factors that pertain to the case study specifically, including but not limited to the role of ethnicity, ethnic mobilization and violence in rebels organizations. In the second part I will provide a brief history of the conflict and a general context under which the KLA emerges in Kosovo. Upon examination of the circumstances that led to the Kosovo war, I argue that the conflict in Kosovo should be placed in the context of systemic changes in the world order with the end of the Cold War as well as the power vacuum at the center of the highly centralized state that led to its disintegration. Section III of the paper analyzes the main structural factors, as identified by former KLA leaders that influenced the recruitment in the insurgency. In part four I explain the genesis of the first guerrilla cells and trace the logic of recruitment and the adaptability of the strategy from the onset of the conflict to the international intervention that halted the war in Kosovo. I argue that familial and social networks, through which guerrilla leaders obtained local control and elicited civilian support, were at the core of KLA's recruitment strategy. This last section of the essay maps out the impact of ethnic homogeneity and counterinsurgent indiscriminate violence on patterns of

recruitment in pivotal events during 1998-1999. Part V includes concluding arguments and suggests possible avenues for future research on rebel recruitment.

Section I: Current theories on rebel recruitment

In the last two decades insurgencies have become the focus of many civil war studies. Most of the scholarly work has traditionally been focused on understanding the factors and the state structures that cause rebellions and civil wars. Other studies use collective action problem to explain the logic that underlies individual participation in rebellions and the incentives that allegedly attract members to a rebel group. While the literature on the subject is evolving, a full review is beyond the scope of this paper. Instead, this section will focus on the theories that focus on the factors favoring rebel recruitment in order to define the framework through which the recruitment in the Kosovo Liberation Army can be understood. While the majority of the literature identifies the features leading to the break out of the war, only a few cases deal directly with the factors that help rebels implement their recruitment strategies. This section summarizes a select body of work that has broadened the understanding of the role of ethnicity, violence and the importance of networks, the three elements that rebel organizers in Kosovo have identified as the most relevant features for their organization's successful growth.

The role of ethnicity is among the most contested issues in the literature on civil war. Earlier work that looked into factors that lead to the onset of civil wars rejected ethnicity or

ethnic-based grievances as predictors of conflict. In "Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War"[12]

(2003), James Fearon and David Laitin argue that while grievance-based ethnic solidarity and

mobilization can be helpful to insurgencies, they are not crucial to their success. It is the

weakness of the state and factors like rough terrain, cross-border safe havens and financial

support that give birth to a successful insurgency, especially in cases where governments may

exhaust their resources to co-opt a large population.[13] The authors hypothesize that the solution

is to induce the local population to deny insurgents access to information on the activities of the

community. The efforts to elicit collaboration from the local population are premised on

sanctions, retribution and coercion, but also can be cast as a competition between government

forces and rebels to persuade or incentivize the civilian population to cooperate. "The presence

of an ethnic insurgency does not imply that the members of the ethnic group are of one mind in

their determination to fight the state till they realize a nationalist dream. The immediate concern

is how to survive in between government forces using violence to gain information or punish

alleged rebel supporters and rebel forces using violence to punish alleged informants, moderates;

or government sympathizers."[14] Fearon and Laitin claim that if given the opportunity, an

insurgency can thrive with a small number of rebels and does not need the strong, widespread

popular support that might stem from inequality or linguistic and religious discrimination. Yet,

while the authors concede that grievances may favor rebellion by pushing noncombatants to

shelter the rebels, their theory leaves unexplored a possible link on how ethnic ties may give the

rebels the advantage to establish control, access information and a readily identified pool of fresh

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[12] Fearon, James and David Laitin. 2003 "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," American Political Science
Review, 97: 75-90
[13] ibid, pp. 80
[14] ibid, pp. 80

recruits. Fearon, however, contended on "Ethnic Mobilization and Ethnic Violence"[15] (2004) that violence gives ethnicity a role in the conflict, making it socially relevant and politicized.[16] According to this author, ethnicity is socially relevant "when people notice and condition their actions on ethnic distinctions in everyday life," and it becomes politicized when "political coalitions are organized along ethnic lines, or when access to political or economic benefits depends on ethnicity." He credits the use of violence as the main factor in politicizing ethnicity, causing "rapid and extreme polarization in societies in which ethnicity had not been much politicized."

Ethnicity does not feature prominently in Jeremy Weinstein's and Macartan Humphreys' "Who Fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War"[17] (2008), a micro-level analysis that seeks to narrow down the factors that determine rebel participation in civil war. Drawing on the experiences of 1,043 combatants and 184 noncombatants in Sierra Leone's civil war, Weinstein and Humphreys test seven hypotheses that could explain rebel participation in a rebellion. They range from economic deprivation to exclusion, political decision-making, political alienation, material rewards for joining a fighting group, and strong social networks and safety. While these authors find that political and ethnic group memberships do not appear as prominent motivations, participation in a military faction does depend on an individual's relative social and economic position, the costs and benefits of joining, and the social pressures that emanate from friends and community members,[18] but not specifically from ethnic belonging.

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[15] Fearon, James D. 2004. "Ethnic Mobilization and Ethnic Violence." Oxford Handbook of Political Economy.
[16] Ibid, pp. 2
[17] Weinstein, Jeremy and Macartan Humphreys. 2008. "Who Fights? The Determinants of Participation in Civil War," American Journal of Political Science, Vol. 52, 2
[18] ibid, pp. 482

Recent work on civil war gives much more prominence to ethnicity. In the group-level analysis of 124 ethnic conflicts since World War II in "Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel,"[19] (2010) Cederman et al. find that exclusion from the state and competition along ethnic lines are strongly associated with internal conflict. While rebel recruitment is not central to the article's argument, by exploring the capacity of different ethnic groups to mobilize against the central power, the authors provide a useful description of the environment that is conducive to rebellion and recruitment. By casting ethnic war as a competition of ethno-nationalist claims on state power and the state is seen as an institution that is made of different degrees of ethnic representation,[20] Cederman et al. find that support for rebellions and violence is most likely to erupt among ethnic groups when they perceive the government as illegitimate. Violence is also equally likely in places where political leaders gain legitimacy by favoring their ethnic kin at the expense of other communities in the provision of public goods.[21] Thus, according to their account, groups that are excluded from state power become fertile grounds for organizations that challenge the government, with those the least included most likely to support a rebellion that confronts the central authority. A similar story arises when ethnic groups experience "negative emotions" as part of loss of power and prestige due to shifts in the power balance at the level of the state.[22] The result is a willingness to fight in response to resentment and anger aimed at reversing changes in the power hierarchy or establishing dominance. This willingness to fight is particularly visible when the excluded groups are numerically larger, because they can draw on

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[19] Cederman, Lars-Erik, Andreas Wimmer, and Brian Min. 2010. "Why Do Ethnic Groups Rebel? New Data and Analysis," World Politics 62(1): 87-119.
[20] Ibid, pp. 87
[21] ibid, pp. 94
[22] ibid, pp. 88

their superior numbers to recruit fighters and have a larger resource pool to sustain their organizational infrastructure.

Similarly, in her study of Nepalese rebels in "Raising Rebels,' [23] (2010) Kristine Eck argues that ethnicity assists rebel recruitment because it minimizes the costs, lessens attrition and resolves the commitment problems in that process.[24] Ethnicity, according to Eck, is crucial in part because its markers - language, names and residence – allow "leaders to target their recruitment efforts, effectively overcoming the information problem and diminishing coordination costs since leaders can rely on existing ethnic networks."[25] Ethnic ties, according to Eck, also weaken the threat of defection by members of that ethnic group to government's side due to fear of retaliation from the wider ethnic community. Rebels also benefit from government's conflation of the entire ethnic group with the ethnicity of the rebels, making participation in the insurgency seem like a means of protection.[26]

On the basis of participation as a means of protection, Stathis Kalyvas' and Matthew Kocher's "How 'Free' is Free Riding in Civil Wars? Violence, Insurgency and Collective Action Problem"[27] (2007) challenges the generally held assumption in civil war literature that non-participation in a rebellion is relatively costless. Reflecting on the literature, but also data from Vietnam's Phoenix Program and the Greek Civil War, these authors suggest that while it is true that rebels run serious personal risks in war zones, so, too, do non-rebels.[28] The argument

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[23] Eck, Kristine. 2010. "Raising Rebels: Participation and Recruitment in Civil War." Report/Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University.
[24] Ibid, pp. 23-24
[25] Ibid, pp. 23
[26] ibid, pp. 23
[27] Kalyvas, Stathis and Matthew Kocher. 2007. "How 'Free' is Free Riding in Civil Wars? Violence, Insurgency, and Collective Action Problem," World Politics, Vol. 59, No. 2, pp. 177-216
[28] ibid, pp. 179

refutes the applicability of the collective action problem literature to insurgencies that are characterized by patterns of violence that systematically select nonparticipants for victimization. The key to Kalyvas' and Kocher's theory is the role that violence plays in shaping the civil war as a whole, but most importantly how recruitment and civilian support for the guerrillas become a function of different types of violence.[29] The difference in the application of types of violence rests on the assignment of guilt: in employing selective violence the target is the individual presumed guilty, while in indiscriminate violence the guilt is collective and the group as a whole is punished. Kalyvas and Kocher posit that irregular wars implicate civilians more than other types of warfare, in part because rebel fighters hide among the civilian population, posing an identification problem to government forces, which cannot tell combatants from noncombatants. As a consequence, government forces target the civilian population indiscriminately based on group profiles, such as ethnicity, location, sex and age, regardless of civilians' allegiances. "If an individual's chances of being victimized depend on a profile rather than on his or her behavior, then shunning participation in the rebellion and free riding may actually prove deadlier than joining it since the rebels may be able to offer a degree of protection."[30]

In addition to providing security incentives for potential recruits, in the wake of state indiscriminate violence the rebels are often found to provide protection for the targeted civilian population, subsequently increasing the civilian support for the insurgency and winning the sympathy of information providers at the local level. Yet, Kalyvas and Kocher warn that the implications of this dynamic relationship between violence and patterns of recruitment in civil war may lead to strategic use of violence. Rebel organizations are not depicted as static players

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[29] ibid, pp. 185-187

[30] ibid, pp. 186

faced with the state's indiscriminate use of force. Instead, according to the authors, for the insurgency to grow, the guerrilla leaders need to have "the ability and willingness to capitalize" on the indiscriminate state violence.[31] Thus, pending on their capacity and overall strategy to absorb the effects of the state-sponsored violence, rebels can take advantage of state reprisal to raise recruits, further strengthen the ethnic ties and promote themselves as credible protectors to a population that is at the receiving end of mass violence.

Eck also asserts that the recruitment process varies with the degree and type of violence: individuals are more likely to join a rebel group when violence is intermediate than when it is widespread and indiscriminate, because the protection incentives offered by the rebel group change.[32] She also finds that coercive measures, like kidnapping, but also blackmail and intimidation, are also employed to raise recruits. This seems especially in conflicts where the losses inflicted to the rebels are high and their resources, like training and arming, are scarce, making coerced recruitment a cheap alternative, if less useful. Likewise, in a competition to win support and establish control over people and territory, ideological indoctrination becomes a tool through which rebels reach out to marginalized communities and expand their numbers.[33]

Because so much of the insurgency's success and recruitment's process hinges on control over information, a portion of the civil war literature that focuses on micro-level analysis pays attention to the local recruitment dynamics. Earlier studies, like Donald L. Horowitz's "Ethnic Groups in Conflict"[34] (1985) explains that ethnicity, envisaged as an extended kinship, becomes especially potent in settings where institutions are absent. The family takes over the duties

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[31] ibid, pp. 190
[32] Eck, Kristine. 2010. "Raising Rebels: Participation and Recruitment in Civil War," pp. 24
[33] Eck, Kristine. 2010. "Recruiting Rebels: Indoctrination and Political Education in Nepal," Department of Peace and Conflict Research in Uppsala University.
[34] Horowitz, Donald L. 1985. "Ethnic Groups in Conflict." University of California Press.

traditionally carried on by any higher political organization, becoming the primary venue where all dealings – social, political and economic – take place. "Extended families are able to help their members in more transactions than nuclear families are. Reciprocally, the need and expectation of help strengthen the bonds of the extended family."[35] Such ties, according to Horowitz, facilitate mobilization and political organization along ethnic lines, where a threat to one member of the group is perceived as an attack on the whole. "To call ethnicity a kin-like affiliation is thus to call into play the panoply of rights and obligations, the unspoken understandings and the mutual aspirations for well-being."[36]

In "Inside Rebellion,"[37] (2006) Jeremy M. Weinstein makes incentives and resources the centerpiece of the rebel recruitment process. Through the study of insurgent groups in Uganda, Mozambique and Peru, Weinstein finds that the key variables that drive the recruitment process are selective incentives used to motivate participation in an insurgency and overcome the commitment problem of their members. The incentives can be economic and social "endowments" and their use depends on the context in which the rebellion is organized. In resource-rich countries, the rebels, who possess material goods and have greater access to weapons, usually rely on economic incentives and entice the recruits by immediate pay-offs to join the rebel group's ranks. The other rebel strategy is one that plays up the "social endowments," likely to be found in poorer countries engulfed in ethnic or ideological wars. In such conflicts, rebels recruit new members by appealing to ethnic, religious, cultural and ideological identities as well as community networks. Weinstein does not measure the relative success of either strategy in terms of attracting larger numbers, but he observes that while rebel

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[35] ibid, pp. 57-64

[37] Weinstein, Jeremy M. 2006. "Inside Rebellion: The Politics of Insurgent Violence." Cambridge University Press.

organizations that recruit with the promise of material rewards usually suffer from low commitment, the ones relying on social rewards are able to gain more credible members because of their ability to tap on preexisting social networks.[38] These social networks meet two crucial functions: they enable the rebels to collect information about potential members, but also impose costs of noncooperation on the members of the network. The methods of recruitment along social networks, according to Weinstein, can be employed only by groups rooted in shared identities or belief systems with networks that connect them to the civilian population. In these cases, credible commitment problems are solved through indoctrination, but also by increasing the risks of participation through recruits' involvement in a attack that acts as a test of their worth.

Kristine Eck's work on rebel group recruitment strategies breaks new grounds in the study of insurgent movements in a civil war by looking at the recruitment from the perspective of rebel leaders and their approach to raising fresh recruits. Her study rejects widely held assumptions in the rebel organization literature that recruitment is a problem of participation or a one-time strategy that is path dependent. Instead of portraying recruitment as a variable that remains constant over time and space, unaffected or unrelated to the degree of violence, battlefield outcomes or the intensity of conflict, Eck posits that recruitment is a dynamic process. It dynamics are not solely based on supply, but also demand, which can often depend on availability of resources and other constraints such as the risk of infiltration, but also concerns over breakdown of discipline.

Despite disagreements over the relevance of ethnicity, violence and networks to insurgencies, the civil war scholars reviewed in this section appear to have reached a consensus

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[38] ibid, 96-107

that these three elements are intrinsic to the recruitment process and should be given more attention. These features appear especially helpful at the onset of the rebellion, when rebels need access to information on community's activities and resources, such as pools of easily identifiable recruits. In the remainder of the paper, through a detailed review of political events, government policy, state's response to insurgency and the structural features of Kosovo's society, I will use this framework to explain how these three factors have set the stage and are capitalized by the guerrilla leaders to successfully grow their insurgency. While the study pertains to Kosovo's specific context and may not be easily generalizable to explain recruitment processes in other conflicts, the value of this micro-level approach lies in the restoration of agency to rebel leaders.

Section II: A Brief History of the Yugoslav Disintegration and War in Kosovo

In most of the Western literature, the 1999 NATO's humanitarian intervention constitutes the legal definition of the start of the war in Kosovo. This overlooks Chief Prosecutor at the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) Louis Arbour's public confirmation that the Tribunal was extending to Kosovo its jurisdiction on violations of the laws of war in March 1998.[39] In Kosovo there is also a broad consensus that the armed conflict between ethnic Albanian guerrillas and the Serbian government troops and Yugoslav Army began in March 1998, the last episode of the disintegration of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The conflict itself, however, began nearly a decade earlier when Yugoslavia began

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[39] Office of the Prosecutor, 10 March 1998, CC/PIO/302-E.
 http://www.icty.org/sid/7683, last accessed on April 21, 2011

to unravel as the national questions – and not the often-quoted ancient hatreds[40] -- preceding

World War II were again brought to the fore. The tensions between opposing national ideologies

resurfaced after having been successfully, albeit temporarily, suppressed, by Tito's design to

replace them with a structural conflict over Yugoslavia's federal arrangements. [41] The creation of

a Yugoslav supranational identity initially rested on strong central power and later devolved into

greater autonomy for the six republics and two autonomous provinces composing the Yugoslav

federal state.[42] Thus, when Tito died in 1980, the unitary vision of Yugoslavia was challenged.

The different national communities, but primarily the Serb leadership who harbored grievances

for a perceived weakened role of Serbia in the federation, competed for autonomy.

With no obvious successor in sight and a dysfunctional rotating presidency, Yugoslavia's

national groups were locked into a security dilemma. Serbia's Communist leadership fell into the

hands of Slobodan Milosevic, who by tapping into nationalist sentiments brought to prominence

a nationalist elite, which was bent on reversing the constitutional reforms and securing Serbian

dominance in the federation. That Serbian nationalists would win the day became obvious when

Milosevic moved to strip Kosovo and Vojvodina off their constitutionally guaranteed autonomy.

In 1989 Kosovo, Serbia's Albanian- populated southern province and Vojvodina, the Hungarian-

inhabited northern province, which had been elevated to near-republic status in the 1974

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[40] For detailed discussion of how the nationalist elites came into being and the causes of the war in Yugoslavia, see Ivo Banac's "The Fearful Asymmetry of War: Causes and Consequences of Yugoslavia's Demise." Daedalus, Vol. 121, No. 2, The Exit from Communism (Spring, 1992), pp. 141-174

[41] Banac, Ivo. "Political Change and National Diversity." Daedalus
Vol. 119, No. 1, Eastern Europe... Central Europe... Europe (Winter, 1990), pp. 150-151

[42] Ibid, pp. 153 and the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution
http://www.arhivyu.gov.rs/active/en/home/glavna_navigacija/leksikon_jugoslavije/konstitutivni_akti_jugoslavije/ustav_sfrj_1974.html; last accessed on March 11, 2011

Constitution, were subjected to Serbia's rule, which in turn strengthened its position in the federal bodies.[43]

In Slovenia and Croatia, Yugoslavia's northern and most prosperous republics, this change gave rise to other political alternatives, namely nationalist parties that responded to Serbia's revision by opting for one of their own. In June 1991, Slovenia and Croatia declared independence and split from Yugoslavia, but not before having to go to war with Serbia Shortly after, Milosevic's war machine, which at this point consisted of most of the manpower and equipment of the Yugoslav Army, special police forces and local Serb paramilitary units, tried to put the breaks on Bosnia and Herzegovina's independence. Underequipped, ethnically divided and lacking the capacity that Croatia exhibited in its defense against Serbia, Bosnia's Muslims – who were not particularly ethnically mobilized or rallied around their religious belonging at that point, became the targets of two expansionist policies.[44] To the South, they confronted Milosevic's vision of Greater Serbia, which was to include all the territories in Yugoslavia where Serbs lived. To the North, Croatia's Franjo Tudjman carved up a similar plan for the Croat minority. Yet, although the Bosnian war became increasingly conventional thanks to the republic's organized police force and the defection of former Bosnian Yugoslav army officers, it claimed the largest number of civilian victims. Throughout the three-year war an estimated 100,000 civilians were killed, 80% Bosnian Muslims, with Srebrenica Massacre remaining the most gruesome episode of Yugoslavia's disintegration.[45] The later stage of the carnage in Bosnia

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[43] Silber, Laura and Allan Little. The Death of Yugoslavia, Penguin Books, 1997. In addition to Serbia's vote, Milosevic established control over the Kosovo and Vojvodina votes by replacing the provinces' communist leaders with officials who cooperated with him, giving him enough power to plunge the federal institutions in a permanent deadlock. He also held the Montenegrin vote.

[44] For details see O'Ballance, Edgar. Civil War in Bosnia.

[45] An estimated 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys were executed in and around the village of Srebrenica, a UN safe haven. For details see ICTY indictment against Bosnian Serb leaders Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic filed

led to a limited international military intervention and an American diplomatic effort that ended

the war by making Bosnia independent and governed by a complicated power-sharing design[46]

that legitimized the results of the Serb ethnic cleansing campaign.

This much-awaited international engagement and the subsequent Dayton Peace

Agreement,[47] however, fell short of resolving the conflict in Yugoslavia. The settlement not only

left Milosevic and Tudjman unpunished for the atrocities committed in Bosnia, but it failed to

address the situation created by the imposition of a marshal law in Kosovo. When Milosevic

abolished Kosovo's autonomous status at the beginning of the 1990s and subjected the majority

ethnic Albanian population to state-sponsored segregation and discrimination, Kosovo's

Albanian political leadership demanded to secede from the rump Yugoslav federation. However,

unlike Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia, which turned their cadres in the Yugoslav Army and

appropriated the military bases and equipment stationed in the republics, In Kosovo, Milosevic

arrested the top 200 police officers and fired the rest of the force, and the province did not have a

significant professional cadre in the army. Lacking means for an armed confrontation with

Serbia, Kosovo's leadership opted for an organized boycott of the Serbian state through a civil

resistance that was built in response to Milosevic's repression. Banking on eventual Western

support for its secession and appealing for intervention against Milosevic's oppressive policies,

the Kosovo Albanian political leadership created a virtual state that oversaw an apartheid-like

society and maintained the status quo.

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in 1995 by the war crimes prosecutor http://www.icty.org/x/cases/mladic/ind/en/kar-ii951116e.pdf; last accessed on
March 12, 2011 Sarajevo Documentation Center's figures, the best ones available, find more quotations in the
Bosnia Institute website

[46] For details, see Holbrooke, Richard. To End a War. Modern Library, Revised edition, 1999.

[47] Dayton Peace Agreement, signed November 21, 1995;
http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/bosnia/bosagree.html; last accessed March 12, 2011

Yet, alongside the nonviolent resistance led by the President of the self-styled Republic of Kosovo Ibrahim Rugova, and the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) that monopolized power among Albanians, an armed alternative existed through most of the 1990s. The armed confrontation with Serbia was espoused by a small network of families living in the rural regions of Drenica and Dukagjin, most prominently the Jasharis and the Haradinajs, and at least two outlawed political parties, which were confined to small cells operating underground in Kosovo and in the Albanian Diaspora in the Western European capitals, the Popular Movement for Kosovo (LPK) and the National Movement for the Liberation of Kosovo (LKCK).[48] The two families had long been targets of the state and had acquired popularity for not bending to the pressure that the Serbian forces put on them. Both families were treated as outlaws by the state. The movements advocating the war option represented a continuation of unsuccessful attempts to secede from Yugoslavia that begun in Kosovo since the end of World War II and were crushed ever since, their members imprisoned or killed.[49] For decades, these movements were marginalized by the powerful parts of Kosovo Albanian elite that cooperated with the Yugoslav regime on identifying Kosovo's national aspiration with Albania, its politics and ideology.[50] They also failed to gain momentum because of the accommodation that Tito made for the Albanians in 1974, allowing for mass education, employment and a sense of welfare that they had never experienced before.[51] At the time, Albania was under the isolated ruled of Enver Hoxha, a Communist dictator who broke ties with Tito's Yugoslavia for ideological purposes in 1948. In Kosovo's clandestine movements, which up to mid 1990s mainly confined their activity

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[48] In Albanian, Levizja Popullore e Kosoves and Levizja Kombetare per Clirimin e Kosoves

[49] Di Lellio, Anna. Forthcoming on a book that traces back the origins of the Kosovo Liberation Army through the story and the representation in contemporary memory of KLA's best-known figure Adem Jashari.

[50] Kraja, Mehmet. Vite te Humbura, Shtepia botuese Rozafa, Prishtine, pp. 60

[51] Interview with Baton Haxhiu, senior Kosovo editor and commentator. January, 2011, Prishtina

to passing propaganda material to each other,[52] Albania, which they could not touch or see, was idealized. The situation dramatically changed for Kosovo's Albanians after Tito's death. The first signs of radicalization surfaced in 1980s, but were crushed by the Communist leadership. At the end of the decade, however, the Serbian repression intensified and Kosovo's nonviolent means failed to attract international attention – most obviously in the failure to include Kosovo in the Dayton Agreement – the groups that had always embraced the war option began to take action. From 1991 to 1997, sporadic training as well as guerrilla attacks took place throughout Kosovo, eventually becoming coordinated and frequent. The newly formed guerilla group KLA targeted police checkpoints, ambushed representatives of Serbian state in Kosovo and settlements of Serb refugees from Croatia, who were sent to Kosovo as part of Serbia's colonization plan. Milosevic responded by sending more of his special police units in Kosovo, who would raid homes of suspects and tighten the noose on Kosovo Albanians in general. The conflict escalated into war in early 1998, when Serbia launched a violent crack down of the KLA. Initially, the violence was selective. Fifty-three members of the family of Adem Jashari, one of the founders of the KLA, were killed as Serbian forces shelled their homes in Prekaz, a village in central Kosovo. This massacre constituted the "event" that marked the beginning of war in Kosovo.[53] The news from Prekaz stunned Albanians in Kosovo and in the Diaspora, gaining funds and recruits for KLA. As the guerrilla grew in numbers and popularity, Serbian violence became indiscriminate.

By March 1999, a decade after failing to stop Milosevic's wars, different international diplomatic initiatives tried to exert pressure on Serbia to stop the violence in Kosovo. Serbian

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[52] Clark, Howard. Civil Resistance in Kosovo, pp. 41

[53] Di Lellio, Anna and Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers. "The Legendary Commander: the construction of an Albanian master-narrative in post-war Kosovo." Nations and Nationalism, 12 (3), 2006, 513-529.

officials and Kosovo Albanian political and guerrilla leaders were brought together several times

to negotiate a solution. The sides agreement on a ceasefire in 1998, which was monitored by the

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) that served both sides to reassess

their strategies and rearm for a continuation of war. All, including the last round of talks at the

French chateau of Rambouillet,[54] which under American pressure offered autonomy to Kosovo

in exchange for the KLA to lay down its weapons, failed to convince Milosevic. By that point,

various Western governments had gone through a decade of embarrassment and criticism for

failing to stop the genocide in Bosnia, the Kosovo apartheid and now war crimes. Milosevic's

reluctance to cooperate with the West led to NATO's 78-day air bombardment in March 24,

1999. NATO's intervention was reasoned on humanitarian grounds, not as a means to further the

demands of the Kosovo Albanian insurgents or its nonviolent leaders for an independent state.

NATO did not commit ground troops in Kosovo and never established an official line of

coordination with the KLA to fight Serb forces.[55] With NATO fighting an aerial war and KLA

mounting a symbolic resistance on the ground, Milosevic launched an ethnic cleansing campaign

to alter Kosovo's demographic composition, a practice he used previously in Bosnia. About

10,000 Albanian civilians were killed during the war in Kosovo, between March and June 1999

and about one million were forced to flee to neighboring Albania and Macedonia.

The war ended on June 12, 1999. In exchange for a halt to NATO bombing, Milosevic

signed off Kosovo to become a United Nations protectorate, agreed to pull out his troops and

NATO established a peacekeeping force. Under the UNSC Resolution 1244,[56] Kosovo remained

[54] For details, see Rambouillet Accords, signed by Kosovo Albanian leaders in 1999 and refused by Serbia. http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/fs_990301_rambouillet.html; last accessed on March 14, 2011
[55] Interview with a senior KLA leader, who wished to remain unnamed on May 2010, in Prishtina.
[56] United Nations Resolution 1244. http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N99/172/89/PDF/N9917289.pdf?OpenElement; last accessed on March 14, 2011

legally under Yugoslavia's sovereignty, while a UN administration prepared it for self-government in a yet to be determined political status. Milosevic, indicted for masterminding the ethnic cleansing in Kosovo and numerous war crimes in 1999, was ousted from power in Serbia through a popular revolt that turned key members of the regime against him. In 2001, Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic handed him over to the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia, where he died from natural causes while ongoing trial. Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008, after failed negotiations that began with international mediation in 2007 and ended unsuccessfully a year later. Independence was achieved through a blueprint drafted by UN Secretary-General's envoy Marti Ahtisaari, who also mediated the talks between Kosovo and Serbia. Under that deal, Kosovo is supervised by an international presence with veto powers to ensure the implementation of an agreement offering extensive constitutional guarantees to the Serb minority. To date, Kosovo's independence has been recognized by 75 countries, including the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom and most European Union member-states, with the exception of Spain, Portugal, Slovakia, Romania, Greece and Cyprus. In the region, Kosovo's independence is also not recognized by Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro. Serbia continues to contest and oppose it, although it failed to persuade the International Court of Justice that Kosovo's independence violates international law.[57]

Section III: Factors that Favored Insurgent Recruitment in Kosovo

The causes and consequences of the Kosovo war have been debated for over a decade.[58] Of course, Kosovo's war cannot be divorced from the international dimension and the

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[57] International Court of Justice. http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/141/15987.pdf, July 22, 2010

[58] A detailed discussion of the works written on this subject can be found in Sabrina P. Ramet's "Thinking About Yugoslavia: Scholarly Debates About the Yugoslav Breakup and the Wars in Bosnia and Kosovo," Cambridge University Press, 2005

opportunity that the guerrilla movement was presented with at the time. After Bosnia's carnage, Milosevic's policies, alongside fears of further destabilization in the region with new waves of refugees, found less tolerance in the West. Also, the collapse of Albania and the subsequent civil unrest that resulted from the botched pyramid schemes on which people lost their savings, created a safe haven for the KLA. Hundreds of thousands of weapons, once a scarcity for the guerrillas, were looted from the Albanian army depots and became widely available. What remains largely understudied is the internal dynamic of the rebel group and their interaction with ethnic mobilization, violence and networks.

One such important aspect of the Kosovo war was the rapid growth of the KLA from a marginal armed group to an organized guerrilla force that counted over 25,000 members by the end of the war.[59] This section of the paper will account for the factors that were outside of the guerrillas' control, but favored their successful recruitment. The two key factors that various insurgency leaders and analysts in Kosovo identify as crucial to the KLA's success in attracting recruits and widespread support among Kosovo's Albanian majority were the social ties and the counterinsurgency, both results of state policies toward Albanians in Kosovo. In Kosovo's case, any discussion of rebel recruitment strategy would be incomplete without the examination of the depth of ethnic mobilization and use of state violence in supporting the insurgents' plan for an armed uprising against Serbia and in shaping the recruitment patterns. Such discussions would also not make sense if they were placed outside the cultural and political context in which the late 1990s armed resistance took place in Kosovo. Interviews, as well as data on when recruits joined the KLA in the whole of Kosovo corroborate that rebels included both these variables into their strategic calculation, and at times even sought to influence them to achieve their own

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[59] International Organization for Migration.

ends.[60] This close investigation from the first movers to the end of the war allows tracing

qualitatively as well as quantitatively how different types of violence as part of the Serbian

government counterinsurgency shaped the motivations for participation and the organization's

strategy itself. The representation of the war in popular culture and the construction of the master

narrative after the conflict explain another dimension of the recruitment process, used by the

KLA to attract support and new members.[61] After having detailed the radicalization process that

produced the strong communal ties in Kosovo and mapping out Serbian counterinsurgency and

its interaction with the origins and the timeframe under which recruits joined the KLA, I will

return to a detailed discussion of how KLA recruited and selected its members during the 1990s.

1. Ethnic Homogeneity and Mobilization in Kosovo

By the end of 1989, in response to Serbia's policies, Albanians in Kosovo made a

political choice. About 90 percent of an estimated two million people living in Kosovo,

Albanians demanded to secede from Yugoslavia and carve their own state. Subject to stereotypes

but also harboring some of their own, Albanians had long felt estranged in Yugoslavia, a feeling

that contributed to their sense of "groupness." According to the Serbian scholar Lazar Nikolic, a

series of empirical findings of surveys in 1970s showed that the social distance between the

different ethnic groups in Yugoslavia was the highest between Albanians and all other ethnic

groups in the country, with Albanians increasingly perceived by others and themselves as alien

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[60] Interview with Veton Surroi, January 2011, in Prishtina.
[61] Di Lellio, Anna and Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers. "The Legendary Commander: the construction of an Albanian master-narrative in post-war Kosovo." Nations and Nationalism, 12 (3), 2006, 513-529

in Yugoslavia.[62] Adding to the experience was the general suspicion with which Serbia treated Kosovo's Albanians after Tito's death. In a span of nine years, from 1981 to 1988, an estimated 584,373 Kosovo Albanians had some negative encounter with the state. They were arrested, interrogated, interned or reprimanded.[63] The effect of these policies in Kosovo installed a sense of general fear, but they also contributed to the homogenization of Albanians as an ethnic group, while the response and the actions that Albanians undertook to counter Serbia's oppression would lead to their ethnic mobilization. The ethnic homogeneity and the subsequent mobilization would become factors that would prove key to rebels' recruitment efforts and the organization of a successful insurgency. By the end of the decade, Kosovo Liberation Army capitalized on an environment where a Serbian attack on one Albanian would be perceived and responded to as an attack against the whole.

How did the ethnic homogenization and mobilization come about? The answer lies in the 1990s when Kosovo Albanians rallied behind the Democratic League of Kosovo (in Albanian, Lidhja Demokratike e Kosoves, now on LDK), a movement that advocated the nonviolent approach in response to a set of constitutional changes that Slobodan Milosevic initiated to revoke Kosovo's autonomy. The nonviolent response was appealing for two main reasons. Firstly, with no standing army or a well-organized police force, unlike Slovenia and Croatia, Kosovo Albanians had no capacity to rebel against Serbia. Secondly, with the events in Eastern Europe as a backdrop – groups like Poland's Solidarity and Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia -, the intellectual class in Kosovo sought to elicit the same degree of international support by casting what it thought would be an acceptable identity for a society striving for democracy against an

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[62] Nikolic, Lazar. 2003. "Ethnic Prejudices and Discrimination: The Case of Kosovo" in Understanding the War in Kosovo, ed. Florian Bieber and Zidas Daskalovski, pp. 55
[63] Clark, Howard. The Civil Resistance in Kosovo, pp. 43

oppressive state.[64] According to Shkelzen Maliqi, a participant in the political activities of this period, the Albanian movement's goal was to make transparent Serbia's tyranny and aggression. "Pushed into building a kind of colonial government and an apartheid system, Serbia lost credibility of a modern state that does not discriminate its citizens."[65]

The less obvious product of the nonviolent resistance, however, was to create unity within Kosovo's society, which while grouped as a counterbalance to the outside threat, was by no means in sync. The divisions were particularly stark between urban centers in Kosovo, largely seen as having adapted to the Communist ideology and enjoying its privileges, and villages, which sough to maintain a sense of tradition, as well as skepticism toward the Yugoslav state, and were often punished for not showing allegiance to its "Brotherhood and Unity" ideology. As Maliqi contends, "the homogeneity displayed on the outside, which was forced upon by Serbian aggression, and the need of the community to defended itself from that aggression, could not destroy the internal heterogeneous matrixes of social and ideological divides of Albanian society."[66] The two strands of the Albanian social and ideological divide were brought together throughout the 1990s in Kosovo. They were woven by the joint experience of becoming undifferentiated target by state's organized violence against Albanians in Kosovo and collective actions that were undertaken by the different political organizations in response to that violence. The grassroots reaction to Kosovo's revocation of autonomy through spontaneous protests that often turned violent, "gained structure and hierarchy" in early 1990, with LDK, which had a "fanatical belief in democracy and peaceful protests, as the most effective method to resist the

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[64] Maliqi, Shkelzen. 2000. "Why Peaceful Resistance in Kosovo Failed."
[65] Ibid 2000.
[66] Ibid 2000.

communist regime and Serbian nationalism."[67] As a consequence, "what was emerging was a set of methods and organizational structures to identify violence with the Serbian oppressor while restraining counter-violence from the population to use the limited space available to communicate their defiance."[68]

Then there was the simultaneous resignation from the Communist Party and the membership's cross over to ethnic parties. To the Albanian elite this would become the moment from which it would begin to identify itself with the "politicized mass."[69] Both strands flowed into the LDK, which became the front that would represent the Albanians demand for independence. As many authors recall, enlistment in the LDK resembled an independence referendum, with as many as 700,000 people queuing up to sign the movement's membership cards.[70] Additionally, the movement's organizers set up branches and local offices throughout Kosovo, filling the political vacuum in the cities and villages. Then came the layoffs of hundreds of thousands workers from their jobs either because they were engaged in strikes or defended those who were sacked. Ultimately nearly 90 percent of Albanians were expelled form their jobs. The figure also included all the teachers and professors who protested Serbia's decision to halve the secondary education and significantly reduce Albanians' enrollment in primary education and refused to teach the Serbian curriculum. In March 1990, Kosovo Albanians were gripped by panic as 7,000 children, mostly enrolled in primary schools throughout Kosovo, reported symptoms of poisoning. Serbia condemned the episode as "mass hysteria," but a UN expert sent

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[67] Ibid 2000.
[68] Clark, Howard. Civil Resistance in Kosovo, pp. 59
[69] Kraja, Mehmet. Vite te Humbura, pp. 182
[70] Malcolm, Noel. Kosovo: A Short History, pp. 348

to investigate the claims found elements of Sarin or Tabun, a chemical weapon component produced by the Yugoslav Army, in the blood and urine samples of the children.[71]

Apart from going through a traumatic experience as a group, Kosovo Albanians engaged in public manifestations that taught them to act in concert, strengthen group solidarity and overcome fear by identifying with a large group, but also by emotional bonding. One of the most successful endeavors was the campaign to reconcile thousands of blood feuds, or vendetta cases, between Albanian families in Kosovo. The campaign involved a massive undertaking by students and intellectuals, who under the leadership of a Kosovo Albanian renown historian Anton Cetta, travelled from Kosovo's capital Prishtina to villages and asked families to forgive each other for murders of their members. At this time, there were at least 2,200 feuds in Kosovo, involving 1,000 deaths,[72] with countless families locked down by a cycle of revenge killings that constrained the movement of men from their homes. The British historian Noel Malcolm explains that blood feuds were "the most archaic features" of the Albanian society. "The aim is not punishment of a murderer, but satisfaction of the blood of the person murdered… honor is cleansed by killing any male member of the family of the original offender, and the spilt blood of that victim then cries out to its own family for purification."[73] The tradition stems from the 15th century Code of Laws, which regulated life in largely lawless territories that included Kosovo, northern Albania and parts of Montenegro. Organizers, concerned with the eradication of the blood feuds, cast the tradition as a major liability that could potentially be exploited by Serbia to further divide the Albanian society. They appealed to this external threat to bring people together and push through the ethnic unification. As Serbia introduced a curfew in Kosovo following

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[71] Mertus, Julia. How Myths and Truths started the War; Malcolm, pp. 345.
[72] Ibid, pp. 60-68
[73] Malcolm, Noel. Short History of Kosovo, pp.

several waves of riots, other forms of protest began to take place that contributed to the further ethnic homogenization of Albanians. For example, every night at the start of the curfew, Kosovo Albanians would go to their windows rattle their keys or bang metallic pots simultaneously in defiance of the marshal law. For a series of nights, people in the cities and the villages lit candles and placed them outside their windows or doorways to commemorate a victim of the repression or condemn some act of violence. During the day, Albanians would stop their cars at a certain hour and honk their horns and as Clark explains,[74] respective groups used public holidays to protest the Serbian government repression. In one instance, thousands of Kosovo Albanians marched through the streets of capital Prishtina to bury an empty coffin that symbolized the burial of violence.

The most important feature that led to Albanian homogenization and mobilization, however, was the recalibration of Kosovo's Albanian-dominated self-governing institutions to make the presence of the central state obsolete. This characteristic was in-built in the institutional structure of the Yugoslav Constitution, which had granted Kosovo the institutions of statehood twenty years earlier. Thus, when links with Yugoslavia were cut off in reaction to Milosevic's revocation of the autonomy, the institutions already in existence in Kosovo were absorbed by the nonviolent movement to serve the demands of the Albanian majority. As Maliqi recounts, Serbia's government cracked down on the main political institutions, like the province's government and police, but "it did not have the military and repressive potential to at once crush all of Kosovo's institutions."[75] Milosevic could do very little to forcefully prevent some 400,000

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[74] Clark, Howard. Civil Resistance in Kosovo, pp. 58.
[75] Maliqi, Shkelzen. 2000. "Why Peaceful Resistance Movement in Kosova Failed."

Albanian students of the 60 schools it shut down (out of 66 schools)[76] and about 6,000 teachers[77]

to turn to private houses, basements and depots to organize and attend classes. Health care and

welfare were handled similarly. With no access to hospitals and about 90 percent of Kosovo

Albanians in welfare, Mother Teresa, a local network, organized small clinics and humanitarian

aid offices to feed those in need for nearly a decade.[78] This effort to maintain a "parallel system"

and make the Serbian state's presence in Kosovo rudimentary was financed through an effective

tax system put in place in Kosovo and in the Diaspora, through which Kosovo Albanians were

asked to provide three percent of their income to support primarily the education system and

health care.

By 1992, the Albanian majority in Kosovo and from Kosovo were involved in the

maintenance of this institutional set up either by financing or through direct participation.

Alongside it, Kosovo Albanian political entrepreneurs in the nonviolent movement imposed an

"overbearing moral authority," which "in essence was more effective than the police state that

Serbia had imposed."[79] According to the Albanian commentator Baton Haxhiu, "in practice, the

fear from Serbia and the condemnation of any form of cooperation with the Serbian state by the

'court of people,' made it extremely difficult to make individual decisions about how to deal

with repression or to respect the Serbian police." The state's brutality and the uniformed reaction

against it through the parallel political life in Kosovo saw both sides entrenched in both sides of

an irreconcilable void:

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[76] Clark, Howard, Civil Resistance in Kosovo, pp. 98
[77] Ibid, Malcolm, pp. 349
[78] Vickers, Miranda. Between Serb and Albanian, pp. 276. According to the author, by 1994, about 20 percent of Kosovo's population depended on humanitarian aid
[79] Interview with Baton Haxhiu, January 2011

"The making of parallel institutions and the politics of apartheid led to physical and communications distance between two national communities. Serbs kept the main institutions and symbolically occupied important buildings and centers of towns, while the Albanians were expelled from institutions and they drew to margins, into suburbs and parts of settlements where they were the majority and felt safer. Although there were indeed no direct conflict and incidents, the divide was tectonic, not only between the Albanian population and the Serbian regime. The Serbian population actively supported the regime, proportionally much more than the regime was supported in Serbia itself, while Albanians without discrimination supported Rugova and the LDK, and were not only against the Serbian regime and police, but also against Kosova's Serbs, who accepted the privileges of apartheid system. The Albanian movement did not even try to decrease the distance between the two communities. Albanians decided for a boycott of Serbian institutions, as well as for the boycott of almost all connections with local Serbian population, except the most basic, which were necessary to survive."[80]

Another spin-off of Serbia's discriminatory policy toward Albanians was that it strengthened the social and familial ties in Kosovo. With economic prosperity shattered and institutional exclusion as a state policy, social activity was largely confined to the extended family, which reemerged as the primary organizing unit and "took on an organizational dimension."[81] In many instances, due to the socio-economic conditions and to lower the costs of living, families returned to a more traditional form of living together, a distinct feature especially in the villages. In these settings, whole families, often numbering as many as 50 members, lived in one compound, pooling the products of subsistence farming or their financial resources. The families lived mostly on remittances sent by a family member living abroad, among the 400,000 Kosovo Albanians who fled economic hardship and Serbia's forced military conscription to Western Europe by 1993, the majority of which sought political asylum or refuge in Germany and Switzerland.[82] The flows of refugees fleeing the Serbian repression grew further throughout the 1990s and the Diaspora become the backbone of the nonviolent resistance and later the

[80] Maliqi, Shkelzen. 2000. "Why the Peaceful Resistance in Kosovo Failed."
[81] Interview with Veton Surroi, January 2011
[82] Vickers, Miranda. Between A Serb and Albanian, pp. 272

guerrilla organization. While there is no clear estimate of the financial contribution made by the

Diaspora, the figures are assumed to reach hundreds of millions of dollars. It would be in these

circles of Albanians fleeing Kosovo due to repression or to support their families that the main

forms of organization of the guerrilla movement would emerge.

Alongside Kosovo's demographic characteristics – 90 percent Albanian population with

intimate know knowledge of the terrain[83] - Albanians' mass exclusion and discrimination from

the state institutions and the organized noncooperation with Serbia in the early 1990s, led to the

kind of ethnic homogenization and mobilization that would help guerrilla leaders organize an

insurgency. While the nonviolent resistance's main strategy was to avoid the provocation of

violence and elicit international support for Kosovo's independence based on Serbia's abysmal

human rights record, its immediate side effect was the ethnic homogenization of Kosovo's

Albanians. By the mid 1990s, every Albanian was engaged not only in boycotting the Serbian

state through concerted actions. They also made its presence obsolete through participation in the

parallel system, an "'as if'"[84] state, in which its members would volunteer, benefit from

solidarity and take pride in constructing what they believed was a new, modern Albanian identity

through nonviolence.[85] The "moral authority" imposed by the nonviolence movement in

response to the police state imposed by Serbia banned individuals from opting out, securing a

buy-in by the majority of 2 million Albanians,[86] further exacerbating the ethnic cleavages. At the

same time, the state exclusion, along with the violence and politically motivated arrests, created

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[83] International Crisis Group. "Kosovo's Long Hot Summer: Briefing on military, humanitarian and political developments in Kosovo," Balkan Report No. 41, Sept. 2 1998, pp. 6
[84] Malcolm, Noel. Kosovo: A Short History, pp. 348
[85] Clark, Howard. Civil Resistance in Kosovo, pp. 66-68
[86] Haxhiu explains that the only exception was made to the businessmen, whose cooperation with Serbia was not publicly condemned because most of the revenues to sustain the parallel system came from that sector. Interview, January 2011

negative effects because the Albanian elites, who had a conformist tradition toward the state, lost their privileges and shared the same fate with the rest of Kosovo's predominantly rural population. Public cooperation with Serbia would also invite a "name and shame" in the only local newspaper "Bujku" and the consequences amount to an exclusion from the ethnic group. The tight control within the ethnic group and the strong ties fostered by what developed into a uniformed response to repression were utilized as an asset by the KLA to enlist support and filter their new recruits. As noncooperation with the Serbian forces became the *modus operandi* of Albanians in Kosovo, the crossing of ethnic lines became impossible because of fear of social retaliation. It is through the same networks and relying on this ground created by the nonviolence movement that the KLA established control over information and managed to exercise selective violence against collaborators of the Serbian regime.[87]

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[87] Human Rights Watch. 2001. Under Orders: War Crimes in Kosovo.
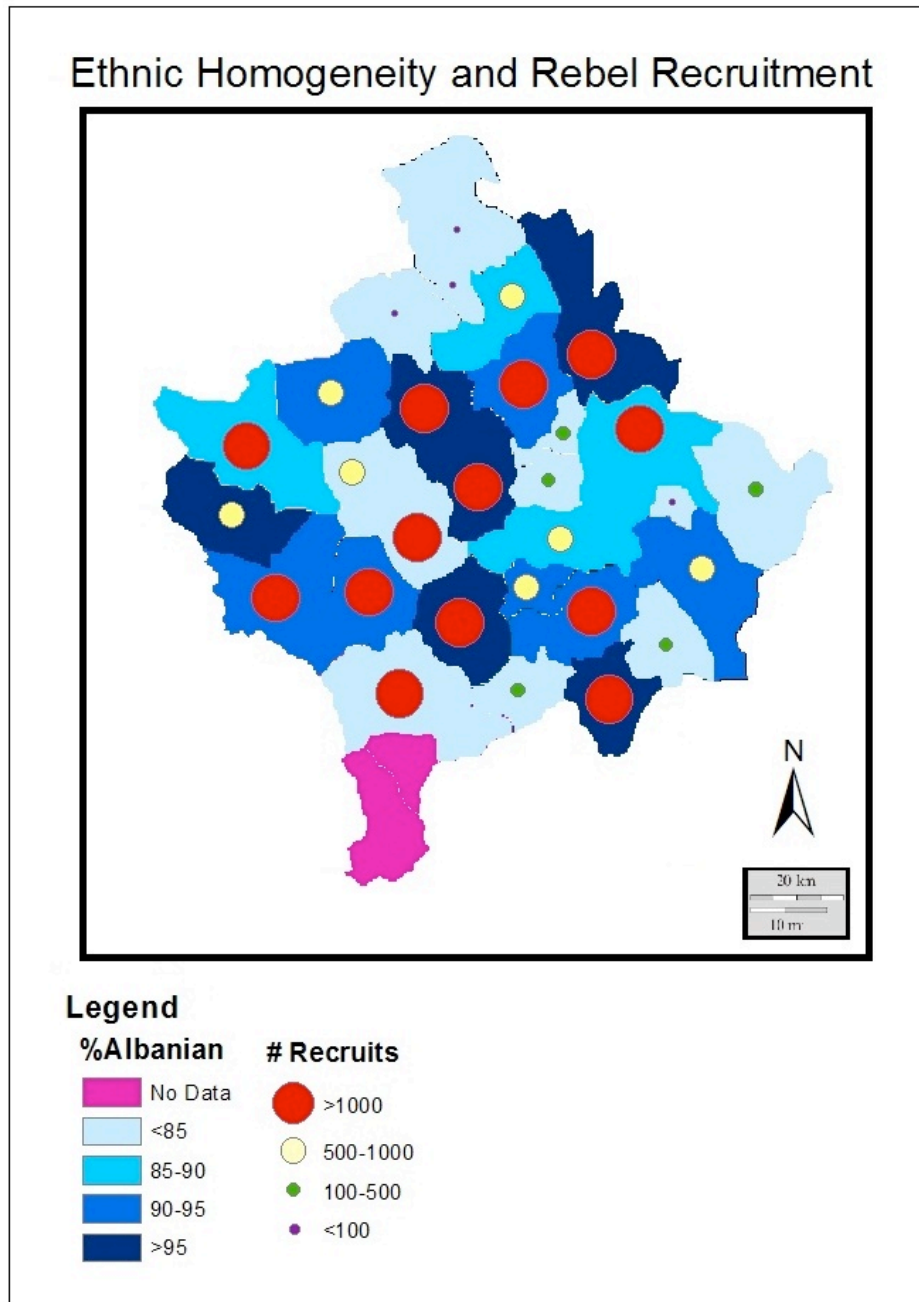
Map 1. Kosovo's ethnic composition and KLA's patterns of recruitment. Designed by Caroline Nash and Garentina Kraja based on data from IOM's Socio-Economic and Demographic Profiles of former KLA Combatants, 2000 and OSCE's "Kosovo/Kosova: As Seen As Told," 2003.

2. Serbian Government Counterinsurgency Strategy in Kosovo

The Kosovo Liberation Army organizers and commanders claim that the Serbian government repression and Serbian forces' indiscriminate violence were the catalyst of a broad guerrilla recruitment and support for the insurgency in Kosovo. These accounts are corroborated by the analyses of human rights activists, different observers and historians who traced a gradual radicalization during the repression and later a backlash as the Serbian government counterinsurgency violence intensified.[88] While these reports are detailed and succinct, they mostly fall short of treating the interaction between the state and rebels and the treatment of civilians, whose cooperation is key to both sides in the conflict. To investigate this question, the section of the paper will seek to analyze the logic that drove the Serbian counterinsurgency in Kosovo and how the KLA's recruitment figured in that strategy. It will focus primarily on the use of violence, but also the nature of troops and weapons deployed in Kosovo in response to the insurgency. The qualitative evidence and a plethora of observations brought forth in this section match the theories already advanced by Kalyvas and Kocher, who identified the interplay of recruitment and different types of violence. It supports the hypothesis forwarded, but not tested, by Eck who claims that intermediate government violence is most conducive to rebel recruitment because of the protection offered by the rebels.

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[88] The lack of full data on the intensity of conflict in Kosovo over time and space makes any quantitative analysis of the interaction between violence and rebel recruitment incomplete. However, several human rights groups who studied the patterns of war crimes and human rights abuses in Kosovo have made great strides in mapping the violence that characterized Kosovo's war, allowing potential scholars to explore its types and the consequences. Further, several international diplomats who spent time in Kosovo during the conflict have since discussed their observations, and some of their testimonies have become the backbone of war crimes trials against Serbian officials as well as KLA rebel leaders. While a complete picture of the cost of the 1998-1999 war in Kosovo is still to emerge, this paper will attempt to create an accurate picture of the Serbian strategy based on the consideration of the reports compiled by the Human Rights Watch, American Bar Association and American Association for Advancement of Science's "Political Killings in Kosovo March-June 1999," OSCE's "As Seen, As Told" volumes, as well as testimonies by Serbian police and military officials and international observes who implemented the ceasefire agreement with OSCE's Kosovo Verification Mission.

There were two notable shifts of Serbia's strategy in Kosovo from systematic low-intensity violence that had characterized the government's complicated coexistence[89] with the nonviolence movement in Kosovo throughout the 1990s. The first shift in strategy in Kosovo came after the end of the war in Bosnia and was in part dictated by domestic political developments in Serbia. In local elections held in late 1996, the Serbian opposition parties won in Serbia's major cities and in the 1997 parliamentary vote Milosevic's party loss ground to the extreme right candidates, whose political program included the expulsion of Albanians from Kosovo.[90] To take away the attention from domestic woes that were undermining the legitimacy of his regime, "Milosevic saw the complex problem of Kosovo as the unique and last instrument for defense of his power,"[91] in part because "the population is not capable of thinking about an alternative regime when it is facing war, mobilization and general hysteria that is a consequence of war."[92] Milosevic inaugurated a governing coalition with the extreme right Serbia's Radical Party on February 28, 1998, just as Serbian special police units killed 25 Albanians in the launch of the counterinsurgency campaign that escalated the war in Kosovo.[93]

The second shift in strategy came in December 1999, nearly a year after the launch of the initial phase of the Serbian counterinsurgency in Kosovo of "scorched earth policy," mainly carried out under the command of Serbia's Ministry of Interior. The tactics of the first period included the destruction of Albanian villages and the expulsion of 241,700 Albanians from their

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[89] Critics and human rights groups have written since that the nonviolent resistance in Kosovo benefited the three sides involved: Milosevic tolerated it because while it was an outlet for Albanian anger it did not open a new front of war for him; Rugova held a monopoly of power and the systematic abuse of human rights justified demands for independence and the West because it guaranteed status quo and did not compel them to get involved.
[90] Independent International Commission on Kosovo. 2000. "The Kosovo Report,"
[91] Vekaric, Vatroslav. 2000. "Beyond NATO Intervention in Yugoslavia: Motivations and Behavior of the Serbian Leadership During the Kosovo Crisis," Independent Center for Strategic Studies, Belgrade, pp. 10
[92] ibid, pp. 11
[93] Human Rights Watch. 1998. Humanitarian Law Violations in Kosovo, Vol. 10, No. 9. The report recounts that twenty-five Albanians died in the attack, at least fourteen people summarily executed by the Serbian police.

homes,[94] mainly in areas that were ethnically homogenous and important weapon routes along

Albania's border, or where the KLA's presence was suspected.[95] The second phase, however,

included a structural change, with the merging of the army units and police, but also the

placement of Milosevic's loyalists in commanding positions of both institutions. The Serbian

offensive that began in 1999 "was a methodically planned and well-implemented campaign."[96]

> "Villages in strategic areas were cleared to secure lines of communication and
> control of border zones. Areas of KLA support, as well as areas without a KLA
> presence, were attacked in joint actions by the police, army, and paramilitaries.
> Large cities were cleared using buses or trains and long convoys of tractors were
> carefully herded toward the borders. Refugees were driven into flight or
> transported in state organized transportation to the borders in a concerted program
> of forced expulsion and deportation characterized by a very high degree of
> coordination and control."[97]

With these parameters in mind, the rest of this section will attempt to reconstruct the

overall outlines of the Serbian counterinsurgency. I divide the Serbian strategy in three distinct

phases to better capture the variation of the different types of violence and approaches to the

KLA insurgency: a) Phase I, from 1996 to early 1998, a period of selective measures to crush the

emerging insurgency; b) Phase II, from February 1998 – March 1999 period, characterized by

indiscriminate but limited violence to quell the insurgency and the support for it, and c) March

1999-June 1999 when Serbian government retorts to indiscriminate, widespread killing and

ethnic cleansing. The last section of the paper will detail how the Serbian counterinsurgency

violence interacted with the KLA's recruitment efforts from the perspective of the guerrilla

leaders.

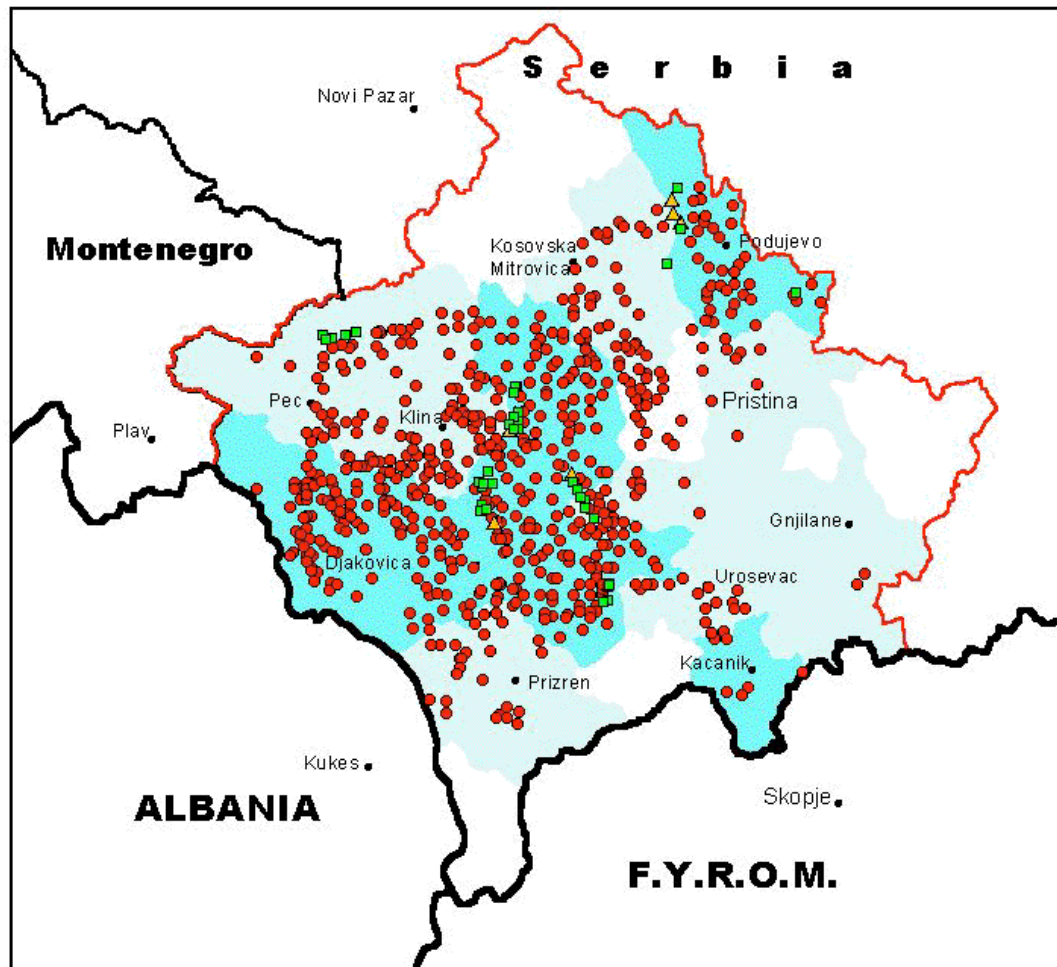[94] International Crisis Group. 1998. "Kosovo's Long Hot Summer," Balkan Report No. 41, pp. 8
[95] Human Rights Watch. 2001. "Under Orders: War Crimes in Kosovo," see Background of the conflict
[96] ibid, see chapter "Forces of the Conflict" and "The 1999 Offensive."
[97] Ibid, Executive Summary, The 1999 Offensive.
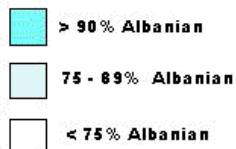
Map 2. The Pattern of Violence in Kosovo, 1998-1999. Source: The US State Department. May, 1999. http://www.state.gov/www/regions/eur/rpt_9905_ethnic_ksvo_7e.html

a. Phase I

Since the revocation of Kosovo's autonomy in 1989, but also in earlier instances like the widespread protests of 1981, Serbia's government imposed a state of martial law in Kosovo. The political response to the crisis in Kosovo deteriorated the security situation too because it failed to distinguish between the social and political grievances, between nonparticipants and participants in violence. "The differentiation process that was really needed… was never attempted; instead, all complainants were lumped together as 'counter-revolutionaries'."[98] Moreover, Serbia used every opportunity, be it a public protest or an incident, to boost up its police presence in Kosovo. After it sacked the Albanian police officers from the local police force and imprisoned 200 of them, Milosevic ordered officers from towns in Serbia to serve in Kosovo. [99] In contrast to the local police force, the Serbian officers did not speak the language and had no intimate knowledge of the terrain or the characteristics of the Albanian community. Many reportedly suffered from low morale and "desertions and demands for transfer were common among units serving in or earmarked for Kosovo."[100] In Kosovo, the police forces were seen as the mechanism that enforced Milosevic's repressive regime. The police forces were engaged in thousands of raids and arrests in the 1990s on the basis of ethnic profiling. In addition to the arrests of half of Kosovo's adult population from 1981 to 1988,[101] human rights groups note that many were subjected to weapons raids and interrogations. In about 9,000 cases between

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[98] Malcolm, Noel. Kosovo: A Short History, pp. 337
[99] International Crisis Group. 1998. "Kosovo's Long Hot Summer," Balkan Report No. 41, pp. 6
[100] ibid, pp. 6
[101] Clark, Howard. The Civil Resistance in Kosovo, pp. 43

1993 and 1996, police would pick an Albanian village, surround it with large force deployment, and then go house to house, separate the men from the women and conduct a search.[102]

As guerrilla attacks intensified, Serbia's security apparatus treated the armed rebels as a peripheral nuisance that was to be contained and dealt with selectively. At best the early clusters of the KLA were referred as "gangs"[103] limited to small and poorly armed groups, isolated in almost pure Albanian areas of central and western Kosovo, where the state's authority was mostly sabotaged or occasionally resisted. While Serbian government continued its policy of intimidation in the rest of Kosovo to enforce its rule through arrests, beatings and intimidation, it sought to limit the threat posed by armed groups territorially and manage its existence in isolation. One such example is the Jashari family in the central Kosovo region of Drenica. The Serbian forces attempted weapons' raids on the family in 1991 with regular police units and both times failed to enter the walled compound, which housed at least 30 members of the family.[104] The family could not legally move past their compound because its members would face arrest, but also police was under orders to use proportional force and not risk an escalation of violence. Another similar example was the village of Jabllanica in western Kosovo, related to the Haradinaj family, where Serbia's secret service claimed: "that movement at night …was unsafe, that it was under their (KLA's) control and any police presence may provoke a conflict that may take on different or larger shape."[105]

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[102] ibid, pp. 78-79; the author of this paper remembers her extended family in western Kosovo affected by these types of raids.
[103] ICTY Testimony by Zoran Stijovic, a member of the Serbian Secret Service in Kosovo, made during the trial of Ramush Haradinaj in October 8, 2007
[104] Di Lellio, Anna and Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers. 2006. "The Legendary Commander: the construction of an Albanian master-narrative in postwar Kosovo," pp. 516
[105] ICTY testimony of Zoran Stijovic, a member of the Serbian Secret Service in Kosovo, made during the trial of Ramush Haradinaj in October 8, 2007

Alongside the containment strategy that tolerated a few armed pockets in central, western and northern Kosovo, the Serbian government sought to take selective action against individuals it believed were engaged in the expansion of the Albanian armed activities. These attacks peaked at a total of nine in 1995,[106] the highest since the first registered rebel activity in Kosovo in 1992. During the first half of the 1990s, based on a dozen testimonies at different war crimes trials, the Serbian government and its Kosovo-based intelligence community appear to have had control over the territory. Its agents relied on surveillance and a network of informants close to the first rebel cells and phone taps to understand the origins of the armed groups, their strengths and plans. As Zoran Stijovic, a member of the Serbian Secret Service in Kosovo explained to an international tribunal in a recent war crimes trial, Serbian government used a mixture of coercion and benefits to elicit information from civilians that allowed them to selectively target the guerrilla cells. He claimed that the information on the rebel activity came mainly through "daily activities" like "issuance of IDs, travel documents" that Albanians had to get from Serbian authorities, but also interrogations under duress and more traditional forms of informants embedded with the community.

In one such case, two informants – one in a Serbian prison and another close to the rebel circles at the time – provided the police with the phone number and nickname of a prominent guerrilla organizer Zahir Pajaziti, whom they allegedly surveyed as he organized and carried out assassination attempts against two Serbian officials in Kosovo. Pajaziti, who was key the organization of the armed resistance in northern Kosovo and tried to merge several decentralized armed groups operating at the time,[107] was ambushed and killed along with two associates. The

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[106] ibid

[107] Interviews with Nuredin Ibishi-Leka and written summary by Rrustem Mustafa-Remi, June/August 2010

armed structure was similarly hurt in 1997 when Serbian police arrested Nait Hasani, a rebel

organizer based in Pristina, and convicted him to 20 years in prison. As a result, through the

access to local information, the Serbian forces were able to maintain control and decapitate

leading organizers of the insurgency. They were also able to intercept any weapons that would be

in Albanian possession in Kosovo, growing confident that the selective targeting strategy

repeatedly set back rebels' efforts to mobilize mass support, resources and establish a structure in

Kosovo.

The Serbian strategy shifted in 1996 and 1997 following a string of simultaneous attacks

in six cities in Kosovo, a period also marked by a dramatic increase in access to weapons and

training due to the state collapse in Albania[108] that allowed the armed movement to grow. Unable

or uninterested to precisely identify the scope of the threat, government officials began to target

villages that were in the vicinity of where attacks on the police took place, under the assumption

that the inhabitants of the village were involved in the assaults or offered the guerrillas shelter.

For one, Serbian officials appeared to believe that they had underestimated the threat posed by

the Albanian armed clusters and were now dealing with a group able to synchronize their attacks.

As Stijovic explained to the tribunal: "It's not easy to carry out so many attacks without good

logistics and good preparation…The targets of the attacks were not chosen at random." He and

other Serbian officials in charge of assessing the threat in Kosovo argued for a change in the

operational plan. "These attacks and some subsequent attacks that took place at the same time

provided us with the absolute right to conclude that they were backed by a well-organized group

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[108] In 1997, some 700,000 weapons were looted from Albanian military depots in a civil unrest that followed the collapse of pyramid schemes. It is estimated that a large portion of those weapons were sold to the KLA in Kosovo.

or organization that was carrying out these actions."[109] Attacks in the villages of Likoshan and

Qirez in February 1998 – where there was no visible KLA presence - were the launching pad for

the new Serbian strategy that escalated the violence in Kosovo. Special police units used an

attack helicopter, armored personnel carriers, mortars and automatic machine guns,[110] killing 25

Albanians who "were clearly not offering any resistance at the time of their death."[111] Though

police, according to the Human Rights Watch, claimed at the time that the situation "had gotten

out of hand," the government's performance in Kosovo followed a similar pattern in 1998.

b. Phase II

In this second phase that began with the attacks in 1998, Serbia's counterinsurgency in

Kosovo failed to distinguish between Albanian civilians and the KLA insurgents, often treating

them as one of the same. In part, the change in tactics was due to the information asymmetry that

Serbian intelligence began to experience as they escalated the violence, but also what they

perceived to be a "green light" by the US government to quell the insurgency.[112] The KLA

started to target Albanians who were considered collaborators of the Serbian regime and they

expanded their attacks with the aim of stretching the Serbian police thin.[113] But even in the

instances when Serbian security establishment had information on specific support for the

guerrillas, they relied on heavy-handed indiscriminate force aimed at discouraging the rebellion

through overwhelming employment of violence. In the village of Prekaz, on March 5, 1998, in

an apparent attempt to quell the rebellion, Serbian government forces sought elimination instead

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[109] ICTY Testimony of Zoran Stijovic in Ramush Haradinaj's war crimes trial, October 8, 2007.
[110] Human Rights Watch. Humanitarian Law Violations in Kosovo, 1998.
http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports98/kosovo/; accessed last on April 2, 2011
[111] ibid.
[112] In 1998, US Envoy Robert Gelbard referred to the KLA as a terrorist organization involved in terrorist activities in Kosovo. Many commentators believed that Milosevic interpreted this message as a permission to go after the guerrillas in Kosovo.
[113] Interview with a senior KLA intelligence official, January 2011.

of apprehension of the rebels in the Jashari family.[114] In two days of fighting with the family at their compound, police opted to kill fifty-eight Albanians, including eighteen women and ten underage children. A senior military official of the Yugoslav Army Branko Gajic suggested to the war crimes tribunal that the force used by the Serbian police and army in the spring of 1998 was fitting to root out the Albanian guerrillas and establish control. He justified the use of artillery as appropriate to the KLA's tactics to "fortify houses, settlements, entire villages and to arm them… and they would open fire at whoever passed. And now if the problem was being resolved with such a terrorist force's stronghold, then let's say houses would be destroyed."[115]

This approach included the widespread use of heavy anti-aircraft and machine guns of up to 40-millimeters by Serbian police special and the Yugoslav Army units. Such weaponry is usually designed for use in conventional warfare where the frontline is clearly demarcated and not to counter hit-and-run guerrilla activity. This is how British military attaché John Crosland, who observed the conflict from the ground, described the weapons used in the Serbian counterinsurgency operations:

> "These machines were used to blow down villages… We would come across areas that had been destroyed, wantonly destroyed, generally along the main roads and any villages that in Serbian terminology could harbor KLA… There were daily fires. Corn was set alight. Petrol stations were damaged and any businesses were wrecked…"[116]

By early spring of 1998, due to sustained attacks in central and western Kosovo villages started to resemble a wasteland. Serbian forces shelled any Albanian areas that were near two families – Jashari in central Kosovo and Haradinaj in western Kosovo - that they believed were at the

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[114] Human Rights Watch. Humanitarian Law Violations in Kosovo in 1998.

[115] ICTY Testimony by Branko Gajic, a senior military official, in the trial of Serbia's President Milan Milutinovic on September 11, 2007.

[116] ICTY Testimony by John Crosland, British military attaché at the British Embassy in Belgrade 1996-1999 at the trial of Vlastimir Djordjevic, October 26, 2009

center of the insurgency. The Serbian government strategy was to establish control by driving the civilian population out. The rationale, according to tribunal's military expert Philip Coo was to "blitzkrieg the area and drive the civilian population out of it in and attempt to try and control or militarily control the area by fear rather than by any proper strategic thought."[117] As a result, a UN report found,

> "Fighting in Kosovo has resulted in a mass displacement of civilian populations, the extensive destruction of villages and means of livelihood and the deep trauma and despair of displaced populations. Many villages have been destroyed by shelling and burning following operations conducted by federal and Serbian government forces. There are concerns that the disproportionate use of force and actions of the security forces are designed to terrorize and subjugate the population, a collective punishment to teach them that the price of supporting the Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units is too high and will be even higher in future. The Serbian security forces have demanded the surrender of weapons and have been reported to use terror and violence against civilians to force people to flee their homes or the places where they had sought refuge, under the guise of separating them from fighters of the Kosovo Albanian paramilitary units."[118]

By October, the violence employed by the Serbian forces, who claimed they were fighting the KLA in central and western Kosovo left up to 2,000 killed, displaced about 200,000 civilians and destroyed 7,000 buildings in shelling or deliberate burning in 269 villages.[119]

Contrary to Serbian government's belief, the counterinsurgency strategy in 1998 neither quelled the insurgency nor enabled the Serbian forces to reestablish control. The indiscriminate and heavy-handed response to what had initially been a contained KLA threat "created a population that may not have been interested in either party being in the area, but after their house had been removed, they certainly weren't going to be signing up for the party that had

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[117] ICTY Testimony by Philip Coo, in war crimes trial against Fatmir Limaj et. Al on April 13, 2005
[118] Report of the UN Secretary General Prepared Pursuant to Resolutions 1160 (1998) and 1199 (1998) to the Security Council. http://dediserver.eu/hosting/ethnodoc/data/KO19981003-1.pdf; accessed last on April 1, 2011
[119] ibid, pp. 3

removed their house."[120] About 9,326 men joined the rebellion immediately after the first wave

of attacks in Prekaz and Gllogjan,[121] or about 37 % of the total recruits, the largest number to

join the armed insurgency at any point during the two years of its existence. Another 5,334, or

about 21 %, joined in the second half of 1998 and 4, 240, or 20%, joined in the first three months

of 1999, just prior to NATO's bombing when the level of violence surpassed that of the previous

spring. The intensity of recruits' participation, the reported period of enlistment and the place of

origin matches the pattern of Serbian government counterinsurgency, indicating that a large

number of Albanians who joined the KLA did so while seeking protection from the Serbian

offensive.

Participation as a function of violence is also expressed in the testimonies of former

combatants, who while not providing a representative or random sample, shed some insights into

the factors that motivated at least some combatants to join the KLA. One of them describes that

his decision to join the KLA in the spring of 1998 followed a raid by Serbian police at his house,

the arrest of his brother and the subsequent beating by the police as he tried to visit relatives in

another part of the country. "They beat me but they didn't kill me. On that day I decided not to

go along the asphalt road. And because of the violence used against us and the massacres

perpetrated, I made up my mind to join the KLA."[122] This detail was not lost on Serbian officials.

Some of them recognized that "due to bad planning, (the police units) used too great of a force in

the action which followed, aiming to neutralize the terrorist group of Adem Jashari... Such usage

of force resulted with unnecessary civilian victims, which provoked a reaction and rapid

escalation of terrorism in the entire"[123] Kosovo. By the summer offensive in 1998, the KLA

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[120] ICTY Testimony, John Crosland in the trial of Ramush Haradinaj, October 4, 2007.
[121] IOM Socio-Economic and Demographic Profiles of Former KLA Combatants, January 2000, pp. 10
[122] ICTY Testimony by Elmi Sopi at the trial against Fatmir Limaj et al, on May 31, 2005
[123] ICTY Testimony of Momir Stojanovic, chief of security section of Pristina Corps in trial of Vlastimir Djordjevic on February 24, 2010.

mushroomed throughout Kosovo and former Albanian officers with training from the days when they were part of the Yugoslav Army were heading back to Kosovo to give the guerrilla organization the shape of a conventional force.[124] The Serbian government responded by ordering the Yugoslav Army to engage in clearing up the areas under the KLA control. According to one military attaché, about 13,000 soldiers rolled in with T-55 and T-84 tanks, while about 10,000 special police units deployed armored personnel carriers and tripled-barrel anti-aircraft weapons to destroy houses and assault villages.[125] But, the Serbian security forces resorted to controlling the main roads, losing the inside of Kosovo to the KLA. "By purely sitting in an area without actively patrolling, by observation points that are looking and providing information, you don't control the ground. And the KLA were very active and good at bypassing (Serbian) positions and using the ground and their local knowledge."[126]

c. Phase III

The realization by at least a few in the Serbian government that the limited and yet indiscriminate response to KLA's actions had the counter effect of what it set out to achieve did not translate into a government plan to establish control through selective violence. Instead, after a brief three-month ceasefire mediated by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Serbian police and the Yugoslav Army and police deployed additional troops for a final showdown in Kosovo.[127] In early 1999, there were up to 40,000 Yugoslav Army soldiers in Kosovo and about 30,000 police – including special police units and Special Anti-Terrorist units,

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[124] Interview with Bislim Zyrapi, former Yugoslav Army officer who fought against the Serbian forces in Bosnia's 1992-1995 war and became KLA's chief of staff in the summer of 1998. Interview was conducted on August 2010
[125] ICTY Testimony of John Crosland, British military attaché in the trial of Gen. Pavkovic on February 2, 2007.
[126] ICTY Testimony of John Crosland, British military attaché in the trial of Ramush Haradinaj on May 24, 2007
[127] For details of the force escalation see ICTY Testimony of John Drewienkiewicz, known as General "DZ", the deputy chief of OSCE's Verification Mission in Kosovo, KVM, during Milosevic's trial on April 11, 2002

as well as paramilitaries.[128] The Serbian government campaign that began in late March 1999 at the start of NATO's air intervention was "different in scale and scope," characterized by systematic violence and forcible deportation that left an estimated 80 percent of the civilians – about 850,000 - displaced from their homes.[129] In addition to areas that the Serbian forces claimed were targeted to suppress the KLA, the new wave of violence, which included mass expulsions and killings, spread in the whole of Kosovo. According to OSCE, which collected testimonies from refugees, the police and the army had blended into one: the Yugoslav army would briefly shell a village, then police and paramilitaries would surround it and then guided by armed Serbian civilians they would move into a looting rampage.[130] To Human Rights Watch, which conducted the most comprehensive report of the violence in 1999, the Serbian government's operations in Kosovo represented "a large-scale counterinsurgency campaign that was in works before NATO's bombing but implemented as the airstrikes began to starve the KLA but also expel Albanians in order to alter Kosovo's ethnic balance." While there is significant variation in the use of violence within Kosovo, the areas that appeared to have suffered most were those that were mostly ethnically homogeneous. The targets of killing were predominantly men, arguably to prevent their recruitment in the KLA, while those expelled were usually women and children, which would meet the goal of changing the population ratio in Kosovo.

[128] OSCE. 2003."Kosovo/Kosova: As Seen As Told," Part I.
[129] Human Rights Watch. 2001. Under Orders: War Crimes in Kosovo.
[130] OSCE. 2003. "Kosovo/Kosova: As Seen As Told," Part I.

**Section IV: Kosovo Liberation Army Recruitment Strategy**

The ethnic fractionalization and mobilization, the increasingly indiscriminate violence against Kosovo Albanians by the Serbian government and Western impatience with Milosevic's policies following Bosnia's war -- all factors that are external to the rebel group -- provided the breeding ground for recruitment in the insurgency. As the previous sections of this paper showed, fractionalization and state violence are the key factors that account for the variation of recruitment patterns during the Kosovo war. The Kosovo Liberation Army mostly spread and built the bases of its support in Albanian areas with very little or no Serbian presence. The ethnic homogeneity provided a broad pool of recruits, but also information that led tighter control. In turn this control through both territory's demography and information proved decisive as indiscriminate government violence fueled the insurgency with civilians rushing to join the rebels for protection. Yet, while maintaining that the structural factors are central to understanding the recruitment patterns in the insurgent organizations, the strategies that rebels draw at the micro-level must not be overlooked in order to map out the shifting nature of recruitment. While most of the scholars writing about rebel recruitment strategies choose to think of rebel strategy as a one-time plan that remains static throughout the war, the interviews with organizers and leaders of the rebellion in Kosovo reveal a process that is dynamic, a strategy that is flexible and adaptable to the different types of violence, political circumstances and local sensibilities. This section will trace the evolution of the strategies and shed light to the processes led by the insurgents that motivate noncombatants to join an armed rebellion. By doing so, it will show how rebel recruitment strategy was affected and shaped by the different types of violence. It will further show that recruitment is a function of supply and demand, often constrained by access to resources, such as weapons, but also political calculations.

Kosovo Liberation Army's Recruitment Patterns in Different Stages of Counterinsurgency
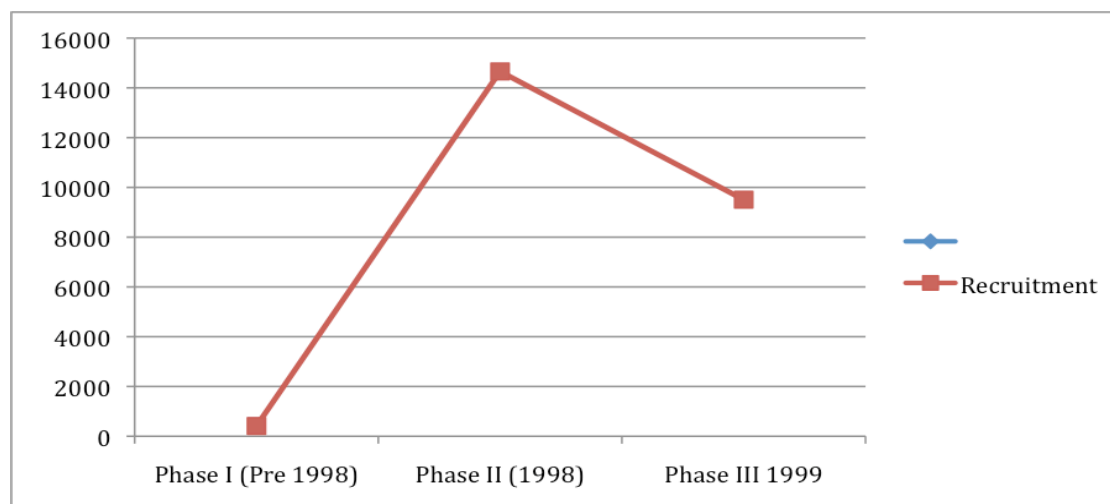
  **Data provided by IOM's Socio-Economic and Demographic Profiles of the Former KLA
Combatants, 2000.

Kosovo Liberation Army's Overall Recruitment Distribution during 1998-1999 War
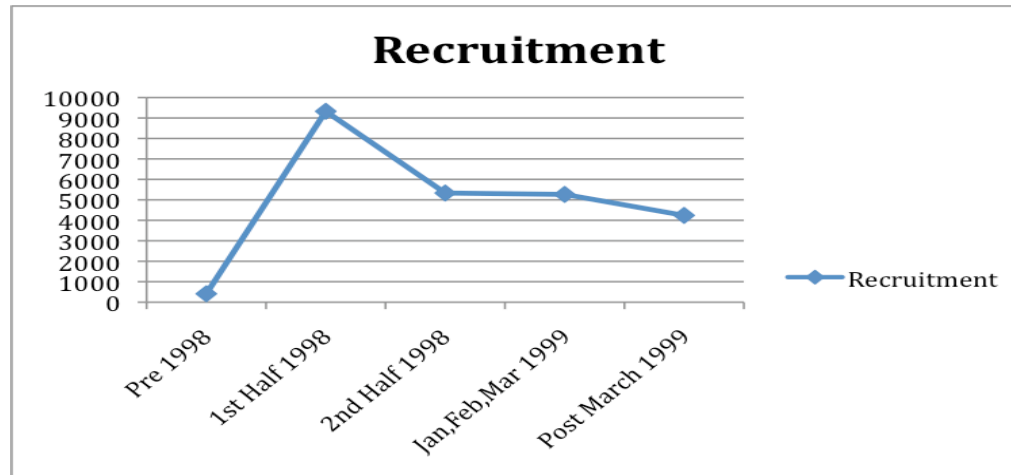
**Data provided by IOM's Socio-Economic and Demographic Profiles of the Former KLA
Combatants, 2000.

Year	Pre 1998	1st Half '98	2nd Half '98	I,II,III '99	Post Mar '99	Total
Recruits	411	9,326	5,334	5,266	4,240	24,577

Phase I 1992-1997: Rebel Recruitment and Selective Violence

Throughout the 1990s the idea of militarily challenging a powerful machine such as the Yugoslav Army represented an unpopular alternative to the nonviolent confrontation. Even if such moves were contemplated as it became clear Serbia's leadership would use the Yugoslav Army to wage war against separatist movements, these plans were set aside. Although encouraged by Croats to fight a common enemy,[131] Kosovo's Albanians chose to stay put being fully aware they would not stand a chance against a much stronger enemy and would merely provide a reason for an even tougher response from Belgrade. For those that propagated an armed resistance, the core of people that grew into the KLA it implied that the Kosovo Liberation Army had to engage in a campaign that would transform the marginalized option they espoused into an acceptable cause. Moreover, the lack of broad support for the armed resistance and the fear of a Serbian retaliation in the 1990s meant that in addition to the lack of recruits and resources, the guerrilla movers faced a landscape dominated by Serbian government control through forced or voluntary collaboration. To overcome the information asymmetry, the guerrilla movers tapped on two traits of Kosovo Albanian society that were fortified by Serbia's repressive policies: family and social ties, and the cultural context engrained and manifested in a national narrative of resistance against the foreign occupier through which a large Albanian Diaspora was moved. The social ties through which the KLA recruited, gave the organization a competitive advantage over the Serbian government, which communicated with Albanians from the affected areas through coercion and brute force.

At its onset in 1990-1994, when the government repression manifested itself through constant but low-intensity violence, the KLA's structure was horizontal, with different armed

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[131] Interview with Baton Haxhiu, January 2011

cells scattered around Kosovo's predominantly Albanian areas. Initially, the movers were a

disjoint mixture of political activists, who lived as political asylum seekers in Switzerland, and at

least two large families, younger activists or students in Kosovo, set out to make a stand and

confront the Serbian police on their own. The guerrillas based in Switzerland were clustered

around the National Movement for Kosovo (LPK), whose members were repeatedly arrested and

questioned by Serbian authorities that many were forced to flee Kosovo. With the armed

resistance a distant dream but still a political option, these men arranged to undergo training from

Albania's military officers, with knowledge and involvement in guerrilla movements in Latin

America and Vietnam.[132] According to Xhavit Haliti, one of the KLA founders, the men

involved with LPK lay the groundwork for the initial phase of recruitment with the aim of

building a structure that would evade arrest and assassination. "It was very important for us to

not be caught by the Serb forces. That way, we would gain the trust of the population, show to

them that we had the power to act and not be caught," Haliti recalled. "During this time people

would spy on everything they knew whenever they were caught." Haliti and a few of his early

collaborators in Switzerland and Germany, and their associates in Kosovo, agreed to avoid

recruiting Albanians who had any history of collaboration with the regime, including political

prisoners who had gone through Serbian prisons and were in danger of blackmail or remained

under police surveillance.

Once they joined, the new recruits were to immediately participate in an attack against a

government target in order to test their loyalty but also to bind the new members to the group by

making them complicit in the guerrilla actions. The complicity that the KLA leaders imposed on

the new members was in response to Yugoslav laws at the time, which pardoned from

[132] Interview with Xhavit Haliti, January 2010

persecution a person who showed regret for participation, but did not commit an armed attack against the state.[133] According to Rexhep Selimi, a KLA founder in charge of organizing the armed group in Kosovo, the rebel organizers demanded equality in action because everyone had to share "in being seen as guilty by the Serb forces."134 The third step was to organize protests in Western European capitals. Another move was to set in motion a propaganda unit to gain legitimacy through communiqués that took responsibility for the attacks "because people (in Kosovo) remained reluctant that we existed at all."[135] The last step was to identify the autonomous armed groups in Kosovo, enroll them for training in Albania and bring them under the same organizational umbrella.

Two villages in Kosovo caught the organizers' attention. In early 1990s, the Jashari and Brahimaj/Haradinaj families had independently mounted an armed resistance against the Serbian police during weapon raids. The Swiss-based activists, according to Haliti, combed through the Diaspora for contacts of the men with familial ties to the villages of Prekaz, in central Kosovo, and Jabllanica, in western Kosovo, hoping to establish contact. The Serbian police stayed away from the two villages since the weapon raids were resisted, and only people from the area were allowed to travel to these villages. After they reached out, the LPK activists smuggled a few weapons to the villages, thereby absorbing two prominent families in the KLA. Similarly, KLA's presence was furthered when it included an autonomous armed cell in the northern town of Podujeve. Through the virtue of weapon provision and claims of responsibility for the attacks conducted with those weapons, the KLA structure abroad extended its reach into Kosovo and claimed the decentralized armed in Kosovo as its own. By 1996, the KLA from its Switzerland

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[133]Interview with Xhavit Haliti, a KLA founder, January 2010 and Interview with Rexhep Selimi, Summer 2009

[135]Ibid, interview.

base absorbed in its structure three autonomous nodes in Kosovo's central, western and northern part that had sprung up independently in response to Serbia's harassment. It was from "large families with reputation for resisting the regime that produced more men with willingness to fight the war" in these regions that the KLA grew.[136]

The concept of the KLA as a loose network in Kosovo was in part geared to expand the guerrilla activity secretly without imposing a fixed chain of command. Fearing that Serbia's extensive force would extinguish the movement as it has done in the past,[137] the rebel leaders would rather have "3 members scattered throughout Kosovo that could carry on the recruitment and the fight, than 300 men concentrated in one place that could be wiped out in a single operation."[138] To avoid a general clampdown and the Serbian intelligence surveillance, the rebel movers organized the armed cells on the ground based on a "structure of three."[139] The idea was to enlist members who would create a large underground network, who were bound to and knew only two people in their immediate group. That way the organization was allowed to grow gradually and survive because in the event of the arrest of a KLA member, the individual's apprehension might yield intelligence on up to two people, but preserve the larger network and allow it to replenish quickly. Because the fear from Serbia and its control was entrenched in Kosovo in the early 1990s, people included in the three-men bands were most often people tied by blood. According to rebel leaders, "the beginning was about close-knit families, people that

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[136] Interview Daut Haradinaj, a KLA brigade commander, January 2010

137 A key KLA organizer said he and his associates were bent on not repeating the mistake of the 1945 insurgency against the partisans, which was largely organized in central Kosovo and crushed in isolation. Interview, January 2011

[138] Interview with senior KLA intelligence official, January 2011 and Fatmir Limaj, a KLA brigade commander, June 2009

[139] ibid; Interview with Nait Hasani, June 2010

were related to each other because one could not trust other people."[140] These were questions "of life and death and people who were ready to shoulder these responsibilities were in high demand."[141] "In Drenica and Dukagjin, the early KLA structures consisted of cousins, nephews, uncles.[142] In scores of western Kosovo villages, Daut Haradinaj, an organizer who later became a KLA brigade commander, and his associates said they scouted scores of villages in their area to search "for suitable men and through them find other friends." Others, like Sulejman Selimi in central Kosovo, who went on to become the KLA's chief of staff, rallied neighbors in his village and organized a nighttime neighborhood watch.[143] Outlawed by the state, these men's options were limited to signing up for war.

Yet, despite the need and temptation to recruit large numbers, in the period from 1993 to 1997 when the Serbian government-sponsored violence continued to be selective, preserving the loosely connected structure took precedence over the accumulation of men that did not have sufficient weapons to attack.[144] Instead, the guerrilla leaders began to use the localized rebel recruitment to establish credibility with the local population whose noncooperation and distrust undermined earlier attempts to create an armed movement in Kosovo. Haliti, the KLA activist in Switzerland, felt that "there was no way for (the KLA) to move forward if it was not welcomed into people's homes… You cannot lead a war if the people are against it."[145] First, the KLA operatives found a ripe terrain for recruitment in predominantly Albanian areas where family ties are stronger, and stayed away from places like Prishtina or Gjilan, where Serbia's presence was deeply felt and the population was ethnically heterogeneous. Second, the KLA recruited people

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[140] Interview with Xhavit Haliti, a KLA founder, January 2010
[141] Interview with Nait Hasani, June 2010
[142] Interviews with Rexhep Selimi; Ramush and Daut Haradinaj, June 2009 and January 2010
[143] Libri i Lirise. Interviste me Sylejman Selimin, 2001
[144] Interview with Rexhep Selimi, a KLA founder and organizer in Kosovo, June 2009
[145] Interview, Haliti, January 2010

who were embedded in communities - a move that helped them established control over the

information, and hence the daily activities of the civilian population. The idea to raise local

recruits was popular within the KLA ranks because it produced quick returns: the recruits "came

from those families," and in turn the families opted to help the KLA because "they knew they

were helping their children."[146] In other times, the KLA sought to leverage its prominent

supporters. For example, Ramush Haradinaj, a prominent KLA organizer and later a commander,

recounted his effort to elicit the support of prominent families in his western region in order to

leverage their credibility and reputation to raise recruits and resources in the surrounding

areas.[147]

Overall, these principles of the recruitment strategy that ran through family and regional

lines provided the rebels with a competitive advantage over Serbia. In addition to facilitating the

communication between the KLA and the population, the local recruits had an advanced

knowledge of their region's terrain[148] and also the human map and the dynamics between

different layers of the society. During the course of the insurgency, the rebels often found

themselves awash with information on the motives of the recruits to join but also information on

the background of civilians living in the area. Further evidence of the rebels' control over

information and the erosion of Serbian power were the abductions and killings of alleged

informants that collaborated with the regime. In several indictments brought against the KLA

after the conflict by the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia, KLA commanders were

charged with the elimination of dozens of Albanian collaborators.[149] Those targets also point out

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[146] Interview with Rexhep Selimi, June 2009
[147] Interview with Ramush Haradinaj, KLA commander in western Kosovo, January 2010
[148] Interview with Fatmir Limaj, June 2009
[149] For details see indictments against Limaj et al and Haradinaj et al.

to the locally bound structure of the guerrilla force with a blanket ideology, but too fragile and afraid to grow ahead of time.

Phase II 1997-1998: Rebel Recruitment and the State's Limited, Indiscriminate Violence

The KLA's blueprint for growth hatched up in Switzerland and Kosovo did not forecast a dramatic shift as the one witnessed in 1997, when about 700,000 weapons were looted from army depots in neighboring Albania. The anarchy that engulfed Albania provided the KLA with two opportunities: a safe haven to train its recruits in the country's lawless bordering area to the north, and a large quantity of weapons that would enable its growth. Money raised in the Diaspora was channeled to Albania, where weapons were purchased and transported by hundreds of recruits, horses and donkeys over the border to western Kosovo.[150] From there, the weapons were carried to other armed cells that initiated attacks on Serbian forces. The effects of the weapons and the organization were felt in Kosovo. According to Serbia's government officials, there were 75 guerrilla attacks on Serbian forces and government officials in 1997, almost a tenfold increase compared to the intensity of attacks in 1992.[151] The attacks helped to galvanize support and created a previously unseen euphoria. Repeated attacks against a notorious police station, "where many people were beaten and tortured," for example, forced the Serbian police to wear flak jackets and Albanians to glorify the underground structure of the KLA.[152]

But, one of the most important moments in KLA's growth and popularity were public displays of sorrow. In two funerals in 1997, the local armed cells that were by now united under the name KLA made public appearances to honor the dead and encourage the crowds to join

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[150] Rrustem Mustafa, KLA's commander in northern Kosovo, provided a written summary on the war in Kosovo to the author of this paper because at the time of the research he was under investigation for alleged war crimes. Summer, 2010
[151] ICTY Testimony by Zoran Stijovic at the trial of Ramush Haradinaj, April 10, 2007
[152] Interview with Rexhep Selimi, June 2009

their fight. It was as if "the fact that so many men came to express their condolences made them more determined and angrier. The solidarity made them stronger."[153] At his brother's funeral in Dukagjin in May 1997, Ramush Haradinaj said his family stopped hiding their newly acquired identity. Some 30 men displayed their weapons and some of them had the KLA emblem stitched to their shoulder. Grenades and long missiles were displayed nearby in case of a Serbian attack as thousands of men from the surrounding villages looked on. "After Luan was killed the situation changed. We were looked upon with sympathetic eyes and admiration, and even pain," Haradinaj recalled the death of his brother, who was killed while transporting weapons from Albania to Kosovo. "Thousands of men came to visit, some out of curiosity, but anyone that came to offer condolences felt brave enough and offered to arm. They would come by our house, have a cup of coffee, tell us where they're from, how many supplies they had and asked whether we needed them."154 Four months later, in Drenica, some 40 miles east of Haradinaj's turf, another group of KLA men stood up in front of a mourning crowd burying a teacher killed by retreating Serb forces to ask Albanians to support the war.[155] For the Albanians in the two rural areas, the KLA now had a local address. As Haradinaj, the commander in western Kosovo, put it,

> "There was no single person in Kosovo that did not want Milosevic defeated. The whole people of Kosovo, all the Albanians, wished they possessed the force that would bring him down. The people to whom this power was closer were the ones that joined the KLA at the beginning. Therefore, the people who were more exposed and at risk turned into KLA straight away. There was not a single formation formed by Serbia that had Albanians in it. There were no Albanians fighting on the enemy's side or supporting them. People might have passed some information out of fear, but they never did that voluntarily."[156]

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[153] Interview with Ramush Haradinaj, January 2010
154 ibid, January 2010
[155] Interview with Rexhep Selimi, Xhavit Haliti and Daut Haradinaj, 2009-2010
[156] Interview with Ramush Haradinaj, January 2010

The KLA began to face the pains of growing: "people were willing to fight but we needed to find a way to integrate them. Our biggest challenges were the logistics, the lack of weapons, infrastructure, food and clothing."[157]

While the recruits trickled into the two Kosovo areas where the guerrilla found a base from which it initiated attacks and organized its ranks, it was not until March 1998 that the KLA's presence was expanded and its ranks flooded with recruits. The Serbian attacks in 1998 in Drenica and Dukagjin, the two sites that the guerilla movers identified as the first stepping stones for a larger effort were now KLA and instead of crushing the insurgency Serbia's reaction triggered the largest wave of recruitment in its history. "There was a total anarchy," said Haliti, who at the time tried to coordinate the resources and the purchase of weapons. Money, men, weapons were pouring from everywhere. In the Diaspora, Albanians were outraged at the sight of a whole family wiped out. In Kosovo, Albanians were scared of the excessive use of force that Serbia had employed against the two prominent KLA families, but also witnessed both fighting back. After the attacks in Drenica and Dukagjin, these two strands of the insurgency that were running parallel played unexpectedly in many villages. Small groups of men rallied to guard their families and property. The Diaspora funneled money through the KLA accounts in the Western Europe and the US. "There were many men ready to respond. Many acted independently from other structures and then sought to join the groups that were more prominent."[158] Simultaneously, there were 1,486 attacks in 1998, a dramatic increase that reflected the escalation of the violence and the pattern of recruitment.[159]

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[157] Interview with Daut Haradinaj, January 2010
[158] Interview with Fatmir Limaj, June 2010
[159] ICTY Testimony by Zoran Stijovic in the trial of Ramush Haradinaj, October 4, 2007.

For example, Elmi Sopi, a villager from Lapusnik in central Kosovo, explained to war crimes prosecutors that after the Serbian police attack in Drenica, he and two friends organized a neighborhood watch to protect their families and village's population. All men, ages 18 to 50, few equipped with hunting rifles and wearing civilian clothes and with no one in charge, participated in keeping a 24-hour guard. "It was a voluntary form of organization because it was a life-and-death issue for us, we volunteered to help our families and our households."[160] It was only on May 9, 1998 that, according to Sopi, his village watch team came in contact and was absorbed by the KLA:

> "On the date, on the 9th of May, Serb police forces came and took positions… Without any pretexts, without any reason, they started to fire at the entire village, all over the place… And then at around 11.00 Ymer Alushani – a childhood friend - came with seven or eight men. All of them were dressed in civilian clothes, but all of them were armed. He came and asked me what was happening after having heard the shots. I told him of the situation and showed him where the Serb police forces were deployed. I also showed him where some youths from the village were, some of them who had hunting guns. And I told Ymer to go to a certain house because there you can find these youths. Ymer went to this house and met these people. After one hour, I saw another group of soldiers descending from the mountains. They were about 16 persons, all of them were armed. Two or three or four were dressed in military clothes, in uniform... My brother, Valdet, and a relative led these people to go to the place where the Serbs were stationed because they didn't know Lapusnik, the terrain, and didn't know which was the best place to come closer to the Serb forces."[161]

After the men succeeded in the ambush that day, the KLA in Lapushnik was asked to stay. A similar dilemma faced Haradinaj in western Kosovo in 1998, as the number of people that hoped to prevent a Serbian attack on their families increased. Haradinaj would follow the men to their village, help them set up a local command, organize them in teams to cross into Albania for weapons and to lobby with their families in western Europe to raise money.

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[160] ICTY Testimony of Elmi Sopi in the trial of Fatmir Limaj et al, May 31, 2005
[161] ibid.

> "At the beginning we only based our network on the loyalty that was shown to us, on who these people were and we would let them join us only if we knew them. But after 1997, we had a different situation: if we were convinced that a person would shoot them we would give him a weapon because we needed to expand and create more trouble for the Serbs. Whoever came, we would take them in. It did not matter who they were."[162]

In the process of recruitment, the KLA in western Kosovo relaxed its selection criteria in a bid to expand the war and make it difficult for Serbian forces to penetrate deeper into the area where the zone's command began to take shape. In other parts of central Kosovo, the KLA leaders appeared torn between the need to grow and continue to vet the new recruits. "We wished to gradually recruit and arm our men because we would have lost fewer of them," said a senior KLA official.[163] Others complained that the growth was undercutting their efficiency. "It was not easy to manage the situation that was created. It was hard to control the situation on the ground , having in mind that we were not well equipped and we had more people joining than we had weapons,"[164] said Fatmir Limaj, who commanded a brigade in southern Kosovo. As recruits flooded in and various leaders declared the KLA was in control of the majority of the territory, international officials based on the sightings on the ground, wrote that the organization of battle of the KLA was difficult to come across at the time. "One came across various commanders… who controlled areas. There was not a great deal of coordinated control at that particular time."[165] To others who observed from distance the KLA spreading like a bush fire and spiraling out of control, the situation had become untenable. "We were dealing with a very strong enemy

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[162] Interview with Ramush Haradinaj, January 2010
[163] Interview with a senior KLA intelligence official, January 2011
[164] Interview with Fatmir Limaj, June 2010
[165] ICTY Testimony of John Crosland, British military attaché, at the trial of Ramush Haradinaj on 24 May, 2007

and we did not stand a chance to ever beat them. We attacked them, but defeating them was a problem."[166]

Yet, its rapid growth had put the KLA on the diplomatic map and Kosovo in the international headlines. The free roaming in the villages and a random meeting between KLA men and the top US envoy Richard Holbrooke,[167] gave the rebels confidence to attempt to take over the southern, ethnically mixed town of Orahovac/Rahovec. The town was the first urban center that the KLA sought to capture and failed. Serbian forces launched an offensive in the summer 1998, rolling back much of the KLA's semi-structured units to their villages. The offensive exposed a flawed organization, decentralized and with "no readiness to obey only one person."[168] In a direct confrontation with a conventional force, the flexible structure that benefited the guerrilla tactics proved a disaster. "We kept hearing this constant answer that 'we cannot give orders to one another because we're all friends'," Haliti said blaming the lack of command for the loss the KLA suffered.

Concerned of a total reversal and loss of the political clout they gained through the rapid growth, the Swiss-based KLA activists called up the former Kosovo Albanian officers that served in the Yugoslav Army to restructure the rebel organization and impose a chain of command. The officers were unimpressed with what they saw. "There was so much will, but no tactics and no experience,"[169] Bislim Zyrapi, a former Yugoslav army officer and a veteran of the Bosnian war recalled the inspection of all the zones where the KLA was active in May 1998. He assembled his peers, other veterans of the Yugoslav wars in Croatia and Bosnia and gradually convinced and eased them into Kosovo to create units from "these very large groups of men" and

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[166] Interview with Xhavit Haliti, January 2010
[167] Time Magazine. 1998. "Mission Impossible." http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,988664-3,00.html
[168] Interview with Xhavit Haliti, January 2010
[169] Interview with Bislim Zyrapi, August 2010

offer them basic military training. "At the time, most recruits thought that weapons they possessed, usually AK-47s, could be used to shoot in a long range. They had no notion that different automatic weapons covered different distances." Zyrapi reminisced. "People were convinced by the ideological aspect, to join and participate in a liberation war: they wanted to fight, but they have no idea how to enter a war and how to end it. They fought with emotions."[170] The summer Serbian offensive, which dealt a blow to the KLA, gave Zyrapi a case to push for a more structured force. For rebel leaders like Selimi, the offensive provided the guerrillas with a "natural selection process." "Our numbers dwindled, in part because a lot of people joined as part of an overall euphoria."[171] The KLA leaders realized that however rapid their growth and numbers, their modest weapons and lack of training, could not withstand Serbia's military power. But while their growth had hurt their flexibility and the offensive tainted the men's morale, the manpower they possessed turned the KLA into a party to the conflict. Serbia's excessive and indiscriminate use of force while chasing the insurgents that made hundreds of thousands of civilians homeless gave the US and key European countries a reason to impose a ceasefire. For the new party in the conflict it provided a welcome respite during which it could regroup and rearm.

Phase III 1999: Rebel Recruitment and State's Widespread, Indiscriminate Violence

Three months of truce gave the KLA leaders an opportunity to replenish their ranks. The overall Serbian offensive, while disastrous for most of Kosovo, distinguished a set of men that would continue to fight from those that had joined or had been absorbed by the insurgency as a means of protection. Moreover, the offensive had exposed the KLA's internal chaos. The will to

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[170] Interview with Bislim Zyrapi, August 2010
[171] Interview with Rexhep Selimi, June 2009

fight Serbia was no longer enough. The KLA regional leaders wanted their men trained and they wanted control over their areas. The funds accumulated by the Diaspora allowed the purchase of more sophisticated weapons. International envoys scouted cities and villages in search of the KLA's political wing. The KLA leaders in the Diaspora or based in Albania wanted just enough men on the ground to maintain their newly gained political relevance in international mediations.[172] All these strands were accommodated in the formation of the General Headquarters in the fall of 1998. Politically, the KLA would have seven political representatives that would negotiate with Serbia and the various international envoys. Militarily, the KLA would be officially divided into seven zones, with a local commander from the area in charge of each, independent to make decisions pertaining to the situation on the ground, but technically responsible to the central command. The small group of former Yugoslav army veterans that were enlisted by Zyrapi was dispersed throughout Kosovo not to recruit people anew, but to shape the existing ones into units and brigades. "Initially, the officers had an idea similar to one they had observed in Croatia and Bosnia, to form military units, but this did not correspond to the reality on the ground," Haradinaj said. As the time went by, the officers engaged in training the existing men. "Shaping and training the officers was necessary not only for that day but also for the next six months because we were not sure how long the war would last."[173]

The next six months brought dramatic changes to the Kosovo landscape. Under the supervision of the experienced and professionally trained officers, the KLA's newly consolidated ranks opened up trenches as they prepared for a transition to conventional warfare. Serbia's government stepped up the army's presence in Kosovo. Skirmishes between the two continued

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[172] Interview with senior KLA intelligence official, January 2011
[173] Interview with Ramush Haradinaj, January 2010

despite hundreds of international observers deployed to monitor the ceasefire.[174] The buildup of

the Serbian army and police and the provocations and ambushes by the KLA, led to a further

escalation of violence.[175] While Serbia's response to KLA attacks had been heavy-handed and

indiscriminate since 1998, its counterinsurgency was mainly limited to areas where it faced

resistance or where it saw potential for the KLA to become a threat. In 1999, according to

Human Rights Watch, counterinsurgency morphed into a campaign of ethnic cleansing and

summary execution of men of fighting age. As NATO launched its air campaign following failed

talks to end the war, the KLA did not seek to control territory or man checkpoints, making

recruitment inside Kosovo impossible. With NATO's airpower in the sky, the KLA's strategy

was to conduct hit and run attacks in a bid to expose the Serbian forces and conserve its structure

in case the war dragged on. Another plan was to open a new front from Albania and act as an

advance party to eventual NATO ground troops.[176] Because most of its troops were locked inside

Kosovo, the KLA General Headquarters issued a call for general mobilization, mostly geared

toward the recruitment of young Albanians living abroad[177] or those that made it out alive and

settled in refugee camps in Albania and Macedonia. Hundreds of Albanians in the Diaspora

heeded the general call. This contingent of combatants presents an interesting case because they

were neither directly subjected to the violence that had compelled thousands of rebels to join the

insurgency nor the ethnic mobilization that had occur over the decade in Kosovo. Yet, they too

were moved by the networks, but also a sense of idealism.[178]

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[174] OSCE Kosovo Verification Mission. http://www.osce.org/node/44552
[175] The Serbian strategy of the time is covered in the third section of this essay.
[176] Interviews with various KLA leaders, 2009, 2010 and 2011
[177] Interview with Rexhep Selimi, June 2009
[178] Florim Lajci's diary of April 8, 1999, as included in Uk Lushi's memoir of the war in Kosovo "Shqiptaro-Amerikanet e UCK-se: Kronike e Batalionit Atlantiku. The 22 year-old volunteer of the so-called "Atlantic

CONCLUSION

This essay sought to explain the interplay between ethnicity and violence and strategies of recruitment and show that the successful recruitment is the result of a competition between the parties in conflict, in which they test the power of loyalty or brute force. Throughout this essay, the recruitment process appeared as a race between winning the support of the civilians caught in the middle and achieving their submission. In this sense, the essay followed the footsteps of recent civil war scholars whose research urges us to consider the course of recruitment as a dynamic process shaped by recruiters and recruits and by factors such as the type of counterinsurgency and ethnicity. The rebel organization and the perspectives of rebel commanders as active agents in raising new members were brought to the fore as a means to understand the tools they use and the decisions they make to grow their organization.

For a close look at these dynamics, I turned to the Kosovo Liberation Army, the now disbanded Albanian guerrilla that fought Serbian forces in Kosovo. Puzzled by the KLA's rapid growth from a marginal option to counter Serbia's overwhelming force in the early 1990s to a widespread insurgency at the end of the decade, I traced the triggers that led to that recruitment. I investigated what were the main explanatory factors that pushed over 25,000 men and women in Kosovo to join an asymmetric war, which they were under-equipped and ill-prepared to fight. Could ethnicity, solidarity and reaction to state violence be the main explanatory factors? I then asked the rebel commanders to explain how they approached people to fight, in hope of sheding

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Brigade," a group of Albanian-Americans, who despite being fully assimilated into the American life and often speaking no word of Albanian, joined the KLA. "I have a pretty good life here," Lajci entered in his diary. "But, I will never be calm if I don't go to help my innocent brothers and sisters who are fighting for their lives in Peja, Gjakova or Drenica.

light to more subjective elements, such as whether the rebels' strategies and their

implementation, provide additional and relevant explanations for the groups quick growth.

Upon the review of Kosovo's demographics and ethnic cleavages, state policies and the

Albanian response to them, I have argued that at the core of the successful Albanian insurgency

are the Serbian state policies of discrimination and repression that led to an ethnic

homogenization in the 1990s. Serbia's undifferentiated response toward the intellectual elite,

dissidents and rural population, brought the two tense strands of otherwise heterogeneous

Albanian society together in building and maintaining a parallel institutional life that made

Serbia's presence in Kosovo obsolete. Similarly, when the KLA emerged, Serbia's

counterinsurgency strategy was an extension of that same undifferentiated policy. Instead of

building relationships and making concessions to the nonviolent movement, the Serbian

government resorted to the indiscriminate use of violence that punished guerrillas and civilians

alike. Milosevic's policies against Albanians as a whole in Kosovo diminished incentives for the

civilians to cooperate with the authorities. Serbia's pressure proved counter-productive; it drove

many to seek that the guerrillas absorb their village defense in their midst for protection. The

deployment of tanks, anti-aircraft and mechanized army units that engaged with villages in

Kosovo from the distance is another way to gauge that its policy had no intention or interest to

accommodate the disgruntled Albanians.

In the meantime, a close look at the organization of the KLA revealed that the areas that

yielded most recruits are predominantly Albanian and where contacts with the state, the Serbian

population and the Serbian authorities were scarce, and thus the ethnic fractionalization deep.

This meant that guerrillas had a comparative advantage over the Serbian forces because the

ethnic homogeneity reduced the latter's access to information. The Serbian forces' lack of

information led to gradual lack of control, paving the way for the rebels to grow bases from where they could initiate attacks. Accordingly, as the KLA benefited from information on the activities of the community, Serbian forces lost control over informants and information and they resorted to the escalation of violence in a bid to subdue the civilian support for the rebels. Yet, benefitting from the fortification of the social and familial ties as a result of state's non-integrative policies, KLA's form of recruitment guaranteed that the rebels would have a constant flow of support and recruits. The rebels' strategy was to build a horizontal network of armed groups, highly decentralized but loosely connected to provide the maximum flexibility that would allow it replenish its ranks in case of a massive crackdown. The KLA represented two strands of the Serbian resistance. One emerged from several large Albanian families at odds with authorities, self-organized through family lines and regional allegiances, and the other consisted of Diaspora-based activists that created the shell linking the armed pockets in Kosovo to form a province-wide insurgency.

To maintain control over the territory and the population, the KLA organizers recruited locally to establish credibility with the local population whose noncooperation and distrust undermined earlier attempts to create an armed movement in Kosovo. The idea to raise local recruits was popular within the KLA ranks because it produced quick returns: the recruits "came from those families," and in turn the families opted to help the KLA because "they knew they were helping their children." But, soon the KLA was faced with the limits of its growth. While it had accumulated an impressive force in a short span of time, few in the force had any military training. This time, the guerrilla organizers activated Albanian officers who had trained and served with the Yugoslav army and dispatched them to shape the rebels force into an

organization with the attributes of a conventional army, while keeping the same local autonomy and command.

Of course, this paper leaves many questions unanswered. However, having set some of the groundwork on the internal dynamics of the Kosovo conflict and having identified the factors that account for the KLA's recruitment patterns, a more specialized approach to capturing these dynamics and analyzing their interaction quantitatively should be the immediate goal. Other, new avenues for research could look into the cultural context and the organization in which the insurgency takes place, especially within the Diaspora communities, which are far removed from the violence but yet are among the first to raise funds and recruits for wars in the homefront.

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MAP OF KOSOVO AND ITS MUNICIPALITIES

Source: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/europe/kosovo_pol98.jpg

BREAKDOWN THE TOTAL NUMBER OF KLA MEMBERS who joined the insurgency and their places of origin, as well as ethnic breakdown of most Kosovo's municipalities

Municipality	KLA membership	Municipal population	Albanians	Serbs
Decan	817	60,000	97%	3%
Gjakove	2081	131,000	93%	1.86%
Gllogovc	1529	69,000	100%	
Istog	799	57,000	~ 90%	~ 10%
Kacanik	1134	44,365	98,6%	~ 1%
Klina	923	70,000	78%	14%
Mitrovica	624	116,500	81%	10%
Peja	1112	170,000	80%	10%
Podujeve	1588	35,000	98%	1%
Prishtina	1335	~ 300,000	80%	20%
Prizren	1656	~ 200,000	78%	5%
Rahovec	2286	85,000	90%	10%
Skenderaj	1750	65,000	98%	2%
Suhareke	1876	87,000	96%	4%
Vushtrri	1104	89,000	91%	9%
Gjilan	808	130,000	90 %	~ 10%
Dragash	102	18,000	5%	~ 0.4%
Ferizaj	1021	127,333	90%	6.5%
Fushe Kosove	123	40,000	59%	24%
Kamenica	333	60,000	76%	22%
Leposavic	30	15,000	7%	90%
Lipjan	632	78,500	80%	13%
Malisheve	1,065	57,000	99%	1%

Novo Berd	27	5000	2%	98%
Obiliq	160	11000	41%	27%
Shterpce	115	13,455	37%	61%
Shtime	585	27,222	93%	5%
Viti	317	59,800	33%	66%
Zubin Potok	17	8,000	~ 20%	72%
Zvecan	25	9,000	~ 20%	74%

Table 2. Source: Data from OSCE's As Seen As Told and IOM's Socio-Economic and Demographic Profiles of Former KLA Combatants