

The Relationship between Violence and Participation in Armed Conflict: Evidence from Croatia's Homeland War¹

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Summary

This paper systematically and empirically explores participation in the first 10 months of the Croatian Homeland War through theories of collective action. It tests the theory that in the face of indiscriminate violence, individuals will choose to participate in a conflict through joining an armed organization that can provide them with the resources to better survive. I hypothesize that as violence increases in a given area, the number of individuals joining the Croatian military forces will also increase. Using a dataset of daily event data and the number of participants per municipality, I test this hypothesis in a generalized linear model. The results show a significant relationship exists between violent events and increased participation.

Keywords: Conflict, Collective Action, Croatian Homeland War, Participation, Mass Violence

Introduction

Twenty-five years after the breakup of Yugoslavia there remain several competing explanations for the War in Croatia (also known in Croatia as the Homeland War). Some of the literature suggests a small group of elites with extreme ideological beliefs engineered the violence in Yugoslavia (Hockenos, 2003; Klanjšek and Flere, 2011), while others argue instead that elites instigated the violence in order to distract and demobilize opposition groups opposed to the privatization process (Gagnon, 2006). Similarly, some regard the violence in the former Yugoslavia as the

¹ This research was conducted with the support of a Fulbright Fellowship. Parts of the research in this article is based on work carried out for my doctoral dissertation, *Why Do They Fight? Explaining Participation in the War in Croatia*, defended at the University of Kansas in 2013.

result of elite-organized bands of thugs, motivated by the spoils of war rather than nationalist antipathy (Mueller, 2000). What is missing from each of these perspectives is an explanation at the individual or microlevel of the mass participation that occurred. Mila Dragojević's recent work is one exception (2019). She explores how mass violence against civilians suppresses moderates and helps construct borders, thereby leading to greater violence and the division into smaller communities and more hostile groups. This paper complements her research by looking at the effects violence has on individual participation in the conflict.

Ideological or strategically calculating elites may have wanted a war, but this does not explain why people chose to take part in it. This is especially the case when we consider that the majority of the war's entrants were not criminals or raving nationalists (Klanjšek and Flere, 2011; Gagnon, 2006). In order to gain a better understanding of the conflict in Croatia, and conflict more generally, this paper systematically and empirically explores participation in the first 10 months of the conflict, January 1991 to October 1991, through theories of collective action (Olson, 1965; Lichbach, 1998; Kalyvas, 2003). I only look at these months for two reasons: 1) it was during the spring and summer of 1991 that fighting escalated into a full-scale conflict; 2) up until October 6, 1991 there was no conscription among the Croatian forces, therefore we can assume participation on the Croatian side was voluntary. I believe that using theories of collective action will provide an explanation for individual involvement in the War in Croatia that either expands or supplants the current understandings of the conflicts in Yugoslavia. Exploring the question can also help us understand why incidents of political violence are able to expand into different forms of domestic conflict such as rebellions, insurgencies and civil wars.²

In the following article I expand on much of the literature on the Croatian Homeland War which enables this study to overcome three shortcomings: Firstly, while the literature wants to focus on elite backed gangs and nationalist zealots, the number of participants in the data exceeds the number of individuals assumed to be involved in these explanations. Secondly, interviews with Croatian war veterans indicate that participants were not simply criminals or nationalists. Many of the interview subjects were satisfied with life in Yugoslavia prior to the war, were em-

² Some might take issue with characterizing the Homeland War as an insurgency. I use the label insurgency and regard Croatian participants as insurgents in the beginning months of the conflict since at the outbreak of the war, Croatia was still part of Yugoslavia as it had not received international recognition until late 1991. Croatian forces were fighting against the Yugoslav federation's military. After 1992, using the term insurgent and labeling Croat forces as insurgents would be incorrect, since the country was largely recognized as a sovereign state trying to liberate itself from an occupying army and trying to restore its territorial integrity. In any case, the dynamics of the conflict in its first year and prior to its beginning are those of an insurgency, including the clandestine formation of fighting organizations and the smuggling of arms into the country.

ployed at the beginning of the war, and relatively amicable to Serbs living in Croatia (see Brown, 2013). The lack of nationalist zeal among the population is supported by public opinion polling from 1990 where 64 percent of respondents who identified as Croatian supported not Croatian independence, but Croatia's remaining in a confederated Yugoslavia (Jović, 2007, pp. 13-14). Thirdly, the dynamics of the conflict underscore an increase in escalation and participation, something that is also not properly accounted for in the current literature. What remains to be answered, then, is the question, how were individuals mobilized into participating in the conflict? To answer this question, I look at the relationship between violent events and increases in participation. I argue that the increase in local, violent, indiscriminate events motivated individuals to take part in the fighting. I develop this argument by reviewing the conflict and collective action literature, while also supplementing the findings in the literature with observations made from interviews conducted with war veterans in Croatia.³ I then test the relationship in a generalized linear model using a dataset of daily event data.

While the literature on the Homeland War is extensive, most of it has not used the mobilization literature to systematically and empirically explore the question of participation (Godić and Knežević, 2019). At the same time, recent studies on insurgency and civil war, and mobilization more generally has neglected the Yugoslav wars and especially the war in Croatia. Three of the exceptions are Hardin (1997), Weidmann (2011) and Kalyvas and Sambanis (2005), but even then, the focus in each of these works is primarily on the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This is a great oversight since much of the literature on domestic conflict focuses on the question of participation through theories of collective action (Lichbach, 1998; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Weinstein, 2005, 2007; Gates, 2002; Kalyvas, 2003; Kalyvas and Kocher, 2007; Francisco, 2009, 2010), which when applied to the Homeland War could provide useful insights into the conflict's dynamics and add to our understanding about the escalation of conflict itself.

The collective action problem occurs when a group of individuals seeks a public good. It is assumed most people will prefer to "free-ride" and receive the benefit of the public good without actually participating in its acquisition (Olson, 1965). When it comes to insurgency, where the risks are high and the chances of success low, participation is even scarcer and the insurgents face a greater collective action problem (Lichbach, 1998). And yet, conflicts occur and individuals participate. Therefore, understanding participation in domestic conflict, in part, involves understanding how the insurgent collective action problem is solved. Observing and testing solutions to the collective action problem helps us understand the occurrence of,

³ In order to attain interviews with nearly all of my research subject, I had to promise full anonymity. As a result the interviews are documented with location and date the interview was conducted.

and individuals' participation in domestic conflict, insurgency and civil war. In this article I offer that looking at the case of the war in Croatia through collective action theories of conflict will not only improve our understanding of the war in Croatia, it can also help expand the current theories of domestic conflict.

Literature Review

Much of the literature on conflict accepts the problems of collective action and has therefore focused on identifying the selective incentives necessary in overcoming the collective action problem and mobilizing individuals into fighting an emerging or ongoing conflict (Lichbach, 1998; Weinstein, 2007; Kalyvas and Kocher, 2007; Francisco, 2010). At its most restrictive, this line of research has reduced the decision to participate to a strictly economic calculation (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004), producing what has come to be known as the "greed" hypothesis, which emphasizes the importance of material incentives on the decision to participate. The greed hypothesis argues that the pay and spoils of war can be enough to incentivize individuals to take part in the fighting. According to Collier *et al.* (2003), "The root cause of conflict is the failure of economic development". Though the authors of this study are careful to explain that a general theory of civil war emergence is difficult to develop, the consensus from this corner of the literature is economic decline and low wages provide a fertile ground of participants and recruits for insurgent organizations. Collier and Hoeffler's (2004) model does reveal a strong correlation between macrolevel economic indicators and the outbreak of conflict. Additionally, in a study of civil wars from 1945 to 1999, Fearon and Laitin (2003) make a similar observation, finding that the greater a country's economic development, the less likely it is to fall into a civil war. At the individual level, the logic of the greed hypothesis follows that amid economic difficulties conflict can provide enough material incentives to attract participants through loot and regular pay; however, most of the literature has not explored the link between economic well-being/decline and conflict below the macro/country-unit level of analysis.

It is true that conflict can certainly result in material profit for some of the participants, and the wars in Yugoslavia were no different. For example, after the fall of Vukovar one document from the Serbian security services reveals that the Serbian paramilitary leader Željko Ražnatović, referred to as Arkan, was to keep 2.5 million German marks and 15 kilograms of gold. He was then ordered to send 3.8 million dollars, 430 thousand Swiss francs, and 38 kilograms of gold to Belgrade (Stewart, 2008, p. 163). Croatian elites, such as President Franjo Tuđman and Defense Minister Gojko Šušak, raised over 100 million dollars from the Croatian diaspora and were able to use this money as their own personal expense account (Hockenkos, 2003, p. 87). Moreover, a large amount of Serb property was occupied and looted by Croatian

forces in Croatia during the conflict (Srdoč, 1995; Hrvatska – Human Rights Watch, 2003).

What is unclear, however, are the specifics of distribution of this loot. Were regular participants compensated through loot? If so, to what extent and how? While the elites, certain individuals, and paramilitary organizations, such as the one led by Arkan, profited, it is uncertain how much loot or spoils were shared with average participants. In some cases it looks as if the opposite were the case. Interviews with veterans of the war reveal that individuals often did not receive pay and often had to pay for their own weapons to join the fledgling Croatian forces in the early weeks and months of fighting (Interview in Podstrana on 08/05/2012; Interviews in Drniš on 02/24/2012). One individual in Osijek explained that since he did not have enough money to pay for a Kalashnikov he was unable to join the Croatian forces in the summer of 1991. Only after it became clear that he had experience with laying and defusing landmines from his time with the Yugoslav People's Army (*Jugoslavenska narodna armija*, JNA) was he allowed to enlist, and then he was provided with an M48, not a Kalashnikov (Interview in Osijek on 04/10/2012). Other participants explained that they had to pay for their own ammunition, even declaring that one bullet was one Deutsch mark, and pulling their funds together to buy and share a Kalashnikov on a rotating basis (Podstrana 08/05/2012). These observations from Croatian war veterans seem to turn the greed hypothesis on its head. Rather than receiving material incentives to participate in the conflict, Croatian individuals were doing the opposite and *paying* to participate.

Contending with the greed hypothesis is the grievance hypothesis, which argues “structural inequalities and collective disadvantages (economic and social) generate grievances among those at the bottom of society” (Taydas *et al.*, 2011, p. 2631) and political violence becomes as a justice-seeking behavior to right these perceived wrongs (Gurr, 1970; Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Collier *et al.*, 2003; Collier and Sambanis, 2005). It is assumed that in an ethnically diverse and divided society these grievances can emerge along ethnic cleavages. Perhaps the biggest problem with measuring and studying the grievance hypothesis is that injustice and inequalities might not be observed at the aggregate, or macrolevel, but may be perceived by individuals at the microlevel. For example, during my field work in Croatia, I found that many of the earliest participants in the conflict, the first joiners of Croatia's fledgling special police force came from families who had fought on the losing side of the Second World War and resented Croatia's inclusion in Yugoslavia (Brown, 2013). Moreover, as a result of their political views a few of them cited problems with the police and difficulties in finding employment. These sentiments were known to others in their network and used as a type of benchmark for organizers in knowing who to ask to participate in the conflict and who not (*ibid.*). More to

the point, studying these individuals and the process of their mobilization revealed that it was not the grievances themselves that led to their participation, but rather the complex relationships that existed within the aggrieved community (*ibid.*).

These perceived grievances might not be reflected in the data often used to determine the presence or extent of discrimination or injustice. Additionally, other research has found, especially prior to and at the outbreak of the conflict, ethnic tensions were not necessarily salient enough to lead large numbers of individuals to engage in a campaign of violence (Gagnon, 2006; Klanjšek and Flere, 2011). Therefore, the presence of grievances seems important to some participants, but not all, and cannot explain the growth in mobilization alone.

Based on this short review we see there are limitations to the greed/grievance hypotheses in the case of the war in Croatia, and perhaps even further when explaining individuals' participation in conflict in general. In a twist of conventional thinking, Kalyvas and Kocher (2007) offer that violence itself may explain an individual's decision to participate in the fighting. While this may sound tautological, there is a clear logic to it based around the idea of selective incentives and solutions to the collective action problem. The authors theorize that when faced with indiscriminate violence against civilians, civilians may see joining an insurgent organization and becoming active in the conflict as a safer option than remaining a bystander (*ibid.*). The reason for this calculus is that as a participant, an individual will have a better chance of surviving given that she receives the resources and training that comes with joining an insurgent organization, whereas bystanders do not receive the same resources. This is not to say that all participants join for reasons of security, survival, and resources; however, this view does help understand how participation expands to include those who would not fit the classification of zealots or necessarily receive direct, material selective incentives.

Kalyvas and Kocher (*ibid.*) explored this theory by looking at the Phoenix Program during the Vietnam War. The Phoenix Program (1967-1972) was the Central Intelligence Agency and South Vietnam's counterinsurgency operation that sought to target members of the Viet Cong hidden among the general population of South Vietnam. The result was indiscriminate violence doled out on thousands of innocent civilians. The study's findings show that for every Viet Cong agent targeted by the operation, 38 innocent victims were targeted as well. This is because the Viet Cong was able to provide the tools and tactics of evasion to its members. Therefore, it was safer to be a member of the Viet Cong than a member of the civilian population (*ibid.*). As this study theorizes and demonstrates to a certain extent with its analysis of the Phoenix Program, in the face of indiscriminate violence against civilians there is more incentive to join the insurgent organization than not to. A positive relationship between a rise in violence and a rise in participation is at first counterin-

tuitive. Instinctively, one would think that increased violence should deter would-be participants from taking part in the conflict; however, the link between the effectiveness of mass, indiscriminate violent repression as a means of limiting collective dissent is not empirically supported (Lichbach, 1987; Francisco, 1995, 1996). Several notable cases of insurgency also demonstrate that violence is capable of motivating individuals into participating in conflict, albeit anecdotally.

During the beginning days of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, support for the Irish Republican Army (IRA) was galvanized by riotous events in Belfast and Derry in August 1969. Rioting bands of Protestants attacked people and property in Catholic dominated neighborhoods. Realizing that it was futile to call the police since many of the rioting Protestants *were* the police, Irish Catholics turned their support to the IRA as a means of obtaining some level of security, leading to an increase in IRA support and membership (Coogan, 2002, pp. 91-95, 104-106). According to Coogan, the incidents of 1969 revived an old formula for Catholics living in Ulster: “fear + distrust = IRA” (*ibid.*, p. 95).

The case of Yugoslavia during the Second World War is also a well-known example of the motivating effects of indiscriminate violence. The strength of the Communist Partisans and Serb Četniks has been attributed to the Wehrmacht’s harsh counterinsurgency tactics and Croatian Ustaša terror against Serbs (Mazower, 2008; Schmider, 2011; Trifkovic, 2011). The German policy for every dead German was the random killing of 100 Yugoslavs. The Ustaša acts involved killing one-third of Serbs living in the Croatian Fascist state, converting another third, and expelling the remaining third (Lampe, 2000, p. 209). When facing these policies, Serbs, and later Croat and other Yugoslav nationalities who were victimized by the Nazis and Ustaša sought safety by joining the armed resistance movements.

In another example from the Vietnam War, the United States aerial bombing campaign did not decrease support for the Viet Cong. In fact, it had the opposite effect. Instead of moving areas out from under VC control, the bombing worked to strengthen the VC’s position in the targeted communities (Kocher *et al.*, 2011).

An example from the Homeland War also illustrates the relationship between violence and participation. While conducting fieldwork in Croatia, many of the war veterans I interviewed kept referring to violent events that occurred in their town, suggesting that their decision to participate in the war was dependent on such occurrences. As one respondent recalled, a single event in the eastern town of Osijek was “the day the war began” (Interview in Osijek on 04/10/2012), despite the fact that, other, well-known incidents had already occurred elsewhere in the country. Several other interviewees in Osijek made similar statements. I therefore decided to look at this incident in more detail. The day in question was June 27, 1991 when several JNA tanks from a nearby military base raced through the streets of Osijek, crushing

several cars on a major thoroughfare. This was one of the first violent incidents in Osijek, which later became a frontline in the war. Prior to that day, only 22 people had joined the town's national guard, the 106th Brigade. The following day, 384 people enlisted. This suggests that violent events can and do have a positive influence on participation. Instead of deterring membership in an insurgency, violence can facilitate greater participation. Just as the few cases discussed above indicate some evidence for this relationship, so too have scholars theorized about its link (Lichbach, 1998; Kalyvas and Kocher, 2007), while Hardin (1997) and Dragojević (2019) both explore the influence of ethnic-based violence and participation in particular. For Hardin ethnic violence is a mechanism that can compel an individual to regard their self-interest as part of the ethnic group's collective interest. Dragojević (2019) offers a more nuanced approach than Hardin's, showing how, in the onset of conflict, the exclusion of moderate members of the community through targeted violence and the creation of dividing lines between the newly defined groups, contributes to the division or demise of one community and reinforces the parameters or borders of ethnic communities, actively sought by elites and locals engaged in a process of ethnicization. This idea is further developed in detail by Bergholz's historical analysis of violence in the town Kulen Vakuf in 1941. Bergholz finds that localized violence initiated by a small minority led to greater violence along ethnic lines (2016). All these findings fit within Lichbach's more general observations that violence, and insurgents' decisions to engage in violence are often ways of making neutral individuals feel they must take sides. Lichbach explains that insurgents can and do use violence as a means of provoking state reprisals which can result in increased insurgent support. Such a strategy seeks to deepen the conflict, and "shows neutrals that their position is untenable. It frightens nonvictims into thinking that they may one day become victims and that they therefore must choose sides" (1998, p. 58). From this perspective the use of violence can itself help solve the insurgents' collective action problem, especially in cases where ethnic identity is seen as an important piece in the solution group.

Of course, this assumes that a preexisting insurgent organization exists to provide the incentives and risk-reducing resources. In the case of the Vietnam War the Viet Cong had existed 7 years prior to the Phoenix Program, had ties to the Vietnamese Communist Party, and went back even further to the Viet Minh resistance in the 1940s during the Japanese Occupation. The IRA existed decades before the Troubles began. In the case of Osijek, the 106th Brigade existed as part of Croatia's emerging military force. We see then that while violence may share a relationship with greater participation in conflict, the extent of this relationship largely and likely hinges on the presence of a preexisting organization, as it is the organization's numbers and resources that help participants overcome the insurgent collective action problem.

The material rewards proposed by the greed hypothesis fit well within the logic of collective action as the spoils of war are mostly available to those who participate. At the same time, as discussed briefly in the case of the war in Croatia, the greed hypothesis seems insufficient in explaining large scale participation. Yet, if we assume an insurgent or rebel organization, resources beyond loot and pay extending from the organization to its members, such as the means to defend oneself and the skills to evade detection, also work to serve as incentives to participation unavailable to non-participants.

Based on the work of Kalyvas and Kocher (2007) and the anecdotal evidence attained while interviewing veterans of the Homeland War, looking at the link between violence and participation in the war in Croatia will both confirm the theoretical link between violence and participation from Kalyvas and Kocher and increase our understanding of the dynamics of participation in the first months of the war in Croatia. In order to test this relationship, I have developed the following hypothesis: As violent events occur in a given area, more individuals from that area will join the insurgent forces.

Data and Methods

It is difficult to specify the actor in the variable “violent events” as it includes attacks by Serb forces and fighting between Serb and Croat forces. I explain the reason for this distinction below. Moreover, the independent variable in the hypothesis may ask to be specified further to something along the lines of violence against civilians. However, this is hard to determine given that some individuals felt victimized by violence that might have been targeted towards soldiers. The outbreak of fighting and violence around civilian centers such as towns and villages can itself be felt by civilians to be targeting them or indiscriminate even if it is not necessarily meant to be indiscriminate. Therefore, I have left the specifics vague, but explain why and how the variables are measured in further detail below.

The war in Croatia does not have a clear beginning. Therefore the best way to understand its unfolding is to briefly look at the frequency of violence in the years 1990 and 1991. These years mark the end of Communist rule in Croatia and the beginning of the conflict. While violent incidents began in the summer of 1990, they were rare and carried on sporadically throughout the spring of 1991. From March to May 1991 several well-known clashes occurred between Croat and Serb forces, including the JNA, around Plitvice lakes and in towns in Eastern Croatia, Slavonia. The violence became near constant when Croatia declared its independence on June 25. Looking at the data we see there was an average of 5.3 events per day in Croatia between June 25 and October 31, 1991, compared to 0.6 events per day from Janu-

ary 1 to June 24, 1991. I include this in order for the reader to have a sense of what was going on in Croatia during the first few months of the conflict.

The model's independent variable is violent events. These data have been coded from newswire service stories in LexisNexis Academic for the first 10 months of 1991, ending on October 5. We can assume that the participants on the Croat side of the conflict were volunteers up to this point. The next day, October 6, Croatia introduced conscription.

An event is any reported protest or repressive action. Strikes, rallies, occupations, hunger strikes, shootings and bombings are all events. For the dataset used in this paper each event was coded separately on the day it took place from the newswire service story reporting the event. For example, a rally in Benkovac in Croatia could be reported by United Press International, while at the same time it is reported by the Associated Press that workers have begun a strike in Zagreb. The time, place, duration, actors and action were all recorded into the dataset as were the number of arrests, injuries, and deaths among protesters and state forces. As the events become more violent, protesters become Croatian insurgents and state forces become Serb/Yugoslav forces.

I only use events of Serb actions or attacks, or those involving both Croat and Serb fighting. This was done in order to avoid any tautological logic in the model. Namely, the independent variable of violent events is likely to be influenced by the dependent variable if the events include Croat actions. In other words, there is a greater potential for more Croat events to be caused by more Croat participants, rather than the increase in Croat participants to be a result of more violent events. Including Serb violence or violent events involving both Serbs and Croats, such as battles and gunfights, in the model minimizes this problem. An event is considered any public display of force. Gunfights, shelling, and bombings are of course events. So too are blockades and barricades. Blockades forcibly prevented individuals from leaving towns like Vukovar, Pakrac, Kijevo, and Dubrovnik. Barricades forcibly prevented citizens from traveling between neighborhoods. Dragojević's work touches extensively on barricades and how they were seen by the population as an act of violence, forcibly dividing communities and even families along ethnic lines (2019). My own interviews with Croatian war veterans further reveal that the public considered blockades and barricades to be threatening (Interview in Omiš on 07/05/2012; Interview in Stobreč on 08/05/2012; Interview in Zagreb on 03/27/2012).

The number of soldiers in each municipality was taken from *registarbranitelja.com*, a website containing the names and dates of enlistment for Croatian soldiers. Multiple units for a single municipality were added together. Before going further, I need to explain a bit about the data from *registarbranitelja.com*. The number of war veterans from the Homeland War in Croatia has been a contentious issue

for several years, as the number has risen over time. Much of the public believes many of those claiming to have been in the war are false veterans who have been allowed to register as veterans and receive veterans' pensions and priority in being hired for public sector jobs in return for personal and political favors. In 2010 someone set up a public and searchable database of war veterans at registarbranitelja.com. As a result, the most likely suspect was interrogated by the police and vilified by the government (Hina/tportal, 2010). Due to the potential criminal nature of posting the data, it was impossible for me to verify its authenticity. In 2012 the Croatian Ministry of Defense create its own website of war veterans; however, unlike registarbranitelja.com where users could retrieve the whole list of individual units in a certain time period, for example the 106th Brigade from Osijek from January 1, 1991 to October 5, 1991, the government's website only allows users to enter in a person's name and see if they served, and if so, where and with which unit. I asked for the data from the Ministry of Defense, but my request was denied. Therefore the data from registarbranitelja.com is the best available for the purpose of this research.

In order to make this test more rigorous, I include a control variable for the greed hypothesis. Collier and Hoeffler (2004) explore the state of the labor market, using three variables, education, population growth, and per capita income, to assess the availability of potential rebel recruits. They explain, "the tighter is the labor market, controlling for the level of per capita income, the more costly would be rebel recruitment, and so the lower would be the risk of conflict" (*ibid.*: 10). For the purposes of this paper and my model, the variables for education, population growth, and per capita income at the municipal level are not available. However, given that Collier and Hoeffler are interested in the availability of the rebel labor supply, substituting unemployment as a control variable can suffice as unemployment can be an indicator for the tightness of the labor market. A municipality with a higher unemployment rate and therefore a more flexible labor market should produce more potential recruits, and could reasonably be expected to correlate with a greater number of members in the Croatian forces. Including such a variable, while not precisely the same as those explored by Collier and Hoeffler (2004), places a more rigorous hurdle for the model's relationship between violence and participation to overcome.

In interviews with war veterans many explained that the Croatian Democratic Union (*Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*, HDZ) was the only party "for Croatia". Moreover, the issue of the Croatian Question, referred to by the dissident community as *Hrvatska stvar*, dealt with the issue of Croatia's inclusion in Yugoslavia and dissatisfaction with Communist rule. Many of those I spoke to felt aggrieved and believed the Communists and Serbs dominated the top political and economic positions in the Socialist Republic of Croatia. During the 1990 campaign,

HDZ was the party that emphasized raising this question seriously, while also representing an alternative to Communist rule. According to one veteran, HDZ “were the loudest and clearest, demanding that we want our own state” (Solin 07/05/2012). Other interview subjects reflected similar sentiments about HDZ (Split 05/08/2012; 05/08/2012b; Podstrana 08/05/2012; Stobreč 08/05/2012; Osijek 04/10/2012). Additionally, Zakošek (1994) notes that the initial division within the Croatian electorate was largely related to those who had historically wanted Croatian independence. Therefore, in order to control for the possibility of the grievance hypothesis influencing participation, I look at the percentage of votes received by HDZ in each municipality in 1990. HDZ vote share can serve as a proxy variable for nationalist feeling. A confirmation of the grievance hypothesis would show that as the percentage of HDZ votes increases in a municipality, so does the number of participants in the Croatian military forces.

I include several additional control variables as well. These are the ethnic makeup of each municipality. This is taken as the difference in population between Croats and Serbs and included in order to test for the likelihood that those areas that were more ethnically skewed one way or the other would have witnessed greater incidents of violence given the fact that the violence generally occurred along ethnic cleavages. Additionally, the total percent of Croats is included in order to control for the fact that municipalities with a higher number of Croats would logically have more participants in the Croatian military forces.

I test the hypothesis by comparing the number of individuals enlisted in the armed forces of each of Croatia’s 94 municipalities with the number of violent events in each municipality between January 1 and October 5, 1991. Since the data are positively skewed, I use a generalized linear model (Fox, 2008, p. 421). The independent variable is the number of Serb and JNA attacks, while the dependent variable is the percentage of enlisted individuals given each municipality’s population. I originally included each municipality’s population as another control variable in the model; however, it was highly collinear. I therefore removed it and made the dependent variable a percentage of insurgents given each municipality’s population.

This model is limited in that its main two variables are time-related and I am testing them cross-sectionally. The best test of my hypothesis would be to use time-series analysis; however, the data for participants were only available cross-sectionally. That said, this test can still show the strength of the relationship between violent events and participation, while also controlling for other influencing variables and the alternative hypotheses of greed and grievance. The inability to conduct a time-series analysis in some way hinders the confidence we can place in the model’s output. At the same time, the literature supporting my hypothesis is vast and well-founded empirically, granting us, perhaps, more faith in the model.

Table 1 confirms my hypothesis:

Table 1. Violent events and participation in 94 municipalities

Variable	Estimate	Std. Error	t-value
Intercept	199.6	696.7	0.286
Violent events	46.4	6.3203	*7.35
Unemployment	-35.6	49.0	-0.72
Diversity	-0.0	8.0	-0.0
Croat percentage	0.4	16.3	0.0
HDZ Vote percentage	8.1	4.2	1.9
N			94

Municipalities with a higher number of violent events saw a statistically significant increase in the number of participants in the conflict. The independent variable of violent events is the only predictor with any statistical significance, reporting a t-value of 7.35. The poor performance of the other variables helps demonstrate the importance of the relationship between violence and participation.

Discussion and Conclusion

What do these results say about the war in Croatia? Seeing violence as the explanatory variable for expanded participation greatly challenges those perspectives that continue to view the violence as a result of enduring ethnic nationalism. At the same time the model's output expands on the literature's (Gagnon, 2006; Hockenos, 2003; Klanjšek and Flere, 2011; Mueller, 2000) central theses that the war in Croatia began at the elite level. Elites and passionate individuals created the organizations that were capable of responding to and also inciting violence. I believe I have improved on this viewpoint by demonstrating how, in the absence of strong ideological commitments or rampant ethnic nationalism, a large number of individuals came to participate in the war. This approach helps our understanding of the conflict as it does not require the majority of the conflict's participants to be thugs, criminals or passionate nationalists. Rather, it lets us understand how regular people can become participants in domestic conflict. It helps us understand how a country with relatively harmonious relations between its ethnic inhabitants was torn apart by a horrendous war. Moreover, it invites us to see the initial incidents of violence as part of a possible strategy used by the minority of elites and extremists who *were* committed to a nationalist program.

As it relates to the broader topic of domestic conflict and collective action, this chapter supports the theorized relationship between violence and participation in Lichbach (1998), and Kalyvas and Kocher (2007). In cases where violence is the main motivating factor, individuals may become involved for the sake of self-preservation, something that is inherently self-interested; however, individuals join a group, and fight for the goals of that group, thereby pursuing a collective good while also benefiting their own self-interested survival. The fact that participation in domestic conflict, rebellion, insurgencies and civil wars like those in the Balkans breaks down along ethnic lines reminds us that ethnic identity, while solely not the cause of conflict, can come to play an important role in such conflicts. In a situation where material incentives are the main motivation for participation, ethnic identity should not be as salient. As Hardin (1997) observed, once acts of violence between ethnic groups become significant enough to spur greater participation, individuals can begin to regard their survival as one linked to the good of the group.

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