At the Endpoint of Violence

A comparative study between the genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the conflict in Georgian Abkhazia

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Abstract

In an attempt to bridge the gap between theories of violent escalation and those of genocide, this paper theorizes genocide to be a strategic choice by leaders in response to a situation which they perceive to lack alternatives. This situation is expected to evolve out of a violent escalation, more precisely civil war. The empirical test consists of a structured focused comparison of one positive and one negative case; namely the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the conflict in Georgia over the region Abkhazia. The finding gives some evidence to the theory, however a more adequate theory needs to also involve a theorization of the ability to perpetrate genocide and not only of a lack of other alternatives. The study builds on previous research on the relationship between violent escalation and genocide, and findings are in line with existing research.

Keywords: genocide, violent escalation, genocidal intent, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Georgia, Abkhazia
1. Introduction

The study of genocide is today an essential part of the field of peace and conflict. As a concept that emerged in response to the holocaust, initial scholarly attention was coloured by this event and genocide was theorized to emerge out of a well-articulated political plan of destruction. Later scholars have in contrast promoted viewing genocide as part of a larger escalation of violence and as a strategy that might emerge out of other types of violence. This has empirical support as most of the genocides throughout history have occurred in relation to armed conflict. A puzzle is found in the fact that violent escalation is a recurring phenomenon in our empirical world, while genocide is rare in comparison. In order to make sense of when genocide is the outcome, studies have to be directed at understanding what separates an escalation leading to genocide from that of a violent escalation leading to stagnation. In response to this a research question is constructed.

Why do some leaders choose a strategy of genocide when faced with a violent escalation, while others do not?

This study claims that genocide is the outcome of a strategic response to a situation that appears to lack alternative solutions. In order to see how this situation is created, a qualitative and comparative approach is adopted to look at two cases, one positive and one negative. Using data from the cases of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which experienced a genocide in 1995, and Georgia, which experienced an intra-state armed conflict in 1992, this study finds some support for the theorized mechanism. Nonetheless, the theory needs to be complemented and tested on other cases in order to increase the explanatory power.

In order to understand how this research question relates to existing knowledge on the phenomenon, an overview of previous research will follow. Next, the theory is presented, explaining the expected relationship and causal mechanism leading to genocide. This is followed by an explanation of the research design, including a description of how the case selection was made. The result section presents the findings in the empirical material. These results are then analysed and compared in the two cases. Finally, the concluding section attempts to relate this to existing theory and policy.

1.1 Existing Research

What the term genocide actually holds has been debated within the field. Raphael Lemkin coined the term to describe the crimes of the Holocaust, and a few years later the UN published
a definition as part of producing a legal framework to handle crimes of mass atrocity (Manaktala, 2012, p. 180). This definition states that genocide involves

acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group (United Nations, 1948).

This definition has been criticized by scholars for being more legal than definitional, thus being arbitrary and not precise enough for academic measurements. In addition, as a legal definition it focuses more on the consequences of genocide rather than the causes of it, making it somewhat unproductive as a theoretical concept for studies on causes of genocide (Manaktala, 212, p. 181f).

With regards to this, the definition produced by the UN will still be used in this paper. This is due to several reasons. Despite it being criticized by many scholars, it is still the most used definition when it comes to studies of genocide. It is also the most common definition outside of the research field. In order to produce research that has internal as well as external relevance, a definition that can be compared to other studies and used in non-scholarly material is preferred. In addition, the legal framework that has been derived from the definition is what has been used to prosecute perpetrators of genocide, something that the scholarly material has to take into consideration.

Definitional debates have been a consistent theme within the research on genocide, not only in response to the UN definition but also concerning more general, theoretical aspects. Discussions have to a large extent revolved around the notion of intent. Some scholars argue that the intent of destruction is what defines genocide, and what sets it apart from other types of violence. Others state that certain actions count as genocide regardless of intent (Manaktala, 212, p. 181f). These opinions have largely been expressed in relation to the fact that the UN definition clearly states that genocide involves the “intent to destroy” (United Nations, 1948).

This discussion on intent closely relates to a parallel debate on the separation between genocide and other forms of violence. Shaw states that previous definitions of genocide have either focused on defining it in terms of its actions (violence with intent) or in terms of its outcome (group destruction) (Shaw, 2007, p. 93). These mutually exclusive categories have produced perceptions of genocide as something either defined by the grandiose plan of mass
destruction, where the holocaust often serves as an example, or as mass killings that reach a certain death rate (ibid). Shaw argues for a more complementary view. Together with other scholars, he regards genocide as something which holds a certain intent of eradication separating it from other forms of violence. However, this intent need not be in place from the beginning, but can evolve over time (Shaw, 2003, p. 41f). Arguing for viewing genocide as a phenomenon related to other types of violence, these scholars all focus on genocide seldom being the intended plan from the beginning, but rather something that has developed during the course of violence (Mann, 2005, p. 8f; Shaw, 2003, p. 41f; Straus, 2006, 2012).

Mann theorizes that genocide occurs in weak democracies as groups make conflicting claims to power. These types of crises produce a radicalized state, which through the escalation of violence come to view ethnic cleansing as an option (Mann, 2005, p. 8f). Straus also gives credence to the theory of radicalization, claiming that the insecurity that internal conflict produces serves to increase tensions within the country. During war, a cumulative radicalization occurs as hardliners are promoted, violence is intensified and pre-existing cleavages are made more salient (Straus, 2006, p. 12). He borrows Valentino’s theoretical phrase of a final solution, as genocide is chosen as “war by other means” (Straus, 2006, p. 233; Valentino, 2000). Straus builds on this work as he some years later summarizes the main school of thoughts within the field (Straus, 2012). He places Shaw, Mann and Valentino within one paradigm; they all emphasize the strategic environment created by war, where the killing of civilians is a response to a threat. In addition, war is seen as legitimising violence and rewarding the most violent actors. This paradigm clearly separates itself from the other major school of thought within the field, which emphasizes the role of exclusionary ideologies and subsequently the role of intent (ibid. p. 547).

Mann, as well as Anderton, further develops that those conditions increasing the risk of war, are also risk factors associated with genocide. These include economic crisis or the spread of extreme types of nationalism (Anderton, 2014, p. 120ff; Mann, 2005, p. 8). This is supported by Campbell, who claims that economic decline tend to produce grievances which may then crystallize as violence escalates (Campbell, 2009, p. 155). Campbell also argues that what decides whether a grievance will lead to genocide or to conflict is the social distance between groups. This theory on relational distance relates to the war by other means perspective, where violence takes different forms depending on the circumstances (ibid. p. 158).

Semelin can be regarded as related to these scholars, however he does not focus on the relationship between war and genocide. He claims that genocide has often been theorized as an inescapable process, taking actors from one point to the other, where the ultimate goal is group
destruction (Sémelin, 2007, p. 325). This relates to Shaw’s thoughts around preparations of war. According to him, studies of genocide have suffered from the fact that the events leading up to the actual killing in hindsight can be seen as preparations of genocide. This linear process, taking perpetrators from the planning to the execution of genocide, is in fact constructed after the killing. Shaw claims that what is afterwards seen as steps taken towards genocide is in reality preparations of war. The machinery of armed conflict is confusingly similar to that of genocide, making people interpret rearmament as planning for genocide thus giving credence to the theory on long-term intent (Shaw, 2003, p. 47).

If genocide is the endpoint of an escalation of violence, what is it more precisely that makes it a distinct concept and phenomenon? Fein writes that the notion of intent need not be found in an extensive plan before the killing, but instead in a “pattern of purposeful actions” (Fein, 1990, p. 20). Straus also provides a useful discussion on what genocide actually is, and how it both relates and is separated from other forms of violence. Genocide may very well, and often does, encompass all other forms of violence, such as ethnic cleansing, rape or repression. What primarily sets genocide apart is its logic. Extensive violence against civilians is a feature of many conflicts, and violence may then be group selective just as genocide is. However, in such conflicts, violence has a communicative purpose; it is part of the interaction between adversaries and can work to deter, inflict costs or repress another conflicting party. In genocide on the other hand, violence is an end to itself. The group-destructive logic of genocide is what defines it (Straus, 2012, pp. 552, 554).

This brings the discussion to what it is that causes this change in logic. If genocide stems from a violent escalation, how actors come to change their logic of violence into the destruction of the other group needs to be understood. There is a gap in existing research as this process have not been tested properly. In addition, the field can overall be criticized for lacking structured tests of the theories on genocide, as well as attempts of comparison. If genocide is part of a larger spectrum of violence, where the logic or goal of violence is changed during the course of escalation, a comparison between a positive and negative case should give valuable insight into the separating features of the two.
2. Theory

The study attempts to bridge the gap that is identified between the theories of violent escalation and those of the mentality of genocide. This theory aims at explaining how violent escalation can lead to genocide. The theory states that genocide is the outcome of a strategic choice, made by leaders who perceive a lack of alternatives to the situation they are facing.

Some existing theories touch upon the point in time when genocide replaces normal warfare, however they overall lack theoretical clarity or empirical tests. Mann describes how the brink of mass cleansing is reached when the perpetrator group believes itself to hold such military advantage so that they will be able to cleanse a territory without little risk to itself (Mann, 2005, p. 6). Straus on the other hand explains how genocide might be the chosen option when strategies such as “group submission, removal, or negotiation” (Straus, 2012, p. 554) have been ineffective. Another theory that he proposes is that genocide is a type of violence that is future oriented. If the dominating group perceives this domination to be diminishing, they might adopt genocide as a pre-emptive measure in order to handle the problem while still having the chance (ibid. p. 555f).

The theory put forward in this thesis stands as an attempt to view the rational choices of leaders in response to the context they are facing as decisive in understanding what causes genocide. The theory argues that genocide is to be seen as an endpoint of a spectrum of violence, and that a violent escalation is vital for genocide to take place. Inspired by the theorization by Straus, the theory states that genocide will be the outcome of a strategic choice that leaders take in response to the immediate circumstances. Genocide is seldom planned or intended from the beginning, but rather a result of a crisis a group is perceived to be facing. This crisis is caused by an escalation of violence, that produces a perception of the situation as one lacking a solution and genocide is subsequently chosen as way out. Thus, it is the independent variable of a perceived lack of alternatives that creates the strategic setting endemic to genocide. This lack of alternatives can primarily be based on two situations. If leaders perceive that there is no way to handle the problem at hand or accommodate an opposing group in alternative ways, such as repression or deportation, genocide may be chosen as a last resort to handle what is viewed as an existential threat. Secondly, this strategic setting will also be affected by leaders’ perceptions of the future. If leaders repress an opposing group, repression will be the continued choice of strategy only if leaders believes that it can keep the hold on power and thus proceed with the repression. If, on the other hand, the dominating group is unsure about its ability of continued repression it may choose to eradicate the threatening group as a pre-emptive measure. This
constitutes a security dilemma; where actors perceive a necessity to act now while still holding some capability, in order to enhance security. As the future is unknown, this results in preventive aggression in order to pre-empt scenarios of later defeat (Souleimanov, 2013, p. 45).

In essence, the theory states that the perpetrator group reacts to events that take place between them and the opposing group, and successively scales up their violence. At each new level of violence, the leaders ask themselves if their actions worked and if they will be able to continue performing these actions.

A violent escalation is as theorized a tit for tat kind of cycle, where two parties use violence against each other in an escalatory manner thus responding to the others action with more and more violent means. Internal armed conflicts often display a violent escalation of this kind where violent actions are responded with more violent actions causing the conflict to spiral into an armed struggle (Pruitt, Kim, & Rubin, 2004, p. 88ff). This theory concerns violent escalations that lead to civil war, as it is in this context genocide is expected to occur. The UCDP definition of civil war is used for this theory, which states that an internal conflict becomes a civil war when there are more than 1000 battle related deaths per calendar year (Allansson et al, 2017). However it is still the violent escalation leading up to the civil war, and events during the war, that is the focus of this study as this is what is expected to create the situation prone to genocide.

The theory looks at leaders of a dominating group and since it concerns a strategic choice, the actors in question need to have the ability to transform this choice into a larger action for them to be important. In this, actors that have power in decision making processes are included, for instance politicians or military leaders. This limits the study to governments or other authorities. The concept of other authorities is borrowed from Chalk and Jonassohn (1990, p. 26), as it is a useful addition to governments including possible local authorities as well as government organs such as the military. These types of authorities are relevant mainly due to the fact that often it is only they who have the organizational capability and strength to actually perpetrate mass murder of this kind (Straus, 2012, p. 553), but also because in relation to theory it is primarily the group currently in power who perceives a threat to future power. In this study, these actors will be referred to as leaders.

The theory applies to countries with a diverse population. Many articles on genocide focus on ethnic cleavages, this is nevertheless not the only form of diversity that can lead to genocide. This theory holds for a broader definition of diversity, including several forms of identity groups. These groups can be cultural, political, religious, ethnic or based on class. Identities can be made more salient during escalation, however some form of diversity needs to have been
present from before the start of the conflict. In addition, as Mann notes, there are few conflicts that solely focus on one aspect of identity. Oftentimes, despite one being more dominating, perpetrator groups focus on several different characteristics of the out-group (Mann, 2005, p. 5). As an example, the Tutsis in Rwanda were not only perceived as constituting a particular ethnic group, but also as occupying certain economic and power positions, making them targets of class hatred as well. For this, Barrington provides a useful term as he writes about demographic threats (Barrington, 2006, p. 258). Instead of using phrases such as ethnic rivalry or ethnic security dilemma, often used in relation to genocide, a demographic dilemma more eloquently captures the problem at hand. It is the demographic composition of the country that is seen as constituting a threat, regardless of which demographic groupings exist.

2.1 Hypothesis

Looking at one negative and one positive case, both ought to exhibit a violent escalation leading to civil war. During this escalation, the perpetrator group will attempt to handle the opposing group using different means, successively scaling up the violence they use. At one point in time, the positive case will assess the situation and find these measures to be ineffective. In the negative case, the violence will stagnate or decrease before this point is reached, and this will most likely be because of the fact that used methods have been effective in controlling the violence of the opposing group. At this time, the two cases are expected to deviate from each other and the positive case will in response to the perceived lack of alternatives use genocidal violence in order to handle a situation that is perceived as existentially threatening. The decision to destroy the other group will be taken shortly before the violence aiming at destruction will begin. The hypothesized relationship is that

\[ H1. \text{Genocide is part of an escalation of violence, and sequentially follows other types of violence, such as violent repression and deportations.} \]

\[ H2. \text{Genocide is the result of an active strategy that is chosen in response to a perceived lack of alternatives.} \]
3. Research Design

3.1 Criteria for Case Selection

The case selection is based on two aspects. As the value of the independent variable is unknown, case selection focuses on the dependent variable and control variables. The study includes two cases with different values on the dependent variable. The positive case have experienced genocide while the negative case have not.

In order to find comparable cases, the number of negative cases needs to be limited. The study requires a negative case which based on theorized risk factors stands the same risk of experiencing a genocide as a positive case does. For this, Mann’s theorization of dangerous cases is used. Mann writes that some of the most dangerous cases are those who “exist around the fringes of bigger imperial countries” (Mann, 2005, p. 517), and then proceeds to mention some of these. As he does not test any of these, they are appropriate for further testing. There is a limited set of internationally acknowledged genocides, and much debate about which cases actually are cases of genocides. As the UN definition of genocide is used, a case that according to this constitutes genocide is necessary. For this, the United to End Genocide organization, which has published a list of past genocides, can be used. This limits the number of cases to six (“United to End Genocide” n.d.), and by matching this list with that of Mann, two cases can be chosen.

Based on the matching of the two lists, the conflicts in Georgia and Bosnia-Herzegovina are identified as suitable for comparison. Both countries experienced conflict in the 1990’s. In Georgia, the region of Abkhazia demanded independence and a subsequent war broke out between Abkhaz and Georgian forces in 1992. Bosnia-Herzegovina experienced a conflict as Bosnian Serbs opposed the declaration of Bosnia-Herzegovina as an independent state. War erupted between Bosnian Serb forces and Bosnian Muslim forces, and during this the Bosnian Serb forces perpetrated genocide against the Bosnian Muslim population. A table presenting the cases is found on the next page. The two cases are compatible as they both present a violent escalation in response to independence struggles from an ethnic group within the country. The cases are also similar in that they both have a history of being members of a larger federation and that the escalation have occurred in the aftermath of the dissolution of this federation. In addition they provide for a fruitful analysis as they are recent examples as well, providing better ground for a more current generalization.

The cases are also compatible when it comes to control variables. The controls have been chosen to cover different aspects of the previous research on genocide and they consist of
relational distance, ideology and economic situation. Relational distance is said to affect the risk of genocide as groups who are socially closer will be less likely to commit mass atrocities against one another (Campbell, 2009, p. 162f). A suitable measurement for relational distance between social groups is the level of intermarriage between the groups (ibid.). Economic situation is believed to affect the risk of genocide in the same way as it is theorized to affect the risk of civil war. Ultimately, economic crisis produces grievances; increasing the risk for scapegoating and other types of polarization (Anderton, 2014, p. 120ff). Lastly, ideology is one of the most common aspects of genocide literature. Building on the concept of exclusionary ideologies, this control is used to ensure that the two cases does not differ in that one case holds “a belief system that identifies some overriding purpose or principle that justifies efforts to restrict, persecute, or eliminate specific political, class, ethnic, or religious groups” (Harff, 2009, p. 521). The values of the two cases are as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Case selection</th>
<th>Bosnia-Herzegovina</th>
<th>Georgia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Historical context</strong></td>
<td>Previous part of Yugoslavia. Escalation occurred in close proximity to the dissolution of a great power in the region (“UCDP - Uppsala Conflict Data Program,” n.d.-a).</td>
<td>Previous part of the Soviet Union. Escalation occurred in close proximity to the dissolution of a great power in the region (Souleimanov, 2013, p. 175).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intermarriage</strong></td>
<td>In 1990, 16.8% of all marriages were mixed (Gagnon, 2006, p. 41f).</td>
<td>In 1989 about 25% of Abkhazians were married to someone of a different ethnicity, most commonly to someone of Georgian ethnicity (Revaz &amp; Georgia, 2014).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Georgia the analysis concerns the Georgian government and its leaders. In BiH on the other hand, the leaders being analysed are members of one of the political parties in power in the
region. After being elected to rule with two other parties, this party then created a separate shadow regime of the official government in BiH, when the latter became dominated by the party of the Bosnian Muslims. Despite this being a difference between the two cases, they are comparable as the shadow regime in BiH both had an extensive governmental organization as well as a military capability in the form of former Yugoslavian troops. Thus they fulfil the requirements of both holding a decision making power as well as the organizational and military capability of perpetrating mass atrocities which was mentioned in the theory section.

3.2 Sources of Empirical Data
The data used for this study is found through a document analysis of primary and secondary sources. Military reports and plans, speeches and statements from leaders as well as interviews and interrogations are primary sources being used to understand the decisions of leaders. Secondary sources, such as UN and NGO reports as well as accounts of the wars and the decisions of leaders are also used.

Two problems in relation to data collection has emerged and somewhat limited the study. Firstly, there is a disparity between the two cases in terms of data availability. The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina has resulted in a large international interest, especially with the subsequent ICTY trial. Georgia on the other hand has not received the same interest, resulting in there being less information available in that case compared to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Secondly, as stated in the section on previous research, genocide studies have had a legacy of promoting the intentional aspect of the phenomenon. This has resulted in a large amount of literature skewing information in favour of this view, thus reading into the material an existing plan of genocide from the beginning. This problem is handled by in first hand using primary sources of particularly leaders’ decisions, and then using secondary sources to complement this information.

3.3 Method
The method used is structured focused comparison. This method allows for a data gathering that is comparable across the two cases, while at the same time keeping the thickness and conceptual clarity of the included concepts (A. L. George & Bennett, 2005, p. 67ff). If the theorized mechanism is in place, structured focused comparison allows for a deeper investigation that can help understand the mechanism. Should the theorized mechanism not be in place, structured focused comparison also leaves room to investigate alternative explanations in the material (ibid. p. 21). The operationalization derived from this method thus consists of a
series of questions on the independent variable. The questions will then be asked of the data from both cases.

3.4 Operationalization

Operationalization of the independent variable *a perceived lack of alternatives* is done through the use of questions for structured focused comparison. The questions included are made to produce a reliable and valid test of the independent variable and the causal mechanism.

- Has instances or attempts of violent repression from the leaders taken place, and what was the result of these? Violent repression includes actions such as “extrajudicial killing, torture or similar physical abuse, disappearances, and political imprisonment” (Wood & Gibney, 2010, p. 369).

- Has instances or attempts of deportation of the out-group occurred, and what was the result of these? Deportations are in this case to be understood as the forcible transfer of populations (Nilsson, 2002, p. 548f).

- Has instances or attempt of collective group violence by the leaders occurred, and what was the result of these? Building on Hultman, collective group violence is similar to violent repression with the difference that it is “selective on group level but indiscriminate on individual level” (Hultman, 2014, p. 290). It is thus a more systematic violent targeting of a certain group.

- Did the leaders perceive a security dilemma?

- Did the leaders perceive an ability to continue repression of the group?

- Did the leaders perceive repression, deportation or limited forms of collective violence as viable options?

- Did any intention of genocide exist before the violent escalation?

- Was group destruction or genocide first brought up in proximity to the initiation of genocidal violence?
4. Results and Interpretation

4.1 Bosnia-Herzegovina

Background

The death of the president of Yugoslavia, Josef Broz Tito, in the late 1980’s, followed by a period of economic decline, pushed the republics of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia towards demanding independence (“UCDP - Uppsala Conflict Data Program,” n.d.-a). Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), inhabited by a mixed population consisting of 44% Muslims, 31% Serbs and 17% Croats, held an election in 1990 before declaring themselves independent. In this election, the parties arranged themselves along ethno-religious lines and the distribution of votes largely matched that of the ethnic composition of the country (Hayden, 2012, p. 51). The Bosnian Muslims wanted BiH to become an independent state, free from the political centre of Belgrade. The Serbian part of the Bosnian population, represented by the party SDS, opposed this. The Serbs had been the dominating group of Yugoslavia, and Bosnian Serbs feared what would happen if they were to become a minority within the new state (“UCDP - Uppsala Conflict Data Program,” n.d.-c). Despite this, independence was declared in 1992 and in response, the Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina or Republika Srpska led by Radovan Karadžić, was proclaimed by the Bosnian Serbs. As the newly formed BiH government contested this claim, a war broke out between the two different republics of BiH which lasted until 1996 (ibid.).

The Bosnian Serb Army (BSA) cooperated with the former official army of Yugoslavia (JNA) and received both military and financial support from the government of Serbia. This made them militarily superior the army of the Bosnian Muslim side and shortly after the war began, BSA controlled more than 70% of the country’s territory (Bartrop, 2016, p. 26). During the war, BSA, led by the commander Ratko Mladić, attacked and seized territory from Bosnian Muslims. It was in this part of the war that the shelling by BSA of the UN safe area of Srebrenica (see picture 2 in appendix) occurred. The subsequent killing of about 7000 Bosnian Muslims has by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) been judged to constitute a genocide (“Srebrenica | Genocide in eight acts,” n.d.).

Following the massacre of Srebrenica, intensive NATO airstrikes forced the BSA and Republika Srpska into signing a peace agreement which would separate BiH into two territories with distinct constituencies (“UCDP - Uppsala Conflict Data Program,” n.d.-c).
Empirical Observations

Shortly after the creation of the Bosnian Serb shadow regime, the Bosnian Serbs began using means of violent repression. 1992 saw the targeting by SDS snipers of a big multi-ethnic peace march in Sarajevo (Gagnon, 2006, p. 111). Early accounts of the conflict also talk of BSA terrorizing Serb controlled areas. These present a situation where nationalist Serbs targeted people who did not comply with their rule of law, and both Serbs and non-Serbs were among the victims. Bosnian Serbs who were outspoken opponents of the Serb shadow regime were dismissed from their jobs or faced with threats of violence (Maass, 1992). As the war proceeded and starting in the Serb-dominated areas; curfews, travel restrictions and the dismissing of non-Serbs from jobs and positions of authority occurred. When the two sides organized militarily, and the BSA gradually occupied more and more territory these practices spread to cities were Bosnian Muslims had previously been in majority (Gow, 2002, p. 120).

In 1992 Republika Srpska, led by Karadžić, presented six strategic goals they were to pursue through the armed struggle (ICTY, 2009). Largely concerning geographical aims, these included both the physical separation of the Serbs of BiH from the other two groups living there as well as access to certain areas that were deemed important (Becirevic, 2010, p. 484; ICTY, 2009). The rhetoric and goals of the political as well as military leadership of the Bosnian Serbs largely came to revolve around geography, something that also increasingly affected their means of warfare. The first idea was to divide BiH into three units, one Serb, one Croat and one Muslim, however due to the demographic pattern of the country this was not possible. There were some areas that were dominated by one of the three groups, yet overall the cities were mixed and the regions lacked clear demographic divides (Friedman, 2004, p. 42). The fear that was expressed by Karadžić, was that an independent BiH would result in the separation between the Bosnian Serbs and their countrymen. The Serbs of BiH would become a minority within the new country and would be cut off from Serbia. Karadžić’s prompted that Serbs would not accept the status quo as he said “we are interested in Bosnia-Herzegovina only as a federal unit of Yugoslavia. Bosnia and Serbia will not be far away, and there will be no hard borders on the Drina”(Toal & Maksić, 2014, p. 247). The Drina referred to the Drina River running between BiH and Serbia (see picture 1 in appendix).

During the initial escalation of the conflict these hard boarders referred to by Karadžić came to represent a scenario that was repeatedly pictured by the leadership of Republika Srpska. Ultimately, they expressed a fear of being targets of genocide by the new BiH government (Radovan Karadžić, 1990). They spoke of the hardships that Serbs had endured in BiH during preceding years, and thought of the independence as one of the final steps in the elimination of
the Serb identity (ibid.). By connecting this to the new borders, the geographical aspect of the conflict became central to the Serbs’ understanding of opposition’s actions. Karadžić stated that “it should be known that most of those future hard, solid state borders are intended to sever the living flesh of Serb peoples” (Toal & Maksić, 2014, p. 282). With this, they motivated a defensive war against the Bosnian Muslims who were said to have forced them into armed conflict (Velma Šarić, 2013). In addition, throughout the conflict, and especially in the months before Srebrenica, BSA consistently perceived the actions by the UN and the international community as unjust. This served to heighten the feeling of a security dilemma (BSA Main Staff, 1992).

In 1992, Directive No. 4 was issued by Karadžić. The goal of this was to free territories that had been occupied by non-Serbs through the “launch [of] offensive operations to crush large HVO [Croatian Defence Council] and Muslim groupings in the territory of the Republika Srpska and to force them into unconditionally surrendering their weapons, or destroy them” (Becirevic, 2010, p. 490). A method of ethnic cleansing is what internationally came to be associated with the BSA. They expressed a necessity in liberating areas of BiH that was said to have been occupied by non-Serbs, and from the beginning planned to inflict as much costs on the enemy as to force them to leave the area (BSA Main Staff, 1992). In this strategy of ethnic cleansing, deportations were a common feature. At the end of the war about 2 million Bosnians had been displaced, however numbers on how many of these that were deported by Serb forces does not exist (Nizich, 1992). Using locations in the newly occupied cities, BSA deported Bosnian Muslims to concentration camps during the entire war. In these camps both long term detention as well as executions took place (Judah, 1997, p. 229).

The war is said to have become more protracted and complicated than the Serbs had originally thought. Mladić were quoted saying that in 1993 many “predicted at that time that the war would be over in five to ten days” (Magaš & Žanić, 2001, p. 217). This disparity between the perception of the BSA military strength and ability and the increasingly stressful situation on the ground came to affect decision making. As the war went on, international interest in the conflict became more and more apparent, and the threat of NATO airstrikes lead to a change in planning by BSA and Republika Srpska. Wanting to end the war as quickly as possible, the leaders realized that terminating the war as well as convincing the opponent and the international community of keeping the status quo in which BSA controlled most of BiH, would be difficult (ibid.). After the increasing international involvement in 1995 Karadžić, and the BSA, felt that continuing the war would “not only become unbearable but would also result in their defeat” (Magaš & Žanić, 2001, p. 219).
This came to affect decisions taken later the same year. It was one of the Muslim groupings mentioned in Directive No. 4 that was targeted in Srebrenica in 1995. BSA had managed to seize most parts of eastern BiH, including the town of Srebrenica which lay close to the Drina River. In mid-1992 the Serbs were beginning to experience military losses, and Muslim irregulars managed to retake Srebrenica (Burg & Shoup, 2000, p. 133). The town served as both a jumping-off point for Bosnian attacks on Serb villages in the area, and as a strategically important position for the Serbs in their quest for a corridor to Serbia (ibid. p. 140). Srebrenica became the gathering point for the Bosnian forces and a large number of Bosnian refugees. As BSA managed to retake territory around Srebrenica, the isolation of the town caused a humanitarian crisis. This motivated the creation of a UN safe area in the town, resulting in humanitarian aid, evacuations and protection of civilians by the UN troops (HRW, 1995b). BSA continued shelling the area, yet later agreed to allowing UNPROFOR personnel into the town, in exchange for the disarmament of the Bosnian forces (Burg & Shoup, 2000, p. 141). In the following years, Serbs would repeatedly claim that the Bosnians broke this agreement by performing terrorist attacks against the Serb population of Bosnia.

In July 1995 BSA launched the military operation Krivaja 95’ where they attacked and managed to seize Srebrenica. To this, airstrikes by NATO were issued, yet the response from Karadžić was that they would not retreat (HRW, 1995b). During the month of July, BSA under General Mladić killed around 7000 unarmed people, mostly men (Allcock, 1998, p. 281). Accounts of when this order of civilian targeting was issued differ. Some have argued that this plan was created the evening before the killing began, when the BSA became aware of the fact that there were able-bodied men among the civilians in the safe area (Honig, 2007, p. 410). ICTY in their prosecution of Mladić on the other hand, concluded that Karadžić issued the order of Directive No. 7 in March, in which he ordered the troops to “create an unbearable situation of total insecurity with no hope of further survival or life for the inhabitants of Srebrenica” (ICTY, 2017). The specific military operation, Krivaja 95’, was however formed twenty to fifteen days before the attack and according to ICTY contained a plan to attack the enclave; “intending to make it disappear, to empty it, and to make the area Serbian territory by forcibly removing the Bosnian-Muslim population” (ibid.). The actual order given to the troops in place was issued only a week before the attack and did not contain anything about the removal of civilians (Drina Corpsa BSA, 1995). In their prosecution of General Krstić, leader of some of the troops in the area, the ICTY concluded that the part of the Bosnian Muslim that BSA had attempted to destroy were men of military age (ICTY, 2004).
4.2 Georgia

Background

When nationalist sentiments increased in Georgia during the late 1980’s, the region of Abkhazia (see picture 3 in appendix) began to voice demands of independence. Abkhazia, with a population consisting of 46 % Georgians, 18 % Abkhazians and 14 % Russian and Armenian, had previously existed as an autonomous region within the Soviet state of Georgia (Souleimanov, 2013, p. 128). In 1989 parts of the Abkhazian population signed the Lykhny Letter, demanding the sovereign status of Abkhazia (Potier, 2001, p. 10f). In response, a large demonstration took place in Georgia. The use of repressive violence by Soviet police during this demonstration became one of the decisive factors as Georgia in 1991 declared itself independent from USSR (BBC, 2009). Zviad Gamsakhurdia became the first president of Georgia and was later replaced by Eduard Shevardnadze. In 1992, after alleged raids by violent groups on the border between Georgia and Abkhazia, Georgia sent the National Guard to restore order. The Georgian army did not stop at the border, but instead went in militarily into Sukhum, the Abkhazian capital (Souleimanov, 2013, p. 160). This was the start of a two year long war that would see the attempts at several ceasefires and negotiated solutions (“UCDP - Uppsala Conflict Data Program,” n.d.-a). In mid-1994 both parties managed to agree on a ceasefire. This agreement was however broken by the Abkhaz forces who in their largest military offensive retook Sukhum (Souleimanov, 2013, p. 161f). Georgia then made a deal with Russia to join their Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), in exchange for Russian military bases along the Abkhaz-Georgian border as well as the employment of 2500 Russian peacekeepers (Gahrton, 2010, p. 68f; “UCDP - Uppsala Conflict Data Program,” n.d.-a).

A few months later a partial solution was reached, as UN talks led to Abkhazia being granted its own constitution, flag and national anthem, yet it would still remain as an autonomous region within Georgia (“UCDP - Uppsala Conflict Data Program,” n.d.-a). The conflict remained inactive until 2008 when fighting broke out again between the two parties (ibid.). This study will only cover the first part of the war, as the latter involves other aspects of the incompatibility (ibid.).

Empirical Observations

The Abkhaz conflict initial stages saw repressive policies but did not experience any large scale violent repression from the Georgian centre. After the signing of the Lykhny letter in 1989 some parts of the Georgian population urged a punishment of the Abkhazians, calling for the termination of their autonomous status (Souleimanov, 2013, p. 132). Tbilisi did not agree to
This decision, and instead continued with low-intensity political struggle. In the middle of 1989 violence broke out as a branch of Tbilisi State University was proposed to open in Sukhumi, something that Abkhaz youths opposed (ibid.). That year saw an increase in nationalist slogans promoted by Gamsakhurdia and policies leading to the repression of the Abkhaz population. Gamsakhurdia promoted the slogan of “Georgia for the Georgians” (Fríchová, 2009, p. 11). People of other ethnicities than Georgians were said to be “guests on the Georgian territory” (ibid.) and this motivated a series of discriminatory laws in 1991, such as making the Georgian language the only official language and banning regional parties from national elections (ibid.). These laws and the violent outburst between students in Sukhumi caused the declaration of the independent state of Abkhazian S.S.R by Abkhaz leaders (Souleimanov, 2013, p. 133f). In response Gamsakhurdia decided to grant Abkhazia the right of over-representation in their local parliament. This meant that despite the Abkhazian group comprising only one sixth of the regions total population, they got one third of the seats in parliament (ibid.).

At the beginning of his presidency, Shevardnadze decided to replace this quota system. As it was a policy by Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze is believed to have wanted to mark his non-association with the previous president. Also, as a former soviet minister, Shevardnadze wanted to prove himself as a defender of the Georgian national interest and not as a “Moscow puppet” (Wheatley, 2005, p. 72). This dialogue that occurred before the war is evidence of the theorized escalatory steps. After using non-violent means of repression, Gamsakhurdia was faced with increased demands on behalf of the Abkhazians. Instead of escalating the conflict, he decided to grant Abkhazia some concessions. This strategy was successful in decreasing tensions for a while, until the quota system was abolished by Shevardnadze (J. George, 2009, p. 119).

No evidence that deportations took place during the war have been found. Fighting in the region caused the flow of a large number of refugees, and when the Georgian troops withdrew around 200 000 people had been displaced (Waal, 2011). These were however mostly Georgian, who had fled after the breaking of the final ceasefire in 1994 by Abkhaz troops (Souleimanov, 2013, p. 161f).

Some accounts of ethnic cleansing exist, nonetheless, this is not perceived as a common pattern in the data. The Georgian side is said to have been the first to practice ethnic cleansing, both as a means to secure certain areas and as part of “population swaps” (HRW, 1995a; Souleimanov, 2013, p. 160). During the second half of the conflict, this practice was mirrored by the Abkhazians. Yet, when it comes to Georgia there are no clear accounts of whether this was a practice ordered from the top, or if it was simply something caused by “a lack of control” (ibid.). HRW concludes that it was probably a combination of both (ibid.). Two additional
accounts have been found about the use of collective group violence by the Georgian side. In late 1992, Georgian troops shot down a Russian helicopter carrying 87 civilians out of a dangerous area. Shevardnadze stated that the helicopter had been targeted because of the risk of it carrying weapons (Hewitt, 2013, p. 136). The same year, Georgian troops had also caused the disappearance of about 200 Abkhazian fighters, who were later found to have been extra-legally executed (ibid.).

Overall, few directives of the Georgian military contained reference to the Abkhaz civilian population. However, in the beginning of the war two alleged statements in reference to genocide was made by the Georgian side. A commander of the Georgian troops, Gocha Q’arq’arashvili gave a statement in 1992 where he said that “the Abkhazians would have no-one left to carry on their race; 100,000 Georgians would be sacrificed for the 97,000 Abkhazians, but Georgia’s borders would remain intact” (Hewitt, 2013, p. 134). In 1993, this statement was rearticulated by Giorgi Khaindrava, a minister in Shevardnadze’s cabinet, as he said that “all that the Georgians needed to do to wipe out the Abkhazians was to liquidate their genetic pool of 15,000 young men” (ibid.). These statements were not followed up by any active action.

Before the war, the political elite expressed a fear that the secessions of some regions would result in a domino effect leading to the dissolution of Georgia (Souleimanov, 2013, p. 177). Furthermore, one of the biggest concerns articulated by Shevardnadze at the beginning of the war was that Georgia’s national interest would be violated through the armed struggle over territory (Richard Balmforth, 1992). Shevardnadze at first took a firm stance against granting any concessions, picturing a potential Abkhaz independence as a route to Georgian disintegration (Francis, 2011, p. 119). Thus, during the initial years, Shevardnadze refused to negotiate the status of the region, and only agreed to discuss other matters related to the conflict (ibid.).

As the Abkhaz forces were catching up militarily with Georgia, Georgian troops were finding themselves in an increasingly desperate situation. When the power balance shifted from Georgia having the upper hand to Abkhazia being the militarily stronger party, Abkhazians also had the opportunity to change their demands in relation to ceasefires. The two first ceasefires had both mentioned the need to respect the territorial integrity of Georgia. The third ceasefire, created in 1993, lacked this parameter and served as proof that Georgia found themselves in a situation on which they were losing their grip (Francis, 2011, p. 127). This ceasefire focused on the withdrawal of Georgian troops and the demilitarization of Abkhazia (Hewitt, 2013, p. 139). Despite being signed by both parties, the agreement was breached by the Abkhaz forces
who in a large offensive managed to recapture Sukhumi (Souleimanov, 2013, p. 161). Shevardnadze who at the beginning of the war had stated that “any concessions violating the national interests of Georgia are ruled out” (Richard Balmforth, 1992) was now faced with attacks on the returning Georgian troops (Souleimanov, 2013, p. 161f). The fact that the military balance had been altered in favour of Abkhazia, as well as the loss of Sukhumi served to reduce Georgian possibilities of future repression. The war had pushed Georgia to a point where they did not possess the capability of continued repression. Allegedly Shevardnadze flew to Sukhumi and placed himself in a bunker, promising that he would rather die there than “leave in humiliating defeat” (Hewitt, 2013, p. 141). He was later forced to contact the central power in Russia. With them he decided that by joining the CIS, Russian troops would arrive to Georgia and secure the border between Abkhazia and Georgia (Souleimanov, 2013, p. 162), a decision Shevardnadze said to have been “against until the last moment” (Schmemann, 1993).

An unexpected finding in the Georgian case is the fact that Russia came to play a big part in the war. The role of Russia has been deemed inconsistent, with them giving help to both sides (“UCDP - Uppsala Conflict Data Program,” n.d.-a). Especially under Gamsakhurdia, accusations of that the Abkhazian demands were simply the result of Russian manipulation were common (Frichova, 2009). That the Abkhazian independence struggle was orchestrated by Moscow became a popular belief in the beginning of the war (Hewitt, 2013, p. 79). Russia was the primary mediator between the parties, and the initiator of all the ceasefires during the conflict. Yet, allegedly, the Russian army also supported the Abkhazian sides with military supplies and engaged in the fighting on the Abkhaz side (Souleimanov, 2013, p. 160). Despite this, Shevardnadze turned to Russia as the Georgian forces were being defeated (ibid. p. 161).

4.3 Interpretation of Results

One apparent and initial difference that the data analysis showed concerned the nature of the escalations. In BiH the escalation was much faster, seeing a sudden outburst of all three types of violence; repression, deportations and collective violence. Georgia did not experience this sharp increase in violence, but instead saw a non-violent escalation of repression and increased political demands until the two parties engaged in more traditional warfare against each other.

The BSA did reach a point in time when they saw no other option than to commit large scale massacre of the Bosnian Muslims. This point was however not preceded by the step by step escalation envisioned. The three escalatory stages before the genocide did not happen sequentially, nor were they separated enough to be able to clearly see the result of each individual step. Deportations were for instance coupled with collective violence, and in the data
it was difficult to discern how the leaders evaluated the outcomes of these intertwined strategies. Yet, despite the preceding steps not occurring as isolated as theorized, they took place before any genocidal actions. During the entire war the Bosnian Serbs were deeply focused on geographical aspects of the conflict. The cutting off from Serbia was seen as representation of their ultimate fear, and the perception of BiH wanting to commit genocide against the Serbs was applied to this. They perceived a demographic security dilemma, where certain geographical places came to represent a life or death situation.

Arguably, Georgia also came to a point when they perceived a lack of alternative. One key difference between the two cases, which the theory does not account for, was that Georgia was in fact faced with the complete lack of alternatives, while this was not the case for BSA. The BSA had the option of genocide, while the Georgian forces at the time were too weak to perform such actions. The escalation in Georgia’s case led to the balance of power being altered. In the beginning of the war Georgian forces were stronger than those of Abkhazia, but during the course of the escalation, the fighting and the political situation weakened the Georgian authority. BSA on the contrary had the upper hand in terms of military power when they were faced with their lack of alternatives. There were great threats that NATO airstrikes would get more frequent or that more UN troops would be deployed, however BSA was the strongest actor at the time and the situation therefore constituted a classic pre-emptive strike opportunity. This speaks in favour of complementing the theory. A more explanatory theory would encompass this aspect as well; the aspect of an ability to perform genocide, and not just the lack of other alternatives.

In relation to the second part of the theory, concerning perceptions of the future, the cases exhibit some similarities. Georgia saw no future ability to use violent repression or collective violence, most probably because they had exhausted the opportunity to repress the Abkhazians when they were successively losing the war. This did however not lead them to the pre-emptive solution, because of the reason mentioned above; the lack of military strength. In the case of BSA, a point where future repression was no longer an option was reached. They were unsure about their ability to hold on to their military advantage, and the strategic decision they took before Srebrenica was related to this. This uncertainty primarily related to actions of other parties, and not BSA’s military capabilities. Rather than seeing their own power decreasing, they worried that NATO and the UN would retaliate and leave them worse off. Thus the pre-emptive nature of their actions were in place as hypothesized.

A difficulty when analysing the intention of genocide is the fact that most actors make the case that they did not intend to perpetrate genocide from the beginning. Most of the actors who
were prosecuted in the ICTY strongly opposed the fact that genocide had been the plan for BSA and Republika Srpska from the start. Most of the articles written about this in contrast contend that Karadžić and his immediate surrounding from the forming of the SDS party worked towards and planned for the genocide of Bosnian Muslims. This has been supported by examples of statements by Karadžić claiming he intended to destroy the Muslims or the opposition. Something that speaks against this, and which this study have managed to shed some light on, is the fact that this type of rhetoric is a recurring feature of parties in war. As found in the Georgian case, there were two instances in which Georgian authorities spoke of the destruction of the Abkhazians and this was not followed by any genocidal actions. This gives some leverage to the theory that genocide is seldom the intended solution from the beginning, despite actors expressing goals of the destruction of the other side.

This relates to another interesting finding. The theory used in this study regards genocide as somewhat of an extension of war. In it, genocide is seen as fulfilling the same goals that the war does, only that it would require a certain type of escalation in order for genocide to be considered. In the case of BiH, the data can be interpreted as supporting this view. Despite speaking of the civilian population in Srebrenica as something that would be destroyed, the planning for this event was largely expressed in military terms. Thus it might be the case that both the Georgians and the Bosnian Serbs viewed their actions in a similar fashion; as a war for their survival. However, in BiH, this war became more collectivized and came to include the fight against the civilian population as well. This could possibly have to do with the fact that the Serbs of Bosnia saw a much larger threat towards them in terms of demography; the Bosnian Muslims were a majority in BiH and should the country become independent the demographic composition of it could lead to the marginalization of the Serbs. Thus there was a different military objective in the struggle of the BSA, and they experienced a demographic security dilemma to a much larger extent. The escalation took them to a point where it was perceived as the Bosnian Muslims constituted a direct threat to the Serbs; a threat they had to get rid of while still having the chance. The fact that the massacre in Srebrenica mostly saw the killing of men of military age would lend support to this. The Georgian forces on the other hand saw the biggest threat in the creation of a domino effect; that the secession of Abkhazia could lead to other regions wanting to break free. This threat was however not perceived as one that the population of Abkhazia created, but rather as initiated by the driving forces behind the Abkhazian independence. This would also explain why the conflict in BiH saw the targeting of civilians throughout the entire escalation, even without the articulation of destruction being the goal of those individual military operations.
To this it can be added that the study shows that the lack of alternatives need to be in relation to a problem that is seen as an *existential threat*. For the Georgian authorities, the worst case scenario was a domino effect causing more secessionist wars in the country. Thus their primary fear was a reduction of government power. In BiH on the other hand, the worst case scenario was the eradication of the Bosnian Serb population, and subsequently the creation of an independent Bosnian state constituted an existential threat. This difference between the two cases was present throughout both escalations. The way the conflict was formulated differed from the beginning and served to create diverse types of escalation.

As previously mentioned, the analysis of Georgia’s decisions must incorporate the role of Russia. Russia can be seen as both constituting a way out and as a factor increasing the lack of alternatives. Georgian troops were considered defeated by Abkhazia in 1993, although it is difficult to tell whether this defeat was completely dependent on the support of Russian forces. The fact that Russia throughout the war had been seen by the Georgian authorities as in favour of the Abkhazian independence, could have affected the choice of strategy by Georgia. The killing of Abkhazian civilians could have been seen as too big a risk, as this could result in an increased military effort by Russian troops. At the beginning of the war, Georgian decision making were most probably also affected by their dependence on good relationship with the Kremlin in their strive for independence. These factors possibly influenced Georgia’s cost benefit analysis of the use violence against civilians. Furthermore, the fact that Georgia at the end felt they could turn to Russia for help provided a way out apart from genocide, something that was perceived as lacking in the conflict in BiH.

To summarize, the study aimed at explaining why and at what point in time a violent escalation turns into genocide. Srebrenica was judged to be the sole individual event during the war in BiH constituting genocide. What has been found is that the planning of the Srebrenica attack occurred only some weeks before the actual attack. Long before this, in the beginning of the war, Karadžić had articulated an intent to destroy the Muslim population, or at least its resistance. Before the attack of Srebrenica, BSA did talk about destroying the population therein and the actual planning for the event took place in proximity to the attack, which supports the theory. Nevertheless, the rhetoric of destruction at the beginning of the war does not serve as evidence against the theory, as this rhetoric was present in Georgia as well. As previously mentioned, there is however one aspect of these two cases that makes the validation of the theory difficult. The formulation of the conflict and the incompatibility differed between Georgia and BiH from the beginning, leading to different perceptions of who constituted the primary enemy. Why this was the case could partly be explained by the difference in
demographic composition. Nevertheless, this explanation is not sufficient and the theory, despite being complemented with the aspect of ability to perform genocide, is thus not enough to completely explain the variance between the two cases. The theory would have to be adjusted to reach its full explanatory potential. Overall, the theorized mechanism was quite similar to the sequence of events in BiH, but it was not sufficient to explain the outcome in the case of Georgia.

4.4 Potential Problems

A problem which was realized during the data collection is the fact the demographic composition of the two cases differed. Using cases with better compatibility in this respect would have produced a result with perhaps other explanatory variables. However, as it turned out, the ethnic composition was a large aspect when it came to why the Serbs of BiH perceived a lack of alternatives. Despite it being difficult to know whether a different demographic composition in Georgia would have produced a different result, it can be concluded that a demographic security dilemma to a large degree is centred on actual ethnic division within the country, and the study failed in terms of accounting for this in the case selection. Overall, the study suffered from the choice of Georgia as a negative case. Arguably, the involvement of Russia in that conflict complicated the data analysis. Another case may have produced a more yielding analysis.

A related problem with the research design is that it required a large amount of information on the decisions of leaders, in particular first-hand information. This was not a difficulty when it came to Bosnia-Herzegovina; as previously stated much information is available on this case mainly due to its international spread. When gathering data on Georgia on the other hand, primary sources were difficult to find. This has resulted in a potential bias, as the research design was better suited to analyse BiH. Especially concerning military decisions and commands there was a disparity, as this type of information was largely non-existent in the case of Georgia. Thus the analysis of Georgia almost exclusively concerns the decision of political leaders and not that of military leaders. The strategy to handle this situation was to simply try to find as much first-hand information as possible, such as quotes by leaders in secondary sources. Yet, this is a problem that could not be fully solved and the understanding of the results will have to be done with this mind.

4.5 Alternative Explanations

One factor worth discussing here is the change of leadership that occurred in Georgia. An important aspect of escalation is the entrapment actors tend to experience as violence escalates;
which forces them to continue increasing the tension and scale up their strategies as they perceive no other way out. It may be the case that Shevardnadze, who had not been in power during the entire escalation, did not experience the same feelings of being caught in the situation as did Karadžić for instance. This may be an alternative explanation to the outcome in these cases; that Shevardnadze never experienced the lack of alternatives felt by leaders of Republika Srpska and the BSA, not being as involved in the conflict as he would have been should he have held power from the start. This explanation relates to what has been theorized in previous research concerning how war relates to genocide. These scholars state that war produces radicalization of leaders, which causes them to take more extensive measures to win the war. This explanation is often coupled with one that states that war also promotes hardliners and rewards those who are militarily superior. This was nevertheless not the case in Georgia, which may be because of the fact that when Shevardnadze came to power no military escalation had occurred. To conclude, change of leadership serves as an alternative explanation to explain the variance between these two cases, yet its generalizability to other cases is difficult to predict.

Another important factor concerning Georgia, is at the time of the Abkhazian conflict the country was involved in two other conflicts. One was the frozen conflict with South Ossetia, another secessionist region, whose political incompatibilities with Georgia followed those of Abkhazia but which escalated into war before Georgian forces went into Abkhazia. The other was with the Zviadists, forces of the former president Gamsakhurdia, who challenged Shevardnadze for state power. This surely affected the military capability of Georgia at the time, making them weaker. Their decision calculus was probably also affected by these conflicts, perhaps being more willing to yield than to be engaged in three conflicts at the same time.

As mentioned in the presentation of previous research, much literature has previously been devoted to understanding genocide as the cause of a particular ideology which contains the necessity of destruction of the other group. To the sceptical reader, the difference between Georgia and BiH might simply be a difference in ideology, where Republika Srpska had formulated a genocidal ideology on which they based their war. This would indeed explain their collectivization of the conflict. Yet, comparing the two cases, the initial ideology did not differ apart from the fact that Republika Srpska feared their own extinction, which was not the case in Georgia. They were both adherents to nationalism, promoting their right to a state and government. Little in the initial ideology by Karadžić was formulated in aggressive terms against the Bosnian Muslim, instead that was developed during the war (Toal & Maksić, 2014,
Ideology may be of importance when looking at the later stages of the conflict, however as something that evolved over time this would too be related to the violent escalation.

The final and likely the most important factor when it comes to alternative explanations, is the difference in formulation of the conflict that has been described above. The fact that it was not the Georgians in Abkhazia who took up arms, and that they did not constitute a minority within this region probably had an impact on how the conflict was viewed. The Georgian conflict was never seen as an inherent existential threat to Georgians, while the Republika Srpska and BiH articulated their struggle as one against their own annihilation. This explanation can however be seen as complementary to the theory, as it is something that contributed to the perceived lack of alternatives.
5. Summary and Conclusion

This study has attempted to answer the question why do some leaders choose a strategy of genocide when faced with a violent escalation, while others do not?

The goal was to bridge the gap between existing theories on violent escalation and theorizations of the logic of genocide, and try to understand how a violent escalation in one case, but not in the other, can lead to a strategic use of genocidal violence.

Through the qualitative analysis of one positive and one negative case this study has shown that leaders faced with a perceived lack of alternatives may choose to perpetrate genocide as a solution to their problem. The study also showed that this situation can occur because of a violent escalation. This gives evidence to the theory tested. However, an additional conclusion which was not foreseen in the theory can be drawn based on the empirical examination. It is not sufficient with a violent escalation leading to a perceived lack of alternatives in order to explain genocide. Actors must also have the military and organizational capability to perpetrate genocide in order for it to become an alternative. In addition, the conflict need to have a collective element from the beginning. It is not enough that the party perceived a security dilemma only in relation to their armed opponent, instead this security dilemma needs to be extended to include the civilian population connected to that armed opponent as well. The empirical evidence showed that this collectivization of the war in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina did not develop during the escalation, but was part of the initial view of the incompatibility. In cases analysed, this collectivization is believed to have occurred in one case and not the other because of differences in demography. In BiH, Bosnian Serbs were in minority, which affected their perception of what constituted the threat. Their perception of the security dilemma was extended to include the civilian population of the opponent as they were the majority in the country. Thus their lack of alternatives were perceived to be in relation to this, were the only solution was to change the demography of the country by perpetrating genocide.

The study also attempted to bring theoretical clarity to the escalation leading to genocide in relation to one leading to stalemate. This has been done, and findings can be seen as both supporting and deviating from previous research. That genocide can be seen as “war by other means” (Straus, 2006, p. 233) is supported by data on the escalation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Furthermore, the study showed that genocide can be chosen as a final solution, in which the war has served to legitimize violence. The presentation of previous research in this paper concerned the notion of intent, and whether or not this needs to be present from the beginning.
in order for it to constitute a genocide. The analysis give evidence to the fact that intent of destruction may indeed be present from the beginning of the escalation, and articulated in relation to acts of genocide. Nevertheless, an articulation of the intent to destroy, annihilate or eliminate another group does not serve as unquestionable evidence that genocide was planned from the beginning, as this sort of mentality is a feature of other conflicts as well. Rather, this articulation needs to be coupled with a series of purposeful actions, as previous scholars have concluded.

This study can thus be said to relate to existing research and contribute as it has by comparing a case of genocide to a case of armed conflict, further shed light on the dynamics of genocide. Yet, the biggest contribution is arguably what the study did not find. Through the testing of this theory and the analysis of these two empirical cases, the paper has managed to find blind spots in existing research. Future research needs to be directed at further understanding the collectivization of the conflict that occurs in cases of mass atrocity; i.e. how civilians come to be the targets of war. This analysis related this process to demography; how a minority can come to see the entire population of the majority as a threat.

Based on brief knowledge about other cases of genocide, this minority – majority divide is however inconsistent. For example, both the German population during the Holocaust as well as the Hutu population during the Rwandan genocide were in majority. This does not speak in favour of demography being a generalizable explanation to collectivization. Future research therefore needs to further explore under which circumstances such collectivization of the incompatibility occurs.

5.1 Policy Implications

One important finding in relation to policy is the fact that this study has given evidence to the necessary inclusion of another risk factor. The incompatibility in BiH was by Republika Srpska from the beginning articulated as one that could result in the extinction of the Bosnian Serbs. Should further research on the subject show that other cases of genocide represent similar patterns, this would be important for future policy decisions. The study showed that genocide can be the result of an escalation articulated in these terms, which reaches a point where a party perceives no other solution but genocide. Thus cases holding this type of demographic composition; where one group is a minority but at the same time has a larger military capability than the other groups in the country, could be potential risk zones for genocide.

Policy suggestions in relation to genocide almost always concern risk assessment and prevention. For this, these results could be interesting. Should the theory be further developed
and tested, it could provide important insight as it identifies risks associated with escalation, thus improving the possibilities for early intervention. As much of the current genocide prevention analyses risk factors and patterns of genocidal violence, it lacks the stage in the process were escalation turns genocidal. Findings from this study could thus help to understand the sequence of events leading to genocide, resulting in greater awareness of when to intervene.

In addition, the study sheds light on some important aspects of third party involvement. In Georgia, Russia managed to both restrict the possibilities of further escalation with the threat of military pressure as well as providing Georgia with a way out of the conflict. In BiH on the other hand, the actions of the UN and NATO have been thoroughly criticized and the empirical analysis performed here showed that they indeed had a role to play in the decisions of the leadership of BSA and Republika Srpska. Exactly how they came to affect BSA decisions is hard to tell, however looking into how peacekeeping operations and armed UN personnel affect the military calculations of warring parties is important if UN interventions are to improve.
Appendix

Picture 1. The Drina River constituting part of the border between Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia (BBC News, 2010).

Picture 2. Srebrenica (VOA, 2015).

Bibliography


