

CASE STUDIES IN POST WORLD WAR II GENOCIDE:
ROOTS OR REGIMES?

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CASE STUDIES IN POST WORLD WAR II GENOCIDE:
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INTRODUCTION

Today, some sixty years after the world witnessed the horrors of the Holocaust, the abhorrent phenomenon of genocide continues to plague mankind. In the half-century following the 1948 United Nations *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, in which the international community committed itself to “liberate mankind from such an odious scourge,”¹ the world has experienced some of the bloodiest decades in the, perennially brutal, annals of human history. Here, at the dawn of the third millennium, the modern consciousness is dominated by twenty-four hour news cycles. The latest murder mysteries and political scandals are played on loop, while stories covering catastrophic complex emergencies, such as the one currently transpiring in the Darfur region of Sudan, are largely shuffled under the mat. Such stories simply don’t compete in the ratings with those covering missing girls, sex or corporate scandals and the economy; much less with the never-ending string of reality shows. Perhaps we have become numb to stories of such violence in the wake of the unprecedentedly brutal twentieth century. Maybe we safely file these images away into the back of our consciousness, believing that they are other peoples’ problems in some dark, far corner of the world. We live in an epoch popularly referred to as the *information age*, in which infinite knowledge is at our fingertips. Yet, presented with this unprecedented smorgasbord of knowledge and

¹ Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), 59, 330-334.

information, the *fingertips* of the developed world overwhelmingly choose to consume the basest material that the information age has to offer: reality shows, sports, video games, rap music, pornography, online gambling, et cetera, *ad nauseum*. Due to the effects of globalization and the myriad of technologies that tie people together like never before, the world is *shrinking* into a global community. As a result of the Holocaust and the subsequent cases of mass murder that occurred in the years since (such as those examined in this analysis), public awareness of genocide is also at an all time historical high.

Unfortunately, for the reasons discussed above, the great mass of people choose to turn their head the other way when faced with such horrific revelations about the plight of their human brethren. Having said this, there is a vigilant minority who are working hard, in their own way, to eliminate this blight from the human condition. The following analysis is an attempt to fight this good fight, ultimately against the very existence of genocide itself, but in the process it hopes to also battle against the widespread apathy and ignorance that pervades the popular psyche when it comes to this important subject. In approach, Part 1 works toward an understanding of genocide using case studies to examine it in its particulars. Then, using a comparative approach, Part 2 endeavors to draw a number of more far-reaching conclusions. Before we delve into the specific cases, a few preliminary issues need to be addressed. First, the obvious overarching question with regard to the propriety of this analysis, why is such a study important? Author Adam Jones speaks to this question, writing:

“First and foremost, if you are concerned about issues of peace, human rights, and social justice, there is a sense that with genocide you are confronting the ‘Big One,’ what Joseph Conrad called the ‘heart of darkness.’ That can be deeply intimidating and disturbing. It can even make you feel trivial and powerless. But genocide is the *opposite* of trivial. Whatever energy and commitment you invest in understanding

genocide will be directed towards comprehending and confronting one of humanity's greatest scourges.'²

Thus, in its small way, this analysis is an attempt to *comprehend* genocide and, in so doing, to *confront* it.

To this end, this volume focuses on three specific states in which genocide was perpetrated in the post-Holocaust era, Cambodia, Rwanda and Bosnia. Conceptually it varies somewhat from similar studies in the nature of its approach. Specifically, as the title implies, Part 1 includes a complete historiography of each of the three sample countries. This is far broader than the traditional lens through which genocide is most often examined, which focuses on the narrower set of events and circumstances that directly surround it. The long historical perspective out of which the circumstances were born is often only given lip service in a few preliminary paragraphs, where broad generalizations are drawn. This is in no way an indictment of that approach or a dismissal of the huge body of invaluable research drawn on this model. Instead, it offers an alternative that aspires to broaden understanding on the whole. Essentially, Part 1 of this analysis includes the *narrative* of three rich and unique regions, whose journeys share a tragic period of rending that irreparably changed their futures and, I would say, the way that humanity perceives itself in the postmodern world. My aim is to paint a broad enough historical picture that the reader will be able to draw their own conclusions with regard to the root causes of genocide in each case. In other words, I am creating a *framework for understanding* each of the three cases, from a historical perspective. Further, my hope is that that the depth and structure of the information covered is such that it can both serve as a foundation and

² Adam Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), xviii.

springboard for those scholars to whom it is new, and still be informative to those who are familiar with the cases. I recognize and accept the possible criticism that such an approach could draw. Primarily, that the breadth of the material covered goes far beyond the scope of our focal point, the genocides that took place in each of the sample countries during the second half of the twentieth century. I would argue that this potential risk to *focus* is acceptable because the ultimate focus of this analysis is relative to the greater understanding of the circumstances that it endeavors to expound.

GENOCIDE IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Before I delve into the individual case studies a few preliminary remarks regarding the historical origins of genocide are in order. This will provide a framework through which to later explore the Cambodian, Rwandan and Bosnian cases. In the first line of his influential text on the subject of genocide, Leo Kuper writes, “The word [genocide] is new, the concept is ancient.”³ In other words, “the roots of genocide are lost in distant millennia,” if not in name at least in deed. (Jones 2006, 3) Throughout the course of history humanity has had a propensity for viewing the world through the prism of *in-group* versus *out-group* interactions. Speaking to this notion, authors Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn assert:

“Historically and anthropologically peoples have always had a name for themselves. In a great many cases, that name meant ‘the people’ to set the owners of that name off against all other people who were considered of lesser quality in some way. If the differences between the people and some other society were particularly large in terms of religion, language,

³ Leo Kuper, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 11.

manners, customs, and so on, then such others were seen as less than fully human: pagans, savages, or even animals.”⁴

When a people comes to see the members of another group or groups from such a dangerously separatist and pessimistic point of view, then their perceptions begin to foster a host of negative manifestations within larger society. Such manifestations include the perpetuation of contemptuous religious traditions, stereotypes, “collective defamation and derogatory metaphor.” Over time, as these trends become ingrained, the next step towards genocide is no longer as far of a stretch. That is, the notion that the other group must “be eliminated in order that we may live (Them or Us).” (Jones 1990, 4) As we shall see in Part 1, in each the three cases examined in this analysis the impetus for such dangerous zero sum mentalities is born out of a complex myriad of historical factors converging with the dangerous ends of the genocidal regimes that perpetrated the massacres.

In prehistory and antiquity we find that genocide customarily took the form of what author Adam Jones describes as *gendercide*. That is, a form of genocide designed to not only eliminate one’s enemies, but also to exploit a certain segment of the opposing group. This exploitation largely applied to females, who were spared in order that they might bear the offspring of the dominant group. In patrilineal societies, in which ethnicity was traced through the bloodlines of males, this was a wholly effective way of eradicating your enemies, while bolstering your own numbers. Looking back, human history is overflowing with examples of genocide. An attempt to document them all would be fertile ground for another study; the instances discussed here are only a broad sampling of the veritably countless cases throughout history. An example of this

⁴ Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide: Analysis and Case Studies* (New Have, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 64.

phenomenon from the classical era is the Athenian sack of *Melos* in 415 BC. (Jones 1990, 5) During the Roman era the siege and ravage of Carthage at the end of the *Third Punic War*, from 149 to 146 BC, we find what Ben Kiernan, whose seminal works I have relied on throughout this analysis, has described as the “First Genocide.” Kiernan writes that the words of Marcus Porcius Cato, “*Delenda est Carthago*”^{*} are likely the “first recorded incitement to genocide.”⁵ In the centuries following the death of Christ, the growing host of Christians were subjected to brutal persecutions and mass murder at the hands of the Romans. As we saw in Chapter 3, beginning in the seventh century, the wave of Islamization that swept the near east accounted for untold death and destruction. Author Bat Ye’or describes the Muslim mindset during the long period of conquest, writing, “[conquered] villages fell into the category of conquest without treaty. According to the strategy of *jihad*, the absence of a treaty allowed the massacre or enslavement of the conquered population and the division of their property.” (Ye’or 1996, 45) On the other side of the world, the Mongol hordes exterminated entire nations in their march to the gates of Western Europe. Jones Writes, “In addition to religious and cultural beliefs, what appears to have motivated these genocides was the hunger for wealth, power, and fame. These factors combined to fuel the genocides of the early modern era, dating from approximately 1492, the year of the Caribbean Indians’ fateful (and fatal) discovery of Christopher Columbus.” As history continued its march headlong toward modernity throughout the eighteenth century, the *Age of Enlightenment*, the world was not exempt from the scourge of mass murder. At the height of the bloody French Revolution, the *Vendée Uprising* against the new republican government, in conservative western France,

^{*} “Carthage must be Destroyed.”

⁵ Ben Kiernan, “The First Genocide: Carthage, 146 BC,” *Diogenes*, 203 (2004), 27.

resulted in a brutal civil war that “constituted a genocide against the Vendean people.” The scorched-earth policy of the central Parisian government left an estimated 150,000 people dead by the time the uprising was brought to heel in 1796. During the next century, between 1810 and 1828, the Zulu Kingdom under the iron-fisted rule of Shaka Zulu waged a highly ambitious campaign of “expansion and annihilation,” in an area that encompasses much of modern South Africa and Zimbabwe. The barbarous Zulu campaign, which exterminated “not only whole armies, but also prisoners of war, women, children and even dogs,” was so destructive that, even today, many peoples throughout the region, including those in “Zimbabwe, Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda can trace their decent back to the refugees who fled from Shaka’s warriors.” (Jones 1990, 5-8)

Having firmly established the fact that mass murder is not a new or modern phenomenon, let us now turn to the twentieth century, the focus of this analysis, which has often been dubbed the *Age of Genocide*. Alvarez writes, “While some have suggested that the twentieth century should be called the age of total war, it should more properly be referred to as the age of genocide, since the genocides of this century have killed more than four times as many people as all the wars and revolutions of the same time period combined.” The most notable instance of genocide during the early decades of the century was the extermination of Armenians by the Ottoman Turks during the First World War, in which estimates of up to two million people were massacred. This, unfortunately, was only a prologue of what was to come. In a century fraught with unprecedented death and destruction, the most notorious example of mass murder, by which all other genocides are sure to be measured, is the German *Holocaust* of the Jews

and other “undesirables” during World War II. More than six million Jews, gypsies and Slavs were exterminated at the hands of the Nazi regime, which prompted the world to take a serious look at the phenomenon of mass murder for the first time in history.⁶

At the forefront of this awakening on the subject was a Polish Lawyer of Jewish decent named Raphael Lemkin. Lemkin had been captivated with the study of atrocities since his days as a linguistics student in the early 1920s at the University of Lvov. As the Nazis rose to power in Germany in the 1930s he paid close attention to the drumbeat of Hitler’s anti-Semitic message. In 1939, after being wounded during the Nazi siege of Warsaw, Lemkin fled the country and was eventually granted refuge in neutral Sweden. (Power 2002, 17, 24, 26) In 1943 he coined the term “genocide,” which has become the internationally recognized word used to describe the phenomenon of mass murder. More specifically, Lemkin argued that genocide should include “the attempted destruction not only of ethnic and religious groups but of political ones, and the term should also encompass systematic cultural destruction.” After the war, Lemkin was the driving force behind the *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, in the newly formed *United Nations*. Although the treaty’s definition of genocide was much narrower than what Lemkin had sought, it gave a new legal meaning to his term. Kiernan writes:

“The convention defines the crime of genocide as an *attempt* at extermination, whether *partial* or *complete*: ‘acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, racial, ethnical, or religious group, as such.’ Genocide need not be state planned or even violent. Among the acts it prohibits, the conventions lists the non-violent destruction of a protected group. While excluding to Lemkin’s disappointment, cultural destruction and political extermination, the convention specifically covers the forcible removal of children from their

⁶ Alex Alvarez, *Governments, Citizens, and genocide: A comparative and Interdisciplinary Approach* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 10-11.

families, the imposition of living conditions that make it difficult to sustain a group's existence, and the infliction of physical or mental harm with the intent to destroy a group 'as such.' ... Thus a new legal discipline of international criminal law emerged from the convention and the Nuremberg trials. It has since overseen what one writer calls 'the rapid evolution of the crime from an academic concept to a firmly-established principle of international law.' ... By 2000, 149 States had ratified the 1948 U.N. convention... A recent legal study terms the Genocide Convention 'one of the most widely accepted' [UN] treaties."⁷

Thus, genocide, as it applies to the law, is defined much more narrowly than many scholars define it. Perhaps at the other end of the spectrum, author Graham C. Kinloch applies a broad definition to genocide, writing that, "The heart of genocide is *destruction*: the annihilation of *minorities* (racial, sexual, religious, tribal, ethnic, national, and political), including the 'disintegration of their institutions, culture, language, national feelings, religion, economic existence, personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and, ultimately their lives.'"⁸ Etymologically, the word genocide is derived from the Greek words *genos*, or race, and *cide*,* meaning "to kill."⁹

Unfortunately, despite the codification of genocide into international law and the unprecedented level of global awareness that was generated in the wake of the Holocaust, mankind continued to suffer from this plague throughout the second half of the twentieth century. This is clearly demonstrated in the Cambodian, Rwandan and Bosnia cases discussed in Part 1 of this analysis. Writing in this regard, Alvarez asserts that, "genocide has ... become a defining feature of the post-Holocaust century." In retrospect, if Lemkin could have foreseen the half-century that followed his death in 1959, he surely

⁷ Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 10-11.

⁸ Graham C. Kinloch and Raj P. Mohan, *Genocide: Approaches, Case Studies and Responses* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2005), 16.

* From the Latin, *occidere*.

⁹ Robert Gellately and Ben Kiernan, eds., *The Specter of Genocide: Mass Murder in Historical Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 97.

would have been disheartened. His life's work and the Genocide Convention for which he was largely responsible did not represent the end of the scourge he had fought so hard to eradicate. Even so, perhaps Lemkin and, I would also dare to say, all of those uncounted souls who have been swept into the genocidal abyss over the long course of time can take heart from the fact that his efforts represent the beginning of our *understanding* of such unconscionable atrocities. For, understanding is the first step to properly confronting this abominable phenomenon. The next step, which involves the *response* to and *prevention* of genocide is fertile soil for another analysis; as the world stands here on the brink of the third millennium, looking out over the unlimited potential that mankind's future holds, perhaps one day soon this understanding, which is the work of thousands of vigilant scholars, will be used by the international community to snuff this, the greatest of all evils, out of our collective destiny.

PART I: THE ROOTS OF GENOCIDE:
THREE DISTINCT HISTORIOGRAPHIES

CHAPTER 1:

CAMBODIA

FROM ANTIQUITY THROUGH THE POLITY OF FUNAN

The early history of Southeast Asia and the region that would later come to be known as Cambodia stretches back to time immemorial. Author Adam Jones describes a commonly held conception of Cambodian history, writing:

“One view of Cambodia prior to the upheavals of the late 1960s and 1970s depicted it as a ‘gentle land.’ Peaceful Buddhists presided over one of the rice bowls of Southeast Asia, where peasants owned the soil they tilled. This picture is far from false. Indeed, Cambodia was abundant in rice, and peasant land ownership was comparatively high.” (Jones 2006, 185)

On the other hand, respected historian Michael Vickery points to a darker undercurrent in Cambodian history, which will play an important role in the present analysis. He asserts:

“Patterns of extreme violence against people defined as enemies, however arbitrarily, have very long *roots* [italics mine] in Cambodia. As a scholar specializing in 19th-century Cambodia has expressed it: ‘it is difficult to overstress the atmosphere of physical danger and the currents of insecurity and random violence that run through the chronicles and, obviously through so much of Cambodian life... The chronicles are filled with references to public executions, ambushes, torture, village-burnings

and forced emigrations.’ Although fighting was localized and forces small, ‘invaders and defenders destroyed the villages they fought for and the landscapes they moved across.’ ‘Prisoners were tortured and killed... as a matter of course.’ Even in times of peace, there were no institutional restraints on *okya* (a high official rank) or on other Cambodians who had mobilized a following.”¹⁰

As we delve into the case, it will be important for the reader to keep these two widely disparate notions of Cambodian history in mind, as frames of reference.

Researchers have carbon-dated pottery fragments found in caves in the region to as early 4200 BC. Their research indicates a culture not so different from the one that existed there in the mid-twentieth century.¹¹ Recent archeological finds even suggest that the region had a relatively sophisticated culture during the prehistoric era. Some believe the area to be the birth place of rice cultivation and bronze working in the region. The very nature of Cambodian society, being subsistence oriented, lent to a changelessness within its culture. This can be largely attributed to the fact that experimentation with agricultural techniques, which were passed down from generation to generation, could easily lead to famine. Thus, the people and their way of life remained well preserved throughout the long sift of time. (Chandler 1983, 10)

Most of what is known about Cambodia prior to the first few centuries AD comes from artifacts and the historical records of other cultures, such as the Chinese. This is primarily because writing had not yet been developed in the region. The first century BC witnessed the emergence of the first polity in Southeast Asia, known as *Funan*.^{*} Some researchers suggest that Funan was in reality a number of loosely intertwined city-states, rather than a single highly organized state. In any case, this early empire, whose center

¹⁰ Michael Vickery, *Cambodia, 1975-1982* (Boston: South End Press, 1984), 7.

¹¹ David P. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983), 9.

^{*} Funan literally means *mountain*.

was lay in Vyadhapura (located south and east of where the modern capital of Phnom Penh is today), was the most powerful political organization in the region during this era. Funan's life force was vested in its location along a major trade route between Rome and Asia. Its position at the mouth of the Mekong Delta made it a natural stop over point and trade hub. The two primary factors that allowed for the rise of larger political entities in the region were agricultural prosperity and trade. During the first four Centuries CE the area was greatly affected by foreign cultural influences that would have a lasting impact on the region, due to the movement of people, goods and ideas along the trade route. Funan flourished, benefiting from increased agricultural production and the increasing movement of trade goods.¹² With regard to the infusion of cultural influences, the most significant of which was a process of *Indianization* that thrived as Indian Culture flowed into Cambodia. The beginnings of this phenomenon are still being debated, but what is certain is that Cambodians began absorbing elements of Indian culture in a process that has gone on for some 2,000 years. By the Year 500 Indian influence had provided Cambodia with such important innovations and ideas as a system of writing, a pantheon, an artistic culture, the Sanskrit language, and Buddhism. Further, it introduced the region to new ways of looking at politics, society, architecture and astronomy. Cambodia's myth, on which it traces its national origin, is rooted in Indian culture. This has set Cambodia and its national mindset apart from that of neighboring Vietnam for centuries ever-after. (Chandler 1983, 11-12)

Unfortunately for the budding polity of Funan, the winds of fortune shifted in the fifth century. An all-sea trade route from India to China began to emerge, which would eventually circumvent Funan altogether. Because trade was the life-blood of the

¹² D. R. Sardesai, *Southeast Asia: Past and Present*, 5th ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), 22-24.

kingdom's power this created a vacuum in which the economic and political relevance of the region went into sharp decline. As Funan's influence faded away a new political force arose in the region to fill its place in the void. The *Khmers*, the predominant ethnic group who had lived along the Mekong River valley for centuries, usurped the reins of political power in the region. Cambodia has always been comprised of a number of ethnic groups, the most dominant of these being the Khmers. In fact the English word *Cambodia* is a linguistic representation of the Khmer word *Kampuchea*, which itself is derived from the Sanskrit word *Kambuja* meaning "born of *Kambu*." The term *Khmer* represents not only the people of Cambodia, but also the language that they speak.¹³

As Funan's power waned, Khmer polity of Chenla supplanted its supremacy over remnant of the empire and the region. The most powerful king to emerge from this era was Jayavarman I (470-514). During the nearly half century of his rule he was able to bring western Cambodia as well as central and upper Laos under his sway. After his death a series of civil wars ensued that eventually divided Chenla into separate northern and southern empires. The southern kingdom, located along the Mekong River, comprised most of present day Cambodia.¹⁴ In 503 the imperial court recognized Jayavarman I's achievements and bestowed upon him the title of "General of the Pacified South, King of Funan." Following his death in 514 the region was thrown into an era of chaos that resulted in a long period characterized by civil disorder. By 539 the last vestiges of the once great polity of Funan had vanished. With regard to the historical perspective, author D. G. E. Hall writes:

¹³ Ian Mabbett and David Chandler, *The Khmers* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 2-3.

¹⁴ John H. Esterline and Mae H. Esterline. "*How the Dominoes Fell:*" *Southeast Asia in Perspective* (Lanham: Hamilton Press, 1986), 67-68.

“Funan was the first great power in South-East Asian history. Like Rome in European history, its prestige lived on long after its fall. Its traditions, notably the cults of the sacred mountain and the naga princess, were adopted by the Khmer Kings of Cambodia. And although its architecture has disappeared completely, there is every reason to believe that some of its characteristics are preserved in a number of Cambodian buildings of the pre-Angkor period which still exist, and that the Gupta-style Buddhas, the mitred Vishnus and the Hariharas of that period convey some idea of the way in which the Funan sculptors fashioned the human form.”¹⁵

During the seventh and eight centuries, in the long period of disorder following the death of Jayavarman I, the region fell prey to a number of weak central governments. In the first decades after his death the kingdom that he had worked to consolidate was torn apart by two competing dynasties who were striving for supremacy. Still, by the second half of the eighth century no prolific leader had arisen to guide the discombobulated region into the future. Throughout this period the disorganized kingdoms of lower Chenla remained under the loose overlordship of the more cohesive northern Chenla. During the latter years of the century a number of raids into lower Chenla by Malay pirates served to further dislocate the political unity of the region. By the year 800 the once strong empire found itself contested between various regional cult-based kingdoms, all vying for ultimate control of the region. (Hall 1955, 90-91)

THE RISE AND DECLINE OF ANGKOR

Out of this period of instability the capable Jayavarman II (802-850) emerged in the early ninth century and asserted control over all of southern Chenla, unifying it into a cohesive kingdom for the first time since the days of his namesake, nearly two centuries

¹⁵ D. G. E. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia* (London: Macmillan, 1955), 30-31.

gone by. The Khmer empire that he forged was known as *Angkor*.^{*} The reign of Jayavarman II ushered in an age of political and economic consolidation. The Angkorian era was defined by several dynasties, stretching for some six hundred years. The first of these dynasties was proclaimed in a *devaraja*^{*} ceremony in 819 when Jayavarman II proclaimed his sovereignty and in so doing rejected the overlordship of northern Chenla. The ceremony symbolically transformed him into a *god-king*; the focal point of Angkorian society. A new moral tradition was developed that united images of royalty, divinity and fertility. Large temples dedicated to Jayavarman II and his ancestors were constructed throughout the realm, serving as centers of political power. The peasants contributed labor and produce to their local temples, which in turn supported the central government. Author Robert Silverberg writes about what life was like for average people during this golden-age of Khmer civilization:

“We can ... re-create their daily lives, now, as shown by the carvings in Angkor. The Khmers carved in their city as though a bare square foot of wall was somehow unlucky. They left stone portraits of their civilization everywhere. They were basically a farming people, as are their descendants today, with rice the chief crop. They had a remarkable irrigation system, even more impressive as a technical feat than their temples. The surrounding countryside is threaded with Khmer canals and reservoirs. Some of the canals are more than 40 miles long. They were mighty warriors, too. They had machines to hurl arrows and sharp spears to use on their enemies. They rode into battle atop richly decorated elephants. A Chinese chronicler of centuries ago tells us that the Khmers had fully 200,000 elephants trained as steeds of battle. And they were businessmen. They traded with the other nations of Asia, particularly with China. They sold to the Chinese rhinoceros horn, spices, and kingfisher feathers, getting in return goods of porcelain, lacquerware, parasols.”¹⁶

^{*} From the Sanskrit word *Nagara*, meaning “city.”

^{*} A Hindu ritual.

¹⁶ Robert Silverberg, *Lost Cities and Vanished Civilizations*, 1st ed. (Philadelphia: Chilton, 1962), 157.

During his rule, Jayavarman II worked hard to foster the conception of a unified Kingdom along the Mekong Delta and its outlying region. Under the new, more stable, regime the ninth century was also the beginning of an era of development. The new capital was moved north to Siem Reap at the head of *Tonlé Sap*.⁺ Ideal for the cultivation of rice, this fertile alluvial plain secured the economic foundation of the young state. Moreover, the abundant supply of fish provided by the lake served as an excellent food source. A new, complex irrigation system was developed, which enabled year round cultivation for the first time. These agricultural advancements allowed for the subsequent intensification of rice production, leading to a sharp spike in the Angkor's population concentration. In any estimation, the thriving empire that Jayavarman II forged in the first half of the ninth century was among the most cultivated in the world at that time.¹⁷

During the mid-tenth century Rajendravarman II (944-968) greatly expanded the borders of the Angkorean Empire by defeating the Cham to the east, in what is now central and southern Vietnam. Further, he incorporated northern Chenla into his empire, uniting it with the south for the first time since the days of Funan. The territory under Angkor's sway continued to expand into the eleventh century, growing to encompass most of present day Thailand. During the early twelfth century Suryvarman II (1113-1150), who was a capable king in both the military and political arenas, built the large temple complex of *Angkor Wat*,^{*} considered to be the masterpiece Khmer architecture. This enormous temple complex is comprised of an area as large as that of the Great Pyramid and truly represents the golden age of Khmer civilization. Built of elaborately worked sandstone, much of Angkor Wat still remains today; as well as a plethora of other

⁺ The *Great Lake*.

¹⁷ Michael D. Coe, *Angkor and the Khmer Civilization* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2003), 155-170.

^{*} Dedicated to the Hindu deity Vishnu.

artifacts from this era including sculptures, metalwork and pottery. (Mabbett 1995, 19)

Politically and culturally, Angkor was the predominate state in Southeast Asia during this period. However, following the death of Suryavarman II, whose strength, more than any other factor, had held the tenuously patched empire together, Angkor went into a sharp state of decline. The reign of his weak successor, Dharanindravarman II (1150-1160), was beset by a series of peasant revolts brought on by the heavy demands levied by the central government. Further, the new king neglected to maintain the intricate irrigation system on which the empire so greatly depended. Adding to the strife were repeated outbreaks of malaria, the plague and a number of other diseases that wiped out significant portions of the population. Finally, perhaps the last straw, an influx of Mongol invasions eviscerated the region. As Angkor declined, a number of its neighboring empires were growing in power, including a re-emergent Champa to the east; overshadowing the once illustrious Khmer state. (Esterline 1986, 70)

Out of these troubled times arose another able and prolific leader in Jayavarman VII (1181-1218), considered the greatest of all the Angkorean kings. He defeated the powerful Cham state in 1181 and under his rule the Angkorian empire reached its apogee. Parts of contemporary Thailand, Burma, Laos and Malaysia all fell under the Angkorian king's sway. Author David P. Chandler speaks to the place of Jayavarman VII in Cambodian history, writing:

“Over the [more than] thirty years ... [of his rule] he [Jayavarman VII] stamped the entire kingdom with his personality and his ideas of kingship as no other ruler was able to do before Norodom Sihanouk in the 1960's and Pol Pot in the late 1970's. Like these later figures Jayavarman wanted to transform Cambodia; he saw himself as the instrument of transformation.” (Chandler 1983, 58)

The new king adopted a revolutionary religious policy, changing the official religion of the state to Buddhism and zealously adopting *Mahayana* theology. In accordance with his Hinduized vision of kingship and material wealth he sought to deliver himself and his people from suffering. The public works that he constructed, including roads, temples, reservoirs and hospitals, were the most extensive improvements in Cambodian history. In the near forty years of his reign Jayavarman VII extended the empire beyond what had ever been thought possible before. Looking back on the reign of Jayavarman VII, author John Tully writes:

“[His] empire was maintained by force of arms, often clashing with neighboring people such as the Chams and later the Thais, both of whom were formidable opponents. In contradiction to the modern European stereotype of Cambodia as ‘the gentle land,’ the Angkor bas-reliefs depict a war-like society. Men march in formation, armed with a variety of weapons including swords, lances, bows and arrows, and clubs. Catapults were mounted on carts or the backs of elephants... Elephants were also employed for cavalry purposes, their foreheads anointed with human gall which ... was drained from the bodies of hapless passers-by by men armed with special knives.”¹⁸

But alas, as has been the case with strong and charismatic leaders throughout history,^{*} the force of the king’s personality served as the principal cohesive force in the empire. By the time his life began to draw to an end the seeds of decline were already beginning to take root.¹⁹

In the end it would be fair to say that the Khmer empire of Angkor fell prey to its own instability in terms of central power. A number of crucial factors accelerated the degradation of the empire, not least of which was the economic burden that Jayavarman

¹⁸ John Tully, *A Short History of Cambodia: From Empire to Survival* (Crows Nest, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin, 2005), 29.

^{*} And indeed, as we saw earlier in Cambodian history following the reigns of Jayavarman I and Suryavarman II.

¹⁹ Charles Higham, *The Civilization of Angkor* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2001), 58-60.

VII's endless building programs laid on the kingdom's economy. The sheer number of monuments that were built to glorify the king were ruinous to the state treasury. Moreover, the ceaseless punitive wars that the king waged against Champa⁺ and a host of other disobedient vassal kingdoms had severely debilitated the empire by the time of his passing. Further, the expanding Mongol empire to the north was beginning to push southward out of China into Southeast Asia. Although the Mongol incursions did not push as far south as Angkor's borders, they did force an ever increasing tide of displaced Thais southward onto the northwest frontiers of the Khmer empire. In 1219, the year of the Jayavarman VII's death, the Thai province of Sukhotai boldly declared its independence from the Angkor. On the empire's northeastern border the situation was equally as bleak, where it was forced to confront a resurgence of its age old Cham nemesis once again. A final, critical factor that contributed to the decline of Jayavarman VII's great empire was the spread of *Theravada* Buddhism from Thailand. This philosophy, which ran counter to the Mahayana notions of divine kingship and court ritual, had a corrosive effect on the kingdom's religious foundation, which had been such a key component in its cohesion. (Higham 2001, 84-85) More specifically, it dismissed the devaraja cult (discussed above) in which Angkorian kings had vested their divine right to rule since the days of Jayavarman II. In author Charles F. Keyes words, "the rulers of Angkor could no longer draw on the potency of the cosmos."²⁰

The fourteenth century saw somewhat of a renewal of Angkorian power as Jayavarman VII's successors attempted to reassert and centralize Khmer power, but the kingdom would never again reach the full extent of might and territory that it had boasted

⁺ Located in what is modern south and central Vietnam.

²⁰ Charles F. Keyes, *The Golden Peninsula: Culture and Adaptation in Mainland Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995), 77.

during his reign. In the period between 1350 and 1430 Angkor was in a state of perpetual war with the Thais, who were pushing south and east out of Siam.* In 1431 Thai invaders sacked the city of Angkor and, following a prolonged, though futile, resistance, the Cambodian political structure was moved south to the site of present day Phnom Penh. Some argue that the end of Angkorian culture and power can be traced to the era immediately proceeding Jayavarman VII's death; while others maintain that it lingered on. In any case, the sacking of the capital and ousting of the Khmer government truly represented the end of the classical days of Angkorian power. (Sardesai 1989, 31-32)

Due to its weakened position following its removal from the capital of Angkor, the once great Khmer kingdom was forced to serve as a vassal state, alternately between its more powerful Siamese and Cham neighbors for the next four centuries. This period is commonly considered to be Cambodia's "Dark Ages." Recorded history dwindled and a perpetual state of political turmoil ensued. During this long stretch no powerful Khmer leader arose to assert power for any substantial period of time. As noted above, this lack of guidance created what Chandler describes as a "whipsaw between Champa [and later Vietnam] and Siam, with Cambodia in between." (Chandler 1983, 77, 80) Despite this vast reduction in their power, the Khmers never suffered a total defeat; always maintaining some degree of autonomy. Following the sack of Angkor in 1431, the Siamese king, Paramaraja II, installed his son, Indrapath, on the Khmer throne. The Khmers responded decisively, assassinating the young usurper; before moving their new capital south (discussed above).* In 1471 the growing Vietnamese power, to Cambodia's north and east, sacked the Cham capital, reducing the Khmers' age old enemy into a

* Located in modern Thailand.

* In effect, reversing the move north that Jayavarman II had made some 600 years earlier.

“rump vassal state;” replacing the old threat with a new one, with long term implications for the future. Throughout the fifteenth century the Vietnamese increasingly encroached on the Khmers’ littoral regions to the east, strangling Cambodia’s maritime trade and, in many areas, making the Khmers “a minority in their own country.” (Tully 2005, 56)

Weak and uncertain, the Khmer kingdom spent the sixteenth century primarily preoccupied with its wars with Siam, although Vietnamese incursions continued to push farther south into the under-populated southeastern provinces of Angkor, setting the stage for future clashes. In his 1563 book, *Suma Oriental*, Tome Pires became the first European to write in detail about Cambodia, asserting that the kingdom was “warlike” and that its ruler “obeys no one” (Chandler 1983, 81). Due to an intermarriage between the Vietnamese and Cambodian royal families in the early seventeenth century, the Vietnamese were able to obtain permission to found a settlement at Saigon that included a customs house and trading center, thus establishing the first *formal* Vietnamese foothold in the region that encompasses modern day South Vietnam. (Esterline 1986, 71-72) In 1603 the Siamese, always a threat to the east, were finally successful in installing a Cambodian king, Borommara VIII (1603-1618), who was wholly under their dominion. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Khmer kingdom served as a battleground between the competing Thai and Vietnamese empires to its east and west respectively, a role it played since the years following the death of Jayavarman VII (discussed above). Author David J. Steinberg writes, “Thailand and Annam [Vietnam] struggled for control of Cambodia for the next 260 years, each encroaching upon Cambodian territory. Thailand won lands in the north and Annam in the south;

possession of some of these lands is the basis of dispute today^{*} between Cambodia on the one hand and Thailand and Vietnam on the other.” During this long struggle the Khmer kingdom’s provinces were slowly whittled away. By 1749 it had lost all of its provinces in present day South Vietnam.²¹

At the dawn of the nineteenth century the Thai-Vietnamese struggle for hegemony of Southeast Asia, which had been brewing since the fall of Angkor, was reaching a critical stage. The Khmer king, Ang Chan (Ottey Racha) (1796-1834), was forced pay double tributes to both of stronger, expansionist neighbors in 1806 in order to appease them. Still displeased, the Thais backed a plot against the Khmer king, which eventually forced him to flee to Vietnam in order to save his life. There he was able to requisition the help of the Vietnamese monarch, though not without a price. Chan returned to Cambodia, supported by a strong Vietnamese force. The Vietnamese, General Truong Minh Giang, pushed the Thai army and the usurping regime that they had installed out of the capital. (Esterline 1986, 72) For the Vietnamese emperor, Minh Mang, Cambodia represented a “fence” for his southern and western borders. Following the successful Thai offensive, he realized that Cambodia was rather weak and ineffectual in this capacity and, thus, that it was imperative that he “intensify and consolidate his control” over the region in the face of the age old Thai threat. Speaking to the relationship between the Cambodians and the Vietnamese, Chandler writes:

“Giang needed Chan and his officials to provide the Vietnamese with labor, rice, and soldiers. Chan seems to have needed the Vietnamese somewhat less in material terms, but probably counted on them to protect him from assassination and revolt. Like later outsiders operating in

^{*} That is, when Steinberg was writing in 1959, an era that is crucial to our later discussion.

²¹ David J. Steinberg, *Cambodia: Its People, Its Society, Its Culture* (New Haven, CT: HRAF Press, 1959), 12.

Cambodia, Giang probably expected too much from the king and *okya*.”* Giang probably expected too much from the king and *okya*. Before 1834 was over, he had reported pessimistically to Hué that, ‘We have asked the king to help us, but he has hesitated to do so. After studying the situation, we have decided that Cambodian officials only know how to bribe and be bribed. Offices are sold; nobody carries out orders; everyone works for his own account.’ Giang's impatience was understandable, for Cambodian politics at the time was characterized by a diffusion of power, a shortage of resources, and a negotiability of position that effectively kept anyone from becoming powerful for very long.” (Chandler 2000, 123-124)

As the second quarter of the century began, the regional pendulum of power once again began to swing back in the other direction. Following the British defeat of Burma in 1826, Thailand’s military was free to turn its attention back to the east. The powerful Thai army advanced into Cambodia and Chan was forced to flee once again to Vietnam, where he would die the next year. The Vietnamese quickly struck back and pushed the Thai army back, seizing direct control of Cambodia in the process. In so doing, a puppet regime was installed, with the king’s young daughter,* Ang Mei (1834-1840), placed on the throne. The Vietnamese occupation was harsh and by 1833 Cambodia found itself in the throes of a severe economic depression. It also represented the beginning of a nearly two-decade-long period of Vietnamization, in which Vietnamese names and customs were supplanted on Cambodia. (Esterline 1986, 73) Chandler describes the motivation for and dynamics of this process, which would later be repeated in similar form by the French in the colonial era. He writes:

“Minh Mang's policy of Vietnamizing Cambodia had several facets. He sought to mobilize and arm the Khmer, to colonize the region with Vietnamese, and to reform the habits of the people. He also tried to standardize patterns of measurement, mobilization, and food supply for military reasons. Control--that is, control of the adult male population and

* “Cambodia's high-ranking officials.” (Chandler 2000, 108)

* Ang Mei was twenty years old.

the formation of a standing army, if possible, to resist the Thai--was the essential ingredient of all the Vietnamese programs. Problems of recruitment arose because many of the *okya* were unwilling to relinquish control over their followers. The Vietnamese soon found, in fact, that Cham mercenaries were the only troops they could recruit. Because ethnic Khmer caused so many problems, Minh Mang sought to colonize the region with Vietnamese.” (Chandler 2000, 125)

Moreover, Buddhism, which, in one of its forms, had been a unifying force in Cambodian culture since the days of Jayavarman VII, was suppressed. This resulted in a long-seated resentment of Vietnam that would still be felt in the twentieth century. In 1840 the Vietnamese exiled the queen altogether, dispelling the veiled notion of autonomy she had represented. Amidst the economic turmoil the region was already experiencing, this precipitated a countrywide revolt. Consequently, some elements of the Cambodian nobility appealed to the Thai king for help. He responded by sending two Thai armies into Cambodia where they met stiff Vietnamese opposition. The two sides fought for six long years on Cambodian soil, finally coming to a peace agreement in 1846, in which both recognized Ang Duong (Hariharak Ramaisarah) (1847-1860) as the rightful king of Cambodia. (Esterline 1986, 74)

Ang Duong and his kingdom were thus forced to serve a dual vassalage to both of his ambitious neighbors. Still, for the majority of average Khmers, who had never accepted Ang Chan or Ang Mei as rightful rulers, the coronation of the new king was cause for celebration. As Tully asserts, in the wake of decades of uncertainty with regard to the kingdom’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, it was a much-needed confirmation

of an old proverb, that, “the Cambodian *srok*^{*} will never die.” Compared to the reigns of his predecessors, Duong’s was “peaceful and secure.” He put down several revolts that cropped up with relative ease. Further, the new king instituted a number of administrative reforms and began a program of gradually rebuilding property and infrastructure that had been destroyed during the war that just ended. A large number of peasants who had fled into the forests for safety during the war returned to their homes and trade was resuscitated to a certain degree. The small town of Kampot was Cambodia’s only open seaport during this era, but reports by visiting Europeans claimed that it was the center of “considerable trade.” Duong ardently attempted to resuscitate the ravaged economy by re-tilling neglected rice paddies and reducing taxes. Moreover, “Cambodia was reborn as an Indianized, Buddhist state and the king acted as his subjects thought he ought to.” Despite such popular support and positive moves, it is important not to overstate the degree of independence that Duong enjoyed. To the north-west, the provinces that contained Angkor, the chief historical symbol of Khmer greatness, was under the domain of the Siamese king; ostensibly severed from Cambodia forever. Further, Duong’s sons were held as “guests-cum-hostages” in Bangkok in order to guarantee their fathers “good behavior.” (Tully 2005, 76-77)

Not surprisingly, regional developments would play a key role in ushering in the next era of Cambodian politics. By the mid-1850s, British colonial influence was growing in Siam, to the apprehension of the Khmer king. In 1853 Duong appealed to the French emperor, Napoleon III, for colonial protection, eager to accept a patronage that

^{*} “A Khmer word meaning land or country, but it would be a mistake to equate it historically with the idea of a modern nation-state. As David Chandler has observed, ‘Cambodian ideas about political geography did not include the notion that ‘Cambodia’ was defined primarily by lines on a map.’ *Srok* meant the place where people spoke Khmer and ‘more narrowly’ where official titles and seals of office were given out by the Khmer king.” (Tully 2005, 238)

would counterbalance the rising Anglo-Thai threat on his border. The French emperor, preoccupied with more pressing matters, was slow to respond. At least during this early period, the question of the provincial Southeast Asian prefecture of Cambodia was of little consequence to France's foreign policy. Finally, nearly two years later, a French diplomatic mission arrived to assess the terms of such a patronage, by which time the Siamese had put enough pressure on Duong to make him drop the matter altogether. Ang Duong died in 1860, somber and disheartened. Tully writes:

“Perhaps the old king despaired that he had been able to do no more for his kingdom, but if so he underestimated himself, for he had brought some stability and warded off chaos and disintegration. His death was followed by another depressing interregnum of court intrigues, dynastic squabbling, revolts and foreign meddling.” (Tully 2005, 78)

Thus, while Cambodia looked tentatively toward the mid-1860s, France was strengthening its grip on Vietnam and the proposition of extending its domain into a Cambodian colony, which had been made nearly a decade earlier by Duong, was much more appealing.

THE FRENCH PROTECTORATE

The history of French colonial Indochina is in many ways linked to and a product of the Industrial Revolution. Despite the heavy blow that France took following Napoleon's defeat in 1815, the country shared in and greatly benefited from the wave of inventions that swept across Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century. As the modern era dawned the great powers of Europe sought to increase their own grandeur by

colonizing the far corners of the Earth. France began annexing parts of north Africa in 1830 and in the succeeding decades turned her eyes to the potentially highly lucrative areas in “Black” Africa, the Pacific and Indochina.²²

Cambodia weathered three rocky years following the death of Ang Duong. The departed king’s eldest son, Norodom (1860-1904), was able to hold onto the throne in the tumultuous era following his father’s death; although was not easy. In 1862 he was forced to flee the capital after he was unable to control a major Cham rebellion against Khmer rule. He appealed to the Siamese government for support and it helped to reinstall him in a near impotent capacity. In the meantime, France had asserted colonial control

²² John Tully, *France on the Mekong: A History of the Protectorate in Cambodia 1863-1953* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2002), xix-xx.

over southern Vietnam. Cambodia^{*}, playing its traditional role, was forced to serve as a co-suzerain to both Thailand and Cochin China.⁺ With its new, firmer hold in Southeast Asia, France offered King Norodom the protectorate status that his father had sought against the Thais and, with no more appealing alternatives open to him, he accepted. The agreement made Cambodia a *de facto* French colony and stipulated that Norodom would have to accept a French advisor, as well as a host of trade concessions. During the early years of the protectorate, the French were primarily interested in the timber concessions and mineral exploration rights that they acquired in the treaty. It is important to point out here that the French were relatively magnanimous and not overly exploitative of the region, during this early colonial era. Another, far more tantalizing, impetus for France to enter Cambodia was that the Mekong River granted access to much more lucrative parts of western China. Further, another, not to be overlooked, catalyst for colonialism was religion. This was largely related to the domestic political scene in France, where Louis Bonaparte was seeking the Church's support against anti-clerical republicanism. Although Catholicism would never take a firm root under the protectorate, it was recognized as an approved religion in the treaty. The young French naval officers in charge of the first expedition to colonize Cambodia were young and progressively minded. They were awed by the mystique of the orient and, consequently, respectful of the culture and sympathetic to the people. Local Cambodian government, on the other hand, functioned much as it had since the Angkorian period and was overly exploitative of the common people. The government was essentially a network of status based

^{*} More popularly referred to during this era as *Kampuchea*. In this analysis I most often identify it simply as *Cambodia*, for clarity's sake.

⁺ French Vietnam.

relationships in which peasants were exploited for rice, forest products or labor by local officials who in turn paid the king his share. (Tully 2002, 1-8, 17-19)

Over the next two decades Cambodia proved to be more of a drain on France than an asset. Norodom's ineptitude became apparent, as the French had to put down a number of revolts in the 1860's and 1870's. As a result, in the early 1880's the French began to expand their influence in the region, tightening their grip on local government. A new generation of French officials were beginning to arrive, who were committed to finally tapping into Cambodia's rich potential resources; making the colony profitable. Larger customs duties were imposed in order to finance the growing administrative costs. In this new image, France's role in Cambodia was transformed from one of *protection* to one of *control*. The evolution of this transition culminated in 1884, when the king refused to enter into a customs union with France's Vietnamese colony. A French force was dispatched from Saigon to reign him in. Norodom quickly capitulated in June and was compelled to sign a treaty which read: "His Majesty the King of Cambodia accepts all the administrative, judicial, financial and commercial reforms which the French government shall judge, in future, useful to make their protectorate successful." This treaty marked a watershed event in Cambodian politics and would color the future of the region for the next century. A number of its provisions were a direct blow to the traditional Cambodian political structure. The treaty garnered widespread popular anger in Cambodia, but, besides for the monarchy, the Cambodian elite were the ultimate losers in the reform process. A primary point on which they suffered was the institutionalization of land by the French. Essentially, the French usurped the traditional structure of Cambodian politics where it had been the elite who had exploited the peasant

workforce and taxed the harvest, instead of the land. Under the new order the elite would serve as paid civil servants, forced to administer to rather than exploit the peasantry. For obvious reasons, the new arrangement garnered the antipathy the Cambodian ruling elite, amongst whom a growing anti-French sentiment was beginning to take root. (Chandler 1983, 142-143)

Following the imposition of the treaty, a massive revolt broke out, later to be dubbed, the Great Rebellion. The *Franco-Cambodian War of 1885*, fought to suppress the revolt was a protracted ordeal in which France committed some four thousand troops. Norodom had dubious ties to the revolt, which had been led by his half-brother, Si Votha, but officially he claimed innocence. During the course of the campaign, large swaths of land were laid to waste and Cambodian peasants were sent into flight,^{*} as they were forced to flee the rebel chieftains seeking manpower for their forces on the one hand and advancing French columns on the other. Famine, which so often accompanies warfare, wracked many areas, taking a huge toll. All told it is estimated that the conflict cost Cambodia between ten and twenty percent of its population.⁺ In the end, the French took nearly two years to quash the revolt. They finally put it down in 1886, with the help of the king; who actually came out of the situation temporarily stronger. (Tully 2002, 83-94)

In broader regional developments, the French were victorious in the *Sino-French War* in 1885, in which they wrested control of *Tonkin*[#] from China. As a result France sought to consolidate its Southeast Asian holdings into a single cohesive unit. In 1887 it established the Indochinese Union, with this aim in mind. Authors Rudolf von Albetini,

^{*} Not so different from the situation that they found themselves in less than a century later during the civil war.

⁺ It fell from around 945,000 in 1879 to 750,000 in 1888.

[#] Northern Vietnam.

Albert Wirz, John G. Williamson describe the distinct artificiality that French Indochina represented, writing:

“The Indochinese Union, as established by France between 1887 and 1897, was an artificial colonial administrative entity. It included Annam, Tonkin, Cochinchina, Cambodia, and Laos. In terms of population, culture, and history, the kingdom of Cambodia and the Laotian principalities had little in common with Annamite Vietnam. The former states fell within the Indian cultural orbit and had had a long history of conflict with Annam. But Indochina was also artificial because Vietnam--a name deliberately not used by the French--was divided into three parts, in order to obliterate the old historical unity.”²³

All of these developments, including the treaty and the creation of the Indochinese Union, set in motion a number of trends that pushed Cambodia, often un- gently, toward the twentieth century and its archetypal tenants of centralized political authority and modernization. France maintained control over its Cambodian domain through a number of strategically placed French governors who were charged with upholding order and security within their districts. France’s primary purpose for Cambodia was the function that is served as a buffer between the British influence in Thailand and its valuable holdings in Vietnam. Although Cambodia’s political stability and economic development were subordinate to this objective, both were substantially advanced during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The lot of the Cambodian peasantry was significantly improved as the reforms that were instated during this era abolished the traditional practice of debt slavery. Corn and rubber cultivation thrived, benefiting the local and wider French economies alike. The penal code was also

* A further discussion over the merits of the notion of Vietnamese unity, an area that historically had been comprised of three distinct regions, falls outside the scope of this analysis.

²³ Rudolf von Albertini, and Albert Wirz, *European Colonial Rule, 1880-1940: The Impact of the West on India, Southeast Asia, and Africa*, trans. John G. Williamson (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 193.

reformed and the Cambodian army and police force modernized in the French tradition. In an effort to reconcile with the still discontent Cambodian elite, now serving in a bureaucratic capacity (discussed above), the French ceded them a little more power, allowing for the aggrandizement of the Cambodian monarchy. At the same time, French historians worked to chronicle the history of the Khmer people, which had been all but forgotten in the intervening four hundred years, since the collapse of Angkor. This newly enunciated history served to bind Cambodia together under a collective symbolism. Consequently a rising tide of nationalism, the age defining force of the twentieth century, was nurtured. By the time of King Norodom's death in 1904, Cambodia had become "a faithful, stable and prosperous state in the French Union." (Esterline 1986, 75-76)

Following the king's death his 64-year-old half brother, Sisowath, took the throne. Not well liked by Norodom, the new king had the support of the French. With the bitter taste of the Franco-Cambodian War (i.e. the *Great Rebellion*) still in her mouth, France understood how important and unifying the symbolism of the monarchy was to the Cambodian people and, thus, sought to bolster the new ruler. (Chandler 1983, 149) Hoping to rejuvenate and accelerate the reforms that they had begun under Norodom's reign, which had become stagnate during the later years of his life, the French began a new program that would achieve more during the first few years of Sisowath's reign than had been accomplished over the preceding forty years combined. In 1908 Sisowath won a major political victory, with the help of his French benefactors, when, following a series of "delicate negotiations," Siam agreed to return the lost provinces of Battambang and Angkor, which held the symbolically important ruins of Angkor. (Tully, 2005, 92, 95) By 1909 two inventions, more than any other, had helped to modernize the

French administration of Cambodia, the automobile and the typewriter. Moreover, and perhaps more importantly, these two inventions served to change the perceptions of average Cambodians regarding their European colonizers and, further, to solidify their already held perceptions about their Vietnamese neighbors. First, French administrators began to use automobiles to make their tours of the country. This provided for quicker inspections but, as they were restricted to drivable roads, made them more superficial as well. Second, the typewriter, which allowed for voluminous reports, was largely responsible for a French-induced influx of Vietnamese into the Cambodian bureaucracy because of their ability to type reports in French. As France consolidated its political and economic control over Cambodia, the visibility of the French in Cambodia was actually decreasing, while, to the average Cambodian, that of their Vietnamese surrogates was increasing. These perceptions were central to the growth of Cambodian Nationalism over the next half century. (Chandler 1983, 150) Another similar phenomenon, which was gaining momentum, was Chinese immigration to Cambodia. Constituting a predominately entrepreneurial class, the Chinese represented a growing focal point for the disquiet of the Cambodian peasantry. Cambodia's Chinese population rose from around 175,000 in 1905 to over 300,000 by the time World War II began. Essentially, cities in Cambodia resembled those across colonial Southeast Asia in that they came to be dominated by foreign bureaucrats and entrepreneurs. (Chandler 1983, 161)

By the second Decade of the twentieth century Cambodia was nearly a self-sufficient colony due to a complex system of taxation imposed by the French. When France became embroiled in the conflagration that was World War I, it used its Indochinese holding to help finance the massive war effort. Higher taxation was imposed

on the public and war loans were, rather forcefully, imposed on the upper classes. The peasantry's response to the greater burden that they incurred because of these higher duties, similar to the earlier instance of the Great Rebellion in 1885, provides an interesting glimpse into the development of Cambodia's political psyche. Further, it illustrates the potential for mobilization in the Cambodian countryside, which would prove so crucial more than a half century later when the Khmer Rouge usurped power. In what would popularly become known as the *1916 Affair*, a small delegation of peasants came to the capital of Phnom Penh to protest the taxation to the king, whose representatives levied for the French. As word of the remonstrance spread, larger and larger throngs of peasants united to protest, climaxing in a march upon Phnom Penh, which included an estimated 100,000 people. Author John Tully suggests that the 1916 Affair was the result of a nationally orchestrated plan, asserting that, "The facts of the affair suggest the existence of some kind of organization. The Marchers came from across the kingdom and could not have known each other. The demands they made varied little, if at all, from district to district, and the protests unfolded with remarkable synchronicity." (Tully 2002, 160)

In the end, the protests had little effect on national politics, although they did challenge the French perception of the *introverted* Cambodian peasant. Following the War, French revenue collection accelerated with a renewed fervor as they tried to recoup from the war; while opposition continued to grow as well. The account of an ambitious French resident named Bardez is one example of this process that stands out. In 1924 he reported an increase in every taxable category within his district. In recognition of his successes, he was transferred to the notoriously low revenue-producing

province of Kampong Chhnang late that same year, in the hope that he could turn the circumstances there around. In April of 1925 the overly-confident tax collector convened a meeting of delinquent taxpayers in the village hall of Krang Laav, handcuffing them and threatening prison time if payment was not made. His pompous actions enraged the crowd of several dozen people who were looking on, many of whom lacked even food and shelter due to the deplorable conditions imposed upon them. They set upon Bardez and his entourage and in a matter of minutes they were beaten to death with ax handles, rifle butts and whatever other crude implements were at hand. Since the beginning of the colonial era, this was the first incident in which a high-ranking French official had been killed while on duty and it caused a shockwave throughout the French community in Phnom Penh. Amidst a rising tide of anti-colonial sentiment in broader Indochina, this incident, much like the 1916 affair before it, illustrates a widening gap between the French and the mass of their Cambodian subjects. (Chandler 1983, 153-158) In this regard Tully avers that these events represent a growing “*tradition of unrest*” throughout Cambodia, holding that “the 1916 affair and ... murder of Resident Bardez ... were merely the most striking manifestations of rural unrest.” (Tully 2002, 160)

Amidst a growing sentiment of unrest, Cambodia took part in the general economic boom that touched Indochina in the 1920's. As rice production and exportation skyrocketed to meet international demands, the revenues and tax money they generated were funneled back into an extensive public works program. Because of 5,400 miles of new paved roads, rural Cambodians were able to move around the country by bus with an ease never before possible. Further, power lines were moved from the cities into provincial areas, bringing with them unprecedented modernization. (Chandler 1983, 161-

162) As his kingdom ushered in the modern era, its old king was living out his final days. Sisowath died just a few weeks short of his eighty-eighth birthday in 1927 and was succeeded by his son Sisowath Monivong (1927-1941). The new king, fifty-two at the time of his coronation, was a staunch supporter of the French like his father before him had been. (Tully 2002, 197-198)

In the wake of the prosperous 1920's, the Great Depression effected Cambodia much as it did the rest of the world. The price of rice dropped to a third of its former value, causing the country to revert to subsistence farming. France was forced to deal with a number of uprisings in Vietnamese areas of its Indochinese colonies. Cambodia remained calm and resilient for the most part, although there was a slight spike in rural Khmer violence. 1930 and 1931 were the leanest years of the crisis, but by mid-decade the economy in the region, albeit around the world, began to slowly recover. An important phenomenon that was solidified during this era, but would have lasting ramifications in the decades to come, was the informal ethnic division of Phnom Penh. The city, consisting of a population of around 100,000 in 1936, was sharply divided between a northern Vietnamese and Cham zone, the eastern Chinese and French commercial center and an ethnic Khmer zone in the south and west. (Chandler 1983, 162)

During the second half of the 1930's France was forced to focus its attention on events back in Europe, as the continent geared up for World War II. With the eyes of their colonial rulers averted to more pressing matters, a budding Cambodian self-awareness began to emerge. This new line of nationalistic thinking was almost exclusively prevalent among Cambodia's small elite class; made up of young, low level, French educated bureaucrats. Two of the major conduits through which these notions

were propagated were, Cambodia's only university, the *Lycée Sisowath*,^{*} and the newspaper *Nagara Vatta*, which was founded in 1936. With regard to the former, there had been no public education system Cambodia when the French arrived. At the turn of the century there were only around one hundred Cambodian students in the public schooling system throughout the entire country. This number began to greatly increase after 1911 when Sisowath instituted a number of reforms. By 1935 there were more than 40,000 students and a full 5,000 reform schools, due to the reforms of the 1920s; though the number of graduates from the university level still remained almost nil. (Tully 2002, 220) With respect to the second conduit of nationalist thinking, printed media, the editorial section of *Nagara Vatta*, at least in its early years, was staunchly pro-Cambodian, though not expressly anti-French. Anti-Vietnamese and anti-Chinese sentiments, on the other hand, was pervasive in the paper. It became increasingly vocal regarding two points during the buildup to the Second World War, Vietnamese domination of the civil service and Chinese usury. (Chandler 1983, 164-165)

Another ideological movement, with significant implications for the future, that found its incipience during the interwar period was *Communism*. While this revolutionary brand of leftist politics, which was finding roots around the globe during this era, spread rapidly in neighboring Vietnam, the development of a Communist movement in Cambodia was much more innocuous and overwhelmingly confined to the minority Vietnamese and Chinese communities. Revolutionary newspapers and other Communist literature began to trickle across the border into Cambodia, alarming the French who were working hard to suppress it in Vietnam. The Great Depression slowed the budding movement almost to a stop, but the second half of the 1930's saw the

^{*} Established in 1873.

reemergence and rejuvenation of Communist thinking and organization in Cambodia, although it was nowhere near as significant as it would be following the War.

Overwhelmingly, at least for the time being, Cambodia's majority Khmer population was indifferent to the Communist message. On the one hand, they were content to stay out of the realm of politics, so long as the French refrained from intruding too far into their personal lives. On the other, though, they were no doubt turned off by the predominately Vietnamese character of the Communist movement. (Tully 2002, 236-241)

World War II, more than any other event, changed the landscape of Cambodian politics forever, as it did nearly every country on Earth. The swift defeat of the, hitherto thought, powerful French by Germany in the summer of 1940 came as a shock to her Indochinese colonies. After the fall of France, liberal thinkers throughout Indochina began to get the first inkling that the French presence in Southeast Asia might not be permanent. Following the defeat the Nazi victors partitioned Cambodia into a northern and southern zone under the nominal control of *Vichy France*,^{*} while Japan amassed a large contingent of troops on the northern border of French Indochina. (Tully, 2002, 328)

Amidst the general turmoil of the War, the pro-Japanese government in Thailand seized the opportunity to recapture the territories that it had ceded to French Cambodia in 1907 (discussed above). The *Franco-Siamese War* that resulted proved to be too much for the weak French forces garrisoned in the region. In a humiliating loss, France was forced to cede an area encompassing some 25,000 square miles to the Thai government. This loss so riled Monivong that he refused to meet with French officials again. (Chandler 1983, 167) In 1941 Japan moved in to Cambodia, which it would occupy for most of the rest of the war. The French were left in charge of the administration, for logistical reasons. By

^{*} The name used to identify the French regime from 1940-44.

the end of the year there were more than eight thousand Japanese troops in Cambodia. Although France was in a particularly weak state throughout the duration of the war, it managed to retain control of its colonies in Indochina by making concessions to Japan. In this effort to maintain control, France increasingly tightened its desperate grip on the region, trying to snuff out nationalist thinking. Contrary to this intent, the French actions were actually responsible for the nurturing of Cambodian nationalism, as it sprang up^{*} in reaction to the imposition of liberal policies. (Esterline 1986, 76)

Monivong died in 1941 and was succeeded by his nineteen-year-old grandson, Norodom Sihanouk (1941-1955),⁺ who would dominate the Cambodian political scene over the next forty years. Although he was very bright and well spoken, the young king had no formal political training and consequently had to rely heavily on his French advisors for the first few years of his reign, a fact that his political enemies would use against him in the years to come. During the height of World War II, Sihanouk and his kingdom were forced to appease both the French and the Japanese. In the face of French military weakness, a rising wave of anti-colonial movements began to spring up (discussed above). Buddhism, which offered an alternative value system, was a key component of many of the growing nationalist movements. France, in a trend that would continue through the duration of the war, tried desperately to demonstrate that it was still in charge by suppressing such movements. In 1942 the events culminated in a confrontation between the French and the Cambodian nationalists. A group of more than one thousand marched on the office of the *Resident Superior* in Phnom Penh, demanding the release of an anti-French activist. The demonstration eventually collapsed and was

^{*} Especially among the always fertile ground that was Cambodia's small elite.

⁺ The dates given are for his first reign. He would rule again from 1993-2004.

ultimately a failure, but in the realm of propaganda it became a long lasting symbol of anti-colonial folklore. (Chandler 1983, 168-170)

In March of 1945 Japan disarmed French forces throughout Indochina in a last ditch effort to defend against an allied invasion of Southeast Asia. In accordance with a Japanese request, Sihanouk declared Cambodia's independence from France that same month; thus invalidating any prior agreements between Cambodia and her Franco-colonizers. (Chandler 1983, 171) These final months of the War marked the first time in which Cambodians had been allowed to openly voice their patriotic ideas and form politically oriented groups. That tumultuous summer, Cambodian nationalists also turned their vitriol on their age-old antagonists, the Vietnamese, as a string of clashes between Khmers and Vietnamese sporadically erupted. (Chandler 1983, 172) By early 1946, with the War finally over, the French were ready to reassert control of their Indochinese colonies. To this end, she signed an ambiguous *modus vivendi* treaty with Cambodia, hoping to reign in the increasingly independent minded Khmer regime. The agreement gave Cambodia the ability to establish a constitution and form political parties; while other sectors, such as finance, defense and foreign affairs were to remain in French hands. Although France was once again the dominant power in the region, its new weekend position was far from a return to the status quo of the pre-war years. As the major powers of Europe began to turn their eyes back to their shattered empires, Indochina, like so many other regions around the world, was enveloped in a post-war colonial vacuum. The French hegemony in Indochina was drawing to an end and, indeed, the years that remained to her in the region would be bitter. (Chandler 1983, 173)

*INDEPENDENCE, CIVIL WAR AND
THE U.S. WAR IN VIETNAM*

Under the terms of the *modus vivendi*, Cambodia was declared “an autonomous state within the French union.” (Sardesai 1989, 201) In September of 1946 a dual French and Cambodian commission drafted a constitution. According to the rules set forth in the constitution, a constituent assembly was elected. It was made up of a mixture of political groups, but dominated by two parties. The Democratic Party, which constituted the majority of the delegates, called for an end to French rule and wanted a ceremonial king. The Liberal Party, on the other hand, argued for a continuation of French control, with a strong monarchy. A revised constitution was ratified by the new assembly in 1947 and elections were held for a new national assembly that would convene the following year. The Democratic Party once again won a majority, but in the competitive milieu of intra-party politics, the ultra-nationalist, anti-French, *Khmer Issarak** party asserted ultimate control over the party at large. As the party became increasingly radicalized, it also became more and more antagonistic to the moderate king. (Esterline 1986, 78)

While Cambodia struggled towards Independence, another critically important phenomenon was beginning to take wings, as a leftist movement started to flourish for the first time. Cambodia’s first coherent communist party, the *Khmer People’s Revolutionary Party* (KPRP), was founded in 1951. The KPRP, though heavily influenced and supported by the Vietnamese, was always controlled by ethnic Khmers. Chandler sums their “somewhat elusive” worldview as follows:

“They saw their struggle as part of an international movement, connected with Marxist-Leninist laws of history. At another level, the liberation of Cambodia from the French did not mean, for them, the continuation of the

* Meaning, *Independence*.

status quo among Cambodians or the continuation of a supposedly “traditional animosity” between Cambodians and Vietnamese. Liberation from the French, in other words, was a stage in the Cambodian revolution rather than a goal.” (Chandler 1983, 184)

By 1952 a number of communist guerrilla bands, working in conjunction with the *Viet Minh*,^{*} controlled nearly a sixth of Cambodia. Two short years later, at the time of the Geneva Conference (discussed below), it is estimated that they had usurped control of nearly half of the country. (Chandler 1983, 183)

In the meantime, although the new constitution severely reduced his authority, Sihanouk grew from the naive young king he had been during the war years, into a determined and sagacious leader during the latter half of the 1940's. In 1949, due in large part to the hard work of the king, France ceded Cambodia sovereignty over many of its internal affairs. The only administrative domains in which France retained control were foreign relations, defense, the police force and the judiciary. Despite this unprecedented level of autonomy, these measures were not enough to appease the demands of the growing the Issarak party and other staunch nationalists. (Sardesai 1989, 201) Over the next two years Sihanouk was forced to assert increasingly authoritarian rule via his provisional government, in order to maintain security. He continually had to endure attacks on the French presence in the west from the Khmer Issarak party and from the east by communists emanating from southern Vietnam. By 1952 the rising tide of anti-French sentiment in Indochina was boiling over. With no other viable alternatives left to him, Sihanouk dismissed his cabinet in June of that year, asserting complete control of the state and naming himself prime minister. He asked the assembly to grant him emergency powers so that he could aggressively work toward having Cambodia's

^{*} Vietnamese Communists.

full independence recognized. It did, and in a bold attempt to secure Independence, Sihanouk used his new powers to dissolve the legislature and declare martial law.

(Esterline 1986, 78-79)

By early 1953 France's clutch on Indochina was unraveling on all sides. Sensing the inevitable defeat of the French in Vietnam to his east and an Issarak usurpation of power from within, Sihanouk embarked on what he dubbed his "Crusade for Peace." He visited France and the United State amongst a number of other stops on his extended overseas trip, pleading for Cambodian independence. He was finally successful that summer, having Cambodia's de facto independence recognized in July. Cambodia was finally given autonomy over its own police force, army and judiciary. After spending more than half the year conducting the tour, which had in fact turned into a quasi-exile from his domestic political opponents, the king returned triumphantly and proclaimed his birthday, November 9, as Cambodia's Independence Day. (Sardesai 1989, 201) As the French troops lowered the tricolor for the last time, Cambodia shed ninety years of French overlordship and looked, for the first time, upon the shaky prospects of an autonomous future. Although the French still controlled much of Cambodia's economic foundation, including the lucrative rubber production industry and international exports, political power rested in the hands of the king. Finally, on July 20, 1954, Cambodia's formal independence was ratified at the Geneva Convention on Indochina. (Tully 2002, 480)

In the wake of the Geneva Convention, Sihanouk turned his attention to integrating all of Cambodia's dissident elements into a cohesive national political structure. This was a monumental task in the face of the growing communist movement

(discussed above). In a savvy political move, in March of 1955, Sihanouk abdicated the throne to his father Norodom Suramarit (1955-1960),^{*} so that he himself could skirt the limitations placed on the constitutional monarch and play a more direct role in party politics. Using his new freedom the Prince, as he was now referred to, formed his own political organization, the *People's Socialist Community*, or *Sangkum*. National elections were held in September of 1955 and Sangkum won eighty-three percent of the vote, securing all of the assembly seats. The formerly dominate Democratic Party won only three percent of the votes. Using his huge popularity and the momentum of Sangkum's victory in the elections, a new government was formed the next month and Sihanouk was named prime minister. Still, the new single party system that was installed did not avert factionalism, although it did provide an environment of relative stability that would endure for the next decade. While he was reorganizing Cambodia's domestic political structure, Sihanouk staunchly proclaimed Cambodia's political neutrality on the world stage, negotiating a security agreement with the United States in 1955 and another with China in 1956. In the long run geopolitical circumstances, more than any other factor, would serve to undermine the stability that the tireless prime minister worked so hard to secure for his fledgling country. (Esterline 1986, 79-80)

As Cambodia struggled with newfound independence, events in neighboring Vietnam were moving headlong toward an abyss that would soon engulf all of Indochina. A short digression regarding these circumstances is crucial to understanding how they would later come to affect Cambodia. Following the decisive North Vietnamese victory over the French at *Dien Bien Phu* in 1954, which ended the *First Indochina War*, the United States would take France's place as the principal external actor in Indochina. The

^{*} King Monivong had been Sihanouk's maternal grandfather.

primary objective of the Geneva Conference, which had ratified Cambodia's independence, had been to stop the fighting in Vietnam, which had dragged on for eight long years.²⁴ Under the agreement Vietnam was to be split into northern and southern zones, split by a narrow *demilitarized zone* (DMZ) in the middle, similar to the one in Korea. The Viet Minh (discussed above) under Ho Chi Minh would control the North, while South Vietnam was to remain an autonomous state, backed by the French. American policy at this time was driven by the *Domino Theory*, which held that if one country fell to communism then so would its neighbors, in a chain reaction, until the continental United States itself was eventually threatened. Conventional wisdom held that it was better to take a stand against communism in the far corners of the developing world, such as Indochina, than to wait and be forced to face it on American shores. (Devillers 1954, 321-322) This *Containment Policy*, as it was popularly dubbed, was the cornerstone of the Eisenhower administration's stance towards communism and it would play a key role in the escalation of events to come. With regard to America's Containment Policy, U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles remarked:

“‘[The] important thing from now on ... is to seize future opportunities to prevent the loss in North Vietnam from leading to the extension of communism throughout Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific.’ Further, regarding the DMZ, he held that ‘Transgression of this line by the communists would be treated as active aggression calling for reaction.’” (Devillers 1954, 322-323)

Well before the Geneva Accords concluded a “Saigon Washington alliance” was being forged. It centered on a highly popular, staunchly anti-Communist, South Vietnamese nationalist, Ngo Dinh Diem. Diem, known for his anti-French sentiment, but esteemed

²⁴ Philippe Devillers and Jean Lacouture, *End of a War: Indochina, 1954* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Inc, 1969), 317.

by the Americans for his resolute anti-Communist stance, was appointed the Prime minister of South Vietnam in early July of 1954. By this time the United States had already put a plan in motion to finance and train a 240,000-man *Vietnamese National Army*. At the conclusion of the Geneva Conference the United States and Diem's Saigon government refused to become signatories to the agreement. The US declared that it would withhold its traditional position that, "people are entitled to determine their own future and that the United States will not join in an arrangement which will hinder this."²⁵

By the late 1950's the Diem regime had become increasingly repressive as it tried to maintain its grip on the precariously balanced state of affairs in South Vietnam. In 1958 the situation reached a critical stage. Terrorist attacks by Communist cadres in the South devastated a number of US installations and wreaked havoc on plantations north of Saigon. America, holding to her word, had some three hundred military *advisors* in the country; through which it funneled military and economic aid into the Diem regime's efforts to staunch the rising flow of communist activities and sentiment. By 1960 the US had doubled its advisory force in Vietnam, in pursuit of its new *Strategic Hamlet Program*. (Maclear 1981, 64-66) John F. Kennedy inherited an increasingly delicate state of affairs at his inauguration in 1961. In the first two years of his Presidency he was forced to walk a tightrope between defending America's freedom by opposing the growing Communist insurgency and supporting the, widely reported, repressive Diem regime. In early 1962 he relented to the more hawkish elements in his cabinet and dispatched 4,000 more American advisors to South Vietnam, including the first helicopter units and detachments of Green Berets. By 1963 the American force was

²⁵ Michael Maclear, *The Ten Thousand Day War: Vietnam: 1945-1975* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981), 55-56.

tripled, to some 12,000. During the last months of Kennedy's life he worked hard to avert American blood from being shed in Southeast Asia, although, as history would prove, it was to no avail. (Maclear 1981, 68-73)

While the escalating situation in neighboring Vietnam continued to simmer, Sihanouk spent the decade following his being named Prime Minister delicately maneuvering through the choppy regional and international political waters brewing in Southeast Asia. In a political balancing act, he moved from the right, to the center, to the left over the course of this period. This relatively rapid transformation of his position can, in large part, be traced to the prime minister's firm belief that allying himself with China, more than any other option left open to him, could insure Cambodia's national identity and secure its external security. (Esterline 1986, 81) The age-old rivalry between Vietnam and Thailand festered anew, amidst the changing regional order. In 1956, bolstered by China's support, Sihanouk attempted to lay claim to a number of provinces in South Vietnam, which Cambodia had possessed during the Angkorian era a felt were still rightfully hers. The Republic of Vietnam* (RVN) responded by closing its borders to Cambodia, denying it access to the port of Saigon through which it conducted most of its foreign trade. The growing animosities and mistrust flared in June of 1958 as RVN troops chased *Vietcong*⁺ forces across the traditionally porous Cambodian border. (Esterline 1986, 81)

By the early 1960's the Sihanouk regime was receiving huge sums of American aid aimed at supporting Cambodia's political neutrality. Regional developments were making it increasingly difficult to preserve such a position. In 1960 the Prime Minister's

* South Vietnam.

⁺ Refers to the *National Liberation Front*, it was the military wing of the South Vietnamese communist party.

father, the King, Norodom Suramarit passed away at the age of sixty-four. General elections were held later in which Sihanouk was elected as head of state. Although the position was essentially the same, the title of his new office was changed; he would henceforth be referred to as *Prince* rather than *King*. As the regional scene in Southeast Asia was becoming increasingly muddled, the Prince anxiously watched the proceedings in neighboring Laos. The 1962 Geneva Conference attempted to create a neutral Lao government but it floundered. In the meantime, Sihanouk's relationship with the United States was quickly deteriorating. American arms shipments and military aid to South Vietnam, Thailand and Laos were soaring, which vexed the Prince. In 1963 Sihanouk amended the constitution, in effect making himself Cambodia's head of state for life. That same year he decided to reject all American aid, which had totaled more than \$400 million since 1955, and hedge his bet with the left. Sihanouk strengthened and intensified his relationship with the communist North Vietnamese government of Ho Chi Minh. He spent the next two years trying to have Cambodia's neutrality legally recognized by the international community, but to little avail. (Esterline 1986, 82) In May of 1965, due to infringement on Cambodia's air space by American and RVN forces in pursuit of Vietcong, Sihanouk broke off all diplomatic relations with the United States. By the end of 1966, U.S. relations with Cambodia had reached an all time low. Facing growing dissonance in the domestic political arena, Sihanouk held elections allowing Sangkum candidates to run against one another in the National Assembly, for the first time.²⁶ The voters, largely discontent with the appearance of Sihanouk's one-man-rule, elected a right-wing majority, much to the approval of the United States. The doggedly

²⁶ Ben Kiernan, *How Pol Pot Came to Power: A History of Kampuchea, 1930-1975* (London: Verso, 1985), 138.

conservative, U.S. backed General Lon Nol was elected as the new Cambodian Premier on October 25, 1966. Although Sihanouk maintained his position as head of State, the conservative swing in the election illustrated a general displeasure of his courtship with the Vietnamese communists. Following the uncomfortable defeat in the elections the, weakened, though still powerful, prince licked his political wounds and worked to build a shadow government with his loyal followers and other leftist elements in the regime. (Esterline 1986, 83)

With the blessings of his Western patrons, the new conservative Lon Nol government instituted a program aimed at denationalizing the economy and encouraging foreign investment. In response to the regime's turn to the right, many turned to the extreme left, which had been gaining strength since the end of World War II. Initially these elements operated under the auspices of Sihanouk's shadow government, but by 1968 it had become frighteningly clear to the prince that these radical groups were far beyond his ability to control. (Esterline 1986, 83) The most prominent of these insurgent groups, the *Khmer Rouge*,^{*} would rise to play a critical role in the tragic events to come. The consolidation of the Khmer communist movement can be traced to the early 1960's when the *Khmer People's Revolutionary Party* (KPRP) held its Second Party Congress. At this convention Saloth Sar,⁺ the leader of the Khmer Rouge, and a number of his cronies gained control of the party's apparatus. In reaction to the rise of the conservative Lon Nol regime, the Khmer Rouge initiated an intense insurgency against the Western backed government in 1967, amidst a rising tide of regional turmoil. This marked the

^{*} Meaning, *Red Khmer* (i.e. communist).

⁺ This shadowy, Paris-educated, former school teacher would later be more popularly known by his *nom de guerre*, *Pol Pot*. During the 1950's, while attending school in France, he and a number of his contemporaries formed a Khmer communist movement, which was the incipience of the nucleus of the Khmer Rouge.

beginning of the *Cambodian Civil War*, which pitted Lon Nol's *Khmer National Armed Forces* (FANK) against the increasingly Khmer Rouge controlled *Cambodian People's National Liberation Armed Forces*. The civil war between the Lon Nol regime and the communist forces would rage for nearly a decade, until the Khmer Rouge eventually usurped power in 1975. In the meantime, broader regional developments were coalescing, which would lead Cambodia into the abyss. (Kiernan 1985, 160-161)

While the forces of the right and left struggled for supremacy in Cambodia, the tenuously balanced country was struggling to maintain its domestic integrity, as the American war in neighboring Vietnam escalated into a fevered crescendo during the latter half of the 1960s. In the wake of the Diem and Kennedy assassinations in 1963, the rural communist guerrilla movements in South Vietnam had surged at an extraordinary rate. Following the Gulf of Tonkin incident in 1964, Lyndon Johnson's commitment of U.S. troops to the region skyrocketed from around 23,000 in early 1965 to more than 500,000 in March of 1968. During the same period a massive aerial bombing campaign was launched against North Vietnam. (Maclear 1981, 158) After a long two years of round-the-clock carpet bombing of the North Vietnamese, it was apparent that the effort was doing little to staunch the rate of communist infiltration and supply of South Vietnam. For some time it had been becoming increasingly clear to the U.S. war machine that this unstaunched infiltration of the South was due primarily to North Vietnam's use of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. This 13,000 kilometer long supply route of complex jungle roads and footpaths wound its way from North Vietnam, through neighboring Laos and Cambodia, into the western border of South Vietnam. As early as 1964 the US expanded its bombing campaign to Laos, in an attempt to block the Trail,

but to no avail. As the war waged on, with no end in sight, the Ho Chi Minh Trail became the focus of the U.S. war effort, which would have dire implications for Cambodia. (Maclear 1981, 208-209)

By the late 1960's Cambodia's territorial integrity was being jeopardized by the Khmer Rouge insurgency and by the Vietcong raids along its eastern border. By this time US incursions into Vietcong held areas of Cambodia were becoming common place. In early 1968 American diplomats assured Sihanouk that in cases of "hot pursuit" of Vietnamese forces into Cambodia, the US would do everything in its power to avoid "acts of aggression against the Cambodian state." Once again though, the broader course of the war would dictate Cambodia's future. (Esterline 1986, 84) The *Tet Offensive*, which erupted on January 30, 1968, came as a complete surprise to the American forces in Southeast Asia. Every major South Vietnamese town and city was besieged simultaneously by communist forces. The communists had utilized the Ho Chi Minh trail to inundate the South with troops and supplies. In the end the Tet Offensive was an utter failure *militarily*, as the US was eventually able to contain the attacks. But, in terms of American moral, it marked a turning point in the Southeast Asian war effort and a bitter defeat on the American home front. (Maclear 1981, 230)

In response to the Tet Offensive the United States, under the newly elected Nixon administration, began an unacknowledged bombing campaign of North Vietnamese bases inside of Cambodia in the spring of 1969, dubbed *Operation Breakfast*. With regard to the impact of the American air Campaign, author Michael Maclear asserts that "The bombing was only the beginning of a cycle of escalating violence (see Chapter 5 for a more in depth discussion of such cycles of violence) that would leave Cambodia as

perhaps the most tragic nation in the history of warfare.” (Maclear 1981, 343) Over the next fourteen months, Operation Breakfast was followed by subsequent bombing campaigns, named *Lunch*, *Snack*, *Dinner*, *Dessert*, and *Supper*, collectively referred to as *Operation Menu*. The relentless U.S. bombing campaign, more than any other single factor, led Cambodia into the type of climate in which conditions were ripe for the seizure of power by the brutal and opportunistic Khmer Rouge. During the course of the campaign the U.S. dropped more than twice as many bombs on agrarian Cambodia than it had on Japan throughout the duration of World War II. Estimates of Cambodian casualties resulting from the bombings range in the hundreds of thousands. US bombs fell from the sky, killing and maiming peasants, destroying their villages and turning Cambodia into a seething cauldron of chaos. Further, the bombing created a refugee crisis of nearly 2 million people who fled from the chaos in the countryside into the capital of Phnom Penh. The lives of average Cambodians were turned upside down due to the civil war and the bombing campaign. As their villages were destroyed and their family members were killed because of an international struggle that they largely misunderstood, the Cambodia peasantry became increasingly receptive to the message of the Khmer Rouge. (Kiernan 1985, 155-157)

Assured by Richard Nixon’s promise of Cambodia’s “sovereignty, neutrality and territorial integrity,” the Lon Nol government restored diplomatic relations with the US in April of 1969, which had been cut off by his predecessor (discussed above). Sihanouk, fearing a leftist backlash from North Vietnam, appealed directly to Ho Chi Minh’s Chinese and Soviet benefactors for assistance. (Kiernan 1985, 180) In the meantime the prince departed on an international trip to muster support for his case. In his absence Lon

Nol seized the opportunity and staged a bloodless coup. He had the largely right-wing National Assembly vote to depose Sihanouk, who he perceived as a leftist impediment to Cambodian security, and grant him emergency powers, making him the *de facto* head of state. Lon Nol appealed to the U.N. for help, pointing to the presence of Vietnamese troops inside of Cambodia as a breach of its political neutrality and territorial integrity. On April 30, 1970 the United States announced a joint Invasion of Cambodia in tandem with the *Army of the Republic of Vietnam** (ARVN), after it became apparent that their extensive bombing campaign was largely ineffective. The objective of the invasion was to destroy Vietcong and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) bases near the border, which were being used to stage attacks into South Vietnam. The American led invasion lasted nearly two months. In the wake of the invasion, Cambodia was rechristened the *Khmer Republic*, Under the auspices of the U.N., On October 9. This hailed the end of Cambodia's the 1,168 year-old monarchy and effectively gave international validation to Lon Nol's coup. From the position of the West, the primary function of his regime was its staunch opposition to the communists, who threatened to topple the precariously balanced republic. (Esterline 1986, 85-86)

Although he had been exiled, Sihanouk still enjoyed strong support in the countryside, outside of Phnom Penh. While in China he formed a government in exile, the *Royal Government of the National Union of Kampuchea* (GRUNK). Using his new GRUNK powerbase, Sihanouk built a larger leftist political coalition, the *National United Front of Kampuchea* (FUNK), through which he guided a growing resistance movement. FUNK was comprised of a number of elements inside and outside of Cambodia including Cambodian nationalists, Sihanouk supporters and hard-line communists. Its stated aim

* The South Vietnamese Army.

was to oppose “United States imperialist schemes and aggression,” and further to promote the “development of a profiteering-free nationalized economy, emphasis on the traditions of Angkor civilization and pursuit of a politically neutral foreign policy.” The military arm of FUNK, *The National Liberation Army*, was comprised of some 3,000 Khmer Rouge Guerrillas in 1970, but a dramatic surge in its ranks, including an influx of North Vietnamese and Vietcong forces, caused its numbers to swell to around 85,000 by the middle of 1971. While the military wing was growing into a formidable force, Sihanouk was coming to some hard realizations about how difficult it was to control the amalgamation of groups that made up his coalition. The Khmer Rouge, on the other hand, were the most united force in the country and they quickly began to dominate the exile coalition that Sihanouk had built. Pol Pot and his close inner circle used the symbolic value of the prince’s name and affiliation to the cause in order to garner the mass support of the peasantry, who were flocking to the movement. By the summer of 1972 the Vietnamese elements of the National Liberation Army were in control most of the eastern half of Cambodia, while the indigenous Khmer dominated arm of the Front occupied the western portion of the country. The movement that Sihanouk had formed was well on its way to victory, while he himself sat relatively impotently in China. (Esterline 1986, 86-87)

Facing the ever-growing threat from the left, the Lon Nol regime did everything it could in the early 1970’s to bolster Cambodia’s military. Enlistment in the army shot from around 35,000 in April of 1970, the month Sihanouk was deposed, to over 200,000 in 1972, with the help of the United States, South Vietnam and Thailand. Despite the increase of its size, insufficient training and leadership plagued the army, which was

unable to stop the advance of the communist forces. The cessation of bombing and the pullout of American troops from Southeast Asia in 1973 was the death knell of Cambodian resistance to the Communist insurgency. At the beginning of 1974 the National Liberation Army was in control of roughly eighty percent of the country and had the Capital of Phnom Penh surrounded. A host of tumultuous factors including the civil war, the U.S. bombing campaign, the growing number of casualties, the refugee crisis, the loss of territory, rampant inflation and a devastated economy, and the utter destruction of infrastructure, coupled to create a perfect storm that doomed the tenuously balanced Khmer Republic. In January of 1975 the communist forces completely blockaded every route into the capital. The conditions within rapidly deteriorated and Lon Nol was forced to flee the country on April 1. The weak republic held out for little more than a fortnight, finally surrendering the capital to the Khmer Rouge on April 17. The \$1.18 billion in military aid and some \$500 million in economic aid that the United States had funneled into the Lon Nol regime since 1970 had come to naught, as the communist tide completely washed over Cambodia. At the helm of the communist onslaught were Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge, who, over the next four years, would be responsible for one of the blackest chapters in human history. (Esterline 1986, 87-89)

DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA AND THE KHMER ROUGE

Following their usurpation of power, the Khmer Rouge renamed the Khmer Republic, proclaiming Cambodia as *Democratic Kampuchea* (DK). The powerbase of

the Khmer Rouge was made up of a very small “Party Center,”* composed of Pol Pot⁺ and a handful of his closest circle; its power was centered in Phnom Penh. Once the Khmer Rouge took control of the capital, they set to work closing Democratic Kampuchea off from the outside world. Author Ben Kiernan writes:

“The late twentieth century saw the era of mass communications, but DK tolled a vicious silence. Internally and externally, Cambodia was sealed off. Its borders were closed, all neighboring countries militarily attacked, use of foreign languages banned, embassies and press agencies expelled, local newspapers and televisions shut down, radios and bicycles confiscated, mail and telephones suppressed. Worse, Cambodians had little to tell each other anyway. They quickly learned that any display of knowledge or skill, if “contaminated” by foreign influence (normal in modern societies), was a folly in Democratic Kampuchea. Human communications were reduced to daily instructions and orders.”²⁷

The Khmer Rouge Party Center had consolidated its control over Cambodia’s broader *Communist Party of Kampuchea* (CPK) movement, as it was rapidly gaining momentum in the 1960s (discussed above). Throughout this period the Khmer Rouge carried out a campaign of purges against party figures on their own side, who they believed were too closely linked to the Vietnamese communists. During the early 1970s they were responsible for the arrest and disappearance of some 900 Vietnamese-trained Khmer communists who had returned home to Cambodia to assist in the insurgency against the Lon Nol regime. By the time of the Khmer Rouge victory in 1975, the Party Center was able to excerpt totalitarian control of the country by “replacing autonomous or dissident zone administrations and Party Committees with Center-backed forces commanded by loyalist zone leaders.” Democratic Kampuchea was organized from the

* Known as *Angkar Loeu*, meaning the *high organization*.

⁺ Also known as *Brother Number One*.

²⁷ Samuel Totten, William S. Parsons and Israel Charny, eds., *Century of Genocide: Critical Essays and Eyewitness Accounts*, 2nd Ed., (New York: Routledge, 2004), 341-342.

top down, as the Party Center worked to reduce the autonomy of local zones and bring them under its direct control. Suspected dissidents were taken to Tuol Sleng Prison* in Phnom Penh, where estimates of 20,000 people lost their lives during the brutal Khmer Rouge repression. At the height of the Khmer Rouge's reign of terror, the Party Center's struggle for total control of the country was utterly complete. (Totten, Parsons and Charny 2004, 342-343)

In addition to the psychological effects of the civil war and the U.S. bombing campaign, the Khmer Rouge were able to alter and hijack many of Cambodia's ideological foundations and rally the peasantry to their cause in the lead up to their usurpation of power. The Khmer Rouge focused its ideology on the themes of "national and racial grandiosity," which permeated its reasoning. Its primary split with the Vietnamese communists, which can be traced to the early 1950s, was with regard to the "symbolic grandeur" that the Khmer Rouge placed on the temple of Angkor Wat and the reverence that they held for the medieval Khmer empire. Kiernan writes:

"In their view, Cambodia did not need to learn or import anything from its neighbors. Rather, they would recover its pre-Buddhist glory by rebuilding the powerful economy of the medieval Angkor kingdom and regain 'lost territory' from Vietnam and Thailand. Democratic Kampuchea treasured the Cambodian 'race,' not individuals. National impurities included the foreign-educated (except for Pol Pot's Paris-educated groups) and 'hereditary enemies,' especially Vietnamese. To return Cambodians to their imagined origins, the Pol Pot group saw the need for war, and for 'secrecy as the basis' of the revolution. Few of the grass-roots, pragmatic Cambodian Communists could be trusted to implement such plans, which Pol Pot kept secret from them, just as he never admitted to being Saloth Sar." (Totten, Parsons and Charny 2004, 344)

Thus, the Khmer Rouge subverted traditional Cambodian values, myths and symbols, which had historically bound Cambodia together, to their own ends. Looking back to the

* Code-named *Office S-21*.

early 1970s, Cambodia outwardly appeared to be one of the most resistant countries in the region to revolutionary change:

“Compared to neighboring Thailand and Vietnam it [Cambodia] was geographically compact, demographically dispersed, linguistically unified, ethnically homogenous, socially undifferentiated, culturally uniform, administratively unitary, politically undeveloped, economically undiversified and educationally deprived... Prerevolutionary Cambodia was 80 percent peasant, 80 percent Khmer and 80 percent Buddhist”²⁸

One important example of Khmer Rouge subversion of a traditional symbol, which had played a unifying role in the Cambodian political scene for hundreds of years, was their policy with respect to the monarchy. They loudly blamed the monarchy for all of Cambodia’s past troubles and portrayed it as a corrupt institution that maintained its power at the expense of the people. Author Craig Etcheson describes this process, writing:

“With the demystification and vilification of the monarchy... the Kampuchean people were disposed of the very substance of their social order. Within this vacuum, the authority of the party grew apace. Particularly among the very young peasants from the poorest strata of Kampuchean society, hand-picked and carefully groomed to become shock cadres, the party Organization was emerging as the locus of authority and legitimacy in Cambodian society.”²⁹

Religion, which had traditionally served to outline the place of average Cambodians within society and was further intertwined with notions about the legitimacy of the monarchy, came under the attack of the Khmer Rouge as well. The newly ratified constitution of Democratic Kampuchea expressed the regime’s religious policy, undoubtedly in its glossiest light, holding, “Every citizen of Kampuchea has the right to worship according to any religion and the right not to worship according to any religion.

²⁸ Ben Kiernan, *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, 1975-1979* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 4.

²⁹ Craig Etcheson, *The Rise and Demise of Democratic Kampuchea* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), 154-155.

All reactionary religions that are detrimental to Democratic Kampuchea and the Kampuchean people are strictly forbidden.” (Etcheson 1984, 151) From the paranoid point of view of Pol Pot and the Party Center, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity, Cambodia’s three primary religions, were indeed *reactionary* and, accordingly, targets of its antireligious program. Traditional Buddhist mythology, the backbone of Cambodian society, was replaced with a new Marxist-oriented mythology of class conflict, historical materialism and self-reliance. Thus, by supplanting these two fundamental unifying institutions, the Monarchy and religion, with the party’s new myths, the Khmer Rouge was able to garner mass support for their cause in the years before their rise to ultimate power in 1975. (Etcheson 1984, 151-155)

Perhaps one of the most telling explanations cited for the rapid Khmer Rouge rise to power in the early 1970s, aside from the effects of the civil war and the U.S. war in Vietnam that spilled across Cambodia’s eastern border (both discussed above), is the wide disparity between urban areas and the countryside. Although, as noted earlier, rural conditions in prerevolutionary Cambodia were in many ways better than those of its neighbors during the same period, they masked a growing rural debt crisis, as the number of landless tenants or sharecroppers rose from around four percent in 1950 to more than twenty percent in 1970. Thus, Kiernan writes, “alongside a landowning middle peasant class, a new class of rootless, destitute rural dwellers emerged. Their position was desperate enough for them to have nothing to lose in any kind of social revolution.” Because Cambodia’s urban manufacturing sectors, which were largely the domains of foreign ethnic communities, produced relatively few consumer goods that made it into the countryside, peasants often saw cities as “seats of arbitrary ... political and economic

power.” Although these trends help to explain how the Khmer Rouge was able to rally support to its cause, only *paranoia* can account for why the regime later turned on this same peasant base on which it had rode to power. Another important factor which had allowed the Khmer Rouge to rise to power was the rapid expansion of education during the 1960s, which had been long neglected during the French colonial era. “A generation gap separated peasant parents from educated youth, who were often unable to find work after graduating from high school and drifted into political dissidence. The Khmer Rouge in the 1960s recruited disproportionately among school teachers and students. Still, other factors which helped the Khmer Rouge’s message to appeal to average Cambodians during the prerevolutionary period was the increasing repression of first the Sihanouk and later the Lon Nol regimes, in their efforts to maintain power. (Totten, Parsons and Charny 2004, 347-348)

The Khmer Rouge asserted a *non-aligned* foreign policy, making Cambodia possibly the most politically introverted country on Earth. Norodom Sihanouk was allowed to return from exile in China in September of 1975, becoming, ostensibly, the head of Cambodia’s first communist government. In December a new constitution was ratified and in March a *People’s Assembly* was elected. The process was carefully controlled by the Khmer Rouge. In April of 1976 the state-controlled Radio Phnom Penh began reporting that Sihanouk had *resigned* as head of state. Two days later the People’s Assembly appointed the *unknown* Pol Pot as the Prime minister. Under the direction of the new Prime Minister and his two chief deputies, Khieu Samphan and Ieng Sary, one of the most ghastly massacres in modern history was perpetrated against the Cambodian people. (Esterline 1986, 90-91)

In the first days following the Khmer Rouge victory, in April of 1975, all members of the political opposition remaining in Phnom Penh were systematically murdered. The United States embassy closed and all foreigners, including the press, fled or were expelled from the country. The new regime set about mobilizing the masses. They ordered the evacuation of all the cities and towns, creating a mass exodus of refugees. Cambodians were forced into the countryside to cultivate rice, the heart of the Khmer Rouge economic plan. Every other social and economic aspect of life became subservient to this end. Anyone who resisted was executed on the spot. During Khmer Rouge's reign of terror, misery, malady and death were the primary tenants of life in Cambodia for nearly four years. (Esterline 1986, 89) Because of the very nature of the small, tight-fisted Party Center and its paranoid ideology (discussed above), its resolve to forge ahead "at all costs" in the implementation of its policies directly resulted in genocide. The targets of its murderous campaign were diverse and often arbitrary, as the Center perceived potential threats from all segments of society. In the Khmer Rouge's effort to eradicate religion from Cambodia, Buddhism became a primary target of their repression. It is estimated that fewer than 2,000 Buddhist monks survived past 1979, out of more than 70,000 that had existed before the Khmer Rouge rose to power. Minority groups, also seen as a threat to the Center's power, fared no better. The most prominent of these before 1970 were the Vietnamese, the Chinese and the Muslim Cham. Along with Cambodia's other some twenty odd national minorities they made up more than fifteen percent of the country's population in the pre-Democratic Kampuchea period. Once they took power, the Khmer Rouge officially claimed that these groups only represented one percent of the population, essentially writing them off statistically. The

Vietnamese, the traditional antagonists to Khmer power, suffered the worst. A large percentage of the Vietnamese community was expelled by the Lon Nol regime and later by the Khmer Rouge. It is staggeringly estimated that of the nearly 20,000 who remained, *none* survived the Pol Pot's "campaign of systematic racial extermination." Cambodia's Chinese community "suffered the worst disaster ever to befall any ethnic Chinese community in Southeast Asia." Of the some 215,000 of them who perished, the great majority of which were worked and starved to death in the deplorable conditions in the countryside after the cities were emptied, constituting almost half of their pre-1970 population. Further, more than a third of the Muslim Cham, Lao and Thai communities were killed under the Khmer Rouge. Finally, the ethnic Khmer community itself was not safe from the paranoia of the Party center. Between 1975 and 1979 an estimated fifteen percent of rural Khmers were killed, while nearly a quarter of urban Khmers lost their lives. (Totten, Parsons and Charny 2004, 344-346) This propensity against Cambodia's urban population constitutes a phenomenon that Adam Jones describes as *urbicide*. Putting this concept in both its broader historical perspective and that of our Bosnian case (See Chapter 3), he writes:

"Throughout world history, human civilization has meant urbanization (the Latin *civitas* is the etymology of the root of both 'city' and 'civilization'). Accordingly, forces that aim to undermine civilization or destroy a human group often attack the urban foundations of group identity. 'Deliberate attempts at the annihilation of cities as mixed physical, social and cultural spaces' constitute *urbicide*. The term was originally coined in the Serbo-Croatian language, by Bosnian architects, to describe the Serb assault on Sarajevo and the Croat attack on Mostar during the Balkan wars of the 1990s, but there are numerous historical precedents... There are few more vivid instances, however, than the policy imposed by the Khmer Rouge on Phnom Penh and other cities in March 1975... Within hours of arriving in the capital, the Khmer Rouge was rounding up its two million residents for deportation to the countryside... Without damaging a single building, whole cities were

destroyed... To the residents, the Khmer Rouge justified the deportations on the grounds that the Americans were planning an aerial attack on Cambodian cities. (Given recent history, this was not an inconceivable prospect.) To an international audience – on the rare occasion when KR leaders bothered to provide rationales – the urbicide was depicted as a humanitarian act... But this excuse faltered... Most revealingly, foreign donations of food and other aid went unsolicited, and were rejected when offered. Instead, ... the reason for the evacuations was found in the Khmer Rouge ideology: *‘the deportations were nothing less than an attack on the very idea of a city.’*” (Jones 2006, 192-193)

In the end, it would be fair to assert that in achieving the success of its paranoid policies, the Khmer Rouge had also sown the seeds of its ultimate demise. As the very real Vietnamese threat consolidated itself to the east, the most horrific massacres of the Khmer Rouge reign of terror were perpetrated in Cambodia’s Easter Zone during the last six months of the regime’s rule, as it feverishly worked to suppress anyone who was politically suspect. In a scene eerily reminiscent of Nazi Germany, easterners were forced to wear blue scarves to mark them out before they were “eliminated en masse.” (Totten, Parsons and Charny 2004, 347) By mid-1978 the bellicosity of the Khmer Rouge along Cambodia’s border had reached such a pitch that Hanoi could no longer turn a blind eye. As the year drew to an end the Vietnamese resolved to pursue a military solution to the Cambodian problem. In late December a Vietnamese army consisting of some 150,000 regular troops, supported by some 15,000 Cambodian rebels, advanced into Democratic Kampuchea. With air support the Vietnamese force was able to Seize the Capital of Phnom Penh in a mere two weeks. (Esterline 1986, 91) The Khmer Rouge leadership, including its head, Pol Pot, fled to sanctuaries in western Cambodia, along the Thai border, where they fought to return to power for more than a decade-and-a-half. Cambodia was renamed once again, as the *People’s Republic of Kampuchea* (PRK). The

new regime that was installed was heavily supported by Vietnam, both militarily and politically. The era following the Khmer Rouge defeat, which falls outside of the focus of this analysis, has been dubbed “one of the twentieth century’s ‘more depressing episodes of diplomacy.’” During this time the West, moving along the currents of Cold War international politics, embraced the Khmer Rouge as the legitimate representatives of Cambodia, ignoring the fact that the regime, which it had previously branded as “communist monsters,” was responsible for one of the most ghastly massacres in recorded history. This attitude can largely be attributed to the strong U.S. resentment of and hostility towards the PRK’s Vietnamese patrons, a holdover from the still bitterly remembered American defeat and pullout of Vietnam in 1975. This post-Democratic Kampuchean period is, of course, fertile ground for another study. To end, and put the present chapter in perspective, the nightmare that was perpetrated in Cambodia between 1975 and 1979 at the hands of the brutal Khmer Rouge regime took a colossal human toll. By the time that it was brought to a halt by the Vietnamese invasion, some 2 million Cambodians had lost their lives, representing nearly one third of the country’s pre-revolutionary population of nearly 7 million.

CHAPTER 2

RWANDA

FROM MIGRATORY TRIBES TO THE BEGINNINGS OF POLITICAL UNIFICATION

Due to a deficiency of recorded history it is much more difficult to trace Rwanda's past as far back, in such specific terms, as those of Cambodia or Bosnia. Evidence of the region's first inhabitants, the Twa, a hunter-gatherer people believed to be related to the pygmies of the Congo forest, dates back to the second millennium BC.³⁰ From the early centuries AD the Bantu peoples became the most prominent ethnic group in the region. The origins of the Bantu can be traced to eastern Nigeria, from which they migrated south and east along the tributaries of the Congo River. The Bantu were flourished largely due to the spread of iron technology dating back to the sixth century and their skill as ironworkers gave them a significant advantage, in terms of weapons and tools, over the other peoples that they encountered.³¹ Over the next several centuries

³⁰ Richard F. Nyrop and others, *Area Handbook for Rwanda* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969), 6.

³¹ James S. Olson, *The Peoples of Africa: An Ethnohistorical Dictionary* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 70.

many of the different Bantu dialects began diverging, denoting a more stable, less migratory society.³² The particulars concerning the arrival of and distinction between Rwanda's Hutu and Tutsi, a distinction which would prove fatal in the twentieth century, is the subject of great debate and contention. As clear as can be determined, sometime during the eleventh century the Hutu, a Bantu speaking people, migrated into the region from an area encompassed by modern Chad. They primarily sustained themselves by cultivating sorghum and hunting.³³ Over time the Hutu, as hoe-cultivators, transformed the country by clearing large tracts of grasses, shrubs and bushes, and eventually larger forests for their fields. It is doubtful that, before the arrival of the Tutsi, the Hutu were so numerous or that their deforestation was so extensive that they disrupted the region's natural equilibrium. During the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the Tutsi, a Hamitic speaking people, began migrating into the region from the north-east. The earliest origin of these people is not known, but assumed to be somewhere in what is today either Somalia or Ethiopia. The Tutsi movement into across the region was part of a larger pastoral migration, which, over the long stretch of time, resulted in the formation of distinct societies throughout central Africa. The Tutsi brought with them their large herds of long-horned cattle and incorporated the Bantu speaking Hutu agriculturists that they encountered along the way into their larger society. Over the ensuing centuries, as the two groups intermingled, the Tutsis completely adopted the Bantu language of the Hutus. The absences of linguistic distinctions between the two groups has served as a great impediment to their historical reconstruction in modern times. Author Jacques J. Maquet describes the character and tempo of the Tutsi migration, writing:

³² Rene Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 18-20.

³³ David Lea, ed., *A Political Chronology of Africa* (London: Europa Publications, 2001), 360.

As the Tutsi migration seems to have been gradual and peaceful, an infiltration rather than a conquest, it is probable that at the beginning their cattle grazed on the unoccupied grasslands. But the population increased as more Tutsi kept on entering the country and more land had to be tilled to feed them. Cattle were also increasing and the Hutu had to move from the most fertile soil, in the bottom of valleys, because during the dry season these places were the only ones where cattle could find fresh grass. This process must have been in operation for a few centuries to produce the situation as we know it now.³⁴

Due to the lack of recorded history (discussed above), historians are compelled to rely on the rich African traditions of *oral history* when examining pre-nineteenth century Rwanda. In Rwanda these oral histories are centered on a line of mythical kings beginning with King Kigwa, of whom it was said had descended from heaven and organized the aristocracy. The names of his successors are given down the line, arriving at Gihanga, the fabled king whom it was said formed the first empire. As legend has it, he passed the empire on to his son, Kanyarwanda, the eponym of Rwanda.³⁵ Around 1300 AD larger, more centralized kingdoms began to emerge in the region. These kingdoms found their strength in the consolidation of the pastoralists and cultivators.* In this fashion smaller Bantu states in Rwanda began to see themselves as part of a larger kingdom by beginning of the fifteenth century; in turn paved the way for further political consolidation. (Lemarchand 1970, 20) The line of mythical kings who are named in the royal line that succeeded Kanyarwanda, ended with Rwanda's first actual, historically based, king, Ruganzu I⁺ (1438-1482). Ruganzu I tied himself to the oral myths very effectively, using them to legitimize the *Nyiginya* Kingdom that he founded. Beginning during his reign and continuing through those of his successors, their small kingdom

³⁴ Jacques J. Maquet, *The Premise of Inequality in Ruanda: A Study of Political Relations in a Central African Kingdom* (London: , 1961), 11-12.

³⁵ Jan Vansina, *Antecedents to Modern Rwanda: The Nyiginya Kingdom* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), 10.

* That is, Tutsis and Hutus, respectively.

⁺ Bwimba.

grew over the following century, until it encompassed the greater part of central Rwanda. Following the death of the powerful Yuhi I (1552-1576), a civil war split the kingdom into two parts. The rightful King, Ndahiro II (1576-1600) maintained control of the southern kingdom, *Nduga*. Toward the end of the sixteenth century his kingdom endured a barbarian invasion out of the west and in 1600 he was killed during the fighting. In the political vacuum created by the invasion and the death of the king, Ruganzu II (Ndori) (1600-1624), the late King's son who had been sent to a neighboring kingdom as a child, returned and laid claim the throne. (Vansina 2004, 11, 44)

The greatest of the early Rwandan Kings, Ruganzu II reconquered the entire kingdom, including the northern half which had been lost following the death of Yuhi I, and added a number of new provinces along nearly all of his kingdom's borders. His successors ruled over these domains for more than a century. Throughout that century the dynasty that he had created concentrated its efforts on expansion. Although its military conquest was briefly checked by another empire to the north in Burundi, it remained firmly ensconced for some three centuries. (Lemarchand 1970, 21-22) During the mid-eighteenth century Cyirima II* (1744-1768) was *unjustly* denied the throne by his father. He seized the throne, claiming his right, and ruled as a great warrior-king. He was succeeded by his son Kigeri III (1768-1792), who shared his father's military talents. During their reigns they foiled a number of plots against the Nyiginya Kingdom by its treacherous neighbors and were able instead, through their prowess, to annex a number of territories from their enemies. Following the death of Kigeri III in 1792 another struggle over succession ensued, which resulted in the recognition of a baby-king, Mibambwe III (1792-1797). Throughout the nineteenth century a series of powerful rulers reigned,

* Rujugira.

steadily increasing the size of the kingdom. By this time Rwanda had become the most dominant power in the region due to a consolidation of royal power, military might, trade and the creation of religious cults devoted to the monarchy. This line of strong kings culminated in the rule of Kigeri⁺ IV (1853-1895). When he died in 1895 his kingdom encompassed all of present day Rwanda, as well as several districts located in modern Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. His successor, Mibambwe IV (1895-1896) was overthrown in a coup in December of 1896 and replaced by Yuhi^{*} IV (1896-1931), merely three months before the arrival of the first German colonial officer in the region. (Vansina 2004, 11-12) In retrospect, author René Lemarchand concisely puts the history of pre-colonial monarchical Rwanda into perspective, writing:

“Stripped to its essentials, much of the history of monarchical Rwanda is reducible to chronic spurts of territorial expansion, followed by periods of more or less peaceful assimilation. It is the story of how successive waves of Tutsi ... Pastoralists, under the leadership of a royal clan ... gradually spread their hegemony over the indigenous Bantu (i.e. predominately Hutu) societies, whose customs and traditions they then proceeded to assimilate into their own. What was involved here was nothing less than an indigenous form of imperialism, bolstered by a superior military apparatus and an equally strong conviction of cultural superiority.”³⁶

As the twentieth century rapidly approached, the region was about to undergo a revolutionary transformation, when this *indigenous form of imperialism* would come to be replaced, as the primary organizing agent in society, by a new European imperialism. Rwanda would never be the same.

⁺ Rwabugiri.

^{*} Musinga.

³⁶ René Lemarchand, ed., *African Kingships in Perspective* (Forest Grove, OR: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1977), 72-73.

COLONIALISM UNDER GERMANY

Europeans first set foot in central Africa during the 1850s and 1860s. Between 1854 and 1864 the British explorer John Hanning Speke made three separate expeditions into the region, discovering first Lake Tanganyika and later Lake Victoria in his search for the source of the Nile River. (Lea 2001, 360) No formal attempt to colonize the region would be made for several decades. In the early 1880s Germany, a relative late comer on the scene of European colonization, began changing its colonial policy under Bismarck. For Bismarck colonialism amounted to a surrender to the special interests of missionaries and merchants eager to work under the protection of imperial Germany, which he unenthusiastically went along with as German colonies began sprouting up along Africa's eastern coast. During the last decade and a half of the century, the prices of commodities were falling worldwide and German merchants were pushed to move increasingly inland in Africa in order to reduce the overhead costs imposed by African middlemen. With regard to the importance of both colonialism in general and Africa in particular to Germany, two important points must be stressed. First, colonialism played a very minor role in Germany's domestic politics during the Bismarckian era. Authors L. H. Gann and Peter Duignan assert, "As far as Bismarck was concerned, colonial ventures were of marginal significance." Second, they continue, "within the hierarchy of German capitalism as a whole, the magnates of African trade were pygmies." At the Conference of Berlin in 1885 Rwanda and Burundi were recognized internationally as lying within the German colonial sphere of influence, although it would be nine more years until a European actually set foot in Rwanda proper (Nyrop et al. 1969, 9).

The prosaic impetus for German colonization of East Africa had come in 1885 when a number of small investors received an imperial charter for the *Gesellschaft für Deutsche Kolonisation* (DOAG), under the aegis of its founder Carl Peters, who was much more of an intellectual than a capitalist. The German conquest of Africa's east coast proved relatively easy, if not overly lucrative. As the 1890s began there were more and more calls for German colonization of the as to yet unexplored inland regions (for the reasons discussed above).³⁷ The first European colonizers to arrive in Rwanda were led by Count Gustav Adolf von Götzen in 1893 and 1894 (Nyrop et al. 1969, 9). Von Götzen and those explorers who followed him were immediately struck by the preeminence of the institution of kinship in Rwandan society. The *Mwami* or king was the center of a large royal court and was treated as the divine embodiment of Rwanda. Author Gérard Prunier describes the significance of the King in pre-colonial Rwanda:

“[He] was the patriarch of his people, given to them by *Imana* (God). He is the providence of Rwanda, the Messiah and the saviour. When he exercises his authority, he is impeccable, infallible. His decisions cannot be questioned. The parents of a victim he has unjustly struck bring him presents so that he does not resent them for having been forced to cause them affliction. They still trust him because his judgements are always just. Whatever happens, he remains *Nyagasani*, the only Lord, superb and magnificent.”³⁸

Traditional, pre-colonial, Rwandan society was a “complex pyramid of political, cultural and economic relationships,” of which the king represented only the tip. Under the king there was a three tiered organization of chiefs charged with the administration of all levels of society. The great majority of these chiefs were Tutsi, although some of

³⁷ L. H. Gann, and Peter Duignan, *The Rulers of German Africa, 1884-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, 1977), 9-11.

³⁸ Gérard Prunier, *The Rwandan Crisis: History of a Genocide* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1995), 9-10.

those charged with overlooking agriculture, the “Chiefs of the Land,” were Hutus because this was their traditional domain. The chiefs essentially played two primary roles within society: controlling and extracting. With respect to the former, control was tighter near the center of the kingdom and became relatively looser towards the periphery. Extracting took several forms, from straightforward duties, to maintaining pastures, working the land and minding cattle. There were global norms shared by all of the chiefs and more localized arrangements made to satisfy the government’s demands, in a system of “collective responsibility.” A new system of compulsory work known as *ubuletwa*, ostensibly for works of “public interest,” was devised in the latter nineteenth century under the rule of Kigeri IV. Used more as a tool by the king to extend his domains, it was seen all over the kingdom as a “hated symbol of centralist oppression.” The European colonizers, beginning with the Germans to a smaller degree and latter the Belgians to a much larger degree, greatly abused and exploited these traditional societal structures and divisions. War and religion were two further unifying forces in traditional Rwandan society. War served as a “social coagulant” in which Tutsi, Hutu and Twa perceived themselves first and foremost as Rwandans, fighting against a common enemy. Religion was a shared “social trait,” with adherents from all three ethnic groups. (Prunier 1995, 11-13, 15)

When the first Germans arrived in Rwanda the kingdom was in a state of political upheaval due to the recent death of Kigeri IV. In a grab for power his successor had been slain in a coup shortly before the Germans arrived. One of Kigeri IV’s wives, the shrewd

Kanjogera, asserted power for her son, Yuhi IV* (1896-1931). As the queen mother, Kanjogera became the most powerful political figure in the Kingdom. Her brother, Kabera, served as a sort of regent over her weak and irresolute son as she pitilessly purged the slain King's supporters and any with a lineage that could be perceived as a threat to the new regime. Because of their weak presence and ignorance of local politics, the newly arrived Germans threw their support behind the new King, helping to bolster the usurping regime. Due to the realities on the ground, the German colonial policy was one of *indirect rule* over its central African subjects. Consequently, the Rwandan monarchy was left with substantial latitude in matters of domestic politics. Prunier describes the dynamics of the relationship between the Europeans and the Tutsi monarchy:

“They [the Germans] were ready to overlook the exploitations of their interventions by the central state since they hoped to use it as a tool of colonisation. Thus they had no objections to strengthening it further, i.e. playing exactly the role Kanjogera and Kabera wanted them to play in the period of wobbly authority following the *coup d'état*. Thus the start of the European presence in Rwanda was a determining factor in reinforcing the *mwamiship*, the chiefly hierarchy and the court's increasing hold over the lightly controlled peripheral areas. And when, due to a lack of manpower, the Germans could not directly control a certain area with or on behalf of the royal court, they were not above sub-contracting local control to Tutsi chiefs who, secure in the white man's support, acted as rapacious quasi-warlords.”

Thus, the nineteenth century trends toward a centralization of power, annexation of Hutu territories and the extension of Tutsi political power were accelerated during the colonial epoch. (Prunier 1995, 23-25)

As Germany was working to militarily secure Rwanda and Burundi in the late 1890s, establishing their first military station at Usumbura in Burundi in 1896, religious

* Musinga.

forces were also at work leaving their mark on the region. In 1898 the Roman Catholic order of the Missionaries of Africa* founded their first mission in Burundi and by 1900 the first missions had been established in Rwanda. Less than a decade later, in 1907 and 1908, the first Protestant missionaries arrived, founding missions that emphasized education and egalitarianism, which would have a lasting impact on the development of the region. At the dawn of the twentieth century the region of Rwanda and Burundi lay along the lines of a strategic junction between three colonial empires. Belgium, already in control of the Congo Free State, wanted control of the area because of its access to Lake Victoria and because it provided a strategic link to Africa's east coast. Germany perceived of the region as being a crucial part of a great German central African empire, or *Mittelafrika*. Finally, Great Britain wanted it as a link between its northern and southern African holdings, along the line of its proposed Cape-to-Cairo railroad. Consequently, during the first decade of the century there was great debate and political maneuvering with regard to the exact location of colonial borders in the still much unexplored region. With the death of King Leopold II of Belgium in 1909, the way was cleared for the three empires to come to an agreement. The natural frontiers were set as the boundaries between their spheres of influence and German control of the newly demarcated Rwanda and Burundi was affirmed. (Nyrop et al. 1969, 10)

As discussed above, the Germans used the existing structures of the Mwami's government to strengthen their indirect control over the region, a practice that was mutually beneficial to both the colonizers and the Tutsi monarchy. During the German colonial period the Mwami, backed economically by Germany and, albeit to a lesser

* More popularly known as the *White Fathers* or *Peres Blancs*.

degree, by German force of arms, came closer to asserting absolute rule over his entire territory than at any other previous time in the region's history. In this respect:

“The most significant aspects of German Administration were the punitive expeditions carried out against rebellious Hutu chiefs in the northern region, who had long proved difficult for the Mwami to control, a phenomenon which continued throughout both the German and Belgian periods. In 1912 Germany sent an expedition into this northern region to suppress a revolutionary movement and to punish the murderers of a Catholic missionary. The village of the rebellious chief was attacked and burned and the captured leaders executed. The separatist-minded Hutu leaders of the north were forced to submit to German-backed Tutsi authority.”

Other noteworthy advances brought about during the German colonial period were in the economic realm. During the first half of the second decade of the twentieth century, as the European powers geared up for the First World War, the German administration in Rwanda made attempts at economic planning in its central African holdings, but to little avail. Compared to the diamonds, gold and copper found in the Belgian and British territories, Rwanda and Burundi's economic potential was limited. Although cattle were plentiful, the region's agricultural output barely sufficed to feed its domestic population. In 1913 the German resident, Richard Kandt, proposed a plan for Rwanda and Burundi to be developed into coffee lands, in hopes of producing a cash crop. The most significant result of this transition was the introduction of a monetary economy, heretofore unheard of in Rwanda, which would have far-reaching implications. Specifically, over time the Hutu came to see money as a substitute for cattle, the traditional symbol of wealth. As this new conception became solidified, Tutsi domination over the Hutu majority was correspondingly weakened. (Nyrop et al. 1969, 11)

On the eve of World War I, in the early months of 1914, the German colonial administration levied a general head tax on Rwanda. Yuhi IV opposed the tax because he

believed that it would foster the belief among the Hutu that the Germans were their protectors, thus weakening the perception that they were indentured to their Tutsi lords. His fear was justified, as the taxation served to further weaken Tutsi domination. The Germans attempted to conduct a census of their central African holdings so that they could somewhat accurately levy the new tax. Because of poor communication and the extremely low number of colonial officials in the region, this proved to be a near logistical impossibility. Eventually they arrived at an estimate of some 2 million persons. In 1914 the total number of Europeans in Rwanda and Burundi was estimated at less than 200. Of these around 130 were missionaries, along with some forty soldiers, a few traders and five civilian officials. When the War erupted in Europe during the summer, many senior German officials saw it as an opportunity to create a great central African German empire, stretching from the German east African territories, through central Africa, to the Cameroons and southwest Africa. (Nyrop et al. 1969, 11-12) In 1914 Germany's colonial strategy was based on two assumptions that would prove to be fatally wrong. First, that the war would be short and, second, that Germany would win. Operating under these assumptions, Germany quickly cut off its colonies at the outset of the war, jettisoning them in the belief that the energy that would be exerted in holding on to them would be far greater than their potential yield of raw materials. Following this line of thinking the consensus was that, in the wake of her short victory, Germany could reacquire the lost colonies and more than compensate for the temporary colonial losses through territorial expansion in Africa.³⁹

³⁹ Woodruff D. Smith, *The German Colonial Empire* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 221.

COLONIALISM UNDER BELGIUM

Germany's high ambitions for the war proved to be delusory. In Africa her forces were far outnumbered by those of her enemies, particularly in Rwanda and Burundi. By January of 1916 German forces in the region totaled some 1,407 African troops, supplemented by 166 Germans. Her Belgian rivals, on the other hand, had a force of around 7,700 troops and 52 artillery pieces. By April Germany had withdrawn nearly a third of its force as it mounted a weak resistance to Belgian occupation of Rwanda and Burundi. No major engagements were fought as the Belgians easily advanced. On May 21, Belgium was in complete control of the region. At the outset of Belgian occupation, labor demands on the local population were intensified to meet the demands of the war effort and the country was divided along the lines of new military districts. (Nyrop et al. 1969, 12)

When the war finally ended Belgium planned to use its conquered central African territories of Rwanda and Burundi as bargaining chips in their postwar negotiations. The ultimate hope of the Belgians was for a three way exchange in which "Belgium would cede Rwanda-Burundi to Great Britain; the British would cede a portion of German East Africa to Portugal; and the Portuguese would cede the southern bank of the lower Congo River to be joined to the Congo colony." In order to accomplish this diplomatic snafu, Belgium had to first get the four powers of the allied council, the United States, Great Britain, France and Italy, to officially recognize her possession of Rwanda and Burundi. After long negotiations, during which the Americans were the most hesitant to approve Belgium's claim, the Council of Four finally recognized her possession of Rwanda and Burundi on August 7, 1919. In the end Portugal turned down the terms of the proposed

exchange and Belgium was obliged to assume responsibility over the two Central African colonies. On August 23, 1923 the decision of the Council of Four was approved by the League of Nations and Rwanda-Burundi became an officially mandated territory under the supervision of Belgium: "Under the Mandate the responsibilities of the Belgian Government were to maintain peace, order, and good administration; to work toward the emancipation of all slaves; to protect the African population from fraud, arms traffic, and the sale of alcoholic beverages; and to promote both social progress and moral well-being. In 1924 the Belgian Parliament formally accepted responsibility for Rwanda-Burundi under the conditions established by the League." (Nyrop et al. 1969, 13)

Following the war the Belgians carried on the German tradition of indirect rule over their central African colonies. In the early postwar years relations between the Rwandan royal court and the new Belgian administration were poor. This was due in large part to the court's long standing suspicion and distrust of the of the French Catholic order of the White Fathers, who were much more closely linked to the Belgian administrators than they had been to their German predecessors. The Germans had been wary to promote the cause of a French Catholic order, a fact that the Rwandan monarchy exploited to weaken both the demands of the administration and the church. Under the new Belgian administration the divide between the monarchy and the Catholic order grew, resulting in a trend which held significant implications for the future. The White Fathers, being excluded from the royal court and unable to gain Tutsi converts, began recruiting Hutu converts and assuming a patronage over them. In the early postwar years they increasingly used their influence with the Belgians to call for political reform to

protect these converts from what they believed were the unjust political and economic demands of the Tutsi monarchy.⁴⁰

In any case, Belgian interest in the Hutu peasantry and political reform was short lived as they were forced to face the same realities of indirect rule as the Germans had. Because there were too few Belgians in the region to create their own bureaucracy, they were forced to rely on the existing monarchy and elites. Further, with the institution of a new Head Tax, the Belgians were forced into a greater reliance on Rwanda's existing power structures. Consequently, as the exactions that Belgium demanded grew toward the beginning of the 1920s, so too did the wealth and power of the Tutsi monarchy and elites. Thus, as time went on, the Belgian commitment to indirect rule enabled the Tutsi establishment "to extract harsher demands on the commoners, especially the Hutu." Over the course of the next decade these trends were accelerated due in part to a number of factors. In response to a regional famine the Belgian administration, with the help of Yuhi IV and the Tutsi elites, introduced a number of obligatory work programs that included crop cultivation, reforestation and anti-erosion duties. A number of mandatory developmental labor programs were also instituted including road building and maintenance, drainage projects and the construction of public buildings. The Hutu peasantry, who increasingly resented their European and Tutsi overlords, saw this early period of Belgian rule as the beginning of what later became popularly referred to as the "time of the whip." (Jefremovas 2002, 68)

Author Gérard Prunier asserts that the Belgian policy during their first decade of its colonial rule over Rwanda was characterized by a "wait and see" mentality, as

⁴⁰ Villia Jefremovas, *Brickyards to Graveyards: From Production to Genocide in Rwanda* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 67.

Belgium tentatively inherited the indirect, prewar German system that was already in place. This resulted, as already discussed, in a continuation and acceleration of colonial era trends. As the 1920s progressed and Belgium became more comfortable in its administrative role over Rwanda, it began to put its own stamp on the governance of the central African colony. (Prunier 1995, 26) The League of Nations mandate required that Belgium maintain Rwanda-Burundi as a separate and distinct territory, although it allowed her to administer it as part of the larger Congo colony. Thus, a law was passed in the Belgian Parliament in August of 1925 creating an administrative Union between Rwanda-Burundi and the Congo, in which “a separate budget was maintained for each colony, but the administrations, customs, and monetary systems were combined into one.” (Nyrop et al. 1969, 14) In the years between 1926 and 1931 Belgian colonial policy was cemented in a series of measures referred to as *les réformes Voisin*, named after the governor, Charles Voisin. These reforms took weightily into account the advice of the region’s most respected cleric, Monsignor Classe, who had arrived in the country at the turn of the century as a priest and by this time had risen to bishop. In 1927 he wrote to the Belgian administrators that although the Tutsi monopoly of power that had been fostered during the colonial era was an “element of progress,” it should not be forgotten that the Rwandan kings of old also elevated Hutu and Twa lineages to places of “high dignity;” granting them and their descendants “rank in the landholding class.” These sentiments were obviously not popular with the Tutsi monarchy and elites who, following near three decades of colonial rule, had grown comfortable in the predominance of their position. (Prunier 1995, 26) Yuhi IV and his royal court fought every effort of the Europeans to alter the power structures of Rwanda’s ruling elite. In

response, the Belgians began educating their own cadre of local administrators to counter the influence of the existing elite. Using a strategy of *divide and rule*, they set about diminishing the authority of the most powerful chiefs by placing members of rival factions in important positions. The end result was a division of the Tutsi elite into two factions, a “modern faction” that was aligned with the Belgian administrators and a “traditional” faction led by Yuhi IV. This division became the driving force behind the reforms of the latter half of the 1920s. They were primarily aimed at fragmenting the power of the officials that buttressed royal control over the government by vastly reducing the hierarchy of chiefs and subchiefs. (Jefremovas 2002, 69) Although the Belgians were successful in their immediate aim of weakening the grip the traditional Tutsi elites and the monarchy, their reforms essentially set the stage for the emergence of a “far more starkly authoritarian system.” (Lemarchand 1977, 78)

By 1930 Monsignor Classe had a turn of heart, fearing the possible repercussions his advice, with respect to the reform process, might have on the country’s increasingly shaky social order. In this regard he asserted:

“The greatest mistake this government could make would be to suppress the [Tutsi] caste. Such a revolution would lead the country directly to anarchy and to hateful anti-European communism ... We will have no better, more active and more intelligent chiefs than the [Tutsi]. They are the ones best suited to understand progress and the ones the population likes best. The government must work mainly with them.”

Amidst a flurry of new reforms aimed at transforming Rwanda’s existing power structures, this marked the end of the first feeble attempts to place Hutus in administrative positions. Moreover, the few already existing Hutu chiefs were discharged and replaced by Tutsis, leading to a situation of almost total Tutsi dominance. One of the principal measures instated under *les réformes Voisin* was a concentration of

chiefly functions under a single official. The traditional three tiered organization of chiefs, discussed earlier, was abolished and along with it the Chiefs of the Land, a position which had often been filled by Hutus, only to be replaced by a single Tutsi official. Under the old system the Hutus had been allowed a certain degree of latitude, under which they had often been able to cleverly manipulate the various levels of chiefly authority against one another. They now found themselves under the tight control of a heavy handed Tutsi chief, backed by the white administration. None too slowly, Rwanda's traditional societal structures, which had stood the test of time, were being molded into a new image. One that was seen as efficient by the European colonizers, as ideal and lucrative by the minority Tutsi administration and as oppressive by the majority Hutu peasantry. (Prunier 1995, 27)

By the closing years of the 1920s the Belgian administration and the church began planning to remove Yuhi IV from the political scene. They began building a case against him in 1929 citing his "active opposition to the church, 'mismanagement' of the affairs of state, ... incompetence ... and most bizarrely recourse to sorcery." The restructured administration, in which the number of chiefs had been cut from several thousand to around 1,100 during the course of the reforms, isolated the king from the traditional support he had previously enjoyed. In 1931 the Belgians, with the help of the church deposed Yuhi IV, exiling him to the Congo and replacing him with his colonially educated son, Mutara III* (1931-1955). (Jefremovas 2002, 69) This marked a watershed in Rwandan history. For the first time Rwandan kings and elites wanted to be seen as Tutsis, which carried with it an increasingly privileged stamp. The Belgians were more than happy to use their own "creatures" (i.e. the Tutsis) to enforce their order and pursue

* Rudahigwa.

their interests in the colony. (Prunier 1995, 31) Author Mahmood Mamdani expounds on this notion further, alluding to the dangerous portent it held for the future, writing:

“I argue that ... the real turning point in the history of political conflict and political violence [in Rwanda] was not colonization at the turn of the century, or even the replacement of German by Belgian rule, but the reorganization of the colonial state from 1926 to 1936... We have seen that when Mwami Rwabugiri centralized the state toward the close of the 19th century, he also made it the custodian of Tutsi privilege. Belgian rule had contradictory consequences for the Tutsi: on the one hand it branded the Tutsi as not indigenous; on the other hand, it consolidated Tutsi privilege by a double move that effected all strata among the Tutsi. Up above, it made the chiefship a Tutsi prerogative with the fused authority of the chief accountable to none but the colonial power; down below, it exempted the *petits* Tutsi from coerced labor. It is precisely because colonialism underwrote Tutsi privilege in law that the Tutsi, beginning with the elite, embraced the racialization of their own identity as nonindigenous.”⁴¹

Because such racial categorizations were based largely on abstract European constructs, they served to create *imagined* societal rifts out of *actual* political divisions.

A further impetus for change in Rwandan society was the colonial church, which was linchpin in the in the process of Europeanization.⁴² A prerequisite for being a member of the new elite class being constructed by the Belgians was to also become a Christian. Thus in the late 1920s and early 1930s members of the colonial clergy were delighted when the country’s elite suddenly began flocking to the church. Although it was obvious to most that these mass conversions were not rooted in righteousness, they hoped that “with the help of God’s grace, they will be turned into good Christians.” (Prunier 1995, 31-32) The church soon began molding this new generation of elites into

⁴¹ Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 105.

⁴² Johan Pottier, *Re-Imagining Rwanda: Conflict, Survival and Disinformation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 119.

a “colonial-aristocratic hierarchy.” Christian P. Scherrer discusses the key role that the church played in the transformation of Rwandan society, holding that:

“In the colonial school system run by the White Fathers and other missionaries ... pupils were separated, apartheid style. The Tutsi were given milk and meat-based meals, the Hutu had to eat maize porridge and beans. The Catholic missionaries justified and reinforced the Tutsi feeling of superiority. These foreign religious functionaries were the true inventors and champions of the pseudo-ethnological theory that claimed an Ethiopic or Semitic origin for the Tutsi. The White Fathers in particular excelled themselves in this regard. They often possessed very detailed knowledge about the ‘customs and traditions’ of the Banyarwanda (Rwandans) — and their knowledge, as Father Loupias (in Rwanda from 1900) candidly admitted, ‘opened all the doors to the conversion of the country’”

Even more deleterious societal distinctions were being drawn during this period of reform as well. In 1926 the Belgians issued, now infamous, “ethnic” identity cards. In point of fact, the Europeans were at a loss as to how to definitively distinguish between Hutus and Tutsis.⁴³ In short, the exceedingly preposterous method that they settled on was based on the following erroneous conclusions:

“[The Belgians] ... decided to use a strictly economic system of identification. Anyone with more than ten cows at that time became Tutsi, and all (his) children, grandchildren and so on. Anyone with less than ten cows became Hutu, or Twa. With their fear of complexity, the Belgian colonial administration thus ‘tidied up’ Rwandan identity in a banal, surreal process of pseudo-racial classification. The tidiness had lasting consequences. The reason ... one in ten Rwandans are Tutsi, is that one in ten men owned cattle in 1931!” (Pottier 2002, 119-120)

In the early 1930s this system of identity cards, which classified the ethno-social group of the bearer, was used to conduct a census. The Belgians used the results of the census to recruit labor for the Congo, whose own labor force had been devastated in the previous decades due to forced labor, massacres and inhumane conditions. Consequently, the

⁴³ Christian P. Scherrer, *Genocide and Crisis in Central Africa: Conflict Roots, Mass Violence, and Regional War* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 26.

plight of many Rwandan Hutus became “slave-like hard labor far from home, in the plantation and mines of the Congo.” (Scherrer 2002, 27)

Following the installation of Mutara III, the 1930s saw a drastic escalation in the demands on the population by the administrative chiefs. A number of major changes were made to the structure of *corvée*^{*} in order to meet the burdensome fiscal demands of the Belgians. In theory *prestations*⁺ were turned into obligatory cash payments in 1934 in an effort to modernize the economy by encouraging wage labor. By the end of the decade ubuletwa (see earlier text) was allowed to be paid in cash by contract workers, which waived their public works obligations. In practice this system encouraged a great deal of abuse because the demands of the chiefs were growing ever heavier since they were required to mobilize a fixed number of workers each day in order to meet the demands laid upon them, in turn, by the Europeans. The demands for labor increased exponentially during the 1930s, as the Belgian administration encouraged the chiefs to undertake large-scale cash cropping operations, primarily of coffee and vegetables, using ubuletwa labor. Further, public works projects were expanded and obligatory crop cultivation was intensified, while such European enterprises as plantations, industry and mining demanded large indigenous labor forces. If the chiefs were not able to produce the required number of workers each day they were quickly replaced. Therefore, not only was abuse of the system by the chiefs a necessity in order to meet the obligations demanded upon them by the Europeans, it was also self actualizing and extremely lucrative because it allowed them to accumulate a great deal of personal wealth and to strengthen their own chiefly power. Finally, new “native tribunals” were introduced in

* Labor.

⁺ Contributions to the government.

1936 headed by Tutsi chiefs. These served to expand the power of the Tutsi lords because they legitimized the abuses of power being perpetrated to support the system.

(Jefremovas 2002, 70-71) Thus:

“The Belgian reforms of 1926-31 had created a ‘modern’ Rwanda: centralised, efficient, neo-traditionalist and Catholic – but also brutal. Between 1920 and 1940, the burden of taxation and forced labor borne by the native population increased considerably. Men were almost constantly under mobilisation to build permanent structures, to dig anti-erosion terraces, to grow compulsory crops (coffee for export, manioc and sweet potatoes for food security) to plant trees or to build and maintain roads. These various activities could swallow up to 50-60% of a man’s time. Those who did not comply were abused and brutally beaten. The result was a manpower exodus towards the British colonies, especially Uganda where there was plenty of work.” (Prunier 1995, 35)

Standing over the precipice of World War II, it is prudent to stop for a moment and take a look at the broader trends that were being manifested in larger Africa, in order to more clearly understand the aftermath of the war and the subsequent demise of colonialism in Rwanda. From this wider perspective, just prior to the war, “the European colonial powers were as firmly in control of their African territories as they ever would be.” Africa had been firmly molded into the colonial paradigm since the end of the First World War. The system was so firmly ensconced that the 1930s had seen very few major challenges to colonial authority. Though for a great many Africans this meant living oppressive conditions, they, by and large, “had come to accept the new political order and to obey the rules laid down by the colonial administration[s].” Throughout the era of colonization the colonial subjects came to realize that although the European administrations were sparsely represented on the ground, they had at their disposal “overwhelming resources of power.” By 1939 the colonial states possessed legitimacy in the eyes of a generation of inhabitants who knew nothing else. In particular the small

class of educated elites “identified their political and social ambitions” with the colonial authorities. Such was the *Pax Europaea* that seemed so firmly established in Africa before the war.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, underneath the surface, however small and passive they may have been, the seeds of discontent were germinating, though without the water of some great catalyst, it would be fair to conclude, they may have never budded. The 1930s saw a number of protests against the most insufferable aspects of the colonial administrations, although these remonstrations took place within the framework of the colonial states. These protests largely “took the form of riots against taxation or strikes to obtain higher wages or better conditions of service in the small colonial industrial sector.” Perhaps the aspect of colonial rule that was called least into question by nationalist dissenters during this period was “the framework of states superimposed on the pre-colonial polities by the invading Europeans at the end of the nineteenth century.” Before the war only a scant handful of these protests possessed a “modern political character,” that is, of a violent nature with the aim of securing “greater participation of Africans.” In a broad sense, Africans, if not actively, at least passively accepted the status quo. Indeed, as was to be expected, it was in the countryside, particularly those areas that had been arbitrarily split along colonial frontiers, that the population veered the furthest from this colonial mindset. Here the people “tended to operate socially and even politically in terms of their pre-colonial structures.” Authors John Donnelly Fage, Michael Crowder and Roland Anthony Oliver describe this process as follows:

On the eve of the Second World War, then, the *Pax Europaea* was firmly established in Africa. At one level it was seemingly very tenuous peace,

⁴⁴ John Donnelly Fage, Michael Crowder and Roland Anthony Oliver, *The Cambridge history of Africa: From C. 1940 to C. 1975*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 8-9.

dependant on a handful of European administrators ruling over vast and populous areas with only a handful of African soldiers or para-military police at their disposal... The *Pax Europaea* established by the end of the 1930s was, of course, vital to the successful and intensive exploitation of the colonial state by metropolitan capital. And by the 1930s the pre-colonial economic structure of Africa had been remodeled into a series of colonial economies whose common characteristic, whatever the nationality of their administration, was that they were producers of foodstuffs and raw materials for consumption or processing by the metropolitan and related economies; in term they served as markets for the manufactured goods of European industry, many of them, like soap, processed from raw materials exported by these very colonial economies. The infrastructure pattern of the African colonies reflected clearly this function. Railways and roads were built primarily to link mines or areas of export-crop production with the coast; few were built to link one center of production of crops or goods for internal consumption with another. The colonial administrators were handmaidens to this exploitation, differing only in the degree of active assistance they gave in terms of taxation, forced labor or compulsory crop cultivation, and the extent to which they tried to protect the interests of their colonial subjects... In short, by 1939 Africa had been integrated by colonial rule into the European capitalistic system and in turn had been impregnated with the capitalistic structure of the metropole, and such development that took place was mainly in those sectors producing for the export and import trade. Any development of the internal exchange economy that resulted was largely coincidental.” (Fage, Crowder and Oliver 1984, 9-10)

Thus, in the wake of the unprecedented destruction and chaos of World War II, when the old world-order was placed on the anvil of time and wrought into a new image, the house of cards that had been the colonial system in Africa began to unravel.

When the war was over Rwanda, along with all of the other nations of the world, was faced with the uncertainties of the future. As the European colonial powers began trying to reorganize their economies and foreign policies to reflect the realities of the postwar world, the colonized world was being swept with a host of new, radical political ideas. Many of these were direct or indirect consequences of measures taken in the years before the war, when their long-term consequences could not have been foreseen. In the case of Rwanda, the reforms instituted by the Belgians in the previous two decades had,

without them realizing it, “given a great push to the traditional [socio-political] structures.” For example, in its prewar effort to modernize the Rwandan economy, Belgium caused a fundamental shift in the social fabric of Rwanda (discussed above). The push toward a monetarily based economy forced individuals to become independent economic agents, moving them toward independent action and independent thinking. Stated differently, “the various ... measures designed to redesign the ‘feudal’ social structure ... had ... the effect of turning collective relations of social subordination into individual relations of economic exploitation.” The war had vastly expanded the monetary economy. The old clientship system that was rooted in a non-monetary economy, on which much of the reformed system was based, was becoming increasingly outdated. This led to a phenomenon that was “somewhat typical in potentially revolutionary situations,” in which “the old oppressive forms were perceived (and often wielded by their socially obsolescent ‘beneficiaries’) more harshly as they lost their real power and as their cultural legitimacy waned.” (Prunier 1995, 41-42)

Following the war the international colonial system was rebuilt under the auspices of the newly formed United Nations. The era of the Belgian mandate came to an end as Rwanda-Burundi was made a trust territory. On December 3, 1946 the UN General Assembly approved a Trusteeship Agreement that placed them under the charge of Belgium. The new agreement was much more specific, with regard to the responsibilities of Belgium, than was the preceding League of Nations Mandate. Specifically with regard to the political development of the inhabitants, Belgium was obliged to play a much more proactive role. In the words of the agreement:

“[Belgium was to] promote the development of free political institutions suited to Rwanda-Burundi. To this end the Administating Authority shall

assure to the inhabitants of Rwanda-Burundi an increasing share in the administration and service ... of the territory; it shall further such participation of the inhabitants in the representative organs of the people as may be appropriate to the particular conditions of the Territory. . . the Administering Authority shall take all measures conducive to the political advancement of the people of Rwanda-Burundi in accordance with Article 76(b) of the Charter of the United Nations.”

In order to insure compliance, the UN’s Trusteeship Council sent a number of missions into the region in order to review and report on the steps being taken to implement the agreement. The first of these reviews took place in 1948 and others followed in three-year intervals. The first two reviews, of 1948 and 1951, came to the conclusion that the social and political advances were being implemented at too slow of a pace. Belgium responded by “implementing a series of reforms in the economic structure, in education, and in the administrative organization” of Rwanda. (Nyrop et al. 1969, 15)

In 1952 Belgium embodied the direction that the reforms were to take in a new Ten-Year Development Plan. The plan was the result of significant research and analysis of the situation, focusing primarily on the factors of natural resources, population pressures, labor, economic development, health, education, and infrastructure. The consensus was that unless considerable advancements could be made in these areas, significant political progress would be unattainable. In the realm of education fundamental changes were made to the curriculum, replacing the earlier colonial system with one very similar to Belgium’s. In the political arena, the reforms were aimed at broadening the participation in government. Indigenous political structures were reorganized, specifically the system of councils that had been established to advise the mwami and great chiefs regarding “budget and taxation.” Further, a limited degree of representative government was instituted under the system of councils. The new political

organization was implemented in 1953. Contrasted to the old system, it was a much more tightly knit hierarchy of chiefs and sub-chiefs, from local councils to the High Council of State, that were ultimately presided over by the mwami. The new system effectually served to strengthen the continuation of the prewar trend of Tutsi domination, only under a new guise. In 1954 the High Council of State began to gradually do away with the traditional system of *ubuhake**. Over the following four years some 200,000 head of cattle were redistributed as part of the program, which the administration praised as a sign of progress. The Hutu leadership, on the other hand, argued that the redistribution of cattle was merely illusory and had little practical effect since control of pasturelands were still in the hands of Tutsi lords. However, the psychological effect of this program should not be overlooked, because it gave the Hutu a sense that “if Tutsi control over the cattle could be broken, so [too] could the Tutsi control of the land.” (Nyrop et al. 1969, 6, 15-16)

During the second half of the 1950s an anti-colonial (i.e. anti-Belgian) movement began to grow among Rwanda’s Tutsi elite, who, gauging by the winds of decay already blowing on the broader international colonial system, foresaw a postcolonial future for their country. In 1957 the, all Tutsi, High Council of Rwanda released its *Statement of Views*. In short, they called for decisive action toward self-government, via a strategy of rapid preparation of the elite for “greater responsibilities and participation in the government.” To the Hutu leaders the ideas expressed in this document represented a clear Tutsi attempt to “perpetuate their dominant status.” (Nyrop et al. 1969, 17) Because of the Tutsi monopoly of power, which the Belgians themselves had worked for so long

* “A patron-client contract ... by which the Hutu obtained the use of Tutsi cattle and, in return, rendered personal ... service to the owners of the cattle.”

to foster, this growing push for independence presented a clear threat to the colonial administration. In response the Belgians, with the help of the Catholic Church, began promoting pro-colonial interest groups among the Hutu. Over time an increasing number of Hutus throughout Rwanda began to sense more and more that they had the support of the European system, most especially through the powerful institution of the church. Secure in this support they started organizing, “creating mutual security societies, cultural associations and, in the north, clan organizations among some of the ... clans which had submitted most recently to colonial power.” (Prunier 1995, 45) As these groups gained popularity rather quickly, they became Rwanda’s earliest ethno-political movements. The first of which, the *Association for Social Promotion of the Masses* (APROSOMA), was formed in 1956. APROSOMA was soon followed by the *Hutu Emancipation Movement Party* (PARMEHUTU), the forerunner of the MDR* (discussed below), which was founded by Grégoire Kayibanda. Kayibanda was the private secretary for the archbishop of Rwanda, Monsignor Perraudin, an illustration of the close ties between the procolonial movements and the church. (Scherrer 2002, 28) In this atmosphere of political activism a *Bahutu*⁺ *Manifesto* was published espousing the collective aims of the Hutu movements. Essentially, it “rejected the concept of internal autonomy as another means of perpetuating Tutsi domination. Independence ... would be possible only after there were guarantees of genuine democracy.” (Nyrop et al. 1969, 19) On the public relations front, Kayibanda’s periodical, *Kinyamateka*, was one of the primary outlets that the Europeans, through the arm of the church, used to influence public opinion. *Kinyamateka*, with a circulation of some 25,000, was the most read

* The first state party in Rwanda.

⁺ That is, Hutu.

publication in Rwanda. At the same time the growing Hutu counter-elite were given an unprecedented avenue for “economic opportunity and leadership training” with the creation of the coffee cooperative *Travail, fidélité, Progrès*[#] (TRAFIPRO). (Prunier 1995, 44-45) As the decade drew to an end the tension between the new counter-elite, with the support of the indigenous Hutu majority and their European benefactors, and the traditional Tutsi elite was moving dangerously toward a boiling point. Looking back, Prunier summarizes the postwar impact of the colonial mindset on Rwandan society, which would finally reach an impasse in 1959, he writes:

“With the end of the Second World War, new ideas and new myths were going to emerge. But the fact that they grafted themselves so easily on the colonial cultural mythology of Rwanda was proof of how strong, well-implanted and widely believed the latter had become. The new Myths did not destroy the old ones, but followed and strengthened them by adding the dynamics of modernity to the now ‘traditional’ view of Rwandese society.” (Prunier 1995, 40)

The *social upheaval* of 1959 was precipitated on July 25, when Mutara III died following what was officially reported as a brain hemorrhage after being given a routine vaccination in Burundi. He had been returning from a meeting with Belgian officials. The mysterious circumstances surrounding his death left a cloud of suspicion that it had in fact been an assassination. The death of the mwami, who had reigned for nearly thirty years, created a void in the strained structure of Rwandan politics. In the wake of his death conservative elements from both the Tutsi and Hutu factions moved to secure their own interests. (Scherrer 2002, 28) The Tutsis quickly named Kigeli V* (1959-1961) as the new mwami, without first consulting with the colonial administration. Kigeli V, only twenty-seven years old, was quickly engulfed by the unfolding crisis, which was beyond

[#] That is, “work, fidelity, progress.”

^{*} Ndahindurwa.

his abilities to control. For both sides, the fact that the Belgians had not been able to impose their will by influencing the choice of the new mwami blatantly illustrated that the Europeans were no longer in full control of the situation. The death of Mutara III and installation Kigeli V caused a backlash among the Hutu, who were convinced that they needed to “organize more rapidly in preparation for violent confrontation.”⁴⁵ While still supporting the Tutsi constitutional monarchy that was in place in neighboring Burundi, the Belgians employed a diametrical approach in order to protect their position in Rwanda. To this end they espoused a dual policy of, first, “instigating” and, second, “supporting” the growing Hutu calls for a revolt against the Tutsi establishment. In so doing, “the colonialists made possible a dictatorship of the majority.” (Scherrer 2002, 28)

DECOLONIZATION, THE 1959 “REVOLUTION” AND THE REPUBLIC OF RWANDA

As we have seen, Rwanda’s movement toward decolonization during the decade and a half following World War II followed along a perilous path. From a broader perspective, unlike the situation in many other African nations, decolonization in Rwanda amounted to a series of internal convulsions rather than a direct confrontation with the colonial power. During the era of colonialism the distinction between Hutu and Tutsi had solidified (as described above), becoming the focal point of power and legitimacy. Consequently, “decolonization was a direct outgrowth of an internal social movement that empowered the majority constructed as indigenous against the minority constructed

⁴⁵ Catharine Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression: Clientship and Ethnicity in Rwanda, 1860-1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 193.

as alien.” Nowhere was this illustrated more clearly than in the Bahutu Manifesto (see earlier text), which claimed that “the conflict between Hutu and Tutsi was the heart of the Rwandan problem and called for the double liberation of the Hutu: ‘from both the ‘Hamites’ [Tutsi] and ‘Bazungu’ (white) colonization.” (Mamdani 2001, 103-104)

Sensing Belgium’s weakening grip on the region, the Hutu counter-elite turned on their colonial patrons. Riding the rising tide of Hutu power and support, PARMEHUTU, led by Kayibanda, began aggressively pursuing the policy espoused in the Manifesto, endeavoring to throw off the yolk of both Tutsi and European dominance. From August through October of 1959 Rwanda was a “simmering cauldron,” as all sides tried to carve out an advantageous position in anticipation of what the future held. With elections planned for the end of the year, speculation over what form they would take was rampant. In response to the flurry of activity on the part of both PARMEHUTU and APROSOMA, the newly formed Tutsi monarchist party, the *Union Nationale Rwandaise* (UNAR), turned to a program of coercion and violence in order to scare people from joining the Hutu parties. More and more the voices in the middle, such as the moderate Tutsi party the *Rassemblement Democratique Rwandais* (RADER), who called for progressive reforms, a constitutional monarchy and a democratization of the country’s political apparatus, were lost in the uproar of the extremist fringes. (Newbury 1988, 193-194.)

Under so many pressures, the tenuous balance of power was strained to a breaking point by the end of October. On November 1 a group of Tutsi Youths attacked a Hutu sub-chief, Dominique Mbonyumutwa, who narrowly escaped with his life. In the initial aftermath rumors spread that he had been killed. In the combustible environment, this event proved to be the spark that ignited the fires of civil tumult. In the two weeks

following the assault a number of Tutsi chiefs were attacked and killed as widespread violence engulfed all but a handful of Rwanda's provinces. On the whole, the attacks were limited to a few Tutsi chiefs, while the brunt of the violence resulted in the burning of Tutsi homes. Despite the countrywide destruction, the lives of average Tutsis were largely spared. Speaking to the larger significance of the uprising, author Catherine Newbury asserts, "The Hutu uprising of November 1959 was important because it demonstrated the depth of rural discontent with Tutsi domination, and the ability of Hutu to destabilize the state." The resulting Tutsi counterattack was more organized and more brutal than the Hutu protests had been. The Hutus had given the dangerous pendulum of social animosity a push and the Tutsi elite had responded, with an even harder shove in the opposite direction. As the tension built, rhetoric from both sides grew more vitriolic. UNAR, the Tutsi monarchist party, realizing that the longer decolonization was forestalled, the more time the Hutu would have to organize their resources and to mobilize their forces, loudly called for a rapid move toward independence in their campaign appeals for the much anticipated elections. In response, Hutu leaders launched a strong counteraction, which as Newbury asserts, "was directed not against the Belgian administration, which claimed a monopoly of coercive force, but against the Tutsi." For their part, the Belgians were forced to take action if they hoped to maintain control of their colony. The administration had not been caught completely off guard, as they had been closely watching the deteriorating social and political order. In October The Belgian governor of Rwanda-Burundi, Jean-Paul Harroy, employed the help of Colonel B. E. M. Guy Logiest, an officer in the *Force Publique* in the Congo, to assess the state of affairs in Rwanda and make recommendations with regard to securing the situation.

An initial detachment of reinforcement troops arrived in country on October 24. The pendulum was about to move again. (Newbury 1988, 194-196)

On Friday November 6, Kigeli V requested permission from the Belgians to reassert order over his army so that he could rein in the escalating situation. The European administration quickly denied the request, but the mwami ignored their command. The next day elements of the dismantled Tutsi army were dispatched and a number of Hutu leaders were killed and many others captured. Many of those that were detained were tortured by UNAR leaders. The hope of the Tutsi regime was that by cutting off the heads of the Hutu movement, they would be able to quash rural radicalism in the countryside. The Belgian troops, under Logiest's command, tried stop the violence and to reestablish order. As the situation spun out of hand, Governor Harroy and the mwami temporarily put aside their differences and issued a joint proclamation, beseeching the public to maintain calm throughout the country. On November 11, a state of emergency was declared and martial law was imposed throughout the country. The next day Colonel Logiest was appointed the Special Military Resident and by November 14, a relative calm was restored, although it would prove only temporary. In all, some 300 people had lost their lives during the violence and 1,231 had been arrested by the Belgians.* (Prunier 1995, 49) During the reprieve the Belgians began aggressively installing domestic administrative structures that were heavily staffed by Hutus, to ensure that UNAR would not be able to reassert control of the state. Logiest later asserted that he believed that he was faced with two possible alternatives:

“Either he could support the Tutsi structures (this would mean moving rapidly toward independence for Rwanda and, in his view, would be harmful for the popular masses in the country) or he would opt for

* 919 Tutsis and 312 Hutus.

democratization. [He] consciously chose the latter option, knowing full well that this would ‘require ... the establishment of a republic and then abolition of Tutsi hegemony.’” (Newbury 1988, 196-197)

In the wake of the November violence, opposition to Tutsi authority was at an all time high, as much of the population refused to assent to Tutsi control. Logiest ordered the wide-scale deposition of Tutsi chiefs and subchiefs and many of them fled, seeking refuge in neighboring countries. New interim chiefs were appointed, often from the ranks of PARMEHUTU and APROSOMA. In their new, unprecedented, positions of power, Hutu leaders had access to political resources that gave them a strong position going into the anticipated *Commune* elections scheduled for the summer of 1960. (Newbury 1988, 197) Looking back, Prunier asserts that, “what would later be touted as a ‘social revolution’ resembled more an ethnic transfer of power.” (Prunier 1995, 50)

By year’s end, Belgium’s grip on the situation was becoming ever more tenuous. In the early months of 1960 sporadic fighting continued and more houses were burned. The worst of the violence occurred in the northwest, where the Hutu principalities had held out the longest against Tutsi domination earlier in the century. During the first three years of the decade some 130,000 of Rwanda’s Tutsis were forced to seek refuge in neighboring countries, creating a mass exodus of refugees in the Belgian Congo, Burundi, Tanganyika and Uganda. Still, amidst the insecurity, the colonial authorities were able to organize and carry out the planned communal elections between June 26 and July 30, 1960, in which PARMEHUTU won in an overwhelming landslide. The old system of chiefs was transformed into a new model in which *bourgmestres** ruled over 229 *communes*. Of these, 160 were controlled by PARMEHUTU, while only nineteen were held by Tutsis. In October 1960 Colonel Logiest proclaimed that, “the revolution is

* That is, burgomasters.

over.” In reality the social divide was still precariously balanced. During mid-October a quarrel between a Tutsi drifter and local policemen resulted in the massacre of thirteen Tutsis in Kibingo commune. Frightened for their lives, another wave of Tutsis fled Rwanda. The new Hutu administrators were quickly becoming, in many ways, as oppressive as their Tutsi predecessors had been. (Prunier 1995, 51-52)

The UN, under whose care Rwanda had been mandated following World War II, was keeping a close eye on the situation as it developed. In December 1960 it issued Resolution numbers 1579 and 1580, which were a direct challenge to Belgian policy since November of 1959. Essentially, the UN called for Belgium to organize some form of national reconciliation. A *National Reconciliation Conference* was held in Belgium in January 1961, but it came to naught. In the aftermath Colonel Logiest and Grégoire Kayibanda devised a “legal coup,” designed to prevent further international tinkering with the situation. On January 28, 1961 they called an emergency meeting of Rwanda’s bourgmestres in which they proclaimed the “sovereign, democratic” *Republic of Rwanda*. (Prunier 1995, 52-53) The monarchy was abolished and Kayibanda, as prime minister, moved to form the future government. (Mamdani 2001, 124) The UN, with no other viable alternatives, was forced to reconcile itself to the *de facto* independence of Rwanda. In the meantime sporadic violence continued, with another 22,000 people finding themselves displaced in the months following the declaration of independence. On September 25, new legislative elections were held in which PARMEHUTU won seventy-eight percent of the vote. During the new elections Grégoire Kayibanda (1961-1973) was elected president. As the situation grew more grim for Rwanda’s Tutsis, some of the

refugees who had fled to Uganda began forming small commando bands, called *Inyenzi*^{*} by the Hutu. The Tutsi commandos began launching attacks across the border into Rwanda, which provoked violent reprisals against the Tutsi civilian population that was still there. (Prunier 1995, 53-54) Rwanda became formally independent on July 1, 1962. Some of the Rwandan exiles agreed to support the new regime, in hopes of a peaceful reconciliation. Others, from Rwanda's large diaspora continued to oppose it, moving headlong toward military confrontation. Burundi, home to some 50,000 Rwandan refugees, became the primary base for launching surprise attacks into Rwanda. In December 1963 the exiles launched a desperate surprise attack that was able to penetrate nearly to the capital of Kigali; but due to poor planning and equipment the attack was quickly suppressed. The Hutu government responded by launching a repression in which an estimated 10,000 Tutsis were killed by the end of January 1964. All of the surviving Tutsi politicians were rounded up and executed. The attack was put down with such ferocity that by mid-1964 exile politics had overwhelmingly been extinguished. (Prunier 1995, 55-57) Because the massacres did not possess a larger East-West dimension on the global stage, international reaction was largely muted. The westerners that did take note in 1963 and 1964 were horrified at what they found. Author Linda Melvern writes:

“When western journalists finally arrived in the country they had been so shocked at what they saw that they reported the organized slaughter as being reminiscent of the Holocaust in Europe. The British philosopher, Bertrand Russell, claimed that the killing had been the most horrible and systematic extermination of a people since the Nazi extermination of the Jews. Most of the Europeans living in Rwanda were indifferent, considering the massacres to be the result of the ‘savagery of the Negro.’ The fact of genocide was never officially acknowledged and no one was punished. Rwanda slipped back into obscurity.”⁴⁶

^{*} That is, cockroaches.

⁴⁶ Linda Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder: The Rwandan Genocide* (New York: Verso, 2004), 9.

In the end, the net result of the attacks, coupled with the lack of an international response, was a strengthening of Kayibanda's power.

The republic that Kayibanda created "did not just claim to represent the majority; it claimed to be the republic of the entire nation, that is, the *Hutu nation* [italics mine]." After the suppression of the inyenzi attacks, when Tutsis were forcibly removed from the political arena, Rwanda's domestic Tutsi population was relegated to roles in education, the church and business. The political sphere became the strict confines of members of the Hutu nation. In point of fact, the new republic turned the former logic of the colonial state on its head. Where the Tutsi had formerly been "treated preferentially by the colonial state as a nonindigenous civilizing influence, the ... Republic considered this claim reason enough to treat them as politically illegitimate." Further the Republic made a clear distinction between internal Tutsis, that were "tolerated as civic, but not political, beings who could aspire to rights within civil society," and external Tutsis (exiles), that were "defined as a permanent threat to the state and were treated as permanent outsiders." Once Kayibanda had purged the state of its internal Tutsi parties, he turned his political capital against the more moderate Hutu opposition embodied in APROSOMA, slowly removing its members from roles of administrative responsibility. By 1967 He had completely reorganized Rwanda "as exclusively a state of the Rwandan nation." (Mamdani 2001, 134-135)

As the decade drew on, the Kayibanda regime, ironically, drew growing criticism from its own constituency. Staunch Hutu nationalists cried that the President had not gone far enough in advancing "Hutu representation in civil society." The strongest voice

of criticism came from the growing unemployed class of educated Hutus. Mamdani discusses the causes and significance of this burgeoning movement:

“The critique [of the Kayibanda regime] first came from unemployed Hutu school leavers [sic]. Many had left primary school for lack of resources and were ploughing urban streets looking for employment. Others, in spite of being degree holders, lacked employment, to which they no doubt felt entitled. The combination created a pool of agitators, ready to be tapped by an ambitious politician with a keen sense of fresh grievances. This pool of educated discontent had grown significantly by the mid-1960s to surface publicly. (Mamdani 2001, 135)

The primary criticism of the regime was focused on two fronts, education and employment. First, the educated, though economically stifled, Hutu dissidents pointed to the fact that over ninety percent of those enrolled at the university level in Rwanda during the middle and late 1960s were Tutsi. Increasing pressure was put on the regime to assert control over the educational system, which was still under the control of the Catholic Church. The consequence of the agitation was the law of August 1966, which essentially established state control over education. In the realm of employment, the critics asserted that there was no adequate government policy aimed at mandating Hutu representation in the work force. Over time, as education initiatives increased Hutu enrollment in secondary institutions, the ratio of educated Hutus that were unemployed increased as well. (Mamdani 2001, 136)

Regional politics also played an increasingly prominent role in Rwanda's domestic sentiments. As a result, racial tension and antipathy continued to mount throughout the 1960s. In this regard, Scherrer writes:

“Tens of thousands of Tutsi in Rwanda were murdered or had their possessions (livestock and land) confiscated. Tens of thousands fled to nearby countries. In the following decades a pattern called the ‘dialectics of violence’ resulted in mutual cycles of extreme violence in central

Africa: the agonies of Rwanda became closely related to the 'cyclical killing' in Burundi, and vice versa. Rwanda and Burundi alternately became the destination for fleeing expellees from the other side, and served as the hinterland from which political agitation and military attacks were launched against the neighboring country. This is also true, with some reservations, for the neighboring states of Congo Zaire, Tanzania and Uganda. (Scherrer 2002, 30)

In the latter years of the decade the Kayibanda regime, now firmly ensconced, sought to consolidate its repressive power by pushing toward a further ethnicization of Rwandan society. The policy of ethnic discrimination that the regime pursued was a more aggressive reproduction of the earlier colonial policy toward the Hutu. During this same period in Burundi a bitter struggle, that would last for nearly two and a half decades, was beginning in which various factions of the Tutsi dominated army vied for ultimate control of the military. In the meantime, Burundi's Hutu majority, who remained scarcely represented in the military and political life of the country, was left in a dangerously vulnerable position. By the early 1970s the situation had reached a boiling point. In April 1972, following an agitation of Hutu refugees in Tanzania and a Hutu rebellion in the south, the Tutsi controlled state, wary of the Hutu usurpation of power in Rwanda, carried out a "selective genocide" against Burundi's Hutus and members of the Tutsi opposition. Estimates of up to 200,000 people died in the massacres. (Scherrer 2002, 37-38) Melvern writes, "The US State Department estimated that an attempt had been made to kill every Hutu male over the age of fourteen; every Hutu member of the cabinet had been killed, all Hutu officers, half the country's school teachers and thousands of civil servants." The reaction of the UN was muted. In 1973 the UN sub-commission on the *Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities* issued a complaint against Burundi for human rights violations, but no significant action was taken. At least on the

international stage, Burundi sank back into the obscurity of the developing world, much as Rwanda had following the Tutsi massacres the previous decade. (Melvern 2004, 10)

The *dialectics of violence*, described in Scherrer's words above, were not lost on the Hutu majority in Rwanda, who were very sensitive to the regional ethnic balance. Mamdani asserts, "the effect [of the massacres in Burundi] was to reignite the 'racial' tension in Rwanda's middle class." (Mamdani 2001, 137) In Rwanda the austerity of life under the Kayibanda regime was beginning to take its toll on all levels of the social strata by the turn of the 1970s. Under Kayibanda, Rwanda was a "land of virtue," in which vices, such as prostitution, were severely punished. Peasants worked hard toiling the land and attendance at mass was high. The regime was much approved of by its international benefactors, especially amongst the Catholic Church and the Christian Democrat parties in both Belgium and Germany, who steadfastly supported it. Underdevelopment and poverty were not seen so much as a problem, but as a virtue to be "borne with dignity."

One European resident of Rwanda at the time remarked:

"Slowly the country turned into an island. The government feared its whole environment: it was horrified by the Congolese rebellions, reserved towards Tanzania, hostile to the Tutsi regime in Burundi and dependent of Ugandan roads for its imports. The inhabitants were inward-looking and bore the country's slow shrinkage in silence. There were several forms of censorship: from a triumphant Catholic church and from the government which was afraid both of possible communist-inspired social movements and of the traditional manifestations which could be a reminder of the Tutsi imprint which it considered with something like phobia. To generalised lack of trust, rumor, secrecy, lack of breathing space: on top of material deprivation – the country was one of the poorest in the world and lacked almost everything – was added something like mental paralysis. (Prunier 1995, 59-60)

By the summer of 1972 the atmosphere in Rwanda had become stifling. Murmurs were even being heard among the Hutu elite. Kayibanda himself was increasingly reclusive,

sensing that his regime was in a state of “suspended animation.” In the wake of the massacres in Burundi, in April, he tried to exploit their emotional impact on Rwandans to muster the unanimous support he had enjoyed following the *inyenzi* attacks of the 1960s. In the period between October of 1972 and February of 1973 Kayibanda organized vigilante committees that scrutinized educational enrollment, the civil service and the private business sector to ensure that the ethnic quota policies were being met. In large part, those who served most aggressively on these vigilante committees were educated Hutus, who hoped to benefit from the removal of Tutsis from their jobs. The program was carried out relatively peacefully, with only a half dozen deaths being reported officially, but its psychological impact was sufficient enough to provoke another large exodus of Tutsi immigrants. In the end, Kayibanda’s efforts to reenergize his base backfired. A growing tension between northern and southern Hutu politicians manifested itself in the direction of the vigilante committees, which began to operate according to their own logic. In the countryside peasants began using them as an outlet for settling personal grievances with authority figures, often completely outside of the ethnic context. (Prunier 1995, 60-61) Mamdani writes, “the general population began to expand the attack against the Tutsi into an attack on the rich.” (Mamdani 2001, 137) With popular discontent rising on all sides in this increasingly unstable environment, a number of army officers banded together, calling themselves the *Committee for National Peace and Unity*, and wrested the reins of power from Kayibanda in a coup on July 5, 1973. They were led by the young, ambitious and brutal Major-General Juvénal Habyarimana (1973-1994), who had been the commander of the Presidential Guard since 1963. Thus, the *Second Republic* was born. The coup was touted as “bloodless,” but in reality some fifty

people, mostly officials, lawyers and businessmen, close to the old regime were killed with either poison or by hammer blows. Kayibanda and his wife were imprisoned at a secret location where they were quietly starved to death. (Melvern 2004, 10-11) In a diametric reflection of the situation in Burundi, where the Tutsi controlled army had seized power, the Hutu controlled military was now in control of Rwanda. Throughout Rwanda there was widespread relief, even amongst Tutsis, that order would be restored. Prunier discusses the attitudes of most Rwandans following the coup, writing:

“the regionalist infighting of the Kayibanda regime had driven the élite into a state of stifled frustration. The artificial and politically-motivated return to the Tutsi persecutions of old had scared both the Tutsi community and reasonable Hutu. The country’s dull international isolation had put it in a difficult position diplomatically and even economically. So General Habyarimana’s coup had been welcomed relief among the urbanised population and, in the case of the peasant masses who had little to do with Kigali power games, with indifference.” (Prunier 1995, 75)

Following the successful putsch, Habyarimana installed a new “unity party”^{*} in 1974, the *Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement*⁺ (MRND), that would have an undisputed hold on power until 1991. (Scherrer 2002, 38)

On the broader regional stage, events were beginning to gain steam during this period that would have enormous long-term consequences for Rwanda. Specifically in Uganda, where the Idi Amin regime, which controlled the country for the better part of the 1970s, politicized the large diaspora of Rwandan Tutsi exiles who had fled across the border to escape the persecutions of the 1960s and early 1970s. Amin, who was waging a brutal repression of the political opposition in Uganda, was suspicious of rival infiltration in the ranks of his army and death squads. He thus began enlisting the Tutsi refugees,

^{*} Rwanda’s first official state party.

⁺ National Revolutionary Movement for Development.

whose trust he felt could be bought, into his ranks. Author Ogenga Otunnu describes the mutually beneficial relationship that existed between the regime and the refugees and its consequences:

“Tutsi refugees ... also joined the forces to secure good jobs, acquire wealth and receive security. Being loyal and dedicated to the regime of terror meant terrorizing, raping, detaining and murdering perceived opponents of the government. Accumulating wealth in the lawless, violent and chronically underdeveloped society also meant that the refugees had to do what many Ugandans were doing to acquire wealth and land: unleash terror against segments of the society. The result was that the chronically poor Ugandans turned more decidedly against the refugee population. Hostility towards the refugees also escalated because many Ugandans felt that they were being treated as second-class citizens in their own country.”⁴⁷

When Uganda suffered an economic crisis in 1978, the Amin regime effectively threw the refugees under the bus by publicly blaming them, along with a long list of other individuals and groups, for the country’s economic woes, thus drumming up even more anti-refugee sentiment. By making the refugees a scapegoat, the regime could deflect criticism of itself by asserting that it shared in the disapproval of common Ugandans of the brutalities perpetrated by the refugees, even though it had, in point of fact, been the principal author of the terror. As we shall see, when Amin was deposed toward the end of the decade, the plight of the Rwandan refugees in Uganda became much worse and ultimately, in the 1980s and 1990s played a key role in the disastrous events in Rwanda. (Adelman and Suhrke 1999, 15)

Meanwhile, in Rwanda, after Habyarimana took power the sporadic violence against domestic Tutsis abruptly ceased. This illustrated the new president’s keen ability to control events. Even the Tutsi, Habyarimana said, welcomed him as a “saviour,” with

⁴⁷ Howard Adelman and Astri Suhrke, eds., *The Path of Genocide: The Rwanda Crisis from Uganda to Zaire* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1999), 14-15.

his promise to unite the nation. With this mandate, Habyarimana proceeded to turn Rwanda into “one of the most rigidly controlled countries in the world.” Rwanda became a one-party state under the MRND and all other political parties were outlawed. The MRND was represented on every hill and in every village of the country, as all Rwandans, even children and babies, were required to be party members. The party encompassed every facet of public life. For instance, when families wanted to move into a new house, they had to first request permission from the party. Opposition to or infractions of party policy were met with severe consequences, including long prison sentences. Throughout the remainder of the 1970s the regime built an image on the international stage as a “boring, virtuous Christian country, in the mainstream of benign dictatorships.” Rwanda earned a reputation for good economic management and moderate foreign policy. The Habyarimana regime streamlined Rwanda’s bureaucracy, which was broken into executive, legislative and judicial branches. Foreign dignitaries were always impressed with the “sober and simple” life that the Catholic President led, especially in comparison to the excesses of other African despots. (Melvern 2004, 11)

Following the founding of the Second Republic, life for Tutsis in Rwanda was better than it had been since 1959. Under the new government the Tutsi were considered an “ethnicity” rather than a “race,” as they had been identified under the First Republic. In short, *ethnicity* carried with it the implication of an indigenous minority instead of *race*, which implied a non-indigenous (i.e. alien) group. This distinction is important because, as an alien group, the Tutsi were confined to the civic sphere; whereas as a statutorily defined minority they were allowed to participate in the political arena, albeit to a limited degree. The Habyarimana regime began pursuing a policy of “peace and

reconciliation, rejecting the “national Hutuism” of the First Republic. An affirmative action program was instated, which set quotas in the realms of education, employment and the Church. Mamdani writes, “The Second Republic followed a ‘national goal’ and sought to arrive at a balance between two tension-ridden objectives: justice and reconciliation. Reconciliation for the Tutsi was to be in a context of Justice for the Hutu.” To use Habyarimana’s own words, “It is not a question of bringing the Tutsi back to power, which would be equivalent to re-establishing the pre-1959 situation; but each ethnic group has its place in the national fold.” (Mamdani 2001, 138-140)

To Habyarimana’s credit, it is significant to note that from the time he took office in 1973 until the beginning of the war with the RPF in 1990 (see later text), there was no major anti-Tutsi political violence reported in Rwanda. (Mamdani 2001, 141) All in all, life for Rwanda’s Tutsis was, if nothing else, tolerable. They faced institutionalized discrimination, but compared to the Kayibanda years, things were much improved. As long as Tutsis steered clear of the political arena they generally fared well; some involved in the private sector even prospered. The MRND program of national reconciliation was instituted rather seamlessly throughout the second half of the 1970s. Although Rwanda “remained small, land-locked and poor as it always had been, ... its new leadership appeared mild.” (Prunier 1995, 75-76) The first major internal struggle within the regime took place in 1979 and 1980, when Habyarimana’s security chief, Théoneste Lizinde, was arrested and accused of plotting a *coup d’état*. Lizinde was a hard-line anti-Tutsi advocate and staunchly opposed to the President’s efforts to reconcile national relations. Habyarimana seized the opportunity to eliminate the southern Hutu opposition within his

own party,^{*} which had been a thorn in his side since the Second Republic was proclaimed. Mamdani asserts that he liquidated “the entire generation of revolutionaries to the south.” In 1982 Habyarimana held elections in which voters were offered a choice between competing MRND candidates. In short, the system amounted to an inner-party democracy. Of the 128 seats up for election, Tutsi and Twa candidates won two spots each, while the rest of the seats went to Hutus. The prominent Rwandan historian René Lemarchand contemporarily wrote that, “Rwanda remains one of the very few states in Africa where democracy retains a measure of reality.” (Mamdani 2001, 141-142)

In neighboring Uganda, after Amin was overthrown in 1979, anti-refugee sentiment was at an all time high. This was due in part to the fact that many of the Tutsi Rwandan exiles were in the ranks of the *Uganda Liberation Army* (UNLA), under the control of the defense minister Yoweri Museveni. For their part, the refugees had largely joined the army as a means of acquiring military training for a war that they hoped to wage later against the Hutu regime in Rwanda that was blocking their repatriation. To this end, the *Rwanda alliance for National Unity* (RANU)^{*} was formed in June 1979, in which many Tutsi refugees who would later serve in the *Rwanda Patriotic Army* (RPA) invasion of Rwanda (see later text) were early members. In a great many cases the refugees had joined the UNLA in order to “protect their people from reprisals for the activities of those refugees who worked for the Amin regime.” In other cases they joined the army simply because it allowed them to earn a living. When Milton Obote and his *Uganda People’s Congress* (UPC) won the 1980 election and usurped control of the UNLA, Museveni and his followers, who believed that the elections were rigged, split off

^{*} Habyarimana was from the north and throughout his term in office was at odds with the southern Hutu opposition.

^{*} Originally called the *Rwandese Refugee Welfare Foundation* (RRWF).

to form the *Popular Resistance Army* (PRA).⁺ During the early 1980s anti-Rwandan sentiment further escalated in Uganda following several incidents in which Tutsi exiles were involved in well-publicized massacres. In response, the UPC targeted Rwandan refugees for reprisals. As a result, the more that the regime terrorized the Rwandan refugees, “the more they fled [the UNLA] and joined the NRA [see footnote].” (Adelman and Suhrke 1999, 15- 17)

The NRA guerilla war against the Obote regime was ratcheted up in 1982, as both sides dug in. At the same time a grave problem was developing for Uganda’s Rwandan refugees. Based on crude ethnic stereotyping, the opposition accused Museveni of being a Rwandan.[#] In other words, he was “a foreigner meddling in Uganda’s internal affairs which were none of his business.” Animus towards the Tutsi refugees was mainly generated for two reasons. First, Obote[±] was still hostile towards the Rwandan refugees from his first term in office during the 1960s, when the Tutsi diaspora, who were largely Catholics, supported his opposition. Second, some of Obote’s closest advisors were members of an Ugandan ethnic group that closely associated with the Hutu and they were overtly hostile to the NRA, which they perceived as a Tutsi movement. In October of 1982 these hard-line anti-Tutsi elements in the regime ordered cadres of, what amounted to, street thugs in, conjunction with the army’s Special Forces units, to attack the refugee communities. During the violence that followed around 100 people lost their lives in the rape and plunder. A flood of refugees re-evacuated towards the border with Rwanda. Some of them stayed behind and were kept in “quasi-detention conditions,” those who managed to make it across the border were interred in camps by the Habyarimana regime.

⁺ Later renamed the *National Resistance Army* (NRA).

[#] His grandmother had been a Rwandan Tutsi.

[±] Whose UPC was dominated by Protestants.

The most unfortunate group of refugees, made up of about 10,000 men, women and children, got caught on a narrow strip of land on the border, trapped between the Rwandan border guards and the Ugandan thugs, where they experienced conditions akin to those found in a concentration camp for months. For the refugees themselves, many of whom had been born in or grown up in Uganda, when people whom they had lived amongst for more than three decades began to treat them like “despised foreigners” it often came as a shock. In response to such earth-shattering societal reorganizations and eye-opening revelations about their neighbors, a tide of young Tutsis flocked to Museveni’s guerrillas. (Prunier 1995, 68-70)

In Rwanda, following the 1982 elections the outlook was, relatively, rather bright. In the advancement of modernization, Rwanda was a model for the developing world. Although its system was authoritarian, it was “somewhat debonair, and it worked at the economic level.” In the period between 1962 and 1987 it rose sixteen spots on the list of *per capita* income in developing countries. Rwanda’s *per capita* income of U.S. \$300 was roughly comparable to that of the People’s Republic of China, which was U.S. \$310. During this same period, primary economic activities, such as subsistence based agriculture, dropped from eighty percent of the GNP to forty-eight percent, while secondary activities rose from eight percent to twenty-one percent and the service sector shot from twelve percent to thirty-one percent. Medical care and hygiene improved and the mortality rate fell. Even the poorly organized educational system was improving as the number of children enrolled in schools rose from nearly fifty percent in 1978 to almost sixty-two percent in 1986. (Prunier 1995, 78-79) Despite such sunny statistics, the dangerous ideological underpinnings that the Habyarimana regime was founded on

still swirled beneath the surface. Prunier asserts that to understand the regime one must look to similar ideologically based states such as Cuba, Israel and North Korea. In short, Rwanda was “an ideological state where power is a means towards the implementation of a set of ideas as much as a *de facto* administrative structure.” What represented the most dangerous aspect of the regime’s power was that its ideological foundation was still rooted in the construct of the ‘democratic revolution’ of 1959. That is, it was a legitimization of the Hutu elite, who used their power to not only disenfranchise the Tutsi minority, but to rule over the Hutu peasant masses as well. This was effectively the pre-1959 situation turned on its head. “In both cases the ethnic élites approved and reinforced the delusions of their followers.” The strongest link between the pre and post-1959 eras, which served to legitimize both, was the Catholic church. In the case of the newer Hutu dominated order, the Church perceived it to be “the work of divine providence and a great step forward in the building of a Christian society in Rwanda.” Basking in the glow of the Church’s blessing, Rwanda was a rigidly controlled country full of hard-working and clean-living people, in which there was very little crime. Because of this image, the international community, including Belgium and Germany who were the primary donors of economic aid to Rwanda, as well as Switzerland, the United States and Canada, looked very favorably upon the regime and the burgeoning central African state. The problem (as has already been alluded to), Prunier asserts, was that:

“this agreeable façade was built on an extremely dangerous ideological foundation. The Hutu-revised version of the Rwandese cultural mythology which had caused the violence of 1959 to 1964 was still alive. And peace could only be kept maintained through sufficient financial lubrication of the élite. Everything rested on a carefully-controlled machinery of hypocrisy, with the Church playing the role of Chief

Engineer. Violent rumblings could be heard just below the surface if one stopped to listen.” (Prunier 1995, 80-81)

The precariously balanced house of cards only needed a strong wind to blow for it to be pushed over.

In neighboring Uganda, where the plight of the Rwandan Tutsi refugee community was in limbo, the wind was beginning to blow. In January 1986 Museveni’s NRA guerrillas finally persevered in their struggle and marched victoriously into Uganda’s capital of Kampala. During the first years of NRA rule, the new regime found itself embroiled in a civil war in northern Uganda. At this time the presence of Rwandan exiles in the military leadership was on the rise, although their representation was decreasing overall in the army as its enlisted ranks swelled. This is primarily because, as the army grew, the Rwandan veterans who had been there from its incipience were in prime positions for promotion. The two most prominent examples of this trend were Paul Kagame, who was the acting military chief of the NRA’s military intelligence arm, and Major-General Fred Rwigyema who was the deputy army commander-in-chief and the deputy minister of defense, second only to President Museveni himself. Many Ugandans perceived this to be “an unholy power-hungry coalition of indigenous and nonindigenous factions” and there was an increasing outcry for the expulsion of the Rwandans. With the rising tide of public opinion aimed against them, the NRA soon changed its policy and began giving promotions based on descent. To the Rwandan diaspora this period after 1986 began to feel like a betrayal by their former comrades-in-arms. The discrimination and harassment of the refugees, more than anything else, served as a catalyst for their mobilization. In this climate, when RANU held its seventh congress in Kampala in December of 1987, it reorganized and renamed itself the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF).

The new RPF came to a consensus on two points, first, that the leadership of the new refugee struggle should come from the Rwandans in the NRA and, second, that the diaspora's return home could only take the form of an armed struggle. Where RANU had leaned toward a leftist ideology, the new RPF appealed to a much broader base. (Mamdani 2001, 170, 172-175)

In the decades since 1959 the Rwandan diaspora of exiled Tutsis and their descendants had grown to around 1 million people, representing the largest and oldest refugee problem yet to be resolved in Africa. With nearly half of the exile community living in Uganda the outcome of its civil struggle was always on the radar of the Rwandan regime. From the time he had assumed the presidency, Habyarimana had halfheartedly negotiated with the refugee communities throughout the region, ultimately denying them the right to return. His primary argument for refusal was always based on Rwanda's overpopulation problem. With ninety-five percent of the country's land already under cultivation, this wasn't mere exaggeration. When the NRA usurped power in Uganda in 1986, Habyarimana saw their victory as a clear threat because of the strong Rwandan exile representation amongst its ranks. Shortly after Museveni came to power, Habyarimana outlawed all contact between Rwandans and the Ugandan exile community.⁴⁸

While Habyarimana anxiously watched the situation in Uganda, he was facing rising discontent at home. Running for reelection unopposed, he had won reelection with a "comical" ninety-nine percent of the vote. Habyarimana drew most of his close entourage from his home base in Rwanda's northwestern region. The disenfranchised

⁴⁸ Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We will be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* (New York: Macmillan, 1999), 73.

Hutus in the south were facing increasing alienation (a trend discussed above). The Hutu peasantry nationwide lived in conditions little better than the Tutsi and the President's revival of the old colonial institution of mandatory communal work was met with almost universal resentment. Author Philip Gourevitch writes:

“While the country as a whole had grown a bit less poor during Habyarimana's tenure, the great majority of Rwandans remained in circumstances of extreme poverty, and it did not go unnoticed that the omnipotent president and his cronies had grown very rich. Then again, it had never been otherwise in Rwandan memory, and compared to much of the rest of post-colonial Africa, Rwanda appeared Edenic to foreign-aid donors. Just about everywhere else you turned on the continent, you saw the client dictators of the Cold War powers ruling by pillage and murder, and from the rebels who opposed them you heard the loud anti-imperial rhetoric that makes white development workers feel misunderstood. Rwanda was tranquil – or, like the volcanoes in the northwest, dormant, it had nice roads, high church attendance, low crime rates, and steadily improving standards of public health and education.”

As a result, foreign aid poured into Rwanda, or more specifically into the Habyarimana regime. In 1986 the prices of tea and coffee, Rwanda's primary exports, crashed on the world market. With economic productions stagnated, the only means of making large and easy profits in Rwanda became scamming money from foreign aid projects.

(Gourevitch 1999, 75-76)

In reality, true power in Rwanda did not lie in the President's hands, but in a tight-knit group of northwesterners who had ridden on Habyarimana's coattails and were the chief profiteers from foreign economic aid. In other words, “the President himself stood more as a product of regional power than as its source.” In fact, it was common knowledge that Habyarimana was of insignificant lineage and that it was in his wife, Agathe Kanza, who came from a powerful northwestern family, in which his power was truly vested. When the economic woes of the late 1980s beset the country, it was her

faction, *le clan de Madame*,^{*} also known as the *akazu*, which profited the most from foreign donors. (Gourevitch 1999, 76-77) The *akazu* was a concentric web of “political, economic, and military muscle and patronage” that was the center of *Hutu Power* in Rwanda. In April 1988 Habyarimana learned what it meant to cross *le clan de Madame*, when a chief who he had appointed from outside the *akazu*, Colonel Stanislas Mayuya, was shot and killed. When the gunman was subsequently arrested, he and the prosecutor of the case were also murdered. The assassination of Mayuya precipitated the beginning of a “strange” year in the evolution of Rwandan politics. The International Monetary Fund and World Bank soon thereafter ordered Rwanda to implement a structural adjustment program and the government was forced to cut its budget nearly in half for the 1989 fiscal year. As a result the regime raised taxes and increased the demand for mandatory-labor. With discontent steadily rising, drought conditions and poor management of resources resulted in famine in several regions throughout the country. Habyarimana’s critics were becoming more vocal as news of several scandals broke and some of his most vociferous accusers were killed in thinly veiled “accidents.” In order to preserve Rwanda’s sterling reputation in the eyes of international aid donors, whose contributions comprised nearly sixty percent of the country’s annual budget, the President launched vice-squads to arrest and suppress “malcontents and idlers.” (Gourevitch 1999, 81)

The tighter that the regime tried to close its grip over the country, the more diverse the Hutu opposition to Habyarimana’s government became and the louder they appealed to Western powers to demand a liberalization of Rwanda’s government. With the perfect storm begging to form in Rwanda, broader international events coalesced with

^{*} Which amounted to a “court within the court.”

the regional developments in central Africa, discussed above, to move the nation closer to the abyss. For some time before the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, with the end of the Cold War nigh, “the victorious ... powers of Western Europe and North America had been demanding gestures of democratization from their client regimes in Africa.” Following a measure of political bullying by François Mitterrand, the President of France, which was Rwanda’s chief patron, Habyarimana announced the establishment of a new multi-party system in June of 1990. In reality, Habyarimana’s move toward democratization was less than enthusiastic, being the result of foreign coercion rather than reform-minded thinking on his part. On the ground, the prospects presented by an open competition for power caused widespread alarm throughout the country.

Gourevitch writes:

“It was universally understood that the northwesterners, on whom his power increasingly depended, would not readily surrender their percentage. While Habyarimana spoke publicly of a political opening, the *akazu* tightened its grip on the machinery of the state. As repression quickened in direct proportion to the threat of change, a number of the leading advocates of reform fled into exile.” (Gourevitch 1999, 81-82)

In the last months of 1990 Rwanda was a political tinderbox, waiting for a spark to ignite it. That spark would come from Uganda.

THE RPF INVASION, CIVIL WAR AND DECENT INTO THE ABYSS

In Uganda the circumstances of the Rwandan exile community was growing increasingly worse under the rule of the NRA, which they had helped to install. When a law was enacted in 1990 that even precluded them from owning land, it was seen as a last straw

for the militant RPF, who believed that the only way to insure the security of the diaspora was through repatriation in Rwanda, which they understood would require an armed struggle. During the mid-afternoon of October 1, 1990, fifty armed members of the RPF dashed across the border and quickly killed the Rwandan guards at the customs post. Immediately thereafter several hundred more poured into Rwanda wearing Ugandan army uniforms. The RPF claimed to represent all of the Rwandan refugees who had fled or been expelled from the country in the years after the 1959 Hutu uprising. Melvern avers:

“Their demands included an end to the ethnic divide and the system of compulsory identity cards, a self sustaining economy, a stop to the misuse of public offices, the establishment of social services, democratisation of the security force, and the elimination of a system that generated refugees. Internationally the RPF represented itself as a democratic and multi-ethnic movement seeking to depose a corrupt and incompetent government.”

The invading army was comprised of the nearly 2,500,^{*} mostly second-generation, Rwandan exiles who had joined Museveni's NRA. When, in the face of persecutions over their indigeneity, they had left to form the RPF following the NRA victory, the Rwandans had simply carried their weapons off with them. Under the leadership of Major-General Fred Rwigyema, who had been removed from office by Museveni in response to the growing resentment of the exiles in Uganda, the RPF army was well trained and experienced. The Rwandan Hutu elite were terrified by the invasion and panicked, tightening their grip on power. (Melvorn 2004, 13-14)

In the end the RPF invasion was largely a failure, primarily because of international intervention on behalf of the Habyarimana regime. Zaire deployed several hundred elite troops to quell the opposition. France sent in two paratrooper companies

^{*} Out of a total of around 4,000 Rwandans in the NRA.

that helped to secure the capital and its airport. Belgium initially responded as well, but soon withdrew its military assistance because of political considerations, which the Kigali regime perceived as abandonment. In the end it was France's financial and military guarantees that saved the regime in the face of the RPF invasion. (Melvern 2004, 14)

Prunier contends:

“The game was not *two-sided* as the later tragic events in Rwanda have tended to make onlookers believe, but in fact *three-sided*, between the Habyarimana regime jockeying for survival, the internal opposition struggling to achieve recognition, and the Tutsi exiles trying to make some sort of comeback. In trying to use the external threat to quell the internal one, Habyarimana held a major trump-card – the French fear of ‘Anglo-Saxon’ erosion of their position on the African continent – and it was this that made him decide to embark on the risky course of not trying to deflect the invasion through serious negotiations... As so often in the Rwandese tragedy, extremisms tended to feed on each other, and the honest accommodation of conflicting interests was never the order of the day. Part of the problem was that France, as a sort of protectorate power on the Rwandese political scene, also did not act as a moderator. Habyarimana calculated that Paris would back him in any event, and he was right.” (Prunier 1995, 99)

The RPF invaders were met by the *Forces Armées Rwandaises* (FAR), Rwanda's well-equipped regular army force of about 5,200 troops. Rwigyema was killed on the second day of the invasion and more than half of his force died in the humiliating retreat that ensued. In the wake of the invasion Habyarimana ordered the arrest of some 10,000 Rwandan nationals, primarily educated Tutsis and some Hutus who had opposed his regime. Those who were detained were told that if the RPF got close to the capital they would be killed. Rwanda's Tutsi community endured sporadic beatings, rapes and murders. On October 4, Habyarimana staged a fake attack on the capital to instill fear in the Hutu majority and encourage them to arrest “Tutsi suspects.” The regime pushed the notion on the public that all of Rwanda's Tutsis, which accounted for fourteen percent of

the country's overall population, were *ibyitso* or "accomplices" of the RPF invaders and that the Tutsis were coming to exterminate Hutus. In the following days there were widespread reports of atrocities and massacres. (Melvern 2004, 14-15)

By late November the remnants of the RPF were scattered across northern Rwanda. With the outlook for the success of the invasion appearing grim, Major Paul Kagame, now the highest ranking Rwandan expatriate, returned to Uganda from a military training course he had been attending in the United States. Upon his return, Kagame was brought across the border to the front where he organized close to 2,000 men and withdrew his force into northwest Rwanda's heavily forested Virunga Mountains. On December 19, a group of European ambassadors to Rwanda, from France, Belgium and Germany, issued the following warning: "The rapid deterioration of the relations between the two ethnic groups, the Hutu and the Tutsi, runs the imminent risk of terrible consequences for Rwanda and the entire region" (Melvern 2004, 15). By the middle of the next year, 1991, it was reported that Kagame had grown his force to some 15,000 men. At year's end the RPF was in control of a narrow strip of land along the border that stretched nearly twenty miles into Rwanda. As the RPF continued winning victories and stretching its sphere of influence in the first months of 1992, it increasingly began to learn a hard lesson about the political realities in Rwanda. That is, military victories were not translating into political gains with the population. As the RPF advanced, the population, not wanting to be "liberated," was fleeing in an ever-growing wave of refugees. The number of displaced Rwandans shot from around 80,000 at the end of 1990, to some 350,000 in the wake of the RPF offensive in early 1992. Following another offensive in February of 1993, the RPF double the size of the area

under its control and the number of displaced Rwandans surged to an estimated 950,000. Journalists who visited the RPF controlled zones during this period all reported a “lifeless calm” in an area that, in peacetime, is one of the most densely populated regions in Africa. Of the region’s pre-war population of nearly 1 million people, scarcely 2,600 civilians remained. In private, some of Kagame’s officers hoped that the growing refugee problem would put pressure on Habyarimana to reach a settlement in the conflict. (Mamdani, 2001, 186-187)

As the civil war dragged on, living conditions in Rwanda worsened proportional to the refugee crises. This, coupled with the constant stream of propaganda unleashed by the Habyarimana regime, served to significantly shift the attitudes of Rwanda’s peasantry from what they had been in 1990 when the invasion began. Mamdani asserts, “The civil war seemed to have brought to life memories long since buried under the weight of day-to-day concerns.” And further, “The RPF was seen by many as the reincarnation of the pre-Revolutionary power structure.” The constant onslaught of misery and propaganda that resulted from the war led to a situation in which the memories and fears of a generation before began to serve as a framework for the current disaster. At the same time, the RPF itself was changing as well. As they advanced further into Rwanda and were met by the near universal mistrust of the peasants, they in turn developed a mistrust of the peasantry, coming to believe that they were “backward” and “ignorant.” This trend developed into a relationship between these two groups in which the RPF was increasingly coercive in its dealings with the peasants as its military victories mounted proportional to its political losses. Several examples include, “the forcible removal of peasants to camps in Uganda in order to create free-fire zones, the pillaging and

destruction of their property and the recruitment against their will of boys and men into the support structure of the RPF.” These abuses, which had existed to some degree at the beginning of the civil war, began to sharply increase during the RPF offensive in February of 1993. (Mamdani 2001, 187-188)

Under the auspices of the international community, the Habyarimana government met with the RPF leadership to tentatively discuss the terms of a peace agreement. The resulting *Arusha Peace Accords* of August 1993, which both sides signed, guaranteed free elections less than two years down the road that would include the RPF in the political process. The UN instituted the *United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda* (UNAMIR) to monitor the implementation of the Arusha Accords and dispatched some 2,500 foreign peacekeepers to Rwanda. Adam Jones writes:

“The Arusha Accords and the UNAMIR intervention proved to be the last straw for ‘Hutu Power’ extremists. Genocide against the Tutsi minority would simultaneously eliminate the perceived constituency for the RPF; resolve the economic crisis through distribution of Tutsi land, wealth, and jobs; and bind the Hutu majority in genocidal complicity. The extremists imported hundreds of thousands of machetes in 1993-94; this weapon would become the symbol of the Rwandan genocide.” (Jones 2006, 237)

By the summer of 1994 the situation had reached a critical mass. On the evening of April 6, news swept through Rwanda that President Habyarimana’s jet, carrying himself as well as Burundian President Cyprien Ntaryamira, had been shot down while preparing to land in Kigali. Whether Hutu extremists in his own party or the RPF was responsible for the assassination has never been definitively answered. In any case, hard-line Hutu elements in the government immediately took charge of the situation and used the assassination as a pretext to carry out a planned genocidal campaign against

Rwanda's Tutsi population as well as the moderate Hutu opposition. Upon learning of the President's death, Major General Romeo Dallaire, the UNAMIR commander, rushed to the headquarters of the Rwandan army where he found Colonel Théoneste Bagosora, the staff director of the Army and a hard-line Hutu, seated at the head of a table filled with the army's top leadership. "Appearing firmly in command," Bagosora informed Dallaire that the government had collapsed following the President's death and that the army was assuming the reins of power. Dallaire argued that "in effect the king had died, but the government lived on," and asserted that "Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana, a leading moderate, had become the lawful head of state." A number of the officers gathered around the table laughed at this prospect, disregarding the appeal for moderation. (Power 2002, 329-330)

The new Rwandan authorities ordered a curfew, as government soldiers and the Hutu militias formed roadblocks, sealing off the exits to the Capital. At the same time *Radio Mille Collines* (RTL),* the voice of Hutu extremism, began calling for ethnic Tutsis "Inyenzi" to be targeted. These events did not come as a complete surprise to those who were paying attention to what was going on in Rwanda. In the weeks and months prior to the cataclysm that began in April of 1994, a number of desperate warnings were issued from people on the ground. For example, Monique Mujawamariya, a human-rights activist working in Rwanda, had sent *Human Rights Watch* a warning the week before the Presidential assassination, saying, "For the last two weeks, all of Kigali has lived under the threat of an instantaneous, carefully prepared operation to eliminate all those who give trouble to President Habyarimana." During the first hours of violence, following pronouncements by Radio Mille Collines that branded Mujawamariya a "bad

* *Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines*.

patriot who deserves to die,” she was targeted and killed by Hutu extremists. As soon as Habyarimana was dead, the Hutu hard-liners used the assassination as a pretext to begin their deadly campaign. Once armed Hutus took control of the streets in the aftermath of the assassination, they immediately began targeting proponents of the Hutu-Tutsi peace process. Shortly after dawn the next day, April 7, one of the first to be murdered was Prime Minister Uwilingiyimana, along with her family. Ten Belgian UN peacekeepers who were stationed at the Prime Minister’s compound to protect her were rounded up and savagely massacred and mutilated as well. In the wake of the US pullout from Somalia, six months earlier, in which eighteen US soldiers had been killed, the Hutu assailants believed that the massacres would precipitate a similar Belgian withdrawal because the Westerners did not have the stomach to sustain such losses and they were right. Belgium withdrew its remaining forces from Rwanda, followed by a number of other foreign powers, over the intense protests of Dallaire. Foreign journalists also departed the country *en masse*, cutting off much of what was happening inside of Rwanda to the outside world (similar to the situation in Cambodia following the Khmer Rouge usurpation of power, discussed in Chapter 1). (Power 2002, 330-332) Thus, the extremist Hutu Power regime relied on several important factors that they knew would limit international opposition to their genocidal plan. First, they played to international stereotypes that perceived of the events in Rwanda as African “tribal conflicts,” and hence below the strata of foreign concerns. Second, the extremists relied on the “blind commitment of the French government [discussed above] ... believing that *no matter what it did*, French support would always be forthcoming.” Finally, the Hutu Power regime exploited the fact that at that time the international media and public were focused

on the inaugural free elections that were being held in South Africa, thus deflecting attention away from what was transpiring here in the hearth of central Africa. (Jones 2006, 238)

Author Samantha Power describes the planned route that the massacre took and how it progressed, writing:

“A fever descended upon Rwanda. Lists of victims had been prepared ahead of time. That much was clear from the Radio Mille Collines broadcasts, which read the names, addresses, and license plate numbers of Tutsi and moderate Hutu. ‘I listened to (it),’ one survivor recalled, ‘because if you were mentioned over the airways, you were sure to be carted off a short time later by the Interahamwe.’* You knew you had to change your address at once.’ ... From April 7 onward, the Hutu-controlled army, the gendarmerie, and the militias worked together to wipe out Rwanda’s Tutsi. Many of the early Tutsi victims were specifically, not spontaneously, pursued.”

In the early days of the genocide the overwhelming preponderance of the killings were at the hands of well equipped militiamen and government soldiers who used automatic weapons and grenades to perpetrate their grisly work. As the massacres spread to the countryside and became the work of average Hutus, the principle implements used “became increasingly unsophisticated – [including] knives, machetes, spears, and the traditional *masu*, bulky clubs with nails protruding from them. Later screwdrivers, hammers and bicycle handlebars were added to the arsenal.” A common sight amongst the madness was a Hutu killer with a weapon in one hand and a radio in the other, which was spewing murderous commands on Radio Mille Collines. A wave of tens of thousands of Tutsis fled in panic and were butchered *en masse* by Hutu extremists at checkpoints. Because of the historical intermingling that had gone on between Hutu and Tutsi, many Rwandans were faced with making heart wrenching decisions between

* The *Interahamwe* were the Hutu Power militias that perpetrated much of the Rwandan genocide.

abandoning their loved ones or dying themselves. As the corpses of the victims rose exponentially, the murderers either shoveled them in shallow graves in landfills or let them rot where they lay because proper disposal of the bodies would have slowed their frenzied killing. (Power 2002, 333-334)

The savagery took place right before the eyes of the UNAMIR peacekeeping force, whose mandate prevented them from intervening. During the first days following Habyarimana's death, Rwanda was enveloped in "total chaos" as tens of thousands of Tutsi corpses piled up. The U.N. and international community were fully aware of what was transpiring and although there were enough international troops to stop the killings, at least in the capital, they stood idly by. Indeed, Jones writes, "Security Council members – notably France and the US – both cautioned against and actually ridiculed the use of the word 'genocide.'" Looking back it is clear that the genocidal regime was actually holding back during these first days of the crisis. When it became clear that there would be no "outside impediment," they launched the full-scale slaughter that they had been planning; "murder spread like a virus across the territories under extremist control. Tens of thousands of Tutsis fled, often seeking sanctuary in schools, stadiums and places of worship, which actually served to concentrate them for the genocidal killers, as there were no sanctuaries that were safe. The accounts of such massacres are too numerous to recount here, but Jones describes one example that stands out even amongst the other unprecedented atrocities of the twentieth century. He writes:

"One such massacre, in fact, may stand as the most concentrated ground-level slaughter of the twentieth century (by which is meant a mass killing inflicted in hours or days rather than months or years, and by means other than aerial bombing). On April 20, at the parish of Karama in Butare prefecture, 'between thirty-five and forty-three thousand people died *in less than six hours*.'" This is more than were killed in the Nazis' two-day

slaughters of Jews outside Odessa and Kiev (at Babi Yar) in 1941, or in the largest single-day extermination spree in the gas chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau.” (Jones 2006, 238-239)

In retrospect, one of the most remarkable features of the Rwandan genocide was the routine and mechanical way in which it was perpetrated. More specifically, the killings were not carried out as the result of haphazard mob violence, but were “well-ordered” and “mirrored the rhythms of ordinary collective life.” That is, the killers showed up for their duties at a designated hour, as if they were arriving for work and following a day of their macabre labors, they would stop at five in the afternoon, “as though clocking out.” A further fundamental feature of the genocide, without which it could not have transpired, was the involvement of average Hutus in the killings. Even Hutu women participated in the slaughter on a wide-scale basis, “a development perhaps unprecedented in the history of genocide.” Looking back, it is impossible to surmise how many of these average Hutus participated in the killings because they felt that they had to in order to save their own lives or those of their families. But what is certain is that a great many of the killers, who came from “the bottom of the social ladder,” were motivated by greed, social envy and political hatred. (Jones 2006, 243) Prunier describes this phenomenon, writing:

“In Kigali the [militias] ... had tended to recruit mostly among the poor. As soon as they went into action, they drew around them a cloud of even poorer people, a lumpenproletariat of street boys, rag pickers, car-washers and homeless unemployed. For these people the genocide was the best thing that could ever happen to them. They had the blessings of a form of authority to take revenge on socially powerful people as long as these [victims] were on the wrong side of the political fence. They could kill, they could kill with minimum justification, they could rape and they could get drunk for free. This was wonderful. The political aims of the masters of this dark carnival were quite beyond their scope. They just went along, knowing it would not last.” (Prunier 1995, 231-232)

In the end it did not last, for a number of reasons. First, because of the simple reality that the killers were running out of victims, their horrific work had been too prolific. Second, a much more critical factor, the Hutu Power regime had become so focused on the perpetration of the genocide that it had neglected the real threat represented by the RPF. From the initial outbreak of violence in early April, an RPF contingent in Kigali, there because of the mandates of the Arusha Accords, seized control of several neighborhoods, offering oases of sanctuary for Tutsis who would have otherwise been consumed by the genocide. As the violence quickly escalated, the RPF broke the ceasefire and resumed its offensive. By mid-June the RPF had “decisively defeated the Rwandan government forces,” pushing the Hutu Power regime to a small zone in the southwest. In the RPF backlash, large-scale “revenge-killings” were perpetrated against the Hutus, with an estimated 50,000 of them being killed. Finally, in the wake of one of the blackest summers in recorded history, the international community responded. In a sad irony, the international response served more to protect the genocidal Hutu Power regime, who were fleeing the RPF advance, than anything else. On June 17, the Security Council granted France permission to deploy a contingent of troops to Rwanda under the aegis of the UN A force some 4,000 strong was assembled on Rwanda’s border with Zaire in four short days, illustrating “how rapidly a substantial intervention can be mounted when the political will exists.” By July 4, the RPF was in complete control of the capital and the French, with UN approval, established a “safe-zone” in the southwest. The French intervention was a continuation of its long-standing support of the Hutu Power government. Under French protection, some 2 million Hutus were allowed to evacuate into Zaire, where they orderly “remained grouped according to their *communes* of origin

and under the control of the very political structure which had just been responsible for the genocide.” This support of the genocidal regime in many ways is reminiscent the West’s support for the Khmer Rouge in the 1980s, discussed in Chapter 1. Fortunately, the intervention also resulted in saving the lives of thousands of Tutsis, although this was not its primary aim. (Jones 2006, 243) In historical perspective, as the international community shuffled its feet, “The Rwandan genocide would prove to be the fastest, and most efficient killing spree of the twentieth century.” In 100 days, estimates from as low as 800,000 to over 1 million Tutsis and politically moderate Hutu were murdered. (Power 2002, 334)

CHAPTER 3

BOSNIA

FROM PREHISTORY TO THE GREEK ERA

The history of Bosnia has forever been defined by its location along a number of cultural faultlines. As Cambodia's history cannot be understood outside of the broader context of Indochina and Rwanda's history cannot be taken out of the perspective of larger central Africa, modern Bosnia cannot be understood outside the prism of the larger Balkan Peninsula. Because of its proximity to the power-centers of the world throughout the first millennium A.D., the region's history is a long and well documented affair, particularly in relation to the Cambodian and Rwandan cases. It has long been defined by bloody clashes, between a plethora of different peoples converging on this veritable crossroads of cultures. Author Paul Mojzes describes the, largely arbitrary, modern national borders of Bosnia and the manifold problems facing the historian attempting to recount Bosnian history:

“Contrary to the claims frequently heard from Western politicians and journalists, Bosnia and Herzegovina is not a well-established nation. There

was never a Bosnian nation, although there was briefly a Bosnian state in the Middle Ages. It is debatable whether a functional Bosnian state was established, except in a *legal* sense, since its precipitous international recognition in the spring of 1992--the wisdom of which will be argued by politicians and scholars for years to come... Bosnia is the land that is located in the middle of the former Yugoslavia. Its borders are fairly undefined except in the north, where the Sava River separates it from Croatia, and in the east, where the Drina River defines a border with Serbia. The extent of Bosnia has varied greatly over the centuries and this land was ruled by a bewildering succession of nations: Byzantines, Hungarians, Croats, Serbians, Turks, Austrians, and several native Bosnian dynasties. For most of its history it was ruled by outsiders and, hence, there never developed a distinct Bosnian nationality. Bosnians and Herzegovinians are Slavic peoples, but there has always been a tug-of-war about which ethnicity is the most Bosnian, the primary two claimants being Serbs and Croats, but, later, Slavic Muslims asserting themselves along with the other two.”⁴⁹

Thus, the historian is left with the somewhat daunting task of documenting the *tug-of-war* between these *outsiders*, to use Mojzes words, in order to truly find understanding of Bosnian history. Essentially, it is a long tale of shifting power-centers and the molding of cultural, ethnic and religious sentiments over the stretch of time. It is the story of the rise and fall of empires, breaking over the Balkan Peninsula like the tides of the three seas that surround it, the Adriatic to the west, the Mediterranean to the south and the Black Sea to the east. Consequently, it is often necessary to depart from the strict geographical confines of Bosnia's modern national borders in order to fully and accurately explain the complex historical progression that led to the state of affairs during the latter twentieth century. As we proceed into the following chapter, it is important for the reader to remain cognizant of the narrower confines of the Bosnian case being developed, while appreciating the larger historical context within which it occurred.

⁴⁹ Paul Mojzes, *Yugoslavian Inferno: Ethnoreligious Warfare in the Balkans* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 29.

Evidence of the earliest human habitation of the Balkans dates to before 7000 BC. The remnants of more numerous and permanent settlements date to the Neolithic Age, between 7000 and 3000 B.C., which displayed a relatively highly developed stone culture. The period between 2500 - 1800 B.C. saw the introduction of copper and bronze technology, advancing the march of cultural development.⁵⁰ The first vestiges of recorded history in the region emerged with the rise of Greek power in the Aegean, from around 1500 B.C. to 200 A.D. The early peoples of the Balkan Peninsula were members of two dominant tribes, the *Illyrians* and the *Thracians*. Though not expressly Greek, they were part of the same Indo-European family. Over time the Greeks grew to influence the entire region because of their strong influence in the arenas of agriculture and commerce. The highest achievement of the *Hellenistic* * era was the rise of the city-state system. Although the remote, mountainous domain of the Illyrians never fell under the political sway of Greece, they gradually fell under Greek *influence* due to proximity and trade. Hellenism reached its zenith under Alexander the Great (336-323 B.C.) in the fourth century BC. The Macedonian King's conquests marked the first period in history in which the region was consolidated under a single political fabric. Following his death in 323 BC, the political unity of his great empire began to unravel. Greece spent the next century and a half primarily aligned as a number of colonies linked by trade. An influx of Celts, migrating out of the north, during the fourth century BC also had a lasting impact on the region. The Celts conquered a number of Illyrian tribes in the northern lowlands of the Balkan Peninsula, which began an era of cultural infusion.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Ante Cuvalo, *Historical Dictionary of Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 1997), 6-7.

* That is, Greek.

⁵¹ Ferdinand Schevill, *The History of the Balkan Peninsula* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1922), 4-5, 26-28.

THE ROMAN EPOCH

Lack of political solidarity and eternal warring between the various Greek states led to their ultimate decline. By 229 B.C. the region was ripe to be conquered as the Roman Empire, which was growing in power and territory, began a series of advances. By 146 B.C. the whole of Greece was under Roman sway, as the once greatest civilization in the world found itself serving in the meager capacity of an imperial province. It took the Romans nearly another century and a half, and a number of costly campaigns, to defeat the Illyrian tribes in the Balkans. The mountainous region that they inhabited was near impenetrable. Rome was ultimately successful in bringing the Illyrians to heel because of the same time tested strategy she had used to conquer all of her provinces. Essentially, a road system was constructed to the boundaries of the empire, as it gradually expanded due to military might, along which garrisons were established to keep public order. Thus, the peace and order of the empire would stretch from its outermost borders, all the way to Rome itself. (Schevill 1922, 30-31) The Illyrians were conquered during the reign of Tiberius (14-37)* in the first century A.D., after decades of bloody resistance. Five years later, when the Celtic tribes to the north were also brought to rein, the whole of the Balkans fell under Roman sway. The Roman province of *Illyricum* was forged out of the empire's new Adriatic territories north of the Drin River, which encompassed modern Bosnia. Even at this early juncture the region lay along a Roman cultural and administrative fault line, between the eastern extension of Gaul to the north and Macedonia to the south.⁵²

* All dates given, unless otherwise noted, are *Anno Domini*.

⁵² John Wilkes, *The Illyrians* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992), 207-208.

Once the conquest was complete a period of Romanization ensued, as Illyrian culture was assimilated into the greater Empire. Roman courts administered justice and an era of civil order ensued. Merchants and trade goods from all over the empire flowed into the region, bringing with them a myriad of new cultural influences, which were gradually assimilated into the culture of the indigenous peoples. During the height of Rome's power or *Pax Romana*,* following the reign of Augustus, in the first two centuries B.C., *Balkania* became a fully integrated imperial province, filled with Roman officials, soldiers and customs. The whole of the empire thrived in this era of peace and prosperity and over time crude troop garrisons transformed into flourishing cities. Excavations done in the past century indicate that Balkania was an important part of the empire; boasting highly civilized settlements that included bathhouses, temples and theatres constructed in the classic Roman fashion. (Schevill 1922, 31-32)

By the third century chinks began to appear in the armor of the mighty Roman Empire. As the governmental apparatus passed through the hands on a number of incapable rulers, the empire began a slow decay amidst a host of political disturbances. Various renegade portions of the army took up arms against rival emperors resulting in a series of bloody conflicts. The Emperor Diocletian (284-305), born the son of Illyrian peasants, worked to restore the empire to its former glory during the latter third and early fourth centuries.⁵³ While his efforts may have slowed the process, they were ultimately unsuccessful. One of the administrative reforms that Diocletian initiated, which would have far reaching repercussions for the future of Rome, divided the empire into eastern and western halves. This was primarily a defense measure, aimed at facilitating a prompt

* That is, the *Peace of Rome*.

⁵³ Fred Singleton, *A Short history of the Yugoslav Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 12.

response to potential attacks. (Schevill 1922, 36) Barbarian attacks along the empire's northern border, particularly by the various Germanic tribes, also served to weaken Rome's foundation. But it would be inaccurate to ascribe the ultimate fall of the once mighty empire wholly, or even primarily, to the conquests of the barbarian tribes, who were for the most part low in numbers, poorly equipped and divided among themselves. In the end, it is be fair to assert that the Roman hegemony of the Mediterranean decayed from the inside out, in the era following the Pax Romana. A number of inept rulers, corruption and the decay of the *public spirit* that had been the foundation of Rome took their eventual toll. The barbarian invasions were simply the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. (Schevill 1922, 36) The decline of the broader Roman Empire is fertile matter for another study, but for our present purposes, the preceding explication will suffice.

Momentarily digressing, even while the Roman Empire thrived at its apex, the seeds of cultural decline were beginning to take root. The rise of Christianity was, perhaps in the long run, the most important animus of change to arise out of this epoch. The Romans, who for the most part were highly tolerant of the various religions practiced in their provinces, had a special antipathy for early Christianity. This is because its teachings were perceived to be subversive to the Roman order, as they rejected earthly laws and emperor-worship, on which the empire was buttressed. During the first three centuries BC, the early Christians endured a number of bloody persecutions at the hands of their Roman masters. Even in the face of unending hostility, Christianity grew in strength and significance until in 311 the Emperor Galerius (293-305) issued the first *Edict of Toleration*. Under the reign of his successor, Constantine (306-312), Christianity

was given the full protection of the empire. By 392, Christianity had come full circle, when Emperor Theodosius (378-392) proclaimed it the official religion of the state. In less than a century Christianity went from being seen as an outcast, subversive sect, to the officially sanctioned religion of the empire. The violence and religious upheaval that accompanied the transition from paganism to Christianity in many other parts of the empire did not occur in Balkania; the process was rather passive and orderly. That such a decree from Rome instituted peacefully, which compelled the people to tolerate the forced termination of their traditional deities and accept the imposition of Christianity, indicates the degree to which the Balkan provinces were integrated into the empire. (Schevill 1922, 31-34)

Events that would mold the future of the Balkans began to transpire as early as the reign of Trajan (98-117), when a tribe of people called the *Dacians*, living in present day Romania, began raiding the northern Balkan provinces. Trajan successfully repelled the attacks and in the year 107 and was able to conquer and annex the new province of *Dacia* into the empire, which remained a loyal and thoroughly Romanized territory for more than a century and a half. But the social and economic breakdown of the third century (discussed above) severely weakened the government's ability to react to and deal with threats as they arose. The increasing encroachments on the Empire's northern borders during this precarious century can largely be attributed to the wider intercontinental phenomenon known as the *Great Migration*. Author Ferdinand Schevill describes this mass movement of peoples, writing:

“The border peoples decided to try conclusions with Rome not only because they found Rome to be weak, but also because they were made restless by wandering tribes pressing on them from the rear, which tribes were spurred on in their turn by agitated groups still further inland. The

ultimate cause of all of this linked commotion was not improbably the yellow race, the terrible and war-like Mongolians of Central Asia, who in the early Christian centuries began a westward movement in search of pasturage and spoils.” (Schevill 1922, 37-38)

The first wave of this assailment began in 274, when a Germanic tribe, the Goths, attacked Dacia and pushed Rome back across the Danube River. A resurgence of Persian power in the east, under the *Sassanian Dynasty*, made it a necessity for Roman Emperors to keep a keen eye turned to the empire’s eastern Balkan provinces. With this state of affairs, the Emperor Constantine (see earlier text) strategically moved the Empire’s seat of government to the Greek colony of *Byzantium* in 323. The location he chose for the new capital, *Constantinople*, would have consequences for the Balkan Peninsula. Essentially it became what Italy had formerly been to the empire, its foremost province. Further, the mountainous region north of the new capital served as a natural defense, giving it a degree of security from attack. (Schevill 1922, 39)

During the final quarter of the third century, the *Visigoths*^{*} crossed the Danube from the conquered province of Dacia and began a siege of the near-impregnable Balkan Peninsula. The Peninsula endured the cruel onslaught for several decades, until the year 400, when the Gothic invaders, under the leadership of Alric, turned their wrath on the weakened, western half of the empire in Italy. The eastern empire’s resources were stretched too thin from dealing with its own problems to send aid to its western cousin. Rome itself fell to Alric and the Visigoths in 410 and in the succeeding decades of the fifth century Spain and southern Gaul succumbed to the Germanic onslaught. Eventually, all of the former provinces of the Western Roman Empire fell in turn to a host of barbarian tribes. The western empire, formerly the center of the world, finally perished

^{*} That is, *Western Goth*.

with little more than a gasp in 410, when the barbarians forced the powerless emperor, Romulus Augustus (475-476), to abdicate and retire. (Schevill 1922, 40-41)

As western Europe began the early Middle Ages, we turn our attention back to the focus of this analysis. The Balkan Peninsula's natural mountain defenses enabled the eastern empire to repel the Gothic onslaught and push the invaders west. As the Gothic tribes poured into Italy and the western provinces during the era following their victories over the Romans, a subsequent vacuum was created in the Germanic homeland from whence they had come. During this age of mass folk migrations, the embryonic face of modern Europe was beginning to take shape. Into this vacuum, the *Slavs*, an Indo-European people from the great plains to the east, moved into the lower Danube region, formerly inhabited by the Goths. (Singleton 1985, 13) Beginning around the year 500, some of the Slavic tribes began making excursions over the Danube. The eastern *Byzantine Empire*^{*} responded to these incursions with fierce resistance. Over time, due to their persistence, as well as sheer numbers, the Slavs became a significant presence in the Balkans; forever changing the face of its racial makeup. Ever after, it was permeated with a distinctly Slavic identity. (Schevill 1922, 41) At the same time a new force was emerging in the east. A wave of nomadic Mongolian tribes, the successors of the Huns, began a series of encroachments into the Balkans. The weakened Eastern Roman Empire put up an obstinate resistance, as did the Slavs in protection of their dominions. Schevill describes the situation that ensued, writing: "The result was a three-cornered politico-ethnological struggle which fills the annals of the Balkan world for many centuries after

^{*} The *Eastern Roman Empire* is popularly referred to as *Byzantium*, the name of the original Greek name of Constantinople (see earlier text).

500 AD. In point of fact it forms the very kernel of Balkan medieval history.” (Schevill 1922, 42-43)

Although the eastern Roman Empire was legally and traditionally the extension of Augustus’ Roman Empire, it was in actuality a very different organism than its Italian based predecessor. This Byzantine Empire, as I will refer to it henceforth, was in point of fact an East-Mediterranean state that was comprised of the Balkan Peninsula, Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt. Given the legacy of the Great Migration and because of Constantinople’s location along the fault line of two continents Byzantium exuded a characteristically Greek, oriental and Persian flare. (Schevill 1922, 43)

BYZANTIUM

Because of its location, just north and west of Constantinople, The Balkan Peninsula was dominated by the Byzantine Empire over the following centuries and thus, its history cannot is integrally connected to the larger history of the empire. This analysis will endeavor to concisely examine both, in the context of one another and within the framework of the present comparative study. The survival of the Eastern Roman Empire into the sixth century owed largely to factors discussed above, not least of which being the Balkan Peninsula’s natural mountainous defenses. Additionally, Hellenic language and culture, prevalent throughout the eastern Mediterranean, served as a unifying force for the empire. Christianity, which had been passionately adopted by the majority of Byzantium’s people, further served to reinforce the cohesive authority of the imperial government. While the western empire was giving way to the barbarian hordes, a

succession of eastern emperors, the most notable of which being Justin I (518-527), reorganized the army and civil administration of the empire between 457 and 527, enabling it to cope with the changing world order. During this period, the Byzantine army was strengthened through the recruitment of a loyal force of native soldiers, which buttressed the power of the empire against Germanic and Slav aggression. (Schevill 1922, 48-49) As Byzantium embraced a relative era of security during the first quarter of the sixth century, the Emperor Justinian (527-565) assumed the reins of power and led the empire into a period of prosperity. The reforms that Justinian implemented would have a lasting impact on the future of the region. He was successful in reconquering areas in North Africa and in 553 went so far as to oust the Goths from Italy, restoring Roman power on the Italian Peninsula once again. On the eastern front, he fought a number of intermittent wars with the Persian Empire. While these costly and bloody campaigns accomplished relatively insubstantial changes in the geopolitical balance of power, they did result in an infusion of Persian culture into the Byzantine Empire. Domestically Justinian strengthened the absolute power of his position, usurping ultimate control of the government and civil affairs, that is, both the public and private sectors. (Schevill 1922, 49-51) In the sphere of religion, Justinian made perhaps his most far reaching reforms. First, he mandated Christian teaching in all of the schools throughout the realm. More importantly, with regard to doctrine, the emperor decreed that *he* was the final word on all matters of faith and wholly in charge of the administration of the church. This, of course, was utterly contrary to the western tradition of Christianity, which recognized the preeminence of Papal authority. Justinian's contributions in the arena of law were also prolific. He re-codified the mass of old Roman and newer Byzantine law, which were all

rooted in the principle of *stare decisis*. Constantinople was truly the metropolitan capital of the world and a trading center for every corner of the Earth. Its immense population was a cultural melting pot of around 1 million souls, including Greeks, Syrians, Egyptians, Persians, Mongolians and Slavs. (Schevill 1922, 54, 57) Even amidst the general prosperity of the empire, the Slavic and Mongolian incursions across the Danube (discussed above) continued to whittle away the empire's Northern Balkan provinces. Although these invasions were, for a number of reasons, largely ignored by Justinian during his early reign, he was finally forced to face these nomadic hordes during the last years of his life. The emperor sent out an army to face the Slavic marauders and push them off Balkan soil. His army was soundly defeated and the Slavs pushed all the way to the walls of the capital city itself. With no other avenues open to him, Justinian played to the age-old adage that the enemy of one's own enemy is his friend. He handsomely paid the Avars, the descendants of the Huns who had settled in the middle Danube region, to attack the Slavic flank. Thus bringing the siege of Constantinople to an end; but setting in motion a dangerous trend of pitting the empire's greedy foes against one another in times of trouble. (Schevill 1922, 61-62)

On the heels of Justinian's death in 565, the empire was engulfed in an even more perilous crisis as the powerful Persian Empire renewed its attacks on Byzantium's eastern border. Two decades of brutal warfare, between 572 and 591, took a profound toll on the empire. The conflict finally died down when civil war broke out in Persia. In the meantime, while all of the empire's energies were turned toward the Persian threat, the Slavs and Avars seized on the opportunity to increase their holdings along the northern border. In the wake of the Persian war, the largely unpopular emperor, Maurice (582-

602), sent out a predominately mercenary army to staunch the bleeding in the empire's northern provinces. In a disastrous turn of events, the army mutinied and rallied behind the centurion Phocas. The entire force did an about face and quickly conquered Constantinople and murdered the emperor, much to the adulation of the populace. Phocas (602-610), who turned out to be an utterly incompetent ruler, was named emperor and a period of unrest and decline ensued. In the face of renewed Persian aggression, it was evident by 610 that Phocas could not be allowed to remain emperor if the empire was to survive. (Schevill 1922, 63-64)

With the Persian threat looming, an appeal for help was sent to the governor of the province of Africa and he sent his son Heraclius with a fleet to answer the call. Phocas was ousted without the use of force and immediately put to death. Heraclius (610-641) was named Emperor and he began to slowly repair the damage that had been done to the empire and to re-consolidate power. Meanwhile the Slavs and their Avar overlords north of the Danube remained a powerful threat to the west of the Capital. After a long period of rebuilding, Heraclius attacked the powerful Persian Empire in 622 and crushed the mighty Persian army in a number of decisive victories. By 626 the Persian king, left with no other alternatives, allied with the Avars and began a two-pronged offensive on Constantinople. The Avar attack ended in disaster, as their entire force was destroyed. Their Persian allies fell suit to the Byzantine forces shortly afterwards. Heraclius' victories successfully restored the empire's prestige and influence in the short term, although in the long run it was still tenuously balanced in the face of rising Arab power to the east. (Schevill 1922, 65-68)

Following the death of Heraclius the empire's future grasp of its Balkan provinces was shaky at best. Author Noel Malcolm describes the following era of Balkan history, writing:

“The political history of the western Balkans from the seventh to the eleventh centuries is patchy and confused, with succession of conquests and shifting allegiances. The oldest established power in the Balkans, the Byzantine Empire, had little direct control there, but managed to get its authority recognized from time to time.”

In the following paragraphs I will endeavor to make sense this *Patchy* and *confusing* age of *shifting allegiances*.⁵⁴ The seventh century was an uncertain and critical period for the Byzantine Empire as a whole and its Balkan provinces specifically. Threats from first the Persians and later the Arabs slowly exhausted the monarchy. Over the course of the century a fundamental transformation in the very nature of the empire began to take place. Essentially, it began to relinquish its traditional Roman character and take on a new, more Asian influenced, though quintessentially Byzantine identity.⁵⁵ Throughout its history the Byzantine Empire was characterized by its resilience and ability to bounce back following periods of strife. In the wake of the decisive defeat of the Avars, the Balkan Peninsula became relatively under-populated and a number of new tribes began to establish themselves in the region. Due to the weakened position of the empire, Heraclius was forced to tolerate Serb and Croat settlements in the Balkans, in addition to the Slavic tribes (discussed above), under the conditions that they convert to Christianity and accept vassalage to Byzantium. At the same time, a pocket of Bulgarian tribes were beginning to consolidate power in the northeastern reaches of the peninsula. As the

⁵⁴ Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 9.

⁵⁵ Charles Diehl. *History of the Byzantine Empire* (Princeton University Press, Princeton: 1925), 40.

various tribes intermingled they took on a particularly Slavic character and represented a growing threat to the hegemony of the empire. (Diehl 1925, 46-47)

The birth of Islam was perhaps the most far-reaching development to come out of the early seventh century. In its first twenty years, the prolific new religion expanded in power and territorial control, to rival both Persia and Byzantium. By the time of Mohammed's death in 632, he ruled over the entire Arabian Peninsula. Muslim holdings continued to expand during the second and third quarters of the seventh century, until the Arab army laid siege to Constantinople itself for nearly five years, from 673 to 678. The Emperor Constantine IV (668-685) successfully repelled the attack, but by the close of the century the empire found itself once again precariously wedged between two enemies. While the Muslim threat, though temporarily restrained, continued to brew, Bulgarian Tribes to the west began crossing the Danube as early as 679. (Diehl 1925, 43-46)

War finally broke out with the Slavs and Bulgarians in 689 and then again with the Arabs 692. Over the next two decades a era of anarchy ensued, as a number of emperors rose and fell amidst constant treachery and numerous coup-d'états. Revolts, civil wars and insurrections became the order of the day and their savagery tore at the very fabric of the empire. Once again, in the face of discord and decay, a strong leader emerged, this time in the person of Leo III (717-740), who would restore the power of the empire. Leo III and his son, Constantine V (740-775), the first two emperors of the *Isaurian Dynasty*, were both highly capable in both the military and political arenas. During their reigns, both emperors were successful in reorganizing the empire, which had become so severely weakened during the tumultuous first two decades of the eighth

century. Leo III skillfully rebutted the imminent Arab threat, assuaging the menace it represented to the Byzantium. During this same period, the Muslim power base was going through an important transition, as it was moved to Baghdad. Constantine V began a series of Campaigns against the Bulgarians to the north, beginning in 755, in an attempt to reestablish Byzantium's border along the Danube. Although the enigmatic emperor was never able to deal the Bulgarians a decisive blow, by the time of his death in 775 he had reasserted the empire's prestige in the Balkans. (Diehl 1925, 51-55) In the theological realm, the religio-political phenomenon known as the *Iconoclastic Controversy* (726-780) rocked the cultural foundations of the empire. Essentially, Leo III ordered the removal of all iconic images of Jesus, a move that was considered heresy by many in the clerical monk order, which would have far reaching repercussions. Constantine V pursued the policy more vehemently than his father had, widening the rift between the monarchy and the clergy. By 751, the Papacy in Rome, due partly to their rejection of iconoclasm and partly to their own troubles with the Lombards, split with the Byzantine Empire. Although there were already age-old differences between the eastern and western churches, the break that occurred during this era created a schism that would be felt all the way into the twentieth century. (Diehl 1925, 57-61)

Although the reigns of Leo III and Constantine V brought with them security and prosperity, the troubles that seemed to beset all of the Byzantine dynasties caught up with the Isaurians a few short years later, as the line ended with the rule of Constantine VI (780-797). Another period of instability and uncertainty followed. The Byzantine throne was beleaguered by a series of intrigues, while the Bulgar threat to the west continued to grow. In the meantime, a new, stronger western empire was beginning to take shape as

Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne as the *Roman Emperor* in the year 800, which, despite the fact that tensions over iconoclasm had cooled, was a direct insult to Byzantium and the Eastern Church. Charlemagne's Franks subsequently conquered Northern Croatia, as well as well as large portions of northern and northwest Bosnia, which would remain under their Frankish rule until the 870s. During which time, an important political transformation took place in the region. Specifically, the old tribal system, which had been in place for centuries, was remodeled along the lines of European feudalism. (Malcolm 1996, 9) As the Byzantine Empire languished in this era of insecurity the Bulgar king, Krum, seized the opportunity to strike a crippling blow to his Greek enemies. In 811 he launched an attack on the Byzantine army, while it was caught in an exceedingly perilous position in a valley, and slaughtered the force nearly to a man, along with the Byzantine Emperor, Nicephorus I (802-811). By 813 the Bulgars had the capital of Constantinople under siege, but, because they did not possess a navy and were thus unable to blockade the re-supply of the city by sea, the siege was unsuccessful and they were eventually forced to withdraw. Following the successful repulsion of the Bulgar siege, the empire faced a rise in both external threats and internal instability. It struggled through the first half of the ninth century, in the absence of strong leadership. (Schevill 1922, 93-94)

A great many cultural and religious transformations began to change the face of the Balkan Peninsula during the transitional years of the ninth century. First, on the cultural front, a significant shift (whose beginnings in the seventh century were discussed above) in the social makeup of the peninsula was starting to accelerate. That is, a fusion

between the Bulgars and their Slavic subjects. Author Ferdinand Schevill

describes this process and its significance, writing:

“Fusions among different groups of Indo-Europeans are common in the history of Europe but here was the rarer and more difficult case of a merger of the white and yellow races. The issue was probably settled by the fact that the Mongolians were numerically a decided minority, and that besides, they lagged, from the point of view of social and economic development, behind their white dependents. After two hundred years of living side by side the Bulgars gave up their language and customs and, freely intermarrying with the Slavs, became indistinguishable from them. The Bulgar state, though Asiatic in origin and institutions, thus became essentially a Slav state, in fact, the first Slav state of the peninsula, worthy of the name. That the Slavs owed this, their first political creation, to an Asiatic impulse, emphasizes the feeble sense of organization which seems to have been one of their fundamental characteristics. From approximately the middle of the ninth century we must, dismissing the thought of their Mongolian origin, think of the Bulgars as a Slav people with a not unimportant Asiatic strain.” (Schevill 1922, 94-95)

In the religious realm, since their arrival on the peninsula, the Slavs had long worshipped the nature-based gods that they brought with them, doggedly refusing the influence of Christianity. By the mid-ninth century, contact with the Greeks along the southern and eastern borders of the peninsula was beginning to show, as a growing number of Slavs adopted Eastern Orthodoxy. At the same time, the Slavs in the inland, upper Danube region were beginning to be exposed to the Latin Church through their German neighbors to the north. Consequently, with the revival of western power that began under the Carolingians, this pivotal region, located along the fault-line between the east and west, became an area of sharp competition between the Orthodox and Roman Churches. (Schevill 1922, 95-96)

Following the stagnancy of the first half of the ninth century, the empire was finally rejuvenated under the reigns of a series of vigorous and capable emperors. This period, which was truly the apex of Byzantine rule, began under Basil I (867-886), the

first emperor of the *Macedonian Dynasty*, and lasted for more than two centuries. Basil, who had been born of peasant stock, ascended to the highest echelon of power via treacherous means, having his predecessor killed. He backed up his extreme ambition by being a brilliant administrator, as well as an excellent soldier. In his two decades as emperor, he reestablished imperial authority, while at the same time securing the future fortunes of his own family. (Diehl 1925, 73-74) During this same period, critical changes were taking place in the Balkans. The Bulgars had become the strongest force in the region. By 870, following a period of courting by both the eastern and western churches, the Bulgar King, Boris I (852-889), was compelled, under the duress of a Byzantine invasion, to be baptized into the Eastern Orthodox Church. Thus, for the first time in history, the Bulgar principality officially asserted itself as a Christian state. (Schevill 1922, 96-97) Further, a number of Serb controlled *župas* or princedoms, located in modern Herzegovina and Montenegro, banded together under a new *grand župan*, to create a larger, more powerful kingdom in the mid-ninth century. Later, a new Croatian kingdom emerged as the dominant force in the early tenth century under its first king, Tomislav (910-928). Much of Northern and Western Bosnia fell under his sway. Following his death in 928, Croatia was wracked by a civil war. For nearly four decades, between the 930s and the 960s, a large portion of Bosnia was annexed by the growing Serb princedom, which recognized the sovereignty of the Byzantine Empire. Malcolm writes:

“These details give us the historical context for the first surviving mention of Bosnia as a territory. It occurs in the politico-geographical handbook written in 958 by the Byzantine Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus. In the section of his handbook devoted to the Serbian prince’s lands ... [he makes] it clear that Bosnia (an area smaller than modern Bosnia proper, and centered on the River Bosna which flows

northwards from Sarajevo) was considered a separate territory, though at that particular time a dependency of the Serbs. In the 960s it fell once again under Croatian rule, and remained a Croatian territory for roughly half a century.” (Malcolm 1996, 9)

As the tenth century approached, the newly Christianized Bulgarian Empire was growing in power and territory under the quasi-overlordship of Byzantium. Because of its key location, which served as a buffer between Byzantium’s northern flank and a number of migratory hordes, as well as to growing Roman power, the Byzantines were wary to push the Bulgarians too far. Thanks to this advantageous position, and to a number of strong kings,^{*} Bulgaria became more than simply a provincial annex of Byzantium. Further, the strong national feelings of the Bulgarian subjects served to buttress the empire’s resistance to fully being absorbed into Byzantium. With the adoption of Christianity, the formerly barbaric state became a part of the larger Mediterranean civilization. When Simeon (893-927), the most influential of the early Bulgar kings, assumed the throne in 893, he expanded Bulgaria’s territorial, cultural and economic influence to their height.⁵⁶ Simeon’s influence in the arenas of learning, literature and knowledge had an indelible effect on the future of the peninsula. The physical location of his empire lent to a bustling trade, of which author Steven Runciman writes:

“Though literature and refinement might need an artificial stimulus, Bulgarian trade and commerce were flourishing naturally. The main industry of the country was agriculture, and probably Bulgarian cereals and beasts helped to feed the Imperial cities of the coast and Constantinople itself. Mines were worked, and their produce swelled the royal revenues. Moreover, the Bulgarian dominions lay across great trade routes.” (Runciman 1930, 143)

^{*} Or *Khans*.

⁵⁶ Steven Runciman, *A History of the First Bulgarian Empire* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1930, accessed 8 September 2008), 123.

Simeon's military successes paved the way for his later achievements and had far-reaching repercussions for the future development of the region. When a renewal of the hostilities between Bulgaria and the Byzantine Empire flared again, Simeon skillfully foiled Byzantium's strategy. Essentially, the Byzantines employed their age-old tactic of paying an outside mercenary force to attack their enemy's flank to alleviate the pressure on themselves (outlined above). In this instance they used gold to entice the *Magyars*, one of the old Asiatic tribes that had been slowly migrating west, to attack Bulgaria. For several years the Magyars were a constant nuisance as they mounted a series large raids into Bulgaria. In 895 Simeon allied with another Mongol band on the Peninsula and won a decisive victory against the Magyars, pushing them back to the middle Danube region, where over time they became more Europeanized and went on to form the Hungarian state. In any case, they turned their future aggressions away from Bulgaria and towards more lavish areas in Germany and Italy. (Schevill 1922, 99-101)

After decisively rebutting the Magyar advance, the ironhanded Bulgar king turned his attention to the Serbs to his northwest. His efforts were facilitated by the general state of anarchy that existed amongst the numerous Serb tribes. In 924 Simeon advanced into Serbian territory, destroying the armies who opposed him and ravishing the countryside. The utter destruction that he wrought stretched from Rashka to Croatia and Dalmatia. The Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII described the Serbian lands as "absolutely deserted wastes, in which there were no women and children and where a few hunters eked out a precarious living." Simeon brutally relocated large numbers of his defeated enemies and, in the end, the only thing that saved the Serbs from complete extinction was his death in 927. In the coming decades the Serbs would continue to be oppressed by

Bulgaria, but to a much lesser degree, as subsequent Bulgar kings were forced to face their own sets of difficulties.⁵⁷

During his lifetime, Simeon was quiet successful in eliminating any subservience on Bulgaria's part towards Byzantium. Unquestionably Simeon brought the Bulgarian Empire to its apex, but following his death the political seams that he had sewn began to unravel. It is fair to say that that the Bulgarian empire fell prey to its very patchwork nature. As has been the case so often throughout the course of history, the personality, skill and power of a strong ruler is the glue that holds great states together and upon their passing, their dominions begin to splinter. The relatively rapid deterioration of Simeon's once powerful empire began under the rule of his hapless son Peter I (926-969). During Peter I's reign a series of revolts rocked the government, eventually splitting Bulgaria into eastern and western halves. With each of the upheavals, Peter I's powerful Byzantine neighbors took advantage of Bulgaria's weekend position to whittle away at Simeon's old empire until what finally remained was a tottering ruin. When Peter I died in January of 969 his weary kingdom was a mere shadow of its former self. (Runciman 1930, 204)

While Bulgaria was experiencing its sharp decline under Peter I, Byzantium was making a noteworthy revival, still under Basil's Macedonian Dynasty, during the reign of Nicephorus Phocas (912-969). This resurgence of Byzantine power was further accelerated when, by 950, there was a relaxation in Arab pressure from the east. Taking advantage of the weakened Bulgarian position, he applied classic Byzantine strategy, paying the *Russians*, a tribe of Slavic blood that was ruled by Norse conquerors, to attack

⁵⁷ Harold W. V. Temperley, *History of Serbia* (London: Bell & Sons, 1917), 29.

Bulgaria's eastern flank. By the end of his reign he had retaken significant holdings from the Arabs and extended the empire's eastern borders, but problems back home in Constantinople, including famine and economic stagnation, led to his assassination in 969. (Schevill 1922, 105-108)

As the first millennium was drawing to a close, the Byzantine Empire found its political footing once again in a precarious position. During the rule of Basil II (976-1025) the empire faced incarnations of its classic foes, as well as the emergence of new ones. The Arab threat, though thwarted for the time being, continued to grow, looming to the east. Civil strife inside the empire itself was an ongoing problem. Perhaps the gravest problem to beset Basil II was the rapid growth of and the subsequent threat posed by western Bulgaria. Under the reign of the able and ambitious tsar Samuel (997-1014), who aimed to revive Simeon's old empire in the Balkans, Bulgaria began to attack parts of Byzantium, including Thessaly and Greece. During the early years of his reign Samuel had a number of successes against the Byzantines, but in the early years of the eleventh century Basil II proved his worth as a capable ruler. In a series of decisive campaigns, he pushed back the Bulgarian armies and re-conquered much of the formerly Byzantine lands, relegating Samuel to Macedonia, where the stronghold of Bulgarian power was centered. The vigorous Byzantine emperor earned a reputation, which he both embraced and embellished, for dealing ruthlessly with his enemies. Following his succession of victories, Basil II resolved to end the conflict with the Bulgarians once and for all. In one notorious incident he purportedly had 15,000 Bulgar prisoners blinded and broken up into groups of one hundred men. It was said that for each of these larger groups he delegated a prisoner who had only been blinded in one eye as its "guide," to

lead them back to their homeland.⁵⁸ When this sad rabble arrived at his capital, Samuel collapsed, “as though struck with a bolt, sank to the ground in a stupor and died without recovering consciousness.” With his enemy prostrate before him, Basil II dealt a succession of crippling blows to the weakened Bulgars, until he eventually annexed the whole of Bulgaria in 1018. (Schevill 1922, 109-111)

Following crushing victories of Basil II, Bulgaria remained a Byzantine province for nearly the next two centuries. Schevill describes the sense of satisfaction with which the Byzantine Emperor must have looked upon his empire, writing:

“As he looked about the peninsula a remarkable situation met his eye, for not only had the Bulgars been incorporated in his empire but the Serbs to the west of them, and even the Croats to the west of the Serbs, freely acknowledged the Greek supremacy. Not since the days before the wanderings of the tribes had the empire enjoyed such an unquestioned ascendancy in Balkania. If we consider further that the disrupted Arabs had been pushed from the confines of Asia Minor and now no longer seriously threatened the eastern border, we may easily convince ourselves that under Basil II, the Roman empire, stretching from the Danube in Europe to the Euphrates in Asia, had reached its medieval summit.”

Indeed, it is fair to assert that Byzantium was the greatest empire in the world as the second millenium began. None of the other medieval states, including those of the Arabs, the Bulgars or the Franks, could boast the cohesive power of the Byzantine Empire; nor had had any of them demonstrated such an impressive resilience in the centuries since the collapse of the Roman Empire. (Schevill 1922, 112-113) The reign of Basil II was truly the high water mark of Byzantine rule. The decline of the empire began as soon as he died, under the reign of his brother, Constantine VIII (1025-1028). In the generation following his death, the powerful empire that he had carved out fell prey to his weak successors and a series of intrigues. Although the empire would live for

⁵⁸ Paul Magdalino, ed., *Byzantium in the Year 1000* (Boston: Brill, 2003), 131.

another two centuries and there would be significant revivals to come, the greatest days of the empire had passed along with Basil II. (Diehl 1925, 104) Despite this temporary resurgence of Byzantine power, the empire was never able to assert outright control of the part of the Balkans that encompasses modern Bosnia during this period. Over the course of the eleventh century the region was shuffled back and forth between the more autonomous Croat power to the west and, the more directly Byzantine controlled, Serb power to the east. A delicate position that Bosnia would be forced to play over the next millennium. During the second half of the century the Serb kingdom began to consolidate, growing to encompass most of Bosnia by the 1080s, under its king, Bodin (1081-1101). (Malcolm 1996, 10)

By 1081 the Byzantine Empire had weathered the tumultuous reigns of nearly a dozen rulers in the near six decades since the passing of Basil II. All of the empire's frontiers were receding as threats loomed in all directions; anarchy and internal strife ruled the day. To the west, bands of Normans from northern France were arriving in Italy in search of adventure and booty. By the middle of the eleventh century the Normans had pushed the last Byzantine stronghold off of the southern tip of Italy, the last holdout left over from Justinian's re-conquest of the Italian Peninsula in the sixth century. It was widely feared that the Normans, bolstered by their success in Italy, would next turn their attention to the Balkan Peninsula. (Schevill 1922, 124-125) On the empire's eastern border an even more ominous storm was gathering, which would have far-reaching consequences for Byzantium and the Balkans. The *Turks*, a tribe of Mongolian nomads from the same stock as the Avars, and the Bulgars and Huns, both hailing from central Asia, appeared around the outposts of the Arab empire in the ninth century. Over time

the Turks converted to Islam (discussed above), the dominant religion in the region. Seljuk, a powerful chief who arose in the latter tenth century, unified a great kingdom of Turks. The *Seljuk Turk* dynasty that he created perpetuated itself under his namesake. The Seljuk banner rapidly spread over a large chunk of western Asia during the eleventh century. In 1055 the Seljuks usurped control of Baghdad, the heart of Arab power and replaced the tired caliphate with a highly ambitious Turkish “war-band.” As Turkish power flourished, they began raiding Byzantium’s eastern borders. The Turkish victory over the Byzantines at Manzikert in 1071 was the most disastrous defeat in Byzantine history. The results of the battle changed the face of Asia Minor, Islamizing what had before been an essentially European country, founded on Greek culture and Christianity. The victorious Turks set out upon a campaign to “systematically oppress and exterminate the native Christian population;” the results of which were still be felt in the twentieth century. This represented an enormous territorial and economic loss for Byzantium, which was rapidly decaying and in need of strong leadership. (Schevill 1922, 135-137)

For the western Balkans, the beginning of the twelfth century represented a historical turning point. Following the death of Bodin in 1101, Serb ambitions shifted towards Raška to the east, which would form the heart of the medieval Serbian kingdom. In 1102 Hungary usurped power over Croatia, under its king, Koloman (1095-1116), who was crowned King of Hungary, Slavonia, Croatia and Dalmatia in 1108; “thus establishing a relationship between the two states [Hungary and Croatia], sometimes direct subjugation, sometimes of personal union and alliance, which would last (with few exceptions and modifications) until 1918.” In 1102 Hungary also extended its authority over Bosnia, but because of its “remote and impenetrable” territory, Hungarian control

was much more loosely felt than in Croatia. Bosnia was traditionally ruled by a *ban*,* who was a vassal to the Hungarian king, but as the century progressed, Bosnian bans enjoyed greater and greater independence. (Malcolm 1996, 11)

Out of the turmoil and apprehension of the eleventh century, fate, for a brief time, smiled upon Byzantium once more under the *Comnenus Dynasty*. The first emperor of this line, Alexius (1081-1118), was intelligent and resolved, in both military and political matters. Throughout his reign he skillfully attended to Byzantium's two most pressing problems, holding off the empire's enemies, while maintaining order internally. His successors John I (1118-1142) and Manuel (1143-1180) were as able as Alexius and continued to successfully reclaim some of the lost splendor of the empire. The empire's former Balkan provinces were brought to heel and, during the 1160s and 1170s; Croatia and Bosnia once again fell under Byzantine sway. The Comneni also successfully turned their might upon their eastern enemies, including the Seljuk Turks, forestalling the looming Arab threat. While, at home, they were able to reinvigorating the beleaguered domestic economy. (Diehl 1925, 112-113)

In the end, the resurgence of the empire under the Comnenus Dynasty lasted for little more than a century, as a number of factors converged to precipitate its rapid demise. One primary such factor was the rapid expansion of Latin power throughout the twelfth century, which posed an increasing threat to Byzantium. The growing tension between east and west was hastened when the armies of the First Crusade arrived at the walls of Constantinople in 1096. The tenuous alliance that the two Christendoms formed turned into a succession of affronts and doublecrosses. When the Crusade failed in 1101, a wider rift opened between the two empires. The disastrous Second Crusade, which

* That is, a king.

began in 1147, followed along similar lines to those its predecessor had followed, as did its results. The width of the schism between east and west that emerged out of this era would never be mended. (Diehl 1925, 122-124) Following the death of Manuel in 1180, the work of the Comnenus emperors quickly began to unravel. Hungary quickly took advantage of the weakened Byzantine position and reassumed control over Croatia.

Bosnia, on the other hand, was largely able to free itself from the grasp of both Byzantine and Hungarian domination and “it was able to stand, for the first time, as a more or less independent state.” Writing about Bosnia during the 1180s, the prominent Byzantine chronicler Kinnamos asserted that, “Bosnia does not obey the grand župan of the Serbs; it is a neighboring people with its own customs and government.” He noted further that dividing line, between Serbia and Bosnia, could be drawn along the river Drina, which would continue to serve as Bosnia’s eastern border for many years to come. (Malcolm 1996, 11)

The Comnenus Dynasty met an ungracious end, when the last of this line, the arrogant Andronicus (1183-1185), was overthrown and brutally killed by a mob in Constantinople. His death was followed by two decades of turmoil, amidst rising tensions with the rising Western Latin Christendom. (Diehl 1925, 113) A series of provocations between each side, including a massacre of Constantinople’s Latin inhabitants in 1182, heightened friction prior to the Third Crusade in 1189. The failure of the Third Crusade led to the call for a fourth, less than a decade later. The Fourth Crusade (1199), which was promoted by the ambitious Pope Innocent III, was, in point of fact, a Venetian war of conquest against Byzantium. The armies of the Fourth Crusade originally set out to conquer Jerusalem from the Muslims, but their plans changed when

the tumultuous political situation in Constantinople presented an opportunity to strike their Orthodox cousins. The western armies assaulted Constantinople in 1204 in one of the most infamous sacks in history. (Diehl 1925, 135-137) Schevill describes the ravaging that took place:

“Then followed such a sack as is rare even in the brutal annals of medieval conquest. Every church was stripped of its treasures, every house plundered from cellar to garret, and when everything portable had been seized, the victors, shaking off the last human restraint, indulged their lusts and perpetrated every outrage forbidden by the religion whose chosen instruments they professed to be.”

The once exalted Byzantine Empire would never recover. Its last breath would not be so much of a great gasp, as it would be a whimper. (Schevill 1922, 135)

The fall of Constantinople precipitated a fundamental transformation of the oriental Byzantine world. A host of Latin feudal lordships emerged out of the remains of the Byzantine Empire. This newly-wrought Latin empire was essentially doomed from the outset, because there were relatively few western barons there to sustain it and because of unending infighting between them. The divide between east and west was perhaps never wider than during this anxious period. The Latin conquerors, exceedingly outnumbered by their new subjects, openly scorned Greek culture and traditions. A huge point of contention between the eastern and western Christians was a papal decree that was issued, which mandated that the Greeks were to be brought under Latin ecclesiastical dominion. (Schevill 1922, 136) While the Latins were struggling to maintain a foothold in their tenuously held together Byzantine dominions, the Greek state of *Nicaea* was consolidating power along the northwest edge of Asia Minor. By 1261 the Latin empire had become so weakened, due to its own internal instability, that the Greeks were able to recapture Constantinople and push the Latins out of the eastern Mediterranean. The

empire of Nicaea, popularly known as the *Empire of Constantinople*, began under the rule of Michael Paleologus (1259-1282). The new dynasty attempted to espouse itself as the heir to the Roman and Byzantine Empires, but was actually narrowly founded on Greek language, faith and culture. These blatantly Hellenistic affinities were instinctively rejected by the majority of the empire's non-Greeks and represented a fundamental difference between the Empire of Constantinople and its predecessor, as well as one of its principal weaknesses. Upon closer inspection, it is fair to argue that the dismal economic situation that it inherited, utterly doomed the empire from the beginning. Immediately following the death of Michael Paleologus his dominion began to contract, as his enemies applied pressure from all sides. In final assessment, the only real power that the state boasted was control over Constantinople. (Schevill 1922, 138-139)

Bosnia, which was very much a microcosm of this larger East – West struggle, found itself pushed back and forth on the flowing tide between Eastern Byzantine Christendom and Western Latin Christendom. Malcolm sorts the, often tangled, history of medieval Bosnia and puts it in broader perspective, writing:

“From the complex history of early Slav Bosnia, between the arrival of the Croats and Serbs in the 620s and the emergence of an independent Bosnian state in the 1180s [discussed below], no simple conclusions can be drawn. Bosnia proper was under Serb rule at some times: above all, in the mid-tenth century and at the end of the eleventh. It would be misleading, though, to say that Bosnia was ever ‘part of Serbia,’ since the Serb kingdoms which included Bosnia at those times did not include most of what we now call Serbia. For most of this early medieval period Herzegovina was indeed a Serb territory, but Bosnia proper was linked much more closely to the Croat lands; and by the twelfth century, even as it gained independence, it seems to have been increasingly aligned towards the Croat-Hungarian cultural and political realm. (Malcolm 1996, 11)

This narrower Serb – Croat divide would come to define the history of the Balkans. In no area was this split more pronounced than in Bosnia. Although the Serbs and Croats descended from the same South Slavic stock, they have remained fundamentally divided throughout history. This division can primarily be attributed to the cultural fault-line, along which modern Bosnia is directly located (discussed above), between east and west. Croat culture and religion, much like that of their Germanic neighbors emanated “from the great western hearth of faith,” Rome. The Serbs, on the other hand, were culturally and religiously intertwined to Constantinople and the Eastern Orthodox Church. This split between occident and orient, Catholicism and Orthodoxy has plagued the region for more than a millennium and would come to play a role in the events that this analysis is ultimately concerned with during the latter twentieth century. (Schevill 1922, 142)

During the second half of the twelfth century, a strong and long renowned Serb leader, Stephen Nemanja (1165-1196), united all of the Serb tribes for the first time in history. Despite the unprecedented power that he consolidated, Serbia still remained under the shadow of Byzantine yoke. It was not until nearly a decade later, under the reign of his son, also named Stephen (1196-1228), that Serbia would finally realize its independence, following the fall of Constantinople in 1204 and the subsequent collapse of the Greek empire. Under their heirs, the *Nemanja Dynasty* would last for more than 200 years, taking the Serb state to its medieval apogee. (Schevill 1922, 143-145) The twelfth century also witnessed the rise of the first distinctly Bosnian kingship in the region, with the emergence of Ban Kulin (1180-1204), the founder of the *Kulinić Dynasty*; a cousin of Stephen Nemanja. This era of his reign is considered to be the birth of the medieval Bosnian state. During the rule of the Comnenus Emperor Manuel I

(1143-1180), following the Byzantine victory over the Hungarians (discussed above), Kulin rose to power as a Byzantine vassal. He is a folk figure in Bosnian history and his reign is commonly remembered as Bosnia's golden age. In 1183 he participated in an attack, in conjunction with The Serbs and Hungarians, against the largely unpopular Byzantine Emperor Andronicus (discussed above). As Byzantine sway in the Balkans waned, Kulin accepted a new Vassalage to the Kingdom of Hungary in the subsequent years of his reign. The *Charter of Kulin* (1189) was a trade agreement between Bosnia and the Ragusan Republic of Dubrovnic, which is significant because, for the first time in history, Bosnia was defined geographically in a legal document.⁵⁹ Another important development to arise from this era was the expulsion of the Bogomils, a Gnostic Christian order, from Serbia. The Bogomils migrated to Bosnia, where they would settle and form the basis of a uniquely Bosnian Church, which thrived during Kulin's reign. For this, he was accused of heresy by the Catholic Church in 1199. In 1203, to avoid conflict with the church, he submitted to Catholicism and renounced Bogumilism, although he continued to practice it. Following his death in 1204, his son Stephen (1204-1232), the last of the Kulinić line, succeeded him. Stephen was a faithful Catholic; he reversed his father's policies towards the Bogomils and began a campaign of persecution against them.⁶⁰

Before we proceed into the next era of historical development in the region, it is prudent to take a look back at the long Byzantine epoch, through which we have just traveled, and put it in the context of the present study. During its rocky history, the

⁵⁹ Susan Mosher Stuard, *A State of Deference: Ragusa/Dubrovnik in the Medieval Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 26.

⁶⁰ John D. Treadway, "2: Of Shatter Belts and Powder Kegs: A Brief Survey of Yugoslav History," in *Crises in the Balkans: Views from the Participants*, eds. Constantine P. Danopoulos and Kostas G. Messas (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), 21.

Byzantine juggernaut dominated the political landscape of the Balkans and shaped the future of the region for centuries to come and, thus, although we often departed from the strict confines of what constitutes Bosnia's modern borders, Byzantium, which subjugated the Slavic tribes to its northwest, was necessarily the natural focus of this chapter. During its early centuries, Byzantium was unable to staunch the tide of Slavs flowing onto the Balkan Peninsula. Nor was it ever able to completely quell the two major centers of political resistance in the region, Bulgaria and Serbia. Each of the kingdoms, Byzantium, Bulgaria and Serbia, won victories and suffered defeats in the centuries-long three-pronged struggle that resulted. Although over the long flow of time they drew closer together in a host of fundamental ways, the, often trivial, distinctions that remained between them became bitter points of contention. Essentially:

“The ancient and highly developed Byzantine state had gradually transferred a large part of its religion, its literature, its arts, its legal and administrative institutions, in short, its civilization, to the younger Slav societies. It is no exaggeration to say that in matters constituting the essential basis of significant human intercourse the Balkan peoples, almost against their will and certainly without particularly perceiving it, had, in the course of the Middle Age, been brought to something like a common cultural denominator. And yet the remaining differences, involving race and language and the ineradicable human instinct for political self-expression, sufficed to produce the unceasing struggle of which we have been the astonished spectators”. (Schevill 1922, 158-159)

Thus, as time progressed and new, far more distinct, groups including Turks, Asiatics and Muslims, moved onto the Peninsula, amidst this already strained political milieu, it does not take the hindsight afforded to historians to predict the potentially volatile circumstances that resulted.

THE OTTOMAN PERIOD

As the remnants of the Byzantine Empire struggled to maintain order and identity in the thirteenth century, the ascendancy of the Turks, to whom I have already alluded, was the most earth-shattering development to beset the region since the fall of Constantinople. We last departed from the story of the Turks following their victory over the Byzantines at the battle of Manzikert in 1071 and their subsequent subjugation of Asia Minor. Although the saga of the Turks concerns us only insofar as it affected the Balkans, it is necessary to briefly put it in historical context for the benefit of the reader. The Seljuk Empire (discussed above) ultimately fell prey to its own internal instability. It began to unravel in 1092 following the death of Malikshah, the son of Alp Arslan, the victor at Manzikert. The twelfth century was a time of near universal chaos in the Turkish world as, the core of the Seljuk Empire, Iran and Iraq, disintegrated. It first broke into eastern and western halves, which were thereafter split into smaller, less significant, independent states. Although the Seljuk Empire was short-lived by most estimations, it is important, as we proceed into the Ottoman epoch, to briefly sketch the lasting influences that the Seljuks left to their Turkish heirs.⁶¹ Essentially, the system that the Seljuks put in place, would be used and perfected by the Ottomans to perpetuate their great empire for some six centuries. One significant feature of their organization was the *ikta* system. In short, this was a system of awarding lands to military officers that was used to consolidate the Sultan's power and allow him to better maintain the army. Another broader Middle Eastern practice, adopted by the Seljuks, that would be carried on by the Ottomans was the custom of employing a slave army. Administratively, the

⁶¹ Justin McCarthy, *The Ottoman Turks: An Introductory History to 1923* (London: Longman, 1997), 13.

Seljuks put a bureaucracy in place that solidified the trappings of a Turkish state. Finally, the Seljuks expanded the *madrasa* system, colleges of learned teachers and students, which lies at the very heart of cohesion within the Islamic world. In short, “the madrasa system gave a structure to Islam, supporting the learned who were the backbone of the religion and insuring that judges and scholars were properly trained.” (McCarthy 1997, 16-17)

By the middle of the twelfth century, centralized Turkish power in Asia Minor had all but disappeared. A number of small, independent, nomadic principalities closely hoarded power, often annexing previously Christian regions to expand their domains. In the wake of the collapse of the Seljuk Empire, the political face of Asia Minor was rapidly changing, as a new form of militant Islam began to manifest itself. Fanatic, independent bands of *ghazis*^{*} were aggressively spreading their faith; supporting themselves by what they plundered. The ghazis, who had no territorial or tribal basis, attached themselves to whatever local rulers promised them victory. Subsequently, the leaders that they backed began to establish themselves as lords of the regions that they had conquered. The *Ottomans* began their rise to power as typical ghazis, asserting an ever-increasing sphere of influence.⁶² Author Justin McCarthy explains the meteoric rise of Ottoman power during the latter half of the twelfth century, writing:

“The greatness of the Ottomans was that they rose above their nomad inheritance. They incorporated their nomadic inheritance into a new system of government that combined the great traditions of Middle Eastern Empires and the vitality of Turkish nomad life. Although they were initially the smallest and weakest of the principalities, they had two factors that allowed them to rise -- geography and brilliant leadership.” (McCarthy 1997, 36-38)

^{*} That is, *holy warriors*.

⁶² Stephen Turnbull, *The Ottoman Empire, 1326-1699* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 10.

Meanwhile, as the Turkish power was rising in the east, Bosnia was experiencing increasing pressure from Hungary in the first half of the twelfth century. This was largely because during this same period the Catholic Church was sending the Hungarian rulers a constant stream of requests that they root out heresy from the diocese of Bosnia. The Church was responding to what it perceived as an extremely low quality of the clergy in Bosnia, which, it believed, needed to be uprooted and replaced by a more reliable, Latin sanctioned, clergy. Illustrating this point, a papal letter dating to 1232 describes the Catholic Bishop of Bosnia as “illiterate, ignorant ... and ... acting in collusion with heretics.” In reality, this religious validation only justified what Hungary already intended to do, invade Bosnia. By 1232 Hungary had successfully annexed south-central Bosnia, Vrhbosna, where it was attempting to instate the Dominican order of Friars. The Bosnian ban, Ninoslav (1232-1250) was able to retain a large measure of Bosnian territory and when the Hungarians were forced to suddenly withdraw their forces in order to defend against a Mongol invasion to the north in 1241, he was able to reassert control over all of Bosnia once more. The Mongols struck a mortal blow to the Hungarian army before they were forced to withdraw back to the east, following the death of their king. The Hungarians tried to invade Bosnia once more in 1253, but due to its weakened position following the Mongol attack, it was largely unsuccessful. As a result, Bosnia was largely left to its own “isolated existence” during the second half of the thirteenth century. (Malcolm 1996, 16)

At the start of the fourteenth century the Empire of Constantinople (discussed above) was feebly attempting to reassert power in the southern Balkans and in northern Greece. To the west, Serbian expansion, under the emperor Stephen Dushan (1331-

1355), pushed the hapless Byzantines out of the western Balkans; while to the east the Turks had conquered the last vestiges of Byzantium in Asia Minor. Amidst the unchecked foundering of the empire, the Byzantines began to fight amongst themselves, as two families, the Palaeologus and the Cantacuzenus, vied for power. By the middle of the century there no longer remained a great cohesive Christian power in southeastern Europe. The Serbs defeated Bulgaria in 1330, only to watch their own power disintegrate following the death of Stephen Dushan. (McCarthy 1997, 41) Further to the west Croatia, Bosnia and Hungary were locked in a power struggle. Romania, to the north, was bitterly divided into a number of principalities and weakened by internal strife. In Bosnia, a new ruling family had emerged in the 1280s. The ban, Stephan I Kotroman (1287-1299), began an era of consolidation, annexing areas that had formerly been Croatian. During the reigns of his heirs, under the *Kotromanić Dynasty*, of which Stephen I was a part, his son Stephan II Kotromanić (1322-1353) and grandson Tvrtko I (1353-1377) molded Bosnia and Herzegovina into a single political entity, for the first time in history, over the course of the next century. In the broader region, as the Byzantine Empire crumbled and Eastern Christendom was busy tearing itself apart, there remained no unified power to oppose the rising tide of the Ottoman Turks. (Malcolm 1996, 17)

Osman I (1299-1326), the founder and namesake of the *Ottoman Dynasty*, was perspicacious in matters both political and military. His realm bordered Constantinople to the west and was thus located along an age old trade route, which put the Ottomans more in tune with wider civilization than the other ghazis (discussed above). By 1301 the Ottomans represented a significant threat to the fledgling Byzantine Empire. Throughout

the near three decades of his rule, Osman won a number of victories over all of those who opposed him, from the east and west; expanding his domain. His successor Orkhan I (1326-1359) continued the Ottoman surge, taking advantage of the turmoil and infighting inside of Constantinople during the first half of the fourteenth century. Orkhan formed an alliance with the ruling Byzantine faction while he marshaled his forces, going as far as marrying the daughter of John Cantacuzenus and providing him with military support against the rival Palaeologus faction. In 1354 a great earthquake rocked the region around Gallipoli, severely damaging the surrounding Byzantine towns. The Ottomans quickly seized the opportunity to strike and rushed in and took control of the region, much to the surprise of its stunned inhabitants. This gave the Turks their first toehold in Europe and would later serve as a staging ground for their advance into the Balkans. (Turnbull 2003, 12-13) The Ottoman conquest continued under the reign of Orkhan's son Murad I (1359-1389). He captured the strategically located city of Edirne in 1361, which would become the new Ottoman capital. Flanking Constantinople, the Turkish armies moved north to capture the Bulgarian town of Plovdiv and its rich agricultural assets in 1363. This represented a direct threat to Serbia, which was struggling to hold together following the death of Stephen Dushan. In 1371 the Ottomans ambushed and routed a Serbian army that was sent to remove them from the Balkans. This victory served to cement the Ottoman hold on Thrace, Southern Bulgaria and Most of Macedonia. In the face of the Ottoman onslaught, Bulgaria and the remnants of the Byzantine Empire were forced to accept vassalage to the Turks. (Turnbull 2003, 14-16)

For a number of reasons, the Ottoman method of conquest in the Balkans took a much different course than it had in Asia Minor. Primarily this can be attributed to

simple numbers and manpower. Due to the direct migration of Turks into Asia Minor, the Ottomans were able to conquer and rule that region outright because of their dominating majority presence. This simply wasn't feasible in the Balkans, as there weren't enough Turks to successfully colonize and displace the inhabitants of the region. Essentially, the process followed along the following lines:

Turkish nomads move[d] into Europe, at first to fight, then to settle, eventually to become local Balkan Turkish forces. Murat [Murad I] and future sultans settled Turks to defend sensitive regions and to 'water down' potentially rebellious districts. The political rule of the Turks in Europe thus began to be cemented demographically. However, there were never enough Turks to make the Balkans into another Turkey. Therefore, the Ottomans adopted a programme of conciliation and vassalage, rather than outright conquest. Defeated kings were allowed, at least at first, to keep their lands, but as tribute-paying vassals who contributed troops for Ottoman wars. The Ottomans were thus provided with troops and funds and the Balkan kings kept their thrones. Self-interest being an even more important thing with kings than with the rest of humanity, those who had at least some autonomy as vassals would be less likely to chance all in a rebellion. Later, when the vassals had been gradually weakened and Ottoman force firmly established, the sultans could institute direct control. (McCarthy 1997, 46)⁶³

Author Francine Friedman expounds on this process further, describing the course that Islamization followed in Bosnia over the succeeding centuries, writing:

“While some Muslim nobles arrived in Bosnia with the invading Ottoman Turks, most Bosnian Muslims were indigenous Islamicized Slavs. Islam was open to people of any national background, so those who wanted to protect the family lands, or who desired to acquire social, political and financial advantages, became Muslim. Furthermore, those whose allegiance to the Christian churches was minimal anyway might have found the dynamic and well-ordered organization of Islam tantalizing. Whatever the individual reasons for Islamization, it is important to remember that most of those who became Muslims in Bosnia were originally indigenous Slavs – from the same gene pool as those who remained Christian under Ottoman rule. Within the Ottoman Empire, religion, not national identity, was the most important personal defining feature. Thus, any unpopular tensions during the years of Ottoman rule were not the result of ethnonational hatreds.”

⁶³ Francine Friedman, *Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Polity on the Brink* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 8.

In 1386 Murad I was forced to turn his back on the Balkans for a time and return his attention to Asia Minor, in order to consolidate his position there. During his absence, a number of slighted Serbian and Bosnian forces under the leadership of the Serbian king, Lazar Hrebeljanović (?-1389), rebelled against Turkish rule in the Balkans. The Slavs attacked and defeated the regional Turkish commander and began planning a larger assault on the Turks. The rebel army grew as troops from Bulgaria, Wallachia, Albania and Hungary joined its ranks. The Bosnian ban, Tvrtko I (discussed above) sent a large force to the aid of the Slav army. Murad I took decisive action, moving north to meet Lazar Hrebeljanović and the Slav army. Along the way a number of disgruntled Serb nobles rallied to the Turkish cause. The two forces clashed in June of 1389 in the famous *Battle of Kosovo*. The long remembered ramifications of this engagement still echo in Balkan politics today. The Turks were victorious, although Murad I was killed. Lazar Hrebeljanović was subsequently captured and executed. His son, Stephan Lazarevic (1389-1427), reigned as a loyal Ottoman vassal. (Turnbull 2003, 23-24) Malcolm puts the battle of Kosovo in larger historical perspective, writing:

“Though Serbian myth and poetry have presented this battle as a cataclysmic defeat in which the flower of Balkan chivalry perished on the field and the Turks swept on though the rest of Serbia, the truth is a little less dramatic. Losses were heavy on both sides, and Prince Lazar was captured and executed; but the remnants of both sides withdrew after the battle, and for a while the Serb and Bosnian forces thought that they had won. It was not the battle itself that brought about the fall of Serbia to the Turks, but the fact that while the Serbs had needed all the forces they could muster to hold the Turks to an expensive and temporary draw, the Turks were able to return, year after year, in ever increasing strength. By 1392 all the Serbian Orthodox lands, apart from Bosnian-ruled Hum had submitted to Ottoman Suzerainty. (Malcolm 1996, 20)

Following Murad I's death he was succeeded by his son Bayezid I (1389-1402), who was as ambitious and capable as his father. By 1395 he had quashed all significant opposition

in the Balkans and, as the turn of the fifteenth century approached, he began to focus Ottoman attention on the ultimate prize, Constantinople. (Turnbull 2003, 24)

Bayezid I began a blockade of the heavily fortified city of Constantinople, planning to starve out its inhabitants over time. In 1396 a large contingent of nobles from across Europe, including Hungary, the Pope and the Duke of Burgundy, along with large bands of French, Germans and English troops, began, what was essentially, a Crusade to save the city of Constantinople from the Turkish blockade. The Christian army assembled at Buda and began the march down the Danube towards their foes. Any nobility of their cause was marred by the looting and pillaging of Orthodox towns in Bulgaria as they advanced. The crusading army finally reached an impasse when it arrived at the walls of the fortified city of Nicopolis. With no siege engines at its disposal, the European army was forced to halt its advance. The hodgepodge assembly found cooperation exceedingly difficult and a number of French knights began an attack on the city early, determined to strike the first blow. In a disastrous turn of events, the Christian army was routed. This, the first major clash between the Turks and western Europeans, represented a great victory for the Turks; the apex of Bayezid I's reign. In the Christian world the defeat at Nicopolis would long live in infamy because of the summary execution of Christian prisoners that Bayezid I's ordered the following day. (Turnbull 2003, 24-25) Following the decisive victory against the Christian army, the only significant holdout against Ottoman power within its domain was Constantinople itself. However, while his attention had been focused to the west, a growing threat was

rising in the east. The Turco-Mogol conqueror Timur^{*} had a great following, bringing a large portion of eastern Asia Minor under his sway. In 1402 he advanced into central Asia Minor and was met by the Ottoman army of Bayezid I Ankara. Bayezid I was squarely defeated and taken prisoner, where he later died in captivity. This could have well been the end of the Ottoman Empire, had its enemies chosen to assault it further, while it was in this weakened state. Instead, its enemies, east and west allowed the Ottomans to maintain their holdings in northwestern Asia Minor as well as in the Balkans. A period of rebuilding ensued, during which the empire's most significant enemies came from within, as Bayezid's four sons vied for power. (McCarthy 1997, 51-52)

With Ottoman power temporarily quelled to the east, the medieval Balkan states were allowed the breathing space to turn inward. In 1404 the Bosnian king, Ostoja (1398-1404), was exiled by the nobles and replaced with Tvrtko II (1404-1409). In 1409 Ostoja (restored, 1409-1418) returned, backed by a large Hungarian army, and re-conquered most of his domains. Over the next decade he worked to build a close relationship between Bosnia and Hungary. By the second decade of the fifteenth century the Ottomans had consolidated their power and were attempting to reassert control over the Balkans. With this aim, the Ottomans proclaimed that the exiled Tvrtko II was the rightful king of Bosnia in 1414. The Turks deployed a large army into Bosnia to enforce this claim. The conflict that ensued pitted Ostoja and his Hungarian backers against the Ottomans and the Bosnian a powerful Bosnian nobleman, Hrvoje Vukčić. The Hungarian army was squarely defeated and struck a deal with the Ottomans that allowed him to remain the king. Malcolm writes that, "it was clear that from now on the Ottoman

^{*} Tamerlane (1370-1405).

Empire would have an influence rivaling that of Hungary over Bosnian affairs.” With Turkish support Ostoja was actually able to expand his domains in the final years of his reign. Following his death in 1418, his heir, Stephen Ostojić (1418-1421), fell prey to the instability caused by bitterly competing Bosnian nobles as well as increasing Turkish influence and he was driven into exile. Tvrtko II was restored (1421-1443) to the throne. During the early 1420s Bosnia enjoyed a peaceful period under his restoration. The Hungarian and Turkish armies continued to clash inside of Bosnia, taking and retaking a number of towns and ravaging the countryside. During the 1430s the Ottomans finally pushed back the Hungarian forces to assert a firm grasp over the region. Malcolm writes further that, “At this stage the Turks were more interested in plunder than in the direct annexation of territory. (Malcolm 1996, 22)

The Ottomans spent the first two decades of the fifteenth century struggling to gain sure footing once more. Murad II (1421-1444) focused his energy on consolidation rather than conquest. During the first half of the century, the Ottoman Empire’s primary adversaries in Europe were Hungary and Venice. Venice’s great wealth and formidable navy made it a significant power in the region. Hungary, on the other hand, was an expansionist land power, which was vying for the same frontiers as the Ottomans. The Hungarian leader John* Hunyadi, formed an alliance with the Serbs in 1442. Together, they inflicted major defeats against the Ottomans in the Battles of *Hermanstadt* and *Vazağ*, where tens of thousands of Turks were slain. These defeats induced Murad II to sign a treaty with Hunyadi in 1444, which enlarged Serbia and reduced its vassalage to the Turks. Hungary’s successes against the Ottomans led many in Europe to perceive that the Muslim threat was abating. The Pope called for another Crusade and Christian

* János.

troops from Poland and Germany began assembling in Hungary. The crusaders advanced into Ottoman territory and began marching toward the Black Sea. Murad II moved his forces north and the two armies met at *Varna* where the Turks won a crushing victory. Hunyadi attempted another unsuccessful Crusade in 1448, but was put down once again. By the time of his death in 1451, Murad II in 1451 had successfully cemented the subjugation of the Balkans to the Ottoman Empire. The weakened Balkan states would fall under direct Ottoman control during the next half century. (McCarthy 1997, 60-62)

Murad II was succeeded by his son, Mehmet II (1511-1481), who would lead the Ottoman Empire into its golden age. With its borders relatively secure, Mehmet II was able to turn his attention to the empire's most prominent bit of unfinished business in 1453, the conquest of Constantinople. The Ottoman Empire could never be fully integrated until the great city fell. Moreover, Constantinople represented a target for Crusading armies from outside the empire and a sanctuary for those enemies within. After an extended siege and bombardment Constantinople fell to the Ottomans on May 29. The empire would never be the same again. (Turnbull 2003, 37,40) The fall of Constantinople served a long felt blow to the eastern European Christian psyche, which could still be felt in modern times. Author Paul Fregosi describes the far reaching impact of these events, writing:

“The fall of Constantinople is, after the Crucifixion, the greatest human calamity to have befallen Christianity... The Crucifixion was the inevitable prelude to the Resurrection. But it's good imagery, and it conveys the feelings of Christians at the time. Today, more than half a millennium later, if one is a Western European, one can still cringe in shame when one remembers how this bastion, however flawed, of European civilization, religious tradition, and culture, in spite of its desperate calls to Christendom for help, was allowed by the rest of Europe

to disappear into the maw of a then cruel nation while the West wrung its hands and twiddled its thumbs.”⁶⁴

The last Byzantine Emperor, Constantine XI (1449-1453), was killed during the fighting and shortly thereafter the *Haghia Sophia*, the great church built by Justinian, was converted into a mosque, along with other Christian churches. The city was renamed *Istanbul* and it became the Capital of the Ottoman Empire. (McCarthy 1997,70-71) Throughout his rule Mehmet II strove to centralize the authority of the empire. Following the fall of Constantinople he moved to consolidate the empire’s grip on the Balkans. Serbia was brought under direct Ottoman rule in 1459. In Bosnia, which had long been the center of the persecuted Bogomil sect (discussed above), many welcomed the coming of the Ottomans as a possible reprieve from their torment at the hands of other Christians. Mehmet II incorporated Bosnia into the empire in 1463. (Turnbull 2003, 40-43) Despite any hopeful expectations, the Ottoman conquests of the Balkans were brutal and the Turks were ironfisted masters. Ducas, a fifteenth century Byzantine historian, offers a sobering account of the wave of Islamization that swept over the Balkan Peninsula:

“More than any other people, the Turks love war and pillage. They show it in their relations among themselves, what then is the lot of Christians? [...] The Turks went on foot as far as the Danube in order to subjugate the Christians. They invaded this or that province in their tens of thousands; they came like brigands and fled once they had pillaged it. These raids turned all Thrace as far as Dalmatia into a desert. Even the Albanians, who are an innumerable people, were reduced in number. All in all, the Turks destroyed the Wallachians, the Serbs and the Byzantines.”⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Paul Fregosi, *Jihad in the West: Muslim Conquests from the 7th to the 21st Centuries* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1998), 248.

⁶⁵ Bat Ye’or, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity Under Islam: From Jihad to Dhimmitude* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1996), 56.

By the end of the reign of Mehmet II, some two decades later, nearly the whole of the Orthodox Balkan world fell under Ottoman sway. Only the small district that would later encompass Montenegro maintained its own autonomy. During the last years of his reign, Mehmet II audaciously set out to attack the center of Western Christendom. He invaded southern Italy and captured Otranto in 1480. The Ottomans planned to use this outpost as a toehold from which to conquer the whole of the peninsula, but Otranto was retaken the next year following the death of Mehmet II. (Turnbull 2003, 43-45)

A bitter dispute over succession ensued between Mehmet II's two sons, Bayezid and Jem. The dispute dominated the closing decades of the fifteenth century and weakened the consolidation of the Ottoman Empire, which their father had worked to secure. In 1520 Suleiman I (1520-1566)* became sultan at the age of twenty-five. From the outset of his reign he resolved to expand the empire into Europe by tightening its grip on Hungary. Hungary location along the Ottoman border with the Habsburg Empire, which was centered in Vienna, made it a region of key importance. To prepare for this thrust to the north he launched a campaign to eliminate the last Christian enclaves in Serbia and Bosnia. In 1521 Suleiman I marched on the strategically located Serbian city of *Belgrade*, which had long been a holdout to Ottoman power and a thorn in the empire's side. The defenders held out for nearly a month before Suleiman's forces overran them, giving the Ottomans a strategic wedge along Europe's Danube defense line. (Turnbull 2003, 45-46) The invasion of Hungary was delayed for several years while Suleiman I attended to a number of more pressing matters, but was finally resumed in 1526. Internal strife in Hungary under Louis II (1516-1526) made it a vulnerable target. The Hungarian King was unable to mount a significant defense and the Ottomans

* "The Magnificent."

defeated them decisively on the plain of *Mohács*, south of Buda, which was effectively the end of the independent Kingdom of Hungary. Events on his empire's eastern border took some of the sweetness out of the victory. Several revolts had broken out in Asia Minor, which erupted into a civil war that was in danger of spilling over into Ottoman territory. With his forces spread too thin, Suleiman I was forced to withdraw from Hungary in order to address the more immediate threat.⁶⁶ In the meantime, the Austro-Hungarians attempted to reconsolidate their eastern border. By 1528 Suleiman had regrouped and marshaled his forces for yet another push to the west. The next year his army crossed the Austrian frontier and laid siege to the Habsburg capital of Vienna on September 2. As winter set in and the Ottomans still had not prevailed, Suleiman I was forced to withdraw his army in order to prevent a catastrophe. Determined to establish Ottoman supremacy in central Europe, the sultan launched another massive assault against the Habsburgs, with a force of some 300,000 men, in 1532. Once again, the onset of winter forced him to retreat. Following this final unsuccessful attempt to deal his opponents a death blow, it became apparent to the pragmatic Suleiman I that the viable extent of the Ottoman Empire had been reached. The Sultan pulled his forces back into Hungary, where he had John Zapolya (1526-1540) installed as the King of Hungary; a vassal of the Ottoman Empire. In 1541 the Habsburgs moved to attack the Ottoman presence in Hungary and laid siege to Buda. The Turks repulsed them, in an embarrassing defeat, in which they were forced to sign a treaty renouncing a Habsburg claim to the Hungarian throne and agreeing to pay the sultan a fixed yearly tribute for the Hungarian lands already under their control. (Sicker 2000, 203-204) In 1566, when

⁶⁶ Martin Sicker, *The Islamic World in Ascendancy: From the Arab Conquests to the Siege of Vienna* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000), 201-203.

Suleiman I was seventy-two years old, the royal court was rife with dissension over who would succeed and his health was failing, the old Sultan decided to go to war one last time. He marched on Hungary for the seventh time during his reign, with one of the largest armies he had ever led. On August 5, the Ottoman army laid siege to the fortified town of *Szigetvar* in southern Hungary. The siege was ultimately successful, but Suleiman the magnificent died of natural causes behind the lines before the victory was won. He was succeeded by his son Selim II (1566-1574), who finally brought the war with Hungary to an end with a peace treaty in 1568. (Turnbull 2003, 55-57)

Hostilities between the Ottoman Empire and Austria were renewed in 1593, with Hungary once again seeing most of the fighting. This prolonged and destructive conflict would become known as the *Thirteen Years War*.^{*} When Mehmet III (1595-1603) assumed the throne in 1593, by eliminating 19 of his brothers, he inherited a grave situation. A series of important Ottoman frontier fortresses had fallen to the Habsburgs and the Christian forces were even marauding dangerously near to Edirne. The Ottoman counter attack served an equally alarming blow to their enemy, as the Turks took the Northern Hungarian fortress of Erlau.⁺ (Turnbull 2003, 64-65) The first major engagement of the war occurred in eastern Hungary at the *Battle of Keresztes*[±] in 1596. The battle was costly for both sides, but ultimately an Ottoman victory. A peace treaty was proposed, but neither side accepted its terms and the war dragged on as the bitter enemies swapped blows year after year. Although the war continue to drag on the Ottoman victory at the Battle of Keresztes represented the begging of nearly eighty years of Turkish supremacy in Hungary. Finally, in 1606, the bloody conflict, described by a

^{*} Also known as *the Long War*.

⁺ Eger.

[±] Mezokeresztes.

Christian commentator as ‘the slaughterhouse of men,’ was resolved with the *Peace of Zsitva-Torok*. In the end, the war changed very little long-term, politically speaking. Culturally, though, it engendered enmities between the region’s Christians and Muslims that would be long remembered. (Turnbull 2003, 65-67)

The tradition of strong leadership, which had for centuries held the fabric of the mighty Ottoman Empire together, began to fail in the early decades of the seventeenth century. Beginning with the reign of Ahmed I (1603-1617), the empire suffered a sharp decline in the quality of its leaders. The early rule of Osman II (1618-1622) was dominated by a war with Poland, which ended in defeat in 1621. The sultan blamed the army for the failures against Poland and when he return to Istanbul following the disastrous loss, Osman II began a sharp political attack against the *Janissaries*,* who he held responsible. He planned a series of reforms that would strike a direct blow to the heart of the empire’s old guard of military and religious leaders. In 1622 the sultan’s powerful enemies, to whom these reforms were a direct blow, conspired and had Osman II assassinated. (McCarthy 1997, 176-177)

The empire continued to languish and decay under the slain sultan’s feeble-minded successor, Mustafa I (1622-1623). The ruling class favored a weak sultanate, which allowed power to reside in their hands. A number of provincial leaders revolted against the government in Istanbul, which was desperately trying to maintain its footing in the face of economic ruin. The weak government acquiesced to the outside pressures and placed eleven-year-old Murad IV (1623-1640) on the throne, under the guardianship of his relatives. The degeneration of the empire throughout the first half of the seventeenth century, fortunately for the Ottomans, coincided with the *Counter*

* The infantry units, which had for centuries made up the core of the Ottoman military.

Reformation and the *Thirty Years War* (1618-1648) on the European continent. The Christians were busy rending one another during this period, which, for the time being, spared the Ottomans from attack.⁶⁷ The empire was not as fortunate on its eastern flank. Abbas I, the Shah of Iran, took advantage of the Ottoman disarray and seized Baghdad in 1624, which was a major loss, territorially and psychologically to the empire. By 1632 it was apparent to those in power that the Ottoman Empire's ultimate demise was eminent due to the incessant infighting that had plagued it for decades. As a result, the host of adversarial factions rallied behind the young sultan for the greater good of the empire. Murad IV initiated a number of reforms that reinvigorated the empire, at least for a time, and prevented its immediate collapse. The sultan instituted his reforms with an iron hand; his answer to opposition and impropriety alike was execution. He retook Baghdad in 1638, which held enormous symbolic significance. Contemporarily, Murad IV effectively shored up the woes caused by his corrupt and inept predecessors, but the poor and inadequate system that had allowed ineptitude and corruption to prosper, which was the underlying root of the empire's troubles, largely went unchanged. Following the sultan's death in 1640, the cycle of decay began again. (McCarthy 1997, 178-179)

In the years following the death of Murad IV, a muddle of palace intrigues brought the empire to its knees once again. No less than ten *grand viziers*, the powerful minister to the sultan, second only to the sultan himself, came and went in the succeeding eight years. In 1656 the Ottomans, desperate for some form of salvation, turned to the politically astute grand vizier, Mehmet Köprülü (1656-1661), for leadership. He was ruthless but effective, turning to a system of strict traditional reform, much as Murad IV

⁶⁷ William Stearns Davis, *A Short History of the Near East from the Foundling of Constantinople (330 A.D. to 1922)* (New York: Macmillan, 1922), 256.

had. He purged the military and government of those who opposed him and balanced the budget. When he died in 1661, power was passed to his son, Fazıl Ahmed Köprülü (1661-1676), who carried on his father's reforms and policies. The years of revival under the Köprülüs were truly amongst the greatest in Ottoman history, but they would be short lived. The third of the Köprülü line, Kara Mustafa (1676-1683), overestimated Ottoman power and attempted to achieve what Suleiman the Magnificent had failed at, the capture of Vienna. Kara Mustafa's attack on Vienna in 1683 was an utter failure. As the Turkish army retreated in disarray it was harried all the way back in to Hungary by the Habsburgs and their Polish allies. In 1684 the Habsburgs, along with Venice, Poland, Russia and a number of other lesser European states, took advantage of the disastrous Turkish defeat and launched an attack into Ottoman territory. Hungary was captured with little resistance. The Europeans, sensing blood in the water, continued to encroach upon the Ottomans on several fronts, until the Turks were finally forced to capitulate by signing the *Treaty of Carlowitz* in 1699. Under its dictates, the Ottoman Empire was forced to relinquish its holdings in Hungary, Transylvania, the Ukraine, Slavonia and most of Dalmatia. The Ottoman Empire would never fully recover from this disastrous defeat. Moreover, in Europe "the myth of Ottoman invincibility was over." (McCarthy 1997, 182-183)

At the dawn of the eighteenth century the Ottoman Empire, severely weakened by its defeats and losses in the previous century (discussed above), was in a sharp state of decline. Indeed, the Turkish Empire, at one time the greatest on Earth, was forced into the position of merely trying to remain afloat, as its ambitious neighbors attempted to pick the ageing lion apart. Looking ahead, despite its enfeebled state, the empire was still

a power to be reckoned with, as its two primary foes, Austria and Russia, would learn over the course of the following decades. Peter the Great of Russia realized this point, to his dismay, in 1711 when he attacked the Ottomans in Moldavia and suffered an embarrassing defeat. Encouraged by its recent success against the Russians, the Ottoman *Porte** elected to attack the Venetians in Morea in 1715 and successfully took Greece and Crete. Austria responded, not so much in aid of Venice, as to thwart a potential attack on itself. Two decisive battles were fought, at *Peterwardein* in 1716 and *Belgrade* in 1717, in which the Ottomans were summarily defeated by the forces of the skilled Austrian commander Prince Eugene of Savoy. In the *Treaty of Passarowitz* (1718) that resulted, the Ottomans lost a number of their holdings, including portions of northern Serbia, northern Bosnia and Wallachia. (Schevill 1922, 265-266)

The territorial arrangement created by the Treaty of Passarowitz effectually created an Austrian “lane” southeastward toward Constantinople. At the same time the still powerful and ambitious Russians were making plans to capture a long coveted outlet on the Black Sea from the Ottomans. The expansionist dreams of both Russia and Austria were too strong to sit idle for long, while the Ottomans were reeling from their recent losses. The Russians moved first, beginning a succession of offensives against the Turks in 1735. They eventually advanced all the way to the coast of the Black Sea. In 1737 the Austrians too declared war on the Ottoman Empire, with the hope of extending its Balkan borders. Much to the surprise and chagrin of the Austrians, they found a once again reinvigorated Ottoman army. This was largely the result of a number of practical reforms that had been instituted under the sultan, Mahmud I (1730-1754). (McCarthy 1997, 184) Moreover, incompetence on the part of the Austrian military command led to

* The powerful *divan* (council) that established government policy.

a series of debacles in which the Turks were able to push the Europeans back to Belgrade. In the *Peace of Belgrade* that followed, the Austrians ceded back most of the Turkish losses from the previous war. With their Austrian allies having thrown in the towel, the Russians were forced to capitulate their hold on the Black Sea, lest they face the fury of the combined Ottoman forces. (Schevill 1922, 266-267) By 1739 the territorial situation had come full circle, looking much the same way that it had at the turn of the century. When, first the *War of Austrian Succession* (1740-1748) and later the *Seven Years' War* (1756-1763) erupted, the Europeans were forced to turn away from their Danubian interests for a while. This afforded the Turks time to lick their wounds and regroup. Author William Stearns Davis asserts that, “the Turks ... made very poor use of [this] opportunity to reform either their civil state or their armies. The result was a long series of disasters.” (Davis 1922, 275)

While the Ottomans were struggling to reorganize their empire, Catherine II* rose to power in Russia. War was renewed between Russia and the Ottoman Empire between 1768 and 1774, in which Russia showed overwhelming superiority. By 1770 the Russian armies had pushed through Moldavia and Wallachia, all the way to the banks of the Danube. In a decisive naval victory Russia destroyed the Ottoman fleet at *Tchesmé*. The beleaguered Turks were forced to sue for peace in 1774, which culminated in the *Treaty of Kutchuk-Kainardji*.⁺ The territorial loss to the Ottomans was relatively small, but the political loss was monumental and humiliating. Essentially, Russia gained the access to the Black Sea that it had long desired, while securing indirect control over Moldavia and Wallachia. (Schevill 1922, 269-270) Moreover, Russia declared its right to intervene on

* “The Great.”

⁺ Küçük Kaynarca.

behalf of the Greek Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire, a stipulation which would torment the Turks over the next century. (McCarthy 1997, 196) “In sum,” holds author Ferdinand Schevill, “with this success, Catherine of Russia became the leading factor in Ottoman foreign policy.” (Schevill 1922, 270) In effect, Catherine’s victory reduced the Ottoman Empire to little more than a de facto Russian province. In the three years following the war, Catherine paid no heed to her responsibilities under the peace treaty. She annexed the Crimea and plotted to take Constantinople. The Turks were powerless to stop her and in 1787 Russia once again attacked the luckless Ottoman Empire. The sanguinary campaigns in Bessarabia and Moldavia would be long remembered for the ruthless slaughters of noncombatants that were perpetrated. The Ottomans were once again squarely defeated and spared due more to international factors, such as the division of Poland and the French Revolution, than because of their own skill or position. In the 1792 *Treaty of Jassy*, Russia acquired legal title to the Crimea and extended its borders along the Black Sea as far as the Dniester River. (Davis 1922, 275-276)

Looking back, author William Stearns Davis puts the inglorious history of the Ottoman Empire during the eighteenth century in wider perspective, he writes:

“During the entire century there reigned not one Sultan of superior ability, although a few showed a partial sense of their great responsibilities. Some of them had intelligence enough to name fairly competent viziers, who struggled with intelligence against the ever-increasing disorders at home and the perils abroad. It was frankly realized by many Ottoman leaders that until their army and many civil institutions were largely reorganized according to Western models their national existence was in growing jeopardy, but every half-hearted attempt at reform broke down... The names of the Sultans therefore during this entire epoch are usually of little importance.” (Davis 1922, 276)

As the nineteenth century dawned, it appeared to the states of western Europe that the large and inefficient Ottoman Empire would finally be swallowed by its Russian nemesis. Still, at this late date, the Ottoman soldiery was of a significant quality, especially when defending the very existence of their state, to be considered a force to be reckoned with. A number of factors including poor organization, dishonest administration and poor roads and transporting capabilities prevented the mighty Russians from bringing their full power to bear against the Turks. Nevertheless, it is fair to assert that in the decades following the Treaty of Jassy, the greatest deterrent to an utter rout of the Turks by Russian forces was the combined voice and might of the rest of Christian Europe who forbade it, not wanting Russia to gain too much power (Davis 1922, 278)

The initial shock wave of the French Revolution, which swept with such volatility across the Western world, had little effect on the politically backwards Ottoman Empire. By the time of the Napoleonic Era, a decade later, the Revolutionary doctrine of popular rights was beginning to breach the Ottoman Empire's provincial Balkan districts, laying incipient notions of social and political reform that began to slowly ferment in the region. (Schevill 1922, 275-276) The conflagration that consumed the European mainland in the last decade of the eighteenth century, when the *First Coalition* of European powers were squarely defeated by the French Republic, provided a welcomed respite to the Ottoman Sultan. The respite was only temporary. In 1798 the highly ambitious and successful Napoleon Bonaparte of France attacked the Ottoman province of Egypt in an effort to strike a blow at Britain's lucrative access to India, thus pulling the Ottoman Empire headlong into the wider struggle. Militarily, Napoleon's Egyptian expedition ended in a disaster, when his army was eventually forced to surrender to the English in 1801.

Politically speaking though, it marked the beginning of his meteoric rise to success. Abandoning his army in Egypt in August of 1899, Napoleon was spirited away back to Paris where he seized control of government, eventually naming himself Emperor in 1804. As for the Ottoman Empire, the English restored Egypt to the Sultan, who was able to withdraw from the conflict without sustaining any territorial losses. (Schevill 1922, 279-281)

Napoleon's rise to the Emperorship in 1804 plunged the Western world into nothing short of a world war, with the primary battle lines being drawn between France and England and their respective allies. Napoleon ceased the hostilities between France and the Ottoman Empire, which had begun with the invasion of Egypt, and successfully formed an alliance with the Porte. Within the broader backdrop of the *Napoleonic Wars*, hostilities between the Russians and Turks were renewed in 1806 and, following a two-year interlude in the wake of the *Treaty of Tilsit*, they resumed once again in 1809. The Russians won a string of victories against the Ottomans, once again securing Wallachia and Moldavia. They pushed all the way to the southern banks of the Danube, but were never able to secure the passes through the Balkan Mountains. By 1811 Russia had a veritable noose around the neck of the Ottoman Empire, when the impending French threat to the west forced it to loosen its grip and relinquish its Turkish acquisitions. With the French invasion imminent, Czar Alexander I of Russia quickly concluded the *Russo-Turkish War* with the *Peace of Bucharest* (1812), so that he could withdraw his troops from Ottoman territory; subsequently, these were the same forces that would later harry the *Grande Armée* on its disastrous winter retreat from Moscow. For the Ottoman part, the Porte, having narrowly escaped disaster at the hands of the Russians, was handed

back most of the territories that it had lost, though through no skill or artful maneuvering of its own. (Schevill 1922, 282-284)

In the meantime, the Ottoman's were tightened their grip on the Balkans, in an attempt hang on to the peripheries of the empire. As a result of the increasingly repressive Ottoman rule in the early nineteenth century, a staunch Serbian resistance movement was organized under the Serb noble Kara George,^{*} who found encouragement in the weakened position of the Turks. Events culminated in 1804 in the *First Serbian Uprising*, which marked the beginning of the nine-year-long *Serbian revolution*. The Serbian rebels attacked Turkish inhabitants and burned their property as they usurped control of the region. The Ottoman sultan, Selim III (1789-1807) attempted to negotiate with the rebels, but when talks failed, he was eventually forced to organize a military campaign to put down the Serbs. The rebels won a series of victories at *Ivankovac* (1805) and *Mišar* (1806), culminating in siege and capture of Belgrade in early 1807. For the first time since the long forgotten days of Stephen Dushan (see earlier text) in the fourteenth century, the South Slavs had realistic dreams of autonomy. In the beginning the Serbian rebellion was largely successful because the Porte was entirely focused on staving off the Russian assaults (discussed above). Author Harold W. V. Temperley briefly describes the historical roots and nature of the uprising, writing:

“The decay and division of the Turks at the beginning of the nineteenth century ... offered an ideal moment at which to strike for freedom. There were a hundred fierce chieftains in the Serbian land, full of wild hatred of the janizaries, and thousands of Serbian peasants ready to follow them to the death. The noblest aspect of the Serbian revolt is its universality. There was no hanging back and no treachery, yet there was no pay for those who fought, and every man who joined the ranks joined for love. It was a true peasant uprising, a people in arms for liberty. Perhaps the liberty these men sought led them to cruelty in war and to lawlessness in peace, but this

^{*} Karađorđe Petrović.

wild freedom was something for which all of them were ready to die. Among wild races a great man always has immeasurable influence, yet the true hero of the revolution is not Kara George, but the individual Serbian peasant. For Kara George is only the greatest, because the most typical, of these fierce sons of freedom. (Temperley 1917, 174-175)

By 1813 the Russians were wholly engaged with Napoleon, freeing the Turks to finally deal with the insubordinate Serbs. They dispatched three powerful Ottoman armies to Serbia in order to finally quash the near decade old insurgency. Kara George was forced to flee to Hungary and his remaining followers remitted in the face of overwhelming Turkish force. The Ottomans dealt brutally with the Serbs as they reestablished control over the region. This dark historical episode would long be ingrained on the Serbian conscious; Davis writes:

“The conquerors slew with the sword, flung infants into boiling water, and impaled men and women by hundreds. As wrote a Serbian historian, Yakchitch, ‘peace was reestablished, but it was the peace of the tomb.’ For more than a year a reign of terror prevailed, every person who had had part in the insurrection being hunted down. Before one of the gates of Belgrade, says a writer of 1815, ‘on either side of the road are sixty to seventy impaled Serbs, their bodies are gnawed by the dogs wherever the latter can reach them.’”

In 1815 the *Second Serb Uprising* erupted, to which the Ottoman were not as prepared to put down. The Serbian forces under the prince, Miloš Obrenović (1817-1839), forced the Porte to capitulate and sign an agreement in 1816 that recognized the semi-autonomy of the Serbs. The Serbian state would continue to pay annual taxes to the Ottoman Empire, but it largely became an independent state. (Davis 1922, 290) Malcolm puts the Serbian revolution in historical perspective and in the context of the wider Balkans, asserting:

“The two ... revolts which had begun the Serbian move to independence expressed two tendencies which had long been visible in the Balkan provinces of the Ottoman Empire. There was popular unrest against the entire system, and there was the desire of the local representatives of that system to defend their privileges against interference (above all, reform)

from Istanbul. The power of the local Muslim notables was more entrenched in Bosnia; this meant that their resistance to central rule ... was strongly based and would take several generations to crush.” (Malcolm 1996, 89-90)

In hindsight, The Peace of Bucharest (discussed above), was a missed opportunity for the Ottomans, who could have lobbied for much more favorable terms due to Russia’s weak bargaining position. In any case, it bought them a good measure of peace during the last bloody years of the Napoleonic Wars. Following the fall of Napoleon, Russia found itself in the strongest position in all of Europe. To the Russians’ chagrin, the *Congress of Vienna* (1814-1815) recognized the Ottomans as a “legitimate government.” From 1815 to 1821 the czar was content not to resume hostilities against the Turks, patiently strengthening his *Holy Alliance* with Austria and Prussia. During these tentatively peaceful years, the Ottoman Sultan, Mahmud II (1808-1839), granted semi-independence to the Serbian rebels so that they would not be inclined to appeal to their Christian, Russian protectors to come to their aid against the Turks (for reasons discussed above). (Davis 1922, 286) From a wider perspective, in an effort to maintain the delicate balance of power, one of the principal aims of Western diplomacy during the post-Napoleonic era was the prevention of any justification on the czar’s part to renew attacks against the Sultan. The outbreak of the *Greek War of Independence* in 1821 stirred the romantic sentiments of western Europeans, further souring their view of the Turks, who they perceived as usurpers.⁶⁸

It is fair, no doubt, to argue that despite a never-ending series of calamities over the past century, even at this late date, two decades into the nineteenth century, to the

⁶⁸ Frank W. Thackeray, John E. Findling, and Douglas A. Howard, *The History of Turkey* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001), 58.

outside eye the Ottoman Empire still represented a great power center. It was ostensibly in control of the entire eastern Mediterranean, with footholds in Europe, Asia and Africa. But a closer look revealed how much direr the actual situation was, as the peripheries of the empire were shrinking. (Schevill 1922, 293) To compound the empires predicament, the situation in the capital, which had long been the stronghold of Turkish rule, was becoming increasingly fragile. The central governments, as well as the military were both in states of relatively unchecked decay. Cognizant of the mistakes of his predecessors, Mahmud II recognized the ills that had befallen the empire. He worked hard to reform it along Europeanized lines, that is to modernize it, the only way that he believed that the empire could be saved. In 1826 he abolished the Janissary Corps and established a more modernized Ottoman army. Further, he reorganized the Ottoman treasury to better equip it to handle the changing world order. By the mid-1830's he had to some degree successfully rationalized the central governmental bureaucracy, placing the entire apparatus under the immediate authority of the Sultan. (Thackeray, Findling and Howard 2001, 59)

When Mahmud II died in 1839 he was succeeded by his son Abdülmecid I (1839-1861), who was determined to carry on his father's reforms. During his reign two landmark reforming decrees were issued, the *Rose Garden Decree* * of 1839 and the *Imperial Rescript* of 1856, both aimed at changing the administrative, social and economic policy of the empire in order to confront the modernizing domestic and international political climate and, secondly, to win the continued political and economic support of the western European powers. The most revolutionary of the reforms, the Rose Garden Decree, "declared that the sultan guaranteed the life, property, and honor of

* *Hatt-i Sharif*.

all Ottoman subjects and the equality of all before the law, regardless of religious affiliation.” (Thackeray, Findling and Howard 2001, 60) Author Bernard Lewis further expounds on how revolutionary this measure actually was and what a bitter pill it was for many of the empire’s Muslims to swallow, averring that:

“It was this last [‘equality of persons of all religions in the application of the laws’] that represented the most radical breach with ancient Islamic tradition, and was therefore most shocking to Muslim principles and good taste. The laws and traditions of Islam, the policy and practice of the Ottoman Empire, agreed in prescribing tolerance and protection for the non-Muslim subjects of the state, and in granting them a large measure of autonomy in their internal communal affairs. This toleration, however, was predicated on the assumption that the tolerated communities were separate and inferior, and were moreover clearly marked as such... Infidel and true believer were different and separate; to equalize them and to mix them was an offence against both religion and common sense.”⁶⁹

The period following the issuance of the Rose Garden Decree is known as the era of the *Tanzimat*.^{*} In reality, the initiative for the reforms of this era laid more in the hands of the civil bureaucracy than in those of Abdülmecid I and his successors. Moreover, the ascendancy of the bureaucracy during the middle decades of the nineteenth century illustrates the near inability of the Islamic *Ulema*⁺ to provide competent leadership during this progressive era.” (Thackeray, Findling and Howard 2001, 60)

By the 1850s it had become inherently clear to the governments of Europe that the very existence of the Ottoman Empire was precariously balanced. Given this prognosis, the four strongest Christian powers with commitments in the region, Austria, Russia, France and England, began strategically aligning themselves to protect their own interests in the broader balance of international power should the Turkish empire finally collapse. Events cooled some over the next couple of years as the world waited. After some time,

⁶⁹ Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 105-106.

^{*} That is, “reorganization.”

⁺ The Muslim Clergy, who were the ultimate purveyors of Islamic Law.

it appeared that the revolutionary reforms enacted during the Tanzimat might have prolonged the life of the Ottoman Empire. This was only the quiet before the storm. Renewed tensions between Napoleon III of France and Nicholas I of Russia once again reached an international impasse. The crosshairs of the dispute fell squarely on the Ottoman Empire. (Davis 1922, 310) France and Russia worked themselves into positions, politically, from which neither could back down without a ruinous loss of prestige. Great Britain was something of a wild card, but its mistrust of Nicholas I added to its wariness of the possibility of a Russian hegemony, eventually leading it back the Franco-Turkish alliance against the Russians. The primary point being disputed was regarding which side held sway over the Christian populations in the Ottoman Empire. Russian Troops advanced into Romania in 1853, holding it for “security,” until the “rights” of the czar, as protector of the Ottoman Empire’s Christians, were restored. In 1854 France and England responded, declaring war on Russia and, thus, beginning the *Crimean War* (1854-1856). In retrospect, the Crimean War was relatively insignificant, as far as armed conflicts go. It consisted of only one important military engagement. When Nicholas I realized that his former ally, Austria, was about to join the alliance against him, he was forced to retreat most embarrassingly. With Russia withdrawing, public opinion in France and Great Britain loudly demanded reprisal. French and British forces attacked the naval fortress of *Sebastopol* located on the Crimean Peninsula. The siege that followed was a protracted affair that inflicted dreadful losses on the French and British, many due to the brutal Crimean winter. In the end, the allies would not be deterred. In the spring of 1855 Nicholas I died a bitter man, as more allied reinforcements were arriving at Sebastopol. When the fortress finally fell in September,

the losses to both sides were so appalling that the war could not be continued. The new czar, Alexander II, realized that it was essential to the future viability of his empire that he make peace with the allies. In the *Treaty of Paris* of 1856, Russia was forced to renounce any pretension of being a protector over Christians in the Ottoman Empire. Additionally, the rights to self-government in Moldavia, Wallachia and Serbia were confirmed and put under the protection of the victors, thus guaranteeing, at least for the time being, the “integrity of the Ottoman Empire.” The Sultan had been saved by fate once again, if only because the continued existence of his empire served as a strategic buffer between the allies and Russia. To show his gratitude, he agreed to instate a number of further reforms during the era following the Crimean War. (Davis 1922, 315-319)

The Imperial Rescript* of 1856 (discussed above) marked the beginning of the second phase of the Tanzimat. It reemphasized the principles of the Rose Garden Decree and adding some further measures aimed at modernizing the governmental apparatus. As a result of these reforms, as well as a host of other factors that were corrosive to the traditional structures of the empire, the status of its Christian and Jewish populations were gradually evolving during this age of change. Two of the small, but imminently visible, minorities who benefited from these changes were the Empire’s Jewish and urban Christian communities who took advantage of the liberalization of the Ottoman economy during the Tanzimat. These privileged classes possessed the necessary assets and business contacts, both within the empire and abroad, to develop successful commercial enterprises. In a number of cases *Capitulations* or agreements, granting tax exemptions and other favorable statuses, which had been made between these merchant classes and

* *Hatt-ı Hümayun*.

the Ottoman government during the previous centuries, became very profitable during this period. Although these arrangements caused little harm when they had been originally agreed to, the merchants, often backed by European governments, exploited the principals of extraterritoriality that were manifested in such agreements and built powerful financial enterprises that were outside of the reach of the Ottoman government. Their prosperity was not lost on their Muslim neighbors, who began to feel as though official policy slighted them in favor of the non-Muslims. This, along with other perceived grievances, became rallying points against all of the empire's Christian and Jewish inhabitants and Ottoman Muslims began to emphasize the Islamic character of the empire. The nationalist ideas and literature floating abundantly throughout the empire's Balkan provinces during this period thus became very attractive to its Christian populations, who were increasingly sympathizing with the nationalist aspirations of their coreligionists throughout the region. (Thackeray, Findling and Howard 2001, 63-64)

During the second half of the nineteenth century the changing international order coupled with a number of internal crises to further erode Ottoman power. The unification of Italy in 1860 represented the first great eighteenth century shift of power in Europe. This was followed by the defeat of the Habsburg Empire by Prussia and its subsequent reorganization as the *Austro-Hungarian Empire* in 1871. These power shifts, along with the creation of the *Three Emperors League*, between Russia, Austria and Germany in the 1870's, represented a clear threat to the established international order and, more specifically, to the powers of western Europe. The crash of international stock markets in 1873 precipitated a worldwide depression that lent a further urgency to international relations and maneuvering. At the same time, disastrous harvests led to widespread

famine throughout the Ottoman Empire, hitting especially hard in Asia Minor. When, in this tense climate, a new crisis erupted in the Balkans in 1875, the European powers watched very closely to see how the Ottomans would respond. In short, the whirlwind of events transpired along the following lines:

“An insurrection of peasants in Bosnia and Hercegovina broke out. Ottoman authorities were unable to suppress the revolt, which was aided by sympathetic Serbian and Montenegrin volunteers. In April 1876, Ottoman officials discovered a conspiracy of Bulgarian nationalists, hatched in the Danubian principalities with aid by Serbia. The Bulgarian rebels, forced to act prematurely, slaughtered many Turks. Their revolt was violently suppressed by the Ottomans, who committed shocking atrocities, murdering several thousand Bulgarians. Popular opinion in Western Europe turned with revulsion against the Turks. On May 30, Sultan Abdülaziz [1861-1876] was overthrown and replaced by the liberal Murad V [1876]. Weeks later, Serbia and Montenegro declared war on the Ottoman Empire... In August 1876, Murad V was deposed due to mental incompetence, and the comparatively unknown Sultan Abdülhamid II [1876-1909] acceded to the Ottoman throne.” (Thackeray, Findling and Howard 2001, 65-66)

The Ottomans imposed a number of crushing defeats on the Serbs, pushing them all the way back to Belgrade by the fall. As the Turks were preparing to advance on Belgrade, in what would have been a decisive victory, the Russians stepped in and compelled the two sides to sign an armistice. Serbia, facing the brutal reprisals of the Turks, was allowed to retire from the war relatively unscathed. The Ottoman campaign against Montenegro was more problematic still. The Montenegrins penetrated well into Ottoman territory and stubbornly entrenched themselves, refusing to come to an agreement, because they were confident that the Russians would come to their aid, as they had done for the Serbs. By 1877 it was apparent to the international community that another Turco-Russian war was imminently upon the horizon. (Schevill 1922, 397-398)

This flurry of events, including rebellion in the Balkans, the subsequent massacres and warfare, coupled with a renewed crisis in the Ottoman sultanate to cause great concern in the governments across Europe. The overwhelming desire of these governments was peace, but it lay down a rocky and perilous road. The general consensus was that it was imperative for the sultan to genuinely and effectively institute a program of reforms in the disaffected areas in Bosnia, Herzegovina and Bulgaria, but Abdülhamid II stubbornly resisted. Public opinion throughout Europe, which amounted to an ardent sympathy for the Ottoman Christians in these regions, swayed the European governments, that of Great Britain in particular, to push the Sultan toward an acceptable resolution. The real fear was that if a diplomatic resolution could not be reached, then Russia, which saw itself as the champion of both Orthodox Christianity and Slavdom, would declare war upon the Turks. The obvious outcome of such a war would be a resumption of the informal protectorate over the Ottoman Empire that the Russians had lost during the Crimean War. (Schevill 1922, 398-399)

A conference of international diplomats was called in Constantinople in 1876, in an attempt to avert the impending conflict. During the conference it was announced that Abdülhamid II had issued a constitution that abolished the traditional absolutism of the sultanate and granted all of its subjects an equal stake in the government. The Sultan declared that the international conference was thus pointless, in the face of the democratization of his empire, and asked for it to be disbanded. The international contingent was not so easily swayed and insisted that a program of reforms be instituted in the disputed Balkan region, to be carried out under close European supervision. The Sultan refused to accept European dominion over his lands and the conference disbanded

in despair. War was now certain. (Schevill 1922, 399) Russia spent the early months of 1877 politically maneuvering, in case it had to independently move against the Turks, without the sanction of the *Concert of Europe*. Two agreements were signed with Austria, first in January and again in March, aimed at strengthening the Russian position against the Ottomans. In the agreements, Austria resolved to maintain a “benevolent neutrality” if a Russo-Turkish war were to break out; in return she was granted permission to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina. Among a number of other conditions that were enumerated, Serbia and Montenegro were to remain neutral zones, Austrian troops were forbidden from invading Romania and the two powers were to support each other diplomatically against the other nations of Europe, with respect to the question of territorial changes following the war. Author M. S. Anderson briefly expounds on the realities of this agreement, asserting:

These agreements were a victory for Austria. She was to receive Bosnia and Herzegovina, and all this implied in terms of increased influence over the South Slavs and in the western Balkans, in return for mere neutrality. Russia had, at least by implication, recognised Serbia as falling within the orbit of Habsburg power and had been promised no direct gain except southern Bessarabia which had little more than prestige value. But she had freed her hands for action against the Turks, though at heavy cost. Austria was the only power whose military opposition in the Balkans need be feared. For the time being at least she had been bought off and was reliably neutral.⁷⁰

Finally, on April 24, 1877, Russia declared war on the Ottoman Empire. Materially, the Turks were equally well, if not better, equipped, than the Russians, although they were crippled by poor commanders and personal animosities that existed between them. The Russian advance was slow and in July it was halted altogether, in the

⁷⁰ M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question, 1774-1923: A Study in International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1966), 193-194.

face of bastioned resistance at the fortress of *Plevna* in Bulgaria. Throughout the siege of Plevna the Ottomans hoped and appealed for some type of international intervention, especially from Great Britain, to spare them from utter defeat. The international response to the conflict was indecisive. Plevna finally fell on December 11, and the Russians advanced deep into Ottoman territory. International response was still marked with apprehension. Finally, in the absence of international intervention, and with the Russians nearly at the gates of Constantinople, the Turks were left with no other alternative but to accept the severe Russian terms of armistice on January 27, 1878. (Anderson 1966, 196-198)

Among the terms of the armistice, the Turks were obliged to pay war indemnities, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro would be granted their independence, and Bosnia and Herzegovina were to become autonomous as well. As they stood, the terms of the armistice represented a grave threat to the entire edifice of international relations in Europe. The Great Powers, with Great Britain at the head, strenuously protested its terms, leading to an international crisis in which an Anglo-Russian war appeared to be a distinct possibility. On March 3, the Russians and Turks signed the *Treaty of San Stefano*, which essentially reiterated the terms of the armistice. Intoxicated with the victory, Russia sought to impose a Pan-Slavic peace on the Ottoman Empire, which further consolidated international attitudes against her. (Anderson 1966, 199-204) This international impasse provided the impetus for the *Congress of Berlin* that first met in June of 1878 to mediate the post-war world order. Weakened by the exertions of the war and with the Great Powers aligned against her, Russia's position at the bargaining table, in the wake of the military victory over the Turks, was very unfavorable. With regard to

the greater historical significance of the Congress of Berlin, author Herbert Adams

Gibbons concludes that:

“The Congress of Berlin made an honest effort to find a solution of the Near Eastern question that would avoid a general European war. It was accepted that no power could keep out of the scramble for Ottoman lands, should the empire break up. There was the same anxiety as at Paris in 1856 and at Vienna in 1815 to lessen as much as possible the disturbing effect of the creation of new states in the relations between the great powers. The suspicion of interestedness and of desire to secure exclusive political, and hence economic, advantages, which was manifested against Russia after the treaty of San Stefano, became the attitude of all the powers in regard to help rendered anywhere at any time by a single power to a smaller or weaker state.”⁷¹

The meeting was led by the German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, its primary aim was to revise the dictates of the Treaty of San Stefano and make them more agreeable to the Great Powers. The new agreement was formally accepted On July 13, 1878. Under its terms the Ottoman Empire was allowed to keep Constantinople. In the Balkans, Bulgaria was given autonomy as a tributary of the sultan and divided into several smaller territories; while Bosnia and Herzegovina were placed under the administrative control of Austria-Hungary. With the stroke of a pen, five centuries of Ottoman rule in the region were cast aside. In effect, the Congress of Berlin reversed Russia’s gains from the Russo-Turkish War. Further, it breathed another generation of existence into the Ottoman Empire and Austria-Hungary. The British and Germans stood behind the two fledgling empires because they served as a buffer to greater Russia (discussed above), which served to buttress the delicate world order. The Muscovites were left to lick their wounds in the face of the international concert against them.⁷² In final assessment, The

⁷¹ Herbert Adams Gibbons, *An Introduction to World Politics* (New York: The Century Co., 1922), 49-50.

⁷² A. J. P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809-1918: A History of the Austrian Empire and Austria-Hungary* (London: Hatmish Hamilton, 1948), 152-153.

Congress of was successful, in the short term at least, in effectively shoring up the vacuum created by the declining Turkish empire. Further, the Congress of Berlin represented the beginning of a new era in Balkan politics, as it sanctioned a policy of gradually replacing Ottoman rule in the Balkans with new, independent Christian states. With the yolk of Turkish rule cast aside, which had become the most unifying force in the region, the question of nationality came to define Balkan politics during the decades to come. (Schevill 1922, 406)

FROM AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN RULE TO YUGOSLAVIA

While Bosnia and Herzegovina remained nominally a part of the Ottoman Empire, the Great Powers put them under the administrative control of Austria-Hungary, with the aim of preventing them from uniting with the Slav state of Serbia. This was with an eye toward the circumvention of wider Serb nationalism, which was beginning to blossom in the region. The general hope of the Great Powers was that the Balkan states could be reincorporated with Turkey within the next generation. Author A. J. P. Taylor describes the nature of the Austro-Hungarian administration, writing:

“Bosnia and Hercegovina had not been annexed; therefore they could not be included in either Austria or Hungary. They became instead the only territorial expression of the ‘common monarchy’ and thus the last relic of the great Habsburg Monarchy which had once directed a united Empire. The two provinces were the ‘white man's burden’ of Austria-Hungary. While other European Powers sought colonies in Africa for the purpose, the Habsburg Monarchy exported to Bosnia and Hercegovina its surplus intellectual production -- administrators, road builders, archæologists, ethnographers, and even remittance-men. The two provinces received all the benefits of Imperial rule: ponderous public buildings; model barracks

for the army of occupation; banks, hotels, and cafés; a good water supply for the centres of administration and for the country resorts where the administrators and army officers recovered from the burden of Empire. The real achievement of Austria-Hungary was not on show: when the Empire fell in 1918, eighty-eight per cent of the population was still illiterate. Fearful of South Slav nationalism, the Habsburg administrators prevented any element of education or of self-government.” (Taylor 1948, 153)

When Austro-Hungarian troops marched into Bosnia in July of 1878, to begin the occupation, they encountered dogged Muslim resistance. The resistance was founded on the expectation that the Habsburgs would advocate Bosnia’s heretofore landless and disenfranchised Christians, who had just shrugged of the Ottoman yolk. The Muslim guerrillas harassed the occupying army for nearly six months, killing more than 5,000 Austro-Hungarians, many of Croatian descent, before they were brought to heel at the end of the year. To maintain order, the new administration continued using the old Ottoman feudal and administrative structures that were already in place. Thus, Bosnian Christians who could not afford to purchase their own land remained in the service of the Muslim landowners. (Friedman 2004, 10) Author Charles Seignobos writes about the process, which was largely responsible for the rise of pan-Croat nationalism during this era:

“[The] occupation ... complicated ... inter-racial strife. The provinces which were occupied had a population speaking the Croatian language, but divided among three religions: Mussulman, Orthodox, and Catholic. The Croatian nationalist party adopted the idea of a Greater Croatia which should unite all races speaking the Croatian tongue (Croatia, Dalmatia, Slavonia, and Bosnia). This Slavic agitation was equally disquieting.”⁷³

⁷³ Charles Seignobos, *A Political History of Europe, since 1814*, ed. Macvane, S. M. (New York: H. Holt and Company, 1900), 544.

The ethno-religious divide in Bosnia, the most heterogeneous of the Balkan countries, that would tear the country apart during the 1990s (see later text), became cemented during this era of Austro-Hungarian occupation. The Muslims, unwilling to be separated from their coreligionists in Turkey, fought desperately against the occupiers. On the other hand, Bosnia's Slavic population was unhappy with the occupation as well, because of their hopes for any type of united southern kingdom.⁷⁴

Economically speaking, Austria-Hungary instituted a forward-looking, if not uneven, plan in Bosnia throughout the last two decades of the nineteenth century. Agricultural capital was used to support commercial banking and large-scale industry. Bosnia's forests represented one rich source of raw materials. The introduction of coal mining, along with the enlargement of the traditional iron mining industry, turned the region into a significant center of mineral production. Despite these modest steps forward, it is fair to assert that the Austro-Hungarians never propelled Bosnia to any momentous economic developments. Moreover, being somewhat isolated from the rest of Austria-Hungary, and because of a relative lack of railways, Bosnia was largely dependent on maritime transport, which further hampered its potential for economic growth. (Friedman 2004, 10-11)

On the broader international stage, the Congress of Berlin had far reaching consequences on the fate of the European states system. Simplified for the purposes of this analysis, the alliance between Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia, the Three Emperors League (see earlier text), which had localized the issue of the post-Ottoman Balkans in the 1870's, began to weaken as time went on. Russia, taking British and

⁷⁴ Charles McLean Andrews, *From the Congress of Vienna to the Present Time, 1815-1897* *From the Congress of Vienna to the Present Time, 1815-1897* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), 423.

Austrian opposition for granted, perceived Germany as the primary reason for its diplomatic defeat at the Congress of Berlin and as a threat to Russian security.

Accordingly, it raised a high protective tariff in 1878, which heightened tensions. At the same time Germany, under Bismarck, moved politically to the right, as she abandoned her liberal allies and free trade practices, in reaction to the economic depression that had prevailed since 1873. Thus, a grave new conflict of interest arose between Germany and Russia. In order to avert an armed conflict, a *Dual Alliance* was formed in 1879. It heralded a new era in European state relations, constructed by the shrewd Bismarck, in which formal alliances were being drawn up, binding most of the Continental powers to Germany. The new system that was created was a distinct departure from the loose arrangements of the 1870's; it represented the beginning of an age of international diplomacy and alliances which would lead to the steps of World War I.⁷⁵

During the 1880's the Balkan Christian states began to dream of a future outside of the dictates of the Congress of Berlin. In Bulgaria, which had been divided artificially, there was a strong yearning for unification of all the Bulgar peoples. In 1885 a revolution in East Rumelia^{*} proclaimed a union with greater Bulgaria. Agitated by and jealous of this sudden expansion of Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia loudly called for a Balkan balance of power. Serbia mobilized its army and, with the hope of annexing a chunk of Bulgaria's border, attacked its Slav neighbor on November 14. The results of the Serb-Bulgar war that ensued were a great surprise to the continental powers who assumed that Serbia would relatively quickly quash Bulgaria. The Bulgarians decisively routed the Serbs at *Slivnitsa* and Austria stepped in to keep the peace. The bygone days of the

⁷⁵ F. R. Bridge, and Roger Bullen, *The Great Powers and the European States System, 1815-1914* (London: Longman, 1980), 124-125.

^{*} Northern Thrace.

Middle Ages, when the Bulgars and Serbs had fought side by side to resist Ottoman suppression, had been long forgotten. This souring of inter-Slav relations was full of foreboding for the future. The European powers were impressed by Bulgaria's victory against the Serb aggressors and, at the urging of Great Britain, formal recognition of a Bulgarian union was given in 1886. (Schevill 1922, 412-413)

Another crucial Balkan dispute that arose during this period of nationalist awakenings was in Macedonia. Due to its centrally located position along the Vardar corridor, this large and rather undefined principality was a veritable depository of Balkan peoples, including Greeks, Bulgar and Serb Slavs, Kutzo-Vlachs,⁺ Albanians and Muslims. Even before the Congress of Berlin placed Macedonia under the weak hand of the sultan, Bulgarian propagandists had begun inundating the diverse principality with propaganda intended to sway the feelings of its peoples. As time went on, this method was copied by the other peoples throughout the Balkans and a war of rival propagandas ensued. It has continued for more than a century and been responsible for untold bloodshed throughout the greater region. As the nineteenth century drew to a close, it was apparent that when the Ottoman regime broke down, as it was certain to do before long, Macedonia would become a bone between three hungry dogs, Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria. During the late 1890's the Bulgarians, unable to contain their rabidity any longer, began secretly organizing armed bands and raiding Turk garrisons in the Vardar valley. The Greeks soon followed suit and fresh Turkish troops were sent in to quell the situation, but to no avail. By 1903 the province was in an uproar and the international community could no longer ignore the stories of atrocities and burning villages floating around in the press. With Russia and Austria at the head, the international powers

⁺ Nomadic Orthodox Christians.

instituted the *Mürzsteg program*, which, for all practical purposes, displaced the Sultan's power in the region. The new program was somewhat successful in quelling the violence, although in many areas it was stubbornly persisted. (Schevill 1922, 432-436)

In the early years of the twentieth century Slav nationalism rapidly gained momentum in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. In 1903 the king of Serbia, Alexander I (1889-1903), a client of Austria, was assassinated by nationalist Serbian officers. He was replaced by Peter I Karageordjević (1903-1921), an ardent proponent of the Pan-Serb dream, who wanted to cut Serbia's ties with Austria-Hungary. The Pan-Serb position called for the unification of all "Serbian lands," including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia, and the Kosovo district of Albania. Serbia's magnetic influence over the Balkan Serb peoples represented a significant threat to the tenuous political equilibrium in the region, as, in the succeeding years, it continued to grow. (Gildea 1996, 398-400)

Events that transpire in Turkey in 1908 would have far reaching implications for the Balkans in particular, as well as the larger world. The *Young Turk Revolution* hailed the second constitutional era and the beginning of the final phase of the dissolution of the old Ottoman Empire. The ideals behind the revolution were indeed magnanimous, but the political realities, domestic and international, were stacked against the Young Turks at its outset. With the resumption of constitutional rule, it was expected that all of the empire's tributary provinces would be returned to their rightful position under Ottoman rule. Thus, among other such provincial disputes raised, it was assumed by the Turks that Bosnia and Herzegovina would be returned to the Ottoman fold. The result turned out to be just the opposite. Austria-Hungary promptly annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina, which

she had presided over since the Congress of Berlin. Similar situations resulted as Bulgaria declared independence and Crete decreed a union with Greece. Although the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was a direct violation of the treaty of Berlin, the great powers stood by with hardly a whisper. Each had problems and political designs of their own and could hardly afford the political baggage that stepping into this situation would imply. With no power standing behind her demand for the restoration of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey was isolated. In the end, Turkey had no other viable options and, thus, accepted a cash payment for the two Balkan provinces. This turn of events fanned the volatile flames of Serbian nationalism for two primary reasons. First, an Austro-Hungarian controlled Bosnia and Herzegovina blocked Serbia's access to the sea. Secondly, Bosnia and Herzegovina were filled with people of Serbian extraction and language and the area that they inhabited represented an essential part of the dream of a greater Serbia. As we shall see, these sentiments would play a fundamental role in the eruption of the World War I less than a decade later. (Gibbons 1922, 219-222)

As the great nations scurried to build armies and navies in the image of the new century, they also began to rigidly align themselves politically (discussed above) in order to deal with the threats of the changing world order. The Italian attack on Ottoman Libya in 1911 was the spark that ignited the region into outright warfare. Setting aside their bitter differences, it was apparent to the Balkan states that they needed to cooperate if they were to successfully face Turkey. The impetus for this notion arose in the wake of the Bosnian annexation crisis (discussed above), when Russian foreign policy devotedly supported a league of Balkan states, which would form an offensive alliance against the deteriorating Ottoman Empire and serve as a barrier to Austrian ambitions. As a result,

treaties were struck between Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro, creating the *Balkan League* in 1912. The primary aim of the Balkan League, at least for its members, was the eventual division of Macedonia between them. A mere month later, on October 12, the League was forced into action as the eager little state of Montenegro began attacking Ottoman forces; pulling itself and its allies into the *First Balkan War*. (Gildea 1996, 408) The four Balkan allies won a quick and resounding victory over the more poorly equipped and less organized Turks. The Ottoman Porte was distraught in the face of this overwhelming disaster and appealed to the great powers to mediate a peace. On December 3, a cessation of hostilities was called and a peace conference was held in London. While the conference was discussing the terms of peace, two new crises, with ominous implications for the future, arose which the great powers were forced to address. First, a dispute broke out between the Greek and Bulgarian allies over the port of Saloniki,* which was only temporarily resolved because of the need for a united front against the common Turkish enemy in the peace settlement. Second, blocked from the sea, Serbia resolved to make a push for the Adriatic by moving through Albania. No sooner had Serb detachments advanced into Albania than the international community responded in ardent protest. Albania, seeing this as the moment to act, before being divided amongst the spoils of the Ottoman Empire, declared its independence. The *Treaty of London*, signed on May 30, 1913, resolved, at least temporarily, these complex issues. Albania was recognized as an independent state and the powers stood by their veto of Serbian occupation of the Adriatic coast. Turkey, the exhausted old giant, was almost entirely ejected from the European continent. The question of the division of spoils between the victorious allies represented an even more complex and contentious

* Thessaloniki.

issue. Glutted on their own importance, the victors refused to listen to reason. After decades of ardently building Bulgar sentiment amongst the natives of Macedonia, Bulgaria felt especially slighted because it was forced to settle for Thrace and leave Macedonia, its true political objective, to its Greek and Serbian allies. This, among other similar points of dissension, boded ill for the future of the region. (Schevill 1922, 471, 473-475)

In the month following the Treaty of London, the former Balkan allies squared off with one another in full battle strength on the Macedonian front. The intrigues of the great powers only served to further muddy the waters as the situation reached a boiling point. On June 29, 1913, less than a month after the cessation of hostilities with Turkey, Bulgaria advanced on the Serbian positions in Macedonia. Thus began the *Second Balkan War*, which had been brewing since the Congress of Berlin. Battle lines were drawn, pitting Greece, Serbia and Romania, on the one side, against Bulgaria on the other. The conflict was brief, with hostilities lasting a little less than a month. Bulgaria was caught in a tri-pronged attack of Serbs and Greeks from the west and south and Romanians from the north, and forced to capitulate. As the international community tried to sort out the spoils, Turkey reacted, moving to reclaim a piece of its lost territory in the Balkans. Russia stepped in to maintain the order. The peace talks that ensued culminated in the *Treaty of Bucharest* (1913). Amongst its terms, Macedonia was divided between Greece and Serbia, Bulgaria was awarded a portion of Thrace including access to the Aegean, and Serbia acquired Kossovo. Further, Bulgaria's border with Turkey was redrawn in such a way that she lost the main railway that led to her port on the Aegean. The year closed with Turkey in a much more advantageous position than

anyone would have thought possible following the Treaty of London. (Schevill 1922, 477-478) As we stand on this precipice, before the Great War, Schevill puts the situation into broader historical context, writing:

Pausing for a moment to bring the changes produced in Balkania by the wars of 1912 and 1913 into a general historical perspective, we are forced to admit that the picture before us has both encouraging and alarming elements. Once more the Ottoman Empire has receded, this time to the straits, and its paralyzing hand has been lifted from lands which it had systematically brought to ruin. The Christian states, on the other hand, have reached a new milestone of their steady and hopeful development. To Greece, Serbia, and Montenegro it was particularly gratifying that they had almost doubled their area. Even Bulgaria, despite the disastrous ending of the second war, came out of the struggle with an increase of territory in Thrace. Rumania gained least and the little she did gain was Bulgarian soil, which she could not by any stretch of the imagination claim on nationalist grounds. And therewith we touch the aspect of the new Balkan boundaries particularly inviting reflection. Drawn or at least largely drawn on the basis of might, they frequently cut with ruthless unconcern across established ethnic lines. It was, however, axiomatic that these would have to be treated tenderly and with respect if a genuine pacification of the peninsula was ever to be realized.

He continues further, speaking with respect to the implications for the future of the region that arose out of the two Balkan Wars; which is of fundamental importance to the present analysis:

Long before the partners of 1912 undertook their war of liberation, it was clearly indicated by the progress of events that the days of the Ottoman Empire in Europe were counted and that something would have to be found to replace it. That something was prepared in the womb of Time in the shape of the Christian states, which in the course of the nineteenth century had bravely struggled through adolescence into manhood. By the beginning of the twentieth century it was clear that, after taking over the remainder of the Ottoman heritage, they would either have to combine on some formula of neighborliness and cooperation or else run the risk of a ferocious enmity, certain ultimately to thrust them back into a chaos as bad as the Turkish oppression from which they had been delivered. Out of fear of this sinister development the well-wishers of the Christian states the world over had greeted the quadruple alliance with delight, and when within a few weeks it fell so tragically to pieces, they viewed the catastrophe with angry consternation. Let us be in no doubt about the new

and terrible hatreds bred by the war of 1913 and the treaty which concluded it... Therefore from the satisfaction which a sympathetic observer might reasonably draw from the increasing strength and civilization of the expanding Christian states, a serious deduction would have to be made in view of the prospect of the perpetuation of those agitations and conflicts which had made the Balkan chaos a byword in Europe. More visibly than ever there floated over that chaos not peace but a sword. (Schevill 1922, 480-481)

The outbreak of *World War I* can be attributed to a host of factors. Two of the chief of which were the ambitions of the Great Powers and the strategies that they employed to realize them. A third such factor was the system of alliances that had been formed between the powers (described more fully above), in which hostilities begun by or against one of their members had the effect of dragging their allies in with them. By 1914 Germany gravely feared being encircled by its enemies, primarily France, Great Britain and Russia. The German Chief of Staff, Moltke, urged his allies within the *Triple Alliance*, which also included Austria-Hungary and Italy, toward a preemptive strike against Russia and France, before their enemies could complete their rearmament programs. The initial spark that ignited the world into the chaos of World War I occurred in the streets of Bosnia's capital, Sarajevo, when the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the Austrian heir, and his wife were assassinated by Bosnian students. The assassins were proponents of Pan-Serb unification of Bosnia and Herzegovina into greater Serbia. Though the Serbian government did not have a hand in the killings, the weapons used were traced back to the head of the Intelligence Bureau of the Serb General Staff, who was also known to be an activist in the pro-Serb underground. In the wake of the assassination Austria appealed to Berlin for an unconditional promise of support in the case of Austrian military action. The hope was that such a promise would cause Russia

to back off, allowing the war to be localized in the Balkans, or else Austria and Germany could deal with Russia between them. Germany agreed to the *Blank Cheque* on July 5, 1914. On July 23, Austria issued an ultimatum to Serbia. Its primary dictates were aimed at putting a halt to the huge amount of Pan-Serb propaganda that had been circulating through the region and to bring those responsible for the assassination to trial. Serbia agreed to the main points of the ultimatum, but Austria was not interested in peace. Pointing to a minor discrepancy in the Serbian capitulation, Austria declared war on Serbia on July 28. For Germany this represented a historic opportunity to preemptively strike Russia; the Serbian war was only a side note. (Gildea 1996, 414-416) The dominoes were thus aligned and with this first push they began to fall. Germany declared war on Russia on August 1. On August 2, she invaded neutral Belgium, while the Turks, afraid of utter destruction at the hands of the Russians, entered into the Triple Alliance. The next day, August 3, Great Britain, angered by the violation of Belgian neutrality, which had been under the protection of the Great Powers since 1839, and worried about the implications of a Franco-German war, issued an ultimatum to Germany. Germany responded by declaring war on France later that day. (Gildea 1996, 418-419)

In the colorful language of author R. J. Crampton, “war, the midwife of all modern epochs, had arrived to deliver the twentieth century.” He further expounds on this notion, writing:

The years 1848-1914 had shown that nationalism itself was not a powerful enough force to bring about territorial change. It could, and did, precipitate instability which, if exploited by established military forces, could bring war and territorial revision, but without external military intervention nationalism could not create a nation-state... Of all the new states born in Europe between 1815 and 1914 only two, Belgium and Norway, had appeared without war. The First World War made possible the emergence of national states which had previously been considered

impracticable, even by nationalist leaders. The demand for such states, however, was not the cause but the consequence of the war.⁷⁶

The Great Powers were anticipating a short war and, in their nearsightedness, none had thought through, in any great detail, the political solution that they wanted to see develop in its wake. During the early part of the war both sides made promises to minorities within the enemy's sphere of influence, but these seem to have been aimed more at weakening the enemy's strength than from a sincere belief in the idea of restructuring Europe along nation lines. As the war dragged on and the world witnessed the unprecedented ghastly horrors of the Dardanelles, Verdun, the Somme, and the Brusilov offensive, the Powers began showing an earnest readiness to make major concessions for territorial restructuring. By the end of 1916, Karl* (1916-1918), the final monarch of the Habsburg Empire declared that he would agree to the creation of a predominantly South-Slav kingdom consisting of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Albania. In a famous note to American President Woodrow Wilson dated January 12, 1917, France and England expressed their desire to see the "liberation of the Italians, as also of the Slavs, Roumanes, and Czechoslovaks from foreign rule." Although this did not represent an official policy commitment of the western powers, it did show their clear intent that Austria-Hungary was to be the first multi-national empire to receive the death sentence. (Crampton 1997, 7)

In the early going, the Serbian army held off the Austrian advance, with most of their losses due to an outbreak of typhus during the winter of 1914 and 1915, which killed some 150,000 people. By the autumn of 1915 the tide had turned, as a

⁷⁶ R. J. Crampton, *Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century and after* (London: Routledge, 1997), 6-7.

* Charles I.

simultaneous German and Bulgarian offensive inflicted horrendous losses on the Serbs.⁷⁷ In the end, Serbia bitterly suffered the bloodletting of the war, losing up to one fourth of its civilian population. Bosnia was much more fortunate, experiencing only a few small engagements early in the war, it was mercifully untouched after 1915. The Bosnian population was drawn to pick sides in the war more along the lines of their specific locality rather than ethnic orientation. South-Slavs were pitted against one another in the tangled mess that was the war, as Croats in the Habsburg army fought against Serbs in the Serbian army. Bosnian Muslims and Croats held bloody anti-Serb demonstrations in the streets of Sarajevo. On the Bosnian borders with Serbia and Montenegro Serbs were violently persecuted and interned. As a result many Bosnian Serbs fled into Serbia to join the ranks of the Serb army, along with a few Bosnian Croats and Muslims. Conversely, a small number of Serbs could be found in the Habsburg army fighting with their Bosnian Croat and Muslim cousins. Throughout the course of the war, estimates of around 10,000 Bosnians were killed or wounded in the fighting. Perhaps a better representation of the toll that the war took on the Balkans can be seen in the disparity between the 1910 and 1921 censuses. During this period Bosnia's population dropped by two percent, amounting to some 40,000 people. (Friedman 2004, 12-13)

The Russian Revolution of 1917 had a profound influence on the course of the war and the future of eastern Europe. The non-Russian peoples of the empire saw the revolution and its liberal reforms as an opportunity to break free of the Russian yolk, for the first time in history. The fall of the tsardom produced fear in Germany and Austria that the revolution was contagious and that it would spread into their domains. When the

⁷⁷ Fred Singleton, *Twentieth-Century Yugoslavia* (London: Macmillan, 1976), 58.

United States joined the war on the side of the *Entente Powers* in April of 1917, on the side of liberal democracy, the situation looked even more bleak for Germany and her allies. In November events in Russia took a turn that would have longstanding consequences for the future of the entire world, when the *Bolshevik Party* seized power and proclaimed a communist revolution. Wilson's *Fourteen Points*, issued in early 1918, served to further encourage nationalist aspirations throughout Europe. The worsening conditions inside of the *Central Powers* caused by the war and exacerbated by the allied naval blockade, including "food shortages, overcrowding in the cities, inflation, dejection and demoralization amongst armies short of supplies, together with an exultant Bolshevik propaganda," were compounding, resulting in rapidly rising social discontent. Because of her Dual Alliance with Germany, Austria-Hungary was essentially obliged to play the role of a German satellite state during the war. A primary reason that Austria-Hungary was able to carry on the war for so long was because the eastern, Hungarian, half of the empire was able to keep the army well supplied at the western front. The war dragged on and by 1916 and 1917, it had taken an enormous toll on the Central Powers. Food and supplies from Hungary became intermittent at best. The social and political fabric of the Central Powers, especially within Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria, were rent to the breaking point. There were loud cries from within to seek an armistice with the Entente Powers. As the end of the war drew near, it became increasingly clear that it was going to be an overwhelming victory for the Entente. The various nationalist movements within the Balkans, who had previously been arguing for a greater degree of autonomy within their specific districts, began loudly pressing for their full independence to be recognized. In the tenuously balance Austro-Hungarian Empire, extremist politicians

used these charged populist sentiments to consolidated their power, along separatist minority lines. (Crampton 1997, 7-8)

Under so many pressures, the patchwork Austro-Hungarian Empire began to disintegrate during the closing months of the war. With the groundwork already set at the 1917 *Corfu Declaration*, the exiled Serbian government seized the opportunity to finally realize the Pan-Serb dream. The Prince-Regent of Serbia, Alexander Karadjordjević, proclaimed the unification of Serbia with the lands of the Croats and Slovenes. The *Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes* was officially proclaimed on December 1, 1918. A *Yugoslav*^{*} state was finally a reality, but its realization had been shaky and problematic at best. The Croats and Slovenes tried to get assurances of equality, but to no avail. The Serbs steadfastly refused, as the foundations of the new Yugoslav state were based on Serbian supremacy. The seeds of future conflict were sown in it very creation. Thus, it was that across Eastern Europe, throughout the last months of 1918, a host of small, independent nations emerged between Germany and Russia; each experiencing the growing pains of the new and evolving world order.⁷⁸

With American troops pouring across the Atlantic, Germany was forced to face the insurmountable proposition of facing nearly two million fresh troops by 1919. Following a series of crushing defeats, the beleaguered Germans finally signed an armistice on November 11, 1918, silencing the guns for the first time in more than four years. As the world adjusted its bleary eyes to the new peace, the allies were faced with the daunting task of distributing the spoils and redrawing the national lines across Europe. Following the German surrender, the great powers met for six long months at

^{*} That is, *South Slav*.

⁷⁸ H. Stuart Hughes, *Contemporary Europe: A History* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1961), 108-109.

the *Paris Peace Conference* to discuss the terms of peace, beginning in January of 1919. During the course of the negotiations the great powers formally recognized the new Yugoslav state on July 28, 1919. The end result of the peace conference was the *Treaty of Versailles*, signed on June 28, 1919, which outlined the shape of the new, post-war world.⁷⁹

In the Balkans, author Fred Singleton writes, “The result of the actions of the Yugoslavs and the work of the Allied peacemakers of Versailles was to produce a state composed of disparate elements, brought together by force of circumstances into a shotgun marriage.” In effect, the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were left with no other alternative than to accept the reality of the situation and unite. Amongst their leaders there was a genuine good will and hope for success, but the underlying stresses inherent to the patchwork structure would soon rear their heads. The conglomerate Yugoslav state was composed of the following discordant elements:

1. “The Kingdom of Serbia, with a population of 3,350,000, of whom 550,000 were Macedonians who had been under Serbian rule only since the end of the Balkan Wars in 1913;
2. the Kingdom of Montenegro, with a population of 250,000, most of whom were Serbian in speech but who had a long tradition of independence. Montenegro had enlarged its territory in 1913 and had acquired 80,000 Moslem Albanians from the Sandiak of Novi Pazar, which was partitioned between Serbia and Montenegro at the end of the Balkan Wars;
3. Croatia--Slavonia, a former province of Hungary, which had acquired a measure of autonomy during the late nineteenth century. Croatia--Slavonia covered the Sava valley, from Srem to Zagreb, and included a frontage on the Adriatic between Fiume (Rijeka) and Zara (Zadar). It contained 1,638,000 Croats and 645,000 Serbs;
4. the former Austrian province of Dalmatia, which stretched for over two hundred miles along the Adriatic coast from Zadar to Kotor, and included many of the offshore islands and the cities of Šibenik, Split and Dubrovnik. Dalmatia had a mixed population of Serbs and Croats amounting to 611,000 in all;

⁷⁹ Bullitt Lowry, *Armistice 1918* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1996), 1-2.

5. the former Austrian province of Carniola (Krain) and parts of Styria (Steiermark), Carinthia (Kärnten) and Istria. In these areas Slovenes made up the overwhelming majority of the one million inhabitants, but there were significant German-speaking minorities in the Styrian towns of Marburg (Maribor) and Cilli (Celje) and in Gottschee (Kotčvje) in South Carniola. On the other hand there were some 300,000 Slovenes left in the Julian Region and Istria, which went to Italy, and in the Klagenfurt (Celovec) area of Carinthia, which remained in Austria; the former Hungarian districts of Baranja and Batka, part of the Banat (which was divided between Romania and Yugoslavia), and two small areas near the confluence of the Mur (Mura) and Drava rivers, Prekomurje and Medjumurje. The last two had a mixed Slovene, Croat and Magyar population, and the others a complicated ethnic structure, in which Magyars formed the largest single group, but by no means an overall majority;
6. *Bosnia--Hercegovina*, a former Habsburg province, occupied by the Monarchy in 1878 and formally annexed in 1908. The 1910 Austrian census records 823,000 *Serbs*, 400,000 *Croats* and 610,000 *Moslems* [italic mine] of Slav speech. This last group is composed of the descendants of Slavs who embraced Islam during the 400 years of Turkish rule before the Austrian occupation of 1878.” (Singleton 1976, 66-67)

In the first Yugoslav census, conducted in 1921, an amazing *twelve* linguistic groups were represented. While Serbs, Croats and Slovenes made up nearly ten million of the Kingdom's population, its remaining two million inhabitants were composed of five other non-Slav groups of over 150,000 people each, including Germans, Magyars, Albanians, Romanians and Turks. Along religious lines the population of twelve million broke down to 5.5 million Orthodox Christians, 4.7 million Roman Catholics and more than 1.3 million Muslims; with no other groups exceeding one million adherents. (Singleton 1976, 68) Economically, there was a profound disparity in the level of development in the different regions of the new South-Slav state. Thus, in broader historical perspective, the blood and chaos of World War I, which had cost some 1.9 million South Slav lives, gave birth to the Yugoslav state. Given its diverse makeup, along with the unforgotten

animosities of the not too distant past, the prospects of a united Yugoslav future looked shaky at best.⁸⁰

From its incipience the South-Slav state was torn over the issue of governance, which was compounded by the distinct and varied legal traditions that its borders encompassed. Primarily, “should the regime be centralized [i.e. a republic] or should it be a decentralized federation?” Because nearly the entire region hailed from an agrarian peasant past, the dual processes of modernization and urbanization and their byproduct, the development of a middle class, was belated and slow. In 1921 eighty percent of the population was still involved in agriculture. Industrial development was slow and uneven. The majority of industry was located in the former Habsburg domains of Slovenia and Croatia. Compounding its problems, the fledgling state was faced with the manifold obstacles of sorting out four separate rail systems, seven bodies of law and a number of different currencies. The unification of these different systems was a slow and cumbersome process. Consequently, Yugoslavia lagged well behind the rest of Europe in embracing the modernization of the twentieth century. (Udovički and Ridgeway 1997, 50-51)

The Serbian, Croatian and Slovene political elites earnestly worked to minimize the conflict inside of the delicately South-Slav state. To this aim, a number of reforms were instituted to modernize the government as well as the infrastructure. The first major step in this direction was the *St. Vitus Day Constitution*,* which was ratified on the symbolic anniversary of the battle of Kosovo, June 28, 1921:

⁸⁰ Jasminka Udovički and James Ridgeway, eds., *Burn This House: The Making and Unmaking of Yugoslavia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), 48, 50.

* *The Vidovdan Constitution*.

“It defined the new state as a constitutional, parliamentary, and hereditary monarchy. The constitution enshrined the principles of European bourgeois life: the abolition of feudal obligations, the inviolability of private property, and guarantees of equality under the law and freedom of religion and of the press. This constitution promised modernization but in practice offered only a step in that direction. In a simpler context the liberalism of the constitution might have prevailed; in the Balkans, it could not. (Udovički and Ridgeway 1997, 51)

From its incipience the new constitution was a matter of dispute. It had been adopted by a simple majority of the Constitutional Assembly and, in effect, institutionalized Serb domination. Further tipping power in favor of the Serbs, the Constitution prescribed a highly centralized government allowing Belgrade to dominate the political scene. The Croats and Slovenes raised bitter objections to such a Serb-dominated system, calling for a strictly federal state. In theory the new constitution was meant to fuse the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes into a single nation; in actual practice, it did little more than provide a geographic framework. (Udovički and Ridgeway 1997, 51) It changed none of the essential structures of government and passed on the prevailing schemes of local governance to the new state. The constitution’s primary effect was that it, at least for the time being, maintained the unity of the Kingdom under the person of the king, Alexander I Karadjordjević* (1921-1934) (see earlier text), and established a dynasty with broad royal authority.⁸¹

The single-chambered parliamentary system was created functioned hesitantly under within the limits set by the constitution until 1924. During these first years of constitutional rule the Croats chose to abstain from participation, protesting the heavily Serb-biased system and arguing for their own autonomy. In 1924 the Croats

* *Alexander the Unifier.*

⁸¹ Robert J. Kerner, ed., *Yugoslavia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1949), 123-124.

were brought into the political fold when it became apparent that their boycott was failing. This was due largely to the skillful political maneuvering of Nikola Pašić, the Serbian, Yugoslav Prime Minister, which was nothing short of a political miracle on his part. When the Croats halted this program of abstentive separatism, the Kingdom was able to take its first deep breath and a rocky period of healing began in its national political life. (Kerner 1949, 124) With all of the parties at least participating in the political process, the unduly broad royal authority granted under the constitution became the greatest impediment to the parliamentary system. According to the constitution, King Alexander was endowed with inviolability, meaning that Parliament could not hold him legally responsible for his actions. Further, all of the state's functions, including those in the legislative, administrative and judicial realms, ultimately rested in the King's hands. Alexander, who was under the direct control of the Serbian government in Belgrade, constantly used his powers to interfere with the political functionings of the government, undermining the basic principles of parliamentarianism on which it was supposed to be based. (Udovički and Ridgeway 1997, 54)

By 1928 the gallimaufry Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes had languished through the decade since its birth out of the turmoil of World War I. Despite the whirlpool of competing factions over which it was charged, it had remained together, however tenuously. A critical turning point, which worked to undo the fragile balance, came on June 20, when three members of the *Croatian Peasant Party*, including the celebrated Croatian separatist and founder of the party, Stiepan Radić, were assassinated by a Montenegrin Serb politician. This tragic act erased all illusions regarding the future viability of a democratic Yugoslavia. Radić's death radicalized the

Croatian nationalist movement and drove an irreparable wedge into Serb-Croat split. King Alexander used the upheaval provided by the crisis to stage a coup d'état on January 6, 1929, the tenth anniversary of Yugoslav unification. "He suspended the constitution [and] outlawed political parties," justifying his actions in the name of public interest and setting up a dictatorship, under which he suppressed all democratic and parliamentary activity. Thereafter, "the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was officially renamed the *Kingdom of Yugoslavia*." (Udovički and Ridgeway 1997, 55) To be fair, the King perceived himself as the holder of political authority, rather than its source; as a servant of his people, rather than their master. Under the framework of the new regime, Alexander I began reforming what he perceived to be Yugoslavia's major evil, namely the problem of local government. He believed that the prefectural system, on which the separatist factions placed their hopes, was the largest impediment to Yugoslav cohesion. Accordingly, he set about finding a compromise that would not result in the total destruction of local power. To this end, Alexander did away with the old prefectural system, dividing the country into nine new *banovine*, or provinces. (Kerner 1949, 126-127)

Alexander was aware that he could not rule indefinitely without constitutional sanction. Accordingly, he introduced a new centralist constitution in 1931, which gave broad authority to the institution of the king and created a new bicameral legislature, under his authority. A new *Yugoslav National Party* was formed and quasi-elections were held, in which votes were cast publicly for a list of government candidates. Once again, the Croats protested loudly, as reactionary Croat nationalist movements gained strength. Alexander I responded by having the popular Croat leader Dr. Vladko Maček

arrested, as tensions ran high. In 1934 the king went on a state visit to France. After arriving in Marseilles, he was assassinated on the orders of Ante Pavelić, the founder and leader of the ultra-nationalist Croatian *Ustaše* movement. News of the King's murder was met with widespread shock and revulsion throughout Yugoslavia, even by many of those who disagreed with his policies. The heir to the throne, Peter II (1934-1945), was a minor of only ten years old at the time his father was assassinated. Because of this, a regency was set up under his uncle, Prince Paul.* (Singleton 1976, 77-78)

Prince Paul continued to govern under the 1931 constitution, but turned a blind at to the illegal emergence of moderate opposition groups. New elections were held in 1935, in which an opposition group led by Maček, who Paul had had released from prison, secured 67 of the governments 373 seats. The Croats loudly proclaimed that the election had been manipulated and boycotted the new government. They formed an *anti-parliament* in Zagreb in protest. The Serb majority, headed by the radical Dr. Milan Stojadinović, persuaded the Slovenes and Muslims to support the Yugoslav government, isolating the Croats. As the broader international state of affairs deteriorated during the buildup to World War II, Stojadinović was able to make little headway towards a reconciliation with the Croats, the most vital issue facing Yugoslavia in the prewar years. Further, he alienated many on his own side, partly due to some of the authoritarian tactics that he employed and partly because of a proposed *Concordant* with the Vatican. Elections were held again in 1938 in which Maček and the Croat opposition won nearly forty-five percent of the vote, but only won 67 of the Parliament's 373 seats. Such curious electoral arithmetic aroused a loud public outcry. It represented a moral defeat for the Serb majority leader, Stojadinović. In an attempt to rectify the situation Prince

* Prince Regent (1934-1941).

Paul called for a new government to be created under a new Prime Minister, Dragiša Cvetković (1939-1941), in February of 1939. Cvetković and Maček worked together to find an acceptable solution to the issue that had nearly pulled Yugoslavia apart over the past two decades. Their efforts culminated in the *Cvetković-Maček Agreement*, signed on August 26, 1939. Essentially, the agreement created the new *Banovina of Croatia*, which was effectively a Croat-sub-state within larger Yugoslavia. (Singleton 1976, 78-79)

Thus, for the first time, a federal Yugoslavia seemed to be a distinct possibility. Unfortunately, during the uncertain years prior to the breakout of World War II, the agreement did more to heighten tensions than to quell them. The Croats were angered by the limited autonomy it granted them, while the Serbs were angered at the loss of power that they incurred and the abandonment of the centralist model of government. Moreover, the other Yugoslav states, including Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia, felt left out because it did not recognize them as separate units; while the national demands of Macedonia and Albania continued to be ignored. Perhaps this political solution would have worked, had it been instituted a decade before. In the end, the efforts to create a more heterogeneous South-Slav state would be consumed by the larger chaos of World War II. (Udovički and Ridgeway 1997, 56-57)

WORLD WAR II AND COMMUNIST YUGOSLAVIA

As Germany and her allies closed in on all sides, Hitler issued an ultimatum to Yugoslavia. Left with no other viable options, Prince Paul signed a *cooperation treaty* with the Axis forces on March 25, 1941. A popular uprising followed during which a

coup, led by General Dušan Simović, supported by the military and backed by British intelligence, installed a new national unity government under the minor King Peter II, then only seventeen, which stood in opposition to the *Tripartite Pact*. (Friedman 2004, 19) Hitler's patience with the South-Slavs had by this time worn thin. On April 6, 1941 Yugoslavia was pulled into the war, when Axis forces began a coordinated attack against it. The German Luftwaffe leveled Belgrade and with it, "the first South Slavic state perished as it had been born, in fire and smoke." Its more than two decades of existence had been marked by permanent political crisis and national antagonism. Eleven days later, on April 17, Hitler and Mussolini dealt the final blow to Yugoslavia, partitioning it between them and their allies and redrawing its borders. The South-Slav Balkan states became a microcosm of the larger war as battle lines were drawn. Society was reorganized along ethnic lines and old hatreds and divisions were stoked. In short, "there began a war of all against all." In Montenegro and Serbia, who had long traditions of guerrilla warfare, armed attacks against the occupiers began immediately. When the Nazis invaded Soviet Russia less than three month later, the previously inconsequential *Communist Party of Yugoslavia* was spurred into action, beginning a protracted partisan campaign that would continue for the duration of the war. On the opposite side of the fence, a number of pro-Axis forces arose and began ruthlessly suppressing the opposition, with the blessings of their fascist overlords. Among these, the Ustaše (see earlier text) set up a puppet regime, the *Independent State of Croatia* or NDH.* They quickly annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina and began a brutal repression against the communists and a genocidal campaign against the Serbs within their domains. Further, they enthusiastically carried out Hitler's broader, murderous ambitions by exterminating the ancient Jewish

* *Nezavisna država Hrvatska.*

and gypsy populations of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. (Udovički and Ridgeway 1997, 57-58) In a contemporary report, the Chief of the Balkan Desk of the US State Department details the horrors that were perpetrated during this dark era:

“[The] Ustashi [Ustaše] organization [is] engaged in ‘a comprehensive policy of extermination of the Serbian race in the Independent State of Croatia.’ In several ... localities every Serb had been killed. The murders had been committed in the most atrocious manner. Often the Ustashis (patterned after Hitler's SS organization) used hammers, with which they crushed the skulls of their victims. They cut off the arms or legs of many of them. They pulled out the eyes of some, and threw the victims, still alive, into caves. Sometimes the Ustashis placed their victims in single file, one behind the other, so as to be able to kill as many as possible with a single bullet. Those who were only wounded were cast into a cave along with the dead. In certain localities hand-grenades were hurled at Serbs who had been gathered by force into groups. It can be said ... that of all the means used ... to exterminate the Serbs, the last was the least inhuman.’ Wherever there were Serbs within the Independent State of Croatia (and there were more than two million of them), they became the target of persecution and cruelty.”⁸²

Author Constantin Fotitch further describes the nature of the atrocities committed by the Ustaše during World War II, writing:

“Tens of thousands of Serbs who were not massacred outright in their home towns were sent to a concentration camp at Jasenovatz on the main railroad line from Belgrade to Zagreb, where they were destroyed in the most barbaric manner. The Nazi executioners of Dachau, Osowiec, and Mauthausen could envy the record of their pupils at the Jasenovatz camp. While the Nazi policy of extermination of the Jews was shrouded in mystery during the war, and the facts about it not fully known until after the victory, Croat ministers and officials of the Independent State of Croatia made no secret of their planned policy of extermination of the Serbs living within the Croatian borders. (Fotitch 1948, 122)

The abominations that transpired in the Balkans during World War II are too numerous and ghastly to recount here, but the lasting impact that they had on the culture and collective psyche of the region cannot be stressed enough.

⁸² Constantin Fotitch, *The War We Lost: Yugoslavia's Tragedy and the Failure of the West* (New York: Viking Press, 1948), 117-118.

The military history of Yugoslavia during World War II is long and complex. It is a tale of amazing heroism and appalling atrocity, which is fertile soil for a much for another analysis. An in depth examination of these events is much too broad for the more long-term confines of the present analysis. Simply put, three distinct factions squared off in Yugoslavia during the war. First, were the aforementioned fascist *Ustaše* forces, led by Ante Pavelić and supported by the Germans and Italians. Second, there were the anti-fascist, royalist forces that arose almost immediately to wrest Yugoslavia from foreign yolk. This tangled conglomerate of guerrillas had a host of competing agendas. The foremost of these royalist forces were the *Četniks*, nationalist Serb units mainly composed of what was left of the Royal Yugoslav military. They were led by Draža Mihailović and perceived their primary role as laying in wait, to reinstate the royal government after the fascists withdrew. Consequently, they chose to bide their time, marshalling their strength and focusing on local enemies, such as the Bosnian Muslims, rather than leading a rigorous opposition against the occupiers. Thus, while the *Ustaše* murdered Serbs, Jews and gypsies, the *Četniks* were busy eliminating Croats and Muslims. Thirdly, the *Partisans* were a multinational force under the command of Josip Broz Tito. They welcomed anyone who opposed the fascists into their fold and led an active campaign against the occupiers. The Partisans fought against both the *Ustaše* and the *Četniks*, in a life and death struggle over who would control postwar Yugoslavia. As the Partisans liberated parts of Yugoslavia, they had the foresight to install new institutions, which would serve as the structure of a postwar government. Thus, in short:

“The commonly accepted interpretation of Yugoslavia's wartime experience is that the Second World War was fought on at least three different levels in that land. The first was the anti-fascist struggle. The second was the inter-ethnic civil war, which mainly pitted Serbs against

fascist-supporting Muslims and Croats. The third was the battle between the royalists and the communist-dominated Partisans for the right to dictate the shape of postwar Yugoslavia.” (Friedman 2004, 20)

As the war dragged on and the tide turned against Germany and Italy, the allies decided at the *Teheran Conference* to throw their support behind Tito and the Partisans, after it had become apparent that Mihailović and his *Četniks* were not fighting the enemy, but conspiring with them to defeat the Partisans. A new Yugoslav royal government was assembled in London in June of 1944, under the exiled Prime Minister, Dr. Ivan Šubašić (1944-1945), who was dispatched to Dalmatia to meet with Tito. There the two reached an agreement that would be known as the *Treaty of Vis*, which was essentially an attempt, pushed by the *Allied Powers*, to merge the exiled Royal Yugoslav Government with Tito’s Partisans inside of Yugoslavia. In September King Peter II appealed to all Yugoslavs to rally behind Tito. By year’s end Soviet troops entered Yugoslavia through Romania and Bulgaria and assisted the Partisans in their liberation efforts. On October 20, 1944 Belgrade fell to Tito’s forces. (Singleton 1976, 96-97)

In the End, Yugoslavia paid a heavy toll during the Second World War. It is estimated that more than 1.7 million Yugoslavs lost their lives during the conflict, the equivalent to eleven percent of the overall population. Of this massive number, more than half were killed by other Yugoslavs. (Singleton 1976, 87) As Hitler’s once mighty war machine began to unravel, Tito’s grip on Yugoslavia tightened. In the closing weeks of 1944 he concentrated more on consolidating his own power domestically, than precipitating the, now inevitable, German departure. As such, he turned down allied requests to back up his Partisans, not wanting to deal with their outside influence. Once Russia had secured Serbia, Tito was confident that Yugoslavia was his and thereafter

began working to enlarge his domains. Peace was officially declared in Yugoslavia on VE day, May 8, 1945; by which time the Partisans were already busy liquidating their domestic enemies.⁸³ Author R. H. Markham puts the Partisan usurpation of power into historical perspective, he writes:

“What was Tito's foremost activity after he became master of Serbia and then, step by step, of all Yugoslavia? He did exactly what Adolf Hitler had done under similar circumstances; namely, he tried to exalt his name above every other name in the country. He tried to make himself appear as a god to the people. The country was still horribly devastated and only partially freed. Most Yugoslavs were ragged, badly housed, inadequately fed, and without regular incomes. Yet the chief concern of the Partisans was to aggrandize their chief and establish their domination.”⁸⁴

In the early months after the war, the new regime worked tirelessly to try and punish a range of pro-axis war criminals, along with a sprinkling of other political opponents. It acted decisively to suppress what it considered to be “reactionary nationalistic tendencies,” especially in Croatia, where any manifestation nationalism was treated as a major crime. Moreover, official policy frowned on national discussion of the atrocities that had been perpetrated during the war, in which all of the national groups had been oppressors as well as victims. Perhaps a discussion of such topics could have played a role in a healthy grieving process and reduced the likelihood of animosities rearing their head in the future, but Tito preferred to sweep them under the table in favor of political expediency. (Friedman 2004, 21-22) To be fair, under such extreme circumstances, peace could only be brought to bear with a strong arm. Within two years of Tito's usurpation of power, a person of any nationality or religious belief could safely travel from one side of Yugoslavia to the other. Given the nightmare from which the region

⁸³ Nora Beloff, *Tito's Flawed Legacy: Yugoslavia & the West since 1939* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985), 121-123.

⁸⁴ R. H. Markham, *Tito's Imperial Communism* (Chapel Hill, NC: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1947), 185.

had just emerged, this was nothing short of a miracle. Tito's national slogan of *Brotherhood and Unity*, was more than an empty catchphrase in a country in which ethnic hatred had taken so many lives; it represented a new hope for the future. (Udovički and Ridgeway 1997, 65)

As Yugoslavs began to reacquaint themselves with peace in the early postwar years, the country under Tito began looking to the future in terms of the new world order. In its early years, between 1945 and 1949, The *Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia* was modeled after the Soviet Union, in both its structure and its operation. It was not formally a Russian satellite, but it was, in word and deed, oriented to Moscow and, thus, an extension of Soviet Power.⁸⁵ On January 30, 1946, a new Constitution was promulgated that created a far different governmental organization than the one that had existed in prewar Yugoslavia. In effect, decision making was almost entirely in the hands of the central government in Belgrade, although six equal and ostensibly autonomous republics were set up with independent governments. Author Francine Friedman expounds further on the nature and structure of Communist Yugoslavia, averring that:

“Six republics were created, most of which reflected by their names the titular majority population within their borders. The republics occupied more or less their historic borders, but Serbia was singled out for special attention by the communists. Two autonomous provinces, Vojvodina and Kosovo, were created within Serbia's borders to reflect the presence of large and fairly tightly clustered minority groups of Hungarians and Albanians, respectively. Serbia's power within Yugoslavia was further weakened when Macedonia (heretofore sometimes referred to by Serbs as “Southern Serbia”) became an independent republic. The exception to this neat federal creation was Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its territory, with at least as ancient a historical and territorial identity as Serbia and Croatia, became a Yugoslav republic. Unlike the other republics, however, Bosnia had no titular nation to dominate its decision-making apparatus. With a

⁸⁵ George W. Hoffman, and Fred Warner Neal, *Yugoslavia and the New Communism* (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1962), 81.

large number of Serbs, Croats, and Muslims scattered throughout Bosnia, that republic was truly multinational.” (Friedman 2004, 22)

For everything that the new system that were left wanting, it is fair to assert that a new equality existed among Yugoslavs, which had never before been present. (Hoffman and Neal 1962, 82)

Most Yugoslav communists perceived the Soviet Union to be the elder brother of all communist states and believed that, as such, it would genuinely help Yugoslavia deal with its problems as it tried to rebuild. Tito, who enjoyed broad popular support because of his successes, held no illusions with regard to the challenges inherent to building a new state from the ground up. Further, he was not under the false impression that Communism was a flawless system. He soon found out exactly where Yugoslavia stood in the grand scheme of the Soviet bloc. A landmark 1948 letter from Stalin to Tito was replete with the full dictatorial arrogance of the Stalinist Soviet era. The tone of this letter essentially set the stage for the next period of Yugoslav relations with the USSR; as well as her relations with the West. In the letter Stalin asserted his resentment of what he perceived to be the “self-confidence” of the Yugoslavs. Further, he made it clear that Yugoslavia would not enjoy any special position within the Soviet orbit. The fact that the Yugoslav regime had come to power and kept it due very much to its own efforts, unlike their comrades in other Eastern European countries, and that it was largely not beholden to the Soviets for the place that it now enjoyed, was a special affront to Stalin. It had only been three scant years since the mortal danger of World War II and Yugoslavia was once again threatened, only this time not by a foreign enemy, rather by its bigger communist brother. Tito responded defiantly, with a resounding *no* to Soviet bullying. His defiance earned him the undying admiration and support of the Yugoslav people,

who were willing to forget and forgive many of his foolish and fanciful policies. (Udovički and Ridgeway 1997, 66-67) The primary split between Yugoslavia and the USSR was a conflict in their very notions of the aim of the world-wide Communist movement. Primarily, was the ultimate goal of Communism to serve the interests of the broader USSR, or was it to be aimed the interests of individual states? As the Soviets worked to politically and economically dominate Yugoslavia, the Yugoslavs resisted them at every turn. In the first years after the war, the organization of Communist parties, the *Cominform*, was seated in Belgrade. As a result of the rising tension between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, Stalin expelled Yugoslavia from the organization in the *Cominform Resolution* of June 28, 1948. The seat of the Cominform was subsequently moved to Bucharest and, thus, began what is popularly referred to as the *Informbiro period** in Yugoslav politics, which lasted until 1955. This essentially refers to an era of sharp divide between the Yugoslav and Soviet Communists. Stalin began a propaganda program aimed at overthrowing the Yugoslav leaders. The Yugoslav brand of Communism was dubbed *Titoism* and Stalin conducted brutal Titoist purges of suspected disinters across eastern Europe. (Hoffman and Neal 1962, 113)

Within Yugoslavia, one of the primary aims of Tito's *Communist Party of Yugoslavia* (KPJ)* was agrarian reform, designed to give the peasants control over the land they worked. A *five-year plan* was initiated in 1947 in which an ambitious collectivization of agriculture was promulgated. The expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform, which had been the chief supporter of the Yugoslav agricultural plan, seriously hampered the strategy. In other economic areas significant inroads were made

* *Informbiro* was the South-Slav word for the Cominform.

* Renamed the *League of Communists of Yugoslavia* (SKJ) in 1952.

during the Informbiro period. The concentration of resources and rapid development of industry led to a 100 percent increase in industrial output and a seventy-five percent spike in non-agricultural employment. Unfortunately the new agricultural plan dislocated the private farming system and almost led to a disaster in the last years of the decade. This coupled with a severe drought in 1950, which dropped agricultural output to prewar levels, causing the cities to nearly starve and crippling the Yugoslav economy. The Party leaders were still determined to reform the system along Marxist lines, but because of the 1948 break with the USSR they began looking beyond the Soviet model. (Singleton 1876, 112-113) Not betraying their communist convictions, in the early 1950s the KPJ began instituting what it called “socialism with a human face.” Consequently, defiance of Stalin and the Soviet system became a unifying force within Yugoslavia, as South-Slavs perceived themselves as going against the grain of the international communist movement. Under the Titoist model, a system of reforms was instituted, geared toward decentralizing the Yugoslav economic and political systems. In contrast to the mistrust of the Soviet system, Titoism espoused a belief in worker self-management. Worker councils were created and given the authority over micro-industrial decision-making, which served to decentralize the system. Still, civically, notions such as pluralism and mass political participation were unheard of. Social status was viewed through the prism of personal occupation, rural or urban residence, or public or private sector activity, rather than ethnic identity or political participation. Throughout the 1950s there was a movement to curtail nationalistic tendencies, by creating a new, integral identification, known as *Yugoslavism*.

On the international scene, Yugoslavia's unique political situation served to further augment the successes of Titoism. Following its break with the Cominform, the West extended an enthusiastic hand to Yugoslavia, assisting it through both aid incentives and favorable trading practices, in order to bolster its strategic position in the Balkans against Soviet power. (Friedman 2004, 23-24) As a result Yugoslavia prospered.

In short:

“After a brief interlude, the Soviet economic boycott, which Stalin had intended as a punishment, began to yield rewards. The deals with the USSR, as the Yugoslavs themselves revealed, had been both exploitative and undependable, but once the tap of US aid was turned on supplies were lavish and unconditional... Within two weeks after the rupture was announced the Americans released the 30 million dollars worth of gold, deposited in the US by the royal government and blocked since the war. And a few months later negotiations began for material and financial support which, in the course of the 1950s, amounted to over two billion dollars: more per head then received by any other country” (Beloff 1985, 149)

By the early 1960's the Yugoslav economy depended on access to foreign credits and capital markets. In return Yugoslavia contained the Soviet Union in southeastern Europe, denying it influence in the Mediterranean, Greece and Italy. (Friedman 2004, 24) While Tito was accepting the generous benefactions of the West, he did not completely turn his back on the Eastern bloc. When Stalin died in 1953 it sent ripples throughout the entire Communist world, as the Soviets tried to come to grips with a post-Stalinist world. In an effort to rectify relations with Yugoslavia, the new Soviet Premier, Nikita Khrushchev, traveled to Belgrade in 1955, where he was met by a haughty Tito. Tito offered the Soviets what amounted to a “diplomatically correct normalization of relations between two equal members of the international community.” The resulting *Belgrade Declaration* was signed reluctantly by the Soviet leaders. Following the Khrushchev visit, Tito went

on a tour of Soviet bloc countries, where he was greeted as a hero. In the meantime Khrushchev continued to extend a reconciliatory and congenial hand to Tito. Because his ideological loyalties to communism ran deep, Tito was eventually swayed by Khrushchev's amenability. During a state visit in 1956, Tito signed the *Moscow Declaration*, which once again formalized relations between the Soviets and the SKJ (see earlier footnote). Always the shrewd politician, Tito understood his advantageous and exploitable international position and refused readmission into the *Warsaw Pact* and other Soviet bloc institutions that would have soured the relationships he had built with the West. (Udovički and Ridgeway 1997, 68-69)

With the aim of reforming Yugoslavia's economic and political systems, the 1958 *Program of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia* professed a commitment to liberalism that was unheard of in any other eastern bloc country. The program's planners envisioned a movement away from the single-party system that dominated Yugoslav politics and a loosening of state planning in the economic realm. Moreover, they foresaw the evolution of a full market economy in Yugoslavia in which economic efficiency was the criterion by which the political system would be judged. Sadly, totalitarianism had become far too entrenched to be cast aside and the Program never had a viable chance of success. Essentially, as Yugoslavia looked towards the 1960s:

“Fluctuations in Yugoslav domestic policies and in the country's role in the Cold War world centered on the sole reliable constant: Titoist Yugoslavia was and remained an authentically independent country. Yugoslavia continued using, to maximum advantage, its cooperation and close relations with the West, while avoiding the maximum damage of its relationship with the Soviet Union. Yugoslav success in this area stemmed partly from Tito's personal commitment to the new idea of *nonalignment* [italics mine], that is, of a broad neutrality between the capitalist and Soviet powers on the part of nations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Tito was a leading figure in the Movement of Nonaligned

Countries, which was launched in 1954-55, and he remained a prominent figure in it until his death. For the better part of two decades ... Yugoslavia was in the forefront of nonalignment and contributed effectively to the movement's leadership. Although Tito's involvement with the nonaligned movement has been fiercely criticized in the former Yugoslavia, nonalignment did at least as much for Yugoslavia as Yugoslavia did for nonalignment.” (Udovički and Ridgeway 1997, 70-71)

Torn between its communist mores and the enticements of liberal prosperity, between East and West, the SKJ was forced to perform a precarious balancing act. While nonalignment had its distinct advantages, it also represented a risky dance in the day to day political life of the state. In 1963 a new constitution was adopted aimed at ushering in a new era of *market socialism*. In the early 1960s the system worked and the Yugoslav economy boomed, but such success was to be short lived. (Singleton 1976, 107) The line between economic and political decisions, strategic or tactical, became increasingly ambiguous. In the already complex realm of Yugoslav society, the pull between the capitalist West and the socialist East served to highlight a number of glaring contradictions at all levels of the social strata. As the system developed into the mid-1960s, this internal conflict became more acute. The systemic disharmony that resulted, coupled with a new economic crisis, defined by soaring inflation, to reach an impasse in 1965. In 1966 Tito was finally swayed by the more liberal elements within the party, led by Edvard Kardelj and Vladimir Bakarić of Croatia and Petar Stambolić of Serbia, and, following much debate, a set of reforms was enacted, aimed at saving the crumbling economy. From a broader perspective, these reforms can be viewed as the eventual success of the liberalism of the 1958 Program (discussed above). The reforms were designed to make the market the primary determinant of economic policy, reducing the role of the state to a minimum, and opening the Yugoslav market to the competition of

the prosperous capitalist economies of western Europe. (Singleton 1976, 138, 141) A strong opposition arose against the institution of such liberal policies, headed by Aleksandar Ranković, who Tito forced to resign. The more liberal Titoists who prevailed reveled in optimism for the new system of *self-management* that they had created. The purportedly resided in a realm between communism and capitalism, in which the free worker was protected from the insecurities and hardships of the free market, on the one hand, and the overbearing Soviet-style autocracy on the other. In reality, the system fell prey to its own inherently contradictory nature. “Efforts to manage the market diverted the pressures of demand and supply into such anti-social practices as high inflation, black markets in currency and commodities, smuggling, speculation, almost ubiquitous corruption and massive moonlighting in working hours.” (Beloff 1985, 218) Market Socialism, in final estimation, amounted to nothing more than a hybrid economy, whose direction was unclear to even Tito and the party.

With these ostensible moves toward economic liberalism, by the latter 1960s there were growing calls for Yugoslavia’s political structures to be liberalized as well. Contrarily, but also a threat to Tito’s stronghold on the government, nationalistic sentiments were being aroused for the first time since the end of World War II. Tito, always the astute politician, was not blind to the signs that Yugoslavia was headed toward an eventual breakdown, if it continued down its present course. Yet, he was also aware that this trend could not be stopped, without risk to the position of preeminence that he enjoyed. He chose to deceive himself into believing that Yugoslavia was safe for as long as he lived and, further, that the responsibility for what happened afterwards would fall into the hands of others. Cementing this reasoning, an article was added to the

Yugoslav constitution in the early 1970s stating that, "Josip Broz Tito is President-for-life of Yugoslavia." In Croatia the rising tide of nationalism was becoming loud enough that Tito was forced to respond. He blamed the Croatian Communist leadership for the growing discontent and, enlisting the help of conservatives within the party, Tito set out to purge its leadership, as well as the vociferous intellectual malcontents within Croatia. The Croatian nationalist movement that he was working to repress was only part of a broader push for Yugoslav democratization, which represented a far greater threat to Tito than nationalist sentiments. Understanding this, Tito cracked down on the reformist democrats in Serbia with an iron fist in 1973. In both Croatia and Serbia he targeted agitators at all levels, from prominent figures in academia, to those in trade and industry, removing them and quickly reinstalling loyal Titoists to replace them. On the surface, a new peace descended on Yugoslavia, but it was empty, as old animosities broiled underneath. Tito's strong-arm tactics were outdated and the more power that he accumulated through such means, the more problematic it became. (Udovički and Ridgeway 1997, 72-74)

The Yugoslav constitution was amended in 1974, in an effort to deal with the changing political climate. In theory, the new constitution was designed to prevent further disintegration of the country, by responding to local demands for autonomy. With the aim of decentralization, the lines of authority between the federal government and the republics were redrawn in an exceedingly complicated manner. Moreover, the autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina were given *de facto* status as full republics. In effect, centralist power was just transferred from the federal government to the republics, creating "eight tightly controlled centralist regional governments." The

result was a greater fragmentation of both society and the economy. The 1974 constitution had grave consequences for the future, as each of the eight republics were allowed to freely pursue their own national interests, without a thought to what was best for the larger federation. Under this new fragmented order, ambitious regional leaders could advance their own careers by propagandizing their constituent communities with romantic notions of homogenous ethnic harmony. (Udovički and Ridgeway 1997, 72)

Another ominous source of disharmony, which was increasingly emphasized and exaggerated by political demagogues during the 1970s, was religion. Yugoslavia was purportedly atheistic because of its communist orientation, but in reality, religious affiliation strongly influenced self-identification. Author John B. Allcock asserts that, “the actual effect of state policy with respect to religion [was] to emphasize the specifically religious lineaments of national identity, ensuring that, with the eruption of conflict in an ethnic framework, it would also have a religious coloring.”⁸⁶ Author Edit Petrović further expounds on the dangerous implications of the trend towards ethno-religious identification in Yugoslavia throughout the 1970s, writing:

“Complex historical constellations produced a phenomenon of equivalence between religious and ethnic identification in the Balkans. For example, Croat meant Catholic in everyday life, just as Serb meant Eastern Orthodox. These identifications became important during communist rule. After years of enforced socialist internationalism, open ethnic and religious identification increased in importance from the 1970s, leading to the full recognition of religious freedoms at the end of the communist era. As the relationship between church and state intensified, religious institutions became active partners in political life and a crucial source of populist nationalism.”⁸⁷

⁸⁶ John B. Allcock, *Explaining Yugoslavia* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2000), 299.

⁸⁷ Joel M. Halpern and David A. Kideckel, eds., *Neighbors at War: Anthropological Perspectives on Yugoslav Ethnicity, Culture and History* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 166-167.

Thus, as Yugoslavia decentralized following the 1974 constitution, the heterogeneous mix of Yugoslav peoples began to fracture along political, ethnic and religious lines. Each of the republics and the two autonomous regions, *except* Bosnia, increasingly began to represent a distinct homogenized ethno-cultural group. Owing to its centralized position and multinational makeup, Bosnia had a composite presidency made up of two members each of the Serb, Croat and Muslim communities, in addition to a single, self-declared Yugoslav representative (Friedman 2004, 27). Census data between 1971 and 1981 indicates a trend of inter-Yugoslav migrations, in which ethnic territorial concentrations were strengthened. (Halpern and Kideckel 2000, 166)

On May 4, 1980 Josip Broz Tito, “the courageous leader of Partisan antifascism, the uncompromising opponent of Stalin, the skillful guardian of his country's independence, the architect of post-World War II Yugoslavia and the driving force behind the policy of national equality -- long the best and most consistent aspect of Yugoslavia's governance,” died two days short of his eighty-eight birthday. In truth, he was the kingpin of a precariously balanced political system that wavered between communist dogmatism and controlled democracy. Despite all of his successes in the decades following World War II, Tito’s legacy will always remain flawed. In effect, his refusal to relinquish his own power, in favor of progress and democracy, condemned Yugoslavia to survive him by no more than a decade. To be fair, whatever the failings of his policies, they were in no way wholly responsible for the ultimate collapse of Yugoslavia. Ultimate blame is much more far reaching, as a host of factors coalesced to destroy what was essentially an untenable political system. (Udovički and Ridgeway 1997, 77)

ECONOMIC CRISIS, THE COLLAPSE OF COMMUNISM AND THE WARS OF YUGOSLAV SUCCESSION

In the wake of Tito's death, the plan for the future direction of Yugoslavia was vague at best. In anticipation of a post-Titoan Yugoslavia, the *Eleventh Party Congress* of 1976 had proposed a system of rotating political leadership, in which representatives of the various republics were rotated in and out of political posts, including the presidency. This system, designed to prevent the domination of any single republic over the others, was, in effect, a continuation of the balancing act that Tito had played throughout his political life. Following his death, this notion of collective leadership proved to be as awkward as it was dangerous. With political and economic crises looming on the near horizon, the tentative character of the system, which was devoid of any clear goals, proved ill equipped to deal with Yugoslavia's very real problems in a purposeful manner. The eight-member presidency, created to rule following Tito's death, was an inept institution from its inception and incapable of reaching a consensus in the face of mounting turmoil. (Udovički and Ridgeway 1997, 80)

While the federal government, weak as it was, continued to function in the early 1980s, a broader economic crisis, which had been gathering steam in the previous decade, began to accelerate. Its results would be nothing short of catastrophic for the bitterly divided South-Slav state. Throughout the late 1970s Yugoslavia's economy was much less stable than it may have appeared outwardly. There is no doubt the economy was modernizing, as the percentage of Yugoslavs involved in agriculture had dropped from seventy-three percent in 1948 to only twenty-seven percent by 1981. Moreover, Yugoslavs had access to free medical care, were highly literate (over ninety percent) and

had a life expectancy of seventy-two years. Nevertheless, the global recession of the late 1970s coupled with rising oil prices to impact Yugoslavia especially hard. First, because of its reliance on an export strategy and, second, because of the high foreign debts it had accrued. Mismanagement of foreign debt, which rose some 400 percent between 1975 and the early 1980s, led to three digit inflation. The prices of food, clothing, electricity and other necessities was skyrocketing by some sixty percent every six months (Udovički and Ridgeway 1997, 81).

In 1983 the new leadership responded to the escalating crisis by making agreements with the *International Monetary Fund* to reduce the value of the *dinar* by twenty percent, in an attempt to decrease domestic demands for imports and rechannel them to domestic output of exports. The trade deficit improved, but at a high cost, as the overall growth rate fell to its lowest level since World War II. In 1983 the Party's leading officials and other national luminaries concluded the year-and-a-half long *Krajger Commission for the Economic Stabilization of Yugoslavia*, which determined that a full marketization of the economy was desirable. The Commission resolved that the market should "assume a central role, with production based on criteria of profitability, linking responsibility for economic outcomes with the decision-makers involved. It was also to operate in foreign trade where the goal was to set Yugoslav prices in line with world prices, with a view to reaching the ever elusive convertibility of the *dinar*." Reform was urgently needed, but implementation presented an entirely different set of obstacles.⁸⁸ The economic and political decentralization of the past decade had set the

⁸⁸ Dijana Pleština, *Regional Development in Communist Yugoslavia: Success, Failure, and Consequences* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 119.

stage for the debate between reformists and conservatives and their competing economic visions for Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, in this tense atmosphere arguments were tempered with nationalist overtones, making reform exceedingly difficult. The push for reform resulted in a conservative backlash, in which the political elites of the various republics vied for scarce resources and power. This power grab eventually led to a stalemate in the decision making process. (Friedman 2004, 27-28) Author Susan L. Woodward discusses the significance of the economic crisis and the mechanics of the resulting political breakdown, which led Yugoslavia down the perilous road that it took writing:

“The real origin of the Yugoslav conflict is the disintegration of governmental authority and the breakdown of a political and civil order. This process occurred over a prolonged period. The conflict is not a result of historical animosities and it is not a return to the precommunist past; it is the result of the politics of transforming a socialist society to a market economy and democracy. A critical element of this failure was economic decline, caused largely by a program intended to resolve a foreign debt crisis. More than a decade of austerity and declining living standards corroded the social fabric and the rights and securities that individuals and families had come to rely on. Normal political conflicts over economic resources between central and regional governments and over the economic and political reforms of the debt-repayment package became constitutional conflicts and then a crisis of the state itself among politicians who were unwilling to compromise. Such a contest over fundamentally different views of the role of government and its economic powers would be fought between competing political parties in parliamentary and democratic regimes. But in this transitional, one-party, but highly decentralized federation, the contestants were government leaders fighting to retain or enhance their political jurisdictions and public property rights over economic resources within their territories. The more they quarreled, the more they contributed to the incapacity and declining authority of the central government to regulate and to resolve those conflicts over economic rights and political powers of subordinate governments.”⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy: Chaos and Dissolution after the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1995), 15-16.

“Instead of imposing monetary controls to slow inflation, lifting restrictions on the functioning of the market, and allowing self-managing enterprises greater latitude in decision making,” the inept federal government attempted to maintain the illusion of prosperity by releasing fresh supplies of cash into the economy as the crisis worsened. The economic crisis dominated Yugoslavia’s domestic media, becoming a drumbeat as the decade went on. Popular strikes for higher wages and lower prices on necessities grew in frequency, size and intensity year by year. In 1987 alone there were more than one thousand strikes involving some 150,000 workers. (Udovički and Ridgeway 1997, 81) One of the most far reaching consequences of the economic decline was the erosion of the large Yugoslav middle class, which had been steadily growing since the late 1950s. This broad slice of the social spectrum consisted of “public sector managers, urban professionals, skilled industrial workers, a portion of private sector shop owners, artisans and farmers.” As a result of the economic downturn eighty-four percent of this all-important class saw their own economic fortunes shrink and, thus, felt that their personal security was at risk. This collective sense of fear served to polarize the opinions of the middle class over the solution to the problem, whether they were liberal or conservative. (Woodward 1995, 54)

This increasing polarization of Yugoslav politics was a direct result of the economic crisis coupled with the political vacuum created by the dysfunctional rotating government. The crisis pitted wealthier and poorer regions against one another, as Yugoslavs reached desperately for something to hang on to. (Friedman 2004, 28) The misguided government was left with two options, as it perceived them, both of which would result in the end of the hybrid economy (discussed earlier) that the unstable

Yugoslav system was founded upon. It had to either completely liberalize Yugoslavia's political and economic apparatus or move in the opposite direction and strengthen and entrench its conservatism. The former would have required long-term economic vision and short term resolve to weather the rise in unemployment and social unrest that it would cause; but it could have eventually led to a boom in private business and attraction of foreign investments. A loud cry for democratization was being made by liberals in all corners of Yugoslavia, who publicly criticized the nation's one-party government. The conservative wing of the government, feeling their hold on power threatened, began to loudly play to nationalist sympathies, which were the greatest antagonist to liberal reform. (Udovički and Ridgeway 1997, 82-83) Francine Friedman describes the phenomenon that was taking place, writing:

“The economic crisis in turn altered the potentially modern social relationships within the society, turning them into bonds of clientilism based on ties of blood, religion, ethnicity, and region, not globalism, civic society, or other modern connections. These relationships were pursued in order to protect the interests of the ruling elites from having to compete with external opponents who were economic threats or internal opponents expressing popular disaffection with falling living standards. Thus, the conflict that dissolved Yugoslavia was mostly a result of the stresses caused by the transformation of a socialist society to a market economy and democracy. The political conflict between central and regional governments over economic resources became conflicts over principle.” (Friedman 2004, 29-30)

During the second half of the 1980s a number of events transpired, in conjunction with the economic crises that rapidly changed the political landscape of Yugoslavia. As it struggled to implement economic reform, constitutional quarrels crippled the already weak federal government. First, there was no means for reaching agreement between the federal and republican governments on the implementation of reforms. The federal

system had no procedure for resolving differences and reaching a consensus. The existing order amounted to a bargaining system between the federal cabinet, the republics and the *Yugoslav People's Army* (JNA). In effect, the economic reforms that did get instated, served to deprive “the governing party of most of its few remaining resources to compel compliance other than its powers of persuasion and its members' loyalty.” Those few powers that remained became the targets of political attack. By 1988 the soul persuasive power of the nearly impotent federal government was vested in its position as the distributor of foreign aid credits to the republics. (Woodward 1995, 84-87)

Faced with the possibility of losing power and the wealth that went along with it, the various strong-arm political leaders trumped popular desires for liberalism and democracy, as Yugoslavia struggled to preserve its collective future. During the late 1980s political legitimacy became increasingly insubstantial in Yugoslavia. In this zero-sum atmosphere, ultra-nationalist leaders such as the Serbian President Slobodan Milošević (1989-1997) and his *Socialist Party of Serbia*, and the Croatian President Franjo Tudjman (1990-1999) and his political party, the *Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica* (HDZ),* saw their political stock rise as the end of the halcyon period of nationalist disagreement drew near. Amongst the chaos and confusion of the crumbling economic and political order many average Yugoslavs were especially receptive to their strong-handed calls for collective rights based on homogeneity. They argued that power and legitimacy was vested not in popular sovereignty, but in all-powerful subgroups based on ethnic identity and religion, which were destined to dominate the political landscape of their specific regions. This represented a new form of ethno-nationalism in which membership into the political community was restricted to those of “alien origin.”

* That is, *Democratic Union*.

The anathematic policies of these new ultra-nationalist regimes were based on idealized versions of the past and the demonization of these other “alien” groups. Using these unrealistic ethno-national conceptualizations as their basis, the regimes attempted to draw new, impossible, geographic boundaries, which were intended to create homogenous nation-states out of complicatedly heterogeneous regions. This flew dangerously in the face of classical western notions of citizenship, based on individual identification within the state as a citizen, and redefined it as membership in an ethno-religious group.

(Friedman 2004, 30) Although Milošević and Tudjman ostensibly claimed that their programs were based on righting ethnically based wrongs, in reality they were highly politically motivated campaigns coordinated from the top down:

“The propaganda Milošević, and later on Tudjman, set in motion appealed to the quite tangible, legitimate grievances of the common person: the falling standard of living and the political void. The appeals evolved around the same core: the claim that current economic ills in each of the republics stemmed from the long practice of economic exploitation and political subordination of that republic by all others. In this sense Milošević and Tudjman's campaigns mirrored each other, although their ultimate objectives differed. In both cases nationalism served objectives that had little to do with ethnicity or grassroots ethnic sentiment, were politically motivated, and were fully orchestrated from above. (Udovički and Ridgeway 1997, 83)

As the Yugoslav republics looked towards the 1990s, they could not agree on the direction that the federation should take. Their lists of grievances with one another were complex and often convoluted. Unfortunately the three institutions that were supposed to hold the republic together, the army, the party and the government, were not appropriately suited for this overwhelming task, as the republics struggled to find common ground. In Serbia, Milošević's campaign was based on the notion that the republic's current economic straits were a direct result of its having been crippled by the

dictates of the 1974 constitution, which had fragmented Serbia proper by unjustifiably granting autonomy to its two rightful provinces of Vojvodina in the north and Kosovo in the south. Further, the fact that Vojvodina and Kosovo enjoyed de facto status as full republics, with the same prerogatives as Serbia itself, was an intolerable affront.

Milošević's program consisted of three basic components. First, it called for constitutional reforms to reinstate Kosovo and Vojvodina. Second, it cautioned against the threat posed by Croatia and Slovenia if Yugoslavia should collapse and, third, it warned of the precarious position of Croatian and Bosnian Serbs, should they find themselves cut off from Serbia. Milošević found a number of willing allies in the media, including official television and the Serbian newspaper *Politika*, who identified his leadership with the will of the people. In Serbia *Politika* "enjoyed the aura of a national treasure" and "common readers saw it as an inseparable part of their household life." By the early years of the 1990s *Politika* was using its immense credibility with the reading public to create a "deep sense of foreboding about the future," a future in which "Milošević was Serbia's only hope." (Udovički and Ridgeway 1997, 83, 88-89)

In Kosovo the situation was reaching a boiling point. In the late 1970s and early 1980s Kosovo's Albanian population shot from some forty percent to more than eighty percent and in the years that followed, tension between its Serb and Montenegrin populations on the one side and its Albanian population on the other rose dramatically. Calls for the annexation of Kosovo by Albania rose sharply throughout the 1980s. Being the least developed region in Yugoslavia, it had for years been receiving substantial financial aid from the more prosperous regions, without obligations for repayment. These had been massively misspent by local political elites, at the expense of job creating

industrial infrastructure. As the 1980s dragged on and the economic situation in Kosovo went unaddressed, its Albanian bureaucracy used the crisis as an impetus for pushing for Albanian exclusivity in the region. In the campaign that followed, Serbs were often psychologically and physically harassed, as it was made clear that they were unwanted in the region. Rumor and fear charged the increasingly uncertain atmosphere. As the situation in Kosovo devolved throughout the latter half of the 1980s the federal government, not having the stomach to deal with the crisis, preferred to turn a blind eye to the grievances of Serbs and Albanians alike, clinging to the old Titoist ideological assumption of *brotherhood and unity*. For the Serbs of Yugoslavia, the situation in Kosovo became a rallying point, in which Milošević was seen as a savior and protector. As early as 1988 Serbia was engulfed in massive rallies in which tens and even hundreds of thousands of people expressed their undying support for the Serbian President and demanded bold action. (Udovički and Ridgeway 1997, 84-86, 91) Author Sabrina Petra Ramet describes the pernicious metamorphosis that was taking place in Yugoslav politics:

“It required a catalyst to take Yugoslavia from ‘mere’ crisis to the brink of civil war. That catalyst was Slobodan Milošević... Milošević ended the policy of balance ... and adopted a program of bare-faced Serbian nationalism. Milošević took politics to the streets, mobilizing large crowds of angry peasants (mostly middle-aged males) in a move to topple the local governments of the Republic of Montenegro and the provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo. Sweeping his rivals out of power in these federal units, he installed his own supporters. Meanwhile, in a series of measures, he dismantled the autonomy of the provinces, subordinated them to the Serbian legislature and court system, shut down the provincial assembly in Kosovo (an illegal move on his part), ordered the arrest of the duly elected members of the now banned Kosovo Assembly, and, finally, suppressed Kosovo's major Albanian-language daily newspaper, *Rilindja*.”⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Sabrina Petra Ramet, *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to Ethnic War*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996), 39.

As Serb nationalism found its reawakening under Milošević and calls for a new Serbian dominated federation gained stream, the Serb-Croat conflict, the traditional center of Yugoslav political strife, reemerged as Yugoslavia's central divide. As the Titoist cloak of unity based on suppression, which had kept the peace since the end of World War II, was cast aside, virulent propaganda and accusations began flying both ways. Stories of the atrocities committed during World War II, which had been suppressed for the past four and a half decades, became mantras for the political elites on both sides. As the 1980s drew to a close the dubious system that Tito had left to see Yugoslavia into the future began to crack under so many pressures. In this respect, Ramet writes:

“This system could function reasonably smoothly as long as two conditions were present. First, it was necessary to have a final arbiter who could resolve interrepublican differences if need be. President Josip Broz Tito functioned as this arbiter until his death in May 1980; but the system he bequeathed to Yugoslavia, based on collective decisionmaking at all levels and the right of veto by any republic in many areas of decisionmaking, lacked such an arbiter. Second, the system presumed a degree of prosperity, such as existed in the later 1970s. When the economy eroded, however, the political seams were exposed to full view and the ‘quasi-legitimacy’ of the system disintegrated. Now, with inflation roaring at more than 1,000 percent annually and incomes sagging below minimal levels, people were becoming desperate. In some cities, people decided to live without electricity, since they could not pay the bills. Crime also soared, and authorities linked the increase with the economic crisis... Increasingly, there was talk of the need to reprivatize the economy.” (Ramet 1996, 22)

While Yugoslavia struggled to stay afloat amidst economic meltdown and internal division, earth-shattering international events were beginning to transpire, which would serve the final blow to the viability of its continued peaceful existence. The fall of

communism in eastern Europe in 1989 and 1990 hailed a profound change in the world order. In short, it represented the end of the bipolar international system that had prevailed since the end of World War II. Thus, the strategic position that Yugoslavia had for so long wedged itself in, between East and West, which had served to buttress its economic and political systems, through thick and thin, disappeared with the old world order. As the Eastern Bloc collapsed, a great number of smaller, underdeveloped markets that Yugoslavia had so desperately relied on for its exports were lost in the resulting economic catharsis. Conversely, as Yugoslavia's position as a strategic buffer to the East crumbled alongside Communism, so too did its importance to the West. Consequently, the ever-important economic aid, which the West had funneled into the region for decades to support Yugoslavia in its role as a buffer, quickly dried up as well. As support from the East and West fell away and no new bases of security arose to replace them, the South-Slav federation was left alone in the vacuum that had been left behind, to deal with its growing political and economic crises. (Friedman 2004, 27) The power grab that ensued thrust Yugoslavia into the state of nature, where political legitimacy was directly correlated to might.

In January of 1990 the increasingly irrelevant federal government began to give way and as it did the LYC (the Yugoslav Communist Party, see earlier text and footnote) collapsed. In short:

“This left the federal structure hanging in midair. As though the mortar holding the country together had dried up and turned to dust, only six months after the LCY had withered, the federation itself began to fall apart. Slovenia declared its sovereignty on July 2, 1990. Kosovo proclaimed its independence the same day, and Croatia its independence on July 25, 1990. On October 1, 1990, the Croatian Serbs proclaimed their independence. The Bosnian Serbs and Macedonia each followed with their proclamations of independence on December 21, 1990. In a

community such as that of the former Yugoslavia, disintegration without the consent of all parties meant, to say the least, that none would be able to realize its objectives without a major conflict. In this atmosphere of profound political crisis, the proclamations of independence of states within former states anticipated further destabilization and a polarization of unpredictable consequences. (Udovički and Ridgeway 1997, 99)

In November multiparty elections were held throughout Yugoslavia in which nationalist parties won an overwhelming victory in every republic. In Bosnia, the most ethnically heterogeneous of all the republics, each of its three major ethnic groups fielded parties within the Bosnian parliament. Roughly representative of Bosnia's ethnic makeup, "the Bosnian Muslim *Stranka demokratske akcije* (SDA)^{*} captured eighty-six seats (35.8 percent), the Serbian *Srpska demokratska stranka* (SDS)⁺ seventy-two [seats] (30 percent) and the Croatian *Hrvatska demokratska zajednica* (HDZ)[±] won forty-four [seats] (18.3 percent)." This represented a menacing and pivotal trend in the evolution of post-Cold War Bosnian politics. Essentially, when given the opportunity to vote for unified "Bosnian" representation, Bosnians instead chose to vote as Muslims, Serbs and Croats. (Friedman 2004, 35)

As the Yugoslav republics struggled to maintain some type of a collective future in the post-Soviet era, Slovenia, one of the most prosperous and liberal-minded republics in the Crumbling federation, began threatening to secede. The Slovenes believed that their future would be much more prosperous, independent of Yugoslavia. Taking this lead Croatia and Bosnia began talking of secession as well. On December 22, 1990 Croatia adopted a new constitution which proclaimed that Croatia was "the national state of the Croatian people." Croatian Serbs interpreted this as a demotion in their citizenship

^{*} That is, *Party of Democratic Action*.

⁺ That is, *Serbian Democratic Party*.

[±] That is, *Croatian Democratic Union*.

status, as they were essentially being reconstituted as a national minority. In January of 1991 the Croatian Serbs responded, declaring the independent Serbian province of *Krajina*. This heavily Serb-populated annex totaled nearly one third of Croatia's territory. Moreover it set a dangerous precedent for the direction of post-Cold War Yugoslav politics, in which national borders would be based on demographics. Because Croatia and Bosnia contained the most Serb citizens outside of Serbia itself, they stood to be the most affected by this trend. (Friedman 2004, 36)

By the summer of 1991 interrepublican negotiations between Yugoslavia's republics had grinded to a standstill. Finding the opportunity ripe, Slovenia and Croatia made good on their threat on June 25, 1991, by unilaterally declaring their independence from Yugoslavia. In response, the Serb controlled JNA (see earlier text) advanced into Slovenia, killing and wounding hundreds of civilians, as the first shots of the *wars of Yugoslav secession* were fired in the name of "unity." Following two days of fighting the JNA was in firm control of strategic positions throughout Slovenia and the two sides agreed to a temporary truce. In the aftermath, the European community refused to recognize Slovenian or Croatian independence and pressured both sides to come to a peaceful solution. At the urging of the international community, with the United States at the forefront, the Slovenes were advised to capitulate to what amounted to a Serbian hegemony. Slovenia and Croatia agreed to abrogate their pursuit of independence for three months while a peace agreement was reached. Sadly, this only amounted to a brief peaceful interlude, as the factions throughout Yugoslavia were marshalling their strength. (Ramet 1996, 37)

Under Milošević's hard-line rule, Serbia would not be deterred from its course, to build a larger ethnically homogenous state. Toward this aim, it planned to incorporate parts of Croatia, particularly Slavonia and Krajina, as well as eastern and northwestern Bosnia. This policy eventually dragged Serbia into conflicts across Yugoslavia. In anticipation of this Serbian annexation, the Bosnian SDS, like their Croatian Serb brethren in Krajina, began declaring autonomy for Serb dominated regions in Bosnia throughout August of 1991. Milošević pursued a similar strategy in both Croatia and Bosnia, in preparation for his plans for the expansion of a greater Serbia. He began a program of intimidation of non-Serbs in order to coerce them to clear out of the territories that Serbia hoped to claim. The specific aim was to clear the territories of non-Serbs, not through direct combat and military operations, but by perpetrating violence on civilians and forcing them to migrate away from the Serb dominated zones. This, Milošević believed, would curtail the potential for future unrest. (Friedman 2004, 37)

In Croatia, Serb militias seized large chunks of territory between July and October of 1991, devastating towns and villages and forcing local populations to flee for their lives. With the support of the JNA, the militias laid siege to urban centers across Croatia including Vukovar, Osijek, Dubrovnik, Petrinja, Glina, Kuzmanovič, Okučani, Vinkovci, Borovo and the Capital of Zagreb. Many of these were subjected to relentless artillery shelling and aerial bombardments that reduced them to rubble. Near the end of October the Insurgents were in control of nearly one third of Croatia's territory (as alluded to above). They proclaimed that Croatian Serbs, who represented less than twelve percent of Croatia's total population in the 1991 census, were "not a minority," thus implying that they constituted a majority over the other almost ninety percent of the population.

During the last half of 1991, twelve cease-fires unraveled, proving unacceptable to the combatants. By year's end, the war had created more than half a million refugees. There were estimates of up to ten thousand killed and many more wounded. Nearly half of Croatia's factories had been destroyed, as the estimated damage of the war totaled some \$18.7 billion dollars. (Ramet 1996, 53)

In an effort to quell the violence, the UN Security Council announced an arms embargo for Yugoslavia in September of 1991. In actuality, the embargo effectually guaranteed Serbian Supremacy because of existing arms caches that it already held and because it controlled the JNA. At the urging of the European community, the Security Council was able to broker a cease-fire between Serbia and Croatia on January 2, 1992. By mid-February a *United Nations Protection Force* (UNPROFOR) of 14,000 troops was deployed and headquartered in Sarajevo, "to create the conditions of peace and security required for the negotiation of an overall settlement of the Yugoslav crisis." Constrained by contradictory mandates, UNPROFOR was largely ineffectual in its objectives, as the situation in Yugoslavia continued to deteriorate. Friedman describes the murky environment in which it operated:

"The Security Council passed a large number of resolutions... Often these provisions were in conflict with each other, which 'constrained UNPROFOR's scope for responding' to Serbia. Furthermore, according to Security Council Resolution 770, UNPROFOR's mandate was extended to protect humanitarian efforts and the 'safe havens' in Bosnia, using any necessary means, under wartime conditions with only light arms and loose coordination. Its secondary mission was to serve as a stabilizing presence in Bosnia in hopes that war would be avoided in that arena. However, it soon became apparent to those on the ground that those objectives were at odds with each other. UNPROFOR's mission had been peacekeeping in order to protect the international community's humanitarian activities. With only light arms and an inability to use force except for self-defense, UNPROFOR had little flexibility. However, the peace-keepers themselves soon became endangered by the antagonists who would use

UNPROFOR for revenge or as human shields against NATO airstrikes. Thus, the humanitarian issues became inextricably bound with the military/political issues. This weakened the ability of the international community to pursue either aspect efficiently: 'UNPROFOR failed because of the contradictory nature of its mandate: to help distribute relief as well as protect civilian areas. The UN could not guarantee the consent of the warring parties, nor could it prevent them from dictating the nature of the engagement.' Ill-equipped and with an inappropriate mandate and schizophrenic command structure, UNPROFOR was drawn into situations to which it could not adequately respond." (Friedman 2004, 39-40)

Finally, in December of 1992, international negotiators were able to bring the war in Croatia to an end. However, the Serbian Republic of Krajina remained, at least for the time, unchallenged. The forcible removal of ethnic groups from their home territories which transpired during this conflict would later come to be known *ethnic cleansing*.

Ethnically heterogeneous Bosnia was a microcosm of larger Yugoslavia. Its population was approximately forty percent Muslim, thirty-three percent Serb and twelve percent Croat. During October of 1991, the Serb members of Bosnia's parliament broke away from the central government and formed the *Assembly of the Serb People of Bosnia and Herzegovina*.^{*} They then proceeded to establish an autonomous Serb polity within Bosnia and Herzegovina, which became known as *Republika Srpska* in 1992. As the tri-ethnic coalition government that had been put in place during the 1990 elections crumbled, the situation in Bosnia, which was fueled by the fear of events that had transpired in Croatia, began to unravel in the early months of 1992. (Totten, Parsons and Charny 2004, 416) The Titoist distribution of power between Bosnia's three primary ethno-national groups, which had served to hold the republic together since the end of World War II, worked against it in the post-Cold War era. Although Bosnia was traditionally multi-ethnic and largely tolerant, its underlying nationalist and regionalist

^{*} Also, the *National Assembly of the Republika Srpska*.

rifts were laid bare when the ideological blanket of the Titoist era was removed. Bosnia's three ethno-national parties were not able to come to a mutually agreeable consensus over its political future in the changing world order. Bosnian Muslims, united under the SDA (see earlier text), who had no succor state, insisted that Bosnia's position be equal to that of Croatia and Serbia. Their primary aim was an alleviation of Yugoslav tensions through any means necessary, whether federal, confederal or otherwise. Specifically, the SDA operated according to the very real fear that if Croatia and Slovenia declared independence, then Bosnia would have to follow suit in order to insure its peace and integrity, rather than becoming part of a new Yugoslavia, which would be subjugated under a greater Serbia. Bosnian Croats and Serbs, for their parts, were very wary of Bosnia's Muslim President, Alija Izetbegović (1992-1996), who had been calling for *one-man, one-vote*; which would have ensured Muslim dominance. Further, Bosnian Serbs feared the implications of an independent Bosnia, which would cut them off from Serbia proper. Bosnian Croats were split between those who wished to see a united Bosnia and those who favored cantonization and a closer relationship with Croatia. In the final months of 1991 Izetbegović, fearing Serbian and Croatian military intervention, appealed to the international community to provide preventive troop deployments, but was greeted with no response as sporadic violence was beginning to reek the country. (Friedman 2004, 41-42)

Unbeknownst to the world, Milošević and Tudjman had already agreed upon a plan in 1991 to partition Bosnia between them. A small sliver of land would be given to Bosnian Muslims, while the rest of the country was to be divided "equitably" between Serbia and Croatia. (Friedman 2004, 42) In the meantime, the international community

had resolved to break up Yugoslavia along the lines of national sovereignty, a policy with little foresight of the dangerous consequences that it held for the multi-national republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina. US insistence on Bosnian sovereignty, before its territorial disputes with Croatia and Serbia had been resolved, compounded the bitterly divided republic's problems. Moreover, stalemated negotiations between its three ethno-national political parties, who had struggled to govern the republic as a coalition since the 1990 national elections, only served to further muddy the waters of Bosnian sovereignty. At the urging of the international community, Bosnia held a referendum in March of 1992 in which more than ninety-nine percent of the voters chose to secede from Yugoslavia. The two hard-line Serb members of the presidency convinced most of Bosnia's Serb voters to boycott the vote. Later that same month, backed by Milošević in Belgrade, these Serb nationalists declared a separate Bosnian Serb state. The JNA turned over most of their Bosnian based arsenal to the newly formed the *Army of the Republika Srpska*,* a change which amounted to nothing more than nomenclature. (Power 2002, 248-249) As the situation quickly escalated to outright warfare the international community reacted confusedly in its response to the conflict. In effect, a dilemma developed over the cause of the war, "was it a civil war or external aggression from Serbia?" This question was never resolved and, thus, prevented the western powers from developing an appropriate policy to deal with it. Bosnian statehood was recognized in April and it was admitted into the UN in May, as bloody fighting and massacre raged within its borders. (Udovički and Ridgeway 1997, 229) Serb paramilitary groups were spreading fear and destruction across the countryside, from Banja Luka, to Bosanski Brod and Mostar. In a brave display of protest, between 50,000 and 100,000 Bosnians, of all nationalities and

* Also, the *Bosnian Serb Army*.

religious stripes, took to the streets to voice their opposition to the violence. As the throng moved through the streets of the capital it was repeatedly interrupted by bursts of automatic weapon fire. The words of one speaker embodied the desperate desires of a great many peace loving Bosnians who wished to hold their besieged land together: “let the Serb chauvinists go to Serbia and let the Croatian Chauvinists go to Croatia. We want to remain here together.” By April, artillery units of the federal army were shelling urban centers such as Zvornik, Višegrad and Foča. Once the civilian targets were softened, following several days of shelling, the paramilitary groups advanced to deal with the population. The terror that they wrought went much further than simply frightening the Muslim populations into flight, although it is estimated that some ninety-five percent of these populations had fled their homes by the end of April. While the Serbian military campaign of terror and violence against the local Muslim populations was reaching a crescendo, a propaganda campaign was being perpetrated on the local Serb populations, in which the drumbeat of media broadcasts from *Radio Television Belgrade* convinced them that they had to “defend” themselves against their Muslim and Croat neighbors. The broadcasts warned the Serbs of Croatian Ustaša pogroms and fundamentalist Muslim jihads. This coupled with images of burning villiages and dead bodies pouring in from the war in Croatia over the past nine months, to create a genuine feeling of fear among the local Serbs. Authors Martin Mennecke and Eric Markusen describe the Serbian propaganda campaign, writing:

“Unlike Tito, who had not encouraged commemoration of this dark chapter in Yugoslav history [World War II], Milošević used the government-controlled Serbian media to revive memories and suggest to Serbs that genocide against them was possible again. Graphic documentaries of the Ustasha genocide – including many photographs of mutilated corpses – were broadcast on Serbian television. Mass graves of

Serb victims of the Ustasha were exhumed and the bones ceremoniously reburied. Provocative propagandist books and articles on the genocide were also published. Additionally, academics were sent into areas of Croatia with high populations of Serbs to lecture on the past genocide.” (Totten, Parsons and Charny 2004, 422)

The federal army, under the complete control of Serbia, used public fears, along with trumped up stories of threats and rebellion, to justify the joint actions of regular and paramilitary forces inside of Bosnia. The speed and coordination with which these operations were mounted clearly illustrate that they had been planned beforehand and not mounted as spontaneous responses, as was being asserted. Within the first five to six weeks of fighting, the federal army and its paramilitary cadres had usurped control of an area covering more than sixty percent of Bosnia. Malcolm describes the full extent of Serbian involvement in the war, asserting:

“Some local Serb forces raised in the ‘Serb Autonomous Regions’ of Bosnia also joined these operations in several areas of the country. But it is quite clear that the conquest was mainly achieved by federal army forces (including planes, which were used to bomb the towns of Kupres, Doboj and Tuzla) directed by Belgrade, and paramilitary groups from Serbia. In other words, even though some of the soldiers serving in the federal army were Bosnian Serbs, and even though it was coordinated with elements of a Serb insurrection in some area, this was predominately an invasion of Bosnia planned and directed from Serbian soil. During the early weeks of the invasion, the official statements issued by Milošević and the federal army commanders consisted of two claims, both of them false: first, that the army was acting only as a peacekeeper to separate local fighters, and secondly, that no Serbian Units were crossing the Border into Bosnia. Not only were paramilitary units crossing into the country, but also, as one eye witness report from the border put it, ‘the federal army has this week strung a massive presence of men, artillery and tanks along the road from Serbia as it surges into Bosnia.’” (Malcolm 1996, 235-238)

Further, the Serbs established a number of detention camps, where non-Serbs were held under the most barbaric of conditions. Mennecke and Markusen write, “In addition to being overcrowded and underfed, the inmates were frequently tortured and often

murdered.” Moreover, sexual crimes were rampant, as tens of thousands of rapes were perpetrated within the camps and during the course of the larger war. (Totten, Parsons and Charny 2004, 418)

The international community chose to deal with the Bosnian war as a *civil war* and consequently sought to obtain a political settlement between the divided coalition partners of its constituent communities. However, by the time the international community responded, each of the three parties were busy pursuing their own, completely antithetical, aims of forming separate national states within contested territories. Udovički and Ridgeway discuss the crux of Bosnia’s situation, writing:

“Bosnia's fate was a consequence of its interior location at the geopolitical and cultural heart of the former Yugoslavia -- cordoned off from Europe by the republics of Croatia and Serbia, with no external border except a tiny outlet to the Adriatic Sea at the cluster of fishing huts, tourist inns, and villas for Sarajevo politicians called Neum. Its war could not spill over Western borders. Thus, Bosnia-Herzegovina had no strategic significance [similar to Rwanda’s position, discussed in Chapter 2]. The absence of vital interest for major powers meant they would not become engaged militarily in the war, but as the violence, atrocities, and violations of international conventions on war and humanitarian law invaded television screens throughout the world, pressure from the media and the public acted as a moral campaign, reminding the world that international conventions and moral law were being violated and demanding that the major powers take decisive military action. This dilemma made concrete the proverbial identification of Yugoslavia -- and particularly Bosnia-Herzegovina -- as a crossroads. It was, but it also was not, a part of Europe.” (Udovički and Ridgeway 1997, 229-231)

During the early months of 1992, after Bosnian war had been raging for nearly a year, the Security Council attempted to bring some order to the escalating situation. It declared that Sarajevo, Goradze and Srebrenica, as well as a number of smaller Muslim enclaves inside of Serb-controlled territories, were “safe areas.” UN peacekeepers were deployed to these zones and shelters were built to house the mass of refugees. In actual practice,

the safe areas were “places of extreme suffering.” The refugees had to endure “frequent shelling, as well as shortages of food, medical supplies, and other necessities caused by Serb refusal to allow UN aid convoys to reach the areas.” The most ghastly and appalling massacre to take place on European soil since World War II occurred in the “safe area” of Srebrenica, where more than 40,000 people were killed in the closing months of the conflict. During a one week period alone, between July 13 and July 19, 1995, an estimated 7,000 men and boys were slaughtered “in a carefully planned operation.”

Looking back over the long road of Bosnian history, down which we have traveled, it is interesting to note that when its independence was recognized in April of 1992 this represented, in point of fact, Bosnia’s first appearance as an independent state since before the Ottoman conquest in 1463. In the intervening 529 years, Bosnia had perpetually been the suzerainty of larger polities. Some critics contended that because of Bosnia’s multinational makeup, it could only exist as such, part of a larger whole; although its history seems to indicate otherwise. That is, when examined in terms of ethnic animosities, one trend that becomes readily apparent is that the overwhelming majority of ethnic tension experienced in Bosnia was the result of the pressures of *ambitious outside forces*, rather than genuine internal strife. (Malcolm 1996, 234)

Mennecke and Markusen write:

“Some observers, including world political leaders who wanted to avoid direct forms of intervention, suggested that ‘ancient hatreds’ stemming from centuries of conflict in the region were responsible for the outbreak of war and its barbarity... However, there is a strong consensus among scholars of the region that such alleged ancient hatreds did not cause the war. As Norman Cigar emphasizes: ‘Significantly, all three communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina lived for centuries in relative harmony.’ ... The ability of the various ethnic groups to coexist until the 1990s is also

indicated by the high level of intermarriage among Serbs, Croats and Muslims during Tito's regime. Rather than ancient hatreds, the wars of Yugoslav secession, and the Bosnian conflict and its atrocities in particular, reflected a cluster of factors including economic instability, the rise of nationalistic leaders after Tito's death, the deliberate revival and exploitation of historical traumas from World War II, and the barbaric war in Croatia that preceded war in Bosnia." (Totten, Parsons and Charny 2004, 420)

In modern times, Bosnia played the part of a political bone between Croatia and Serbia.

From the late nineteenth century onwards, its internal politics were colored by persuasion from its two neighbors for Orthodox and Catholic Bosnians to identify themselves as Serbs and Croats. Given these persuasive forces and because Bosnia had been intertwined with both Serbia and Croatia within greater Yugoslavia for more than seven decades, it was only natural for members of these communities to identify themselves with these ethnic "fatherlands." When Yugoslavia collapsed, "the very same fact that made the preservation of Bosnia difficult – its nationally mixed population – also made it imperative. So kaleidoscopically intermingled were these peoples, together with a third which had no other fatherland to look to, that their separation could only be achieved at an appalling and unjustifiable cost." The price of peace, for ordinary Bosnians, would have been relatively small compared to the great price they paid to divide. A "small contribution of normality and goodwill" would have sufficed. A contribution that the great majority of Bosnians would have been willing to pay. Unfortunately, "a minority, acting under the direction of a neighboring state, were not; and they had the guns."

(Malcolm 1996, 235) By the time the *Bosnia war* was brought to a conclusion in November of 1995, more than 200,000 Bosnians of all stripes had been killed and some 2 million more displaced. In the face of loud and growing public outcries about the brutalities and abuses that were taking place, the international community chose not to

intervene with armed force to stop the genocide. It had instead shuffled its feet for three years, pointing its fingers at the main aggressors, imposing economic sanctions, deploying peacekeepers and delivering humanitarian aid while Bosnia and its citizens were faced with utter destruction. (Power 2002, 251)

Part II: Lessons Learned:
Common Threads

CHAPTER 4:

TRENDS

In this final chapter of the analysis, everything discussed thus far will serve as prologue. Here I will examine a number of trends that research has identified, with regard to the phenomenon of genocide, and put them in the context of the Cambodian, Rwandan and Bosnian cases. Kuper points out the difficulties inherent in any such endeavor, asserting that, “given the great variety of historical and social contexts of acts of genocide, it would hardly seem possible to develop a general theory of genocide... But we do have a number of specific theories, *ad hoc* theories or theories directed to a special set of circumstances, from which we can abstract more general comment.” (Kuper 1981, 40) Herein lies the strengths and the weaknesses of this analysis. First, as Kuper maintains, the *variety* of the cases that I have selected does not lend itself to the formulation of a single overarching theory, in which a universal set of variables converged in each case to precipitate genocide. That being said, to further use Kuper’s words, I believe that this same variety, by virtue of the uniqueness of each of the samples, on the one hand, and the parallels that can be drawn between them, on the other, lends

strength to the *abstract* inferences that are drawn. Further expounding on this notion, Alvarez writes:

“Even though they occurred at different times, in different places, and for different reasons, and had different perpetrators and victims ... genocides are remarkably alike in some important ways. The propaganda that dehumanizes the enemy, the drunkenness of many of the soldiers and militia members, the involvement of the state, the active participation and complicity of many ordinary citizens are all common features ... of genocide in general... These transcultural and transhistorical elements suggest that a comparative social science-based analysis [such as the present analysis] can be a useful vehicle for developing further understandings of genocide.” (Alvarez 2001, 13)

With this in mind, let us proceed into the research. The literature offers a broad spectrum of theories and trends. In the paragraphs below I will examine a number of the most prominent of which and apply them to the three sample cases. Although, as a whole, the sub-chapters that follow are circuitous in nature, I have divided most of the primary aspects of genocide thematically so that each may be addressed more fully in its turn.

THE ORIGINS OF GENOCIDE

To begin, there is a wealth of research covering the origins of genocide. A great many authors offer insight into all major aspects of such *complex emergencies*. In this first sub-chapter I will examine some of the most widely emphasized themes, with regard to those factors that lead to or foster the type of environment conducive to genocide.

Author Ervin Staub identifies two primary “starting points” or “instigators,”* which are “especially likely to lead to collective or group violence.” They are “difficult

* Or “motives.”

life conditions in a society” and “group conflict.” These instigators take place in the context of what Staub describes as an “evolution of increasing violence.” From the begging, *difficult life conditions* can be the result of a number of different factors, such as economic problems, political conflict and disorganization, or “intense” or “rapid” social change. With regard to the first of these factors, economic problems, Staub later points out that although they often intensify a conflict, “it is not poverty alone by itself that seems central, but rather the loss of well-being, the threat to and frustration of basic needs, and a sense of injustice or relative deprivation in comparison to others that is intensified in difficult times.” When a people are deprived of *basic needs*, they become desperate and turn to a larger group for security. This gives them an identity larger than themselves and acts as a social safety-net. Group dynamics are such that the tendency is to elevate one’s own group above other groups within the same society. Over time, as the *difficult life conditions* continue and worsen, a group begins to perceive that a rival group or groups are responsible for their problems. As this perception becomes stronger, it serves to protect peoples’ identities, while at the same time it strengthens their connection with their own group. This social construct “provides a psychologically useful (even if false) understanding of events.” Through this group-centric paradigm a new ideology [discussed further below] is created or adopted, which envisions what it perceives to be “ideal social arrangements.” Staub writes further:

“This offers hope of a better future, provides a new comprehension of reality and connection to other people, and offers the potential for effective action. Unfortunately, such ideologies almost invariably identify an enemy group. Effective action means dealing with this enemy, usually the previously devalued and scapegoated group. The group and its individual members change as they engage in harmful actions against the other group. They devalue the other group more, and exclude its members from the moral universe. The standards of group behavior

change, institutions change, or new ones are created to harm this enemy. The *evolution of increasing violence* can end in mass killing or genocide. This evolution can take place over an extended historical period, with periods of relative tranquility. It is a central feature of intense group violence.”⁹¹

In the contexts of our three cases, Cambodia, Rwanda and Bosnia, we find both of Staub’s instigators, *difficult life conditions* and *group conflict*, clearly manifested during the *evolution of increasing violence* leading up to the genocides. In Cambodia, the civil war that pitted the Khmer Rouge guerrillas and their North Vietnamese and Viet Cong allies against Cambodia and her South Vietnamese and US allies was the impetus for the development of the process. As the war waged on, living conditions continued to plummet during the extensive US bombing campaign that began in 1969 and continued into the 1970s. This made the Khmer Rouge and its message, which served as a counterpoint to the perceived imperialist sponsored Lon Nol government, look especially appealing to the Cambodian peasantry who had nowhere to turn. The Rwandan crisis was precipitated in much the same way, during the chaos of a civil war. Beginning with the RPF invasion in 1990 and the refugee crisis that ensued, Rwandans were especially receptive to the message of Hutu power and the security it promised. In Bosnia living conditions had been declining throughout the 1980s, as the economic crisis worsened. With the onslaught of civil war in the early 1990s, as Yugoslavia began to break apart, they got even worse still. While living conditions continued to deteriorate, Serbs and Croats were pushed towards the extreme messages of strong-arm leaders such as Milošević and Tudjman, who not only promised security but a realization of group aspirations. Thus, in all three cases we see a broadly similar sequence of events. First,

⁹¹ Ervin Staub , "Genocide and Mass Killing: Origins, Prevention, Healing and Reconciliation," *Political Psychology*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Jun., 2000): 369-371.

due to a host of reasons, life conditions within the sample countries sharply deteriorated prior to the outbreak of genocide. Next, the extremist regimes exploited these deteriorating conditions to their own ends. In this charged environment, group conflict reared its head, in an evolution of increasing violence that led to conditions in which these regimes were able to carry out their planned genocidal campaigns.

In their article, “Systematic Early Warning of Humanitarian Emergencies,” Authors Barbara Harff and Ted Robert Gurr are more specific than Staub. They identify a number of interrelated “accelerators.” Further, they assert that these *accelerators* “cluster” with one another in the months prior to the outbreak of mass violence. These include: 1) “Occurrence of violent opposition by kindred groups in neighboring countries and increases in refugee flows.” This *violent opposition* often takes the form of demonstrations, riots, destruction of property and then actual physical violence. The concept of violent opposition here can be loosely equated with Staub’s second instigator, group conflict, discussed above. *Kindred groups in neighboring counties* played a major role in all three of our cases. In Cambodia Vietnam played this role, in Rwanda it was Uganda, while in Bosnia both Serbia and Croatia served as bases for such kindred groups. Moreover, each of the three cases was accompanied by a severe refugee crisis. 2) “Increase in external support for politically active groups.” This can range from speeches and statements of support to military aid and support. In Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge enjoyed most of this *external support* from China and North Vietnam. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Hutu Power regime in Rwanda counted on nearly total French support during its retention of power. The trail of external support in Bosnia can be traced to both Croatia and, especially, Serbia, which was the primary succor of the Army of the

Republika Srpska. 3) An “increase in size of, or degree of cohesion in, opposition group.” Her again this accelerator is plainly manifested in each of our sample cases. While the US war in Vietnam spilled over Cambodia’s borders, the Khmer Rouge experienced an exponential *increase in size and degree of cohesion*. In Rwanda the toxic broadcasts of Radio Mille Collines helped to swell the ranks of the Interahamwe during the year prior to the outbreak of genocide. By the time the violence began in April of 1994, the Interahamwe was a well consolidated force, which was used as a direct tool of the Hutu Power regime. During the Bosnian war Milošević was able to create a cohesive Serb force out of the old Bosnian units of the JNA, which was an extension of Serbian power. 4) Aggressive posturing or actions by opposition group. Although the Khmer Rouge presented itself as a peace-oriented party during the years before it ultimately usurped power in 1975, its ever-increasing presence in the countryside during the civil war era clearly represented *aggressive posturing*. During the lead up to the Rwandan genocide Hutu extremism permeated civil society. Nowhere was this more clearly evident than in the widely published *Hutu Ten Commandments*, which called for an intense Hutuization of the already Hutu dominated government, educational system and army. At the same time it propounded a staunchly anti-Tutsi world-view. Finally, in Bosnia Milošević whipped up anti-Muslim and anti-Croat sentiments amongst Bosnia’s Serbs, using the propaganda campaign discussed in Chapter 3 to whip the Serb population into a frenzy. By the early 1990s the *National Assembly of the Republika Srpska* (see footnote in Chapter 3) used these sentiments to justify its aggressive posturing as Yugoslavia collapsed and Bosnia was plunged into civil war.⁹²

⁹² Barbara Harff and Ted Robert Gurr, “Systematic Early Warning of Humanitarian Emergencies,” *The Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 35, No. 5 (Sep., 1998), 576-577.

Having addressed these *instigators* and *accelerators* that, when present, make it more likely that a given society will move towards genocide, I will now discuss a number of other psychological and cultural characteristics that such situations share. Authors Frank M. Afflitto and Margaret Vandiver identify some of these critical characteristics, many of which tie into information covered more fully in later sub-chapters. They include the following: 1) Genocide is almost universally perpetrated against groups in which the perpetrators “perceive threatening qualities.” That is, the victims groups were perceived by the extremist regimes in each case as threats to their hegemonies and the genocides that resulted were backlashes directly linked to such notions. 2) Questions of race or ethnicity, which are often used as rallying points during such situations, are really only a “mask for other ... threatening phenomena.” More specifically, to tie this into the first point, “In any move towards extermination, the undesirable and threatening characteristics [the *threatening qualities* identified above] of a victim group are more predominant than the genetic material which purportedly embodies them.” Looking closely at each of the three cases examined in this analysis, we find this to be true. The genocides can be seen as direct extensions of the political motivations of the regimes who perpetrated them. The existing racial or ethnic divides (which we saw develop in Part 1) provided a societal medium that was dangerously conducive to these genocidal ends. 3) “Genocide necessitates a forced and enforced ‘social distance.’” That is, the perpetrators of genocide are forced to maintain a *social distance* between their followers and those groups that are being exterminated, however slight the differences between the two groups might actually be. The victim groups, whether they were Tutsis or Muslims, were made to be seen as something less-than-human. In each of these situations such

dangerous perceptions became toxic when combined with the charged atmospheres within which they took place. 4) “A zero-sum mentality is fostered in which the social distance comes to be seen in terms of in-groups versus out-groups, that is, us versus them.” Certainly in the Rwandan and Bosnian cases, Hutus and Serbs perceived the *out-groups*^{*} in this manner. The propaganda campaigns orchestrated by the regimes played upon the preexisting historically rooted stereotypes of the populace to create these potentially genocidal mindsets. 5) “Victim groups are dehumanized to the point that they become mere ‘functions’ of their undesirable and threatening qualities [identified above].” This is a dangerous extension of the previous cultural or psychological characteristic. Perhaps the most startlingly flagrant example of this phenomenon is the campaign of hate speech that was waged against the Tutsi in Rwanda. In the charged atmosphere that existed there in 1993 and 1994, the constant drumbeat of this propaganda created a dark new cultural mindset in which Tutsis were dehumanized. 6) Finally, Afflitto and Vandiver write, “genocide is only possible with the direct complicity or acquiescence of states. Small political-military groups cannot commit genocide without being assisted or ignored by the state. Hence genocide is a *state-directed* phenomenon.”⁹³ In other words, behind the background of historical contexts, which, as we saw in Part 1, provided the settings in which the three cases of genocide that we examined transpired, the hand of the genocidal regimes can be seen directing the violence.

^{*} In these cases they happened to be Tutsis, Croats and Muslims.

⁹³ Alexandre Kimenyi and Otis L. Scott, eds., *Anatomy of Genocide: State-Sponsored Mass-Killings in the Twentieth Century* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), 9-10.

THE POLITICAL COMPONENT OF GENOCIDE

Keeping in mind the good deal of overlap between each of the aspects of genocide discussed in this chapter, let us next focus on those expressly political components. In this respect, author R. J. Rummel propounds the theory that, “the more democratic freedom that a nation has, the less likely its government will commit foreign or domestic [genocide].” In short, his theory is based on the notion that democratic institutions offer peaceful alternatives, such as “voting, negotiation, compromise and meditation,” which are much less likely to end in mass violence than the alternatives offered under a totalitarian regime. Further, he holds that in democratic societies political conflict, even between bitter rivals, is seen from all sides in the context of the “same moral universe.” On the other hand, totalitarian regimes, such as those represented in our three cases, are much more likely to foster the type of environment in which societal responses to conflict could lead to mass violence and genocide. With respect to such regimes, Rummel writes:

“Rather than being a means of resolving differences in views, they try to impose on society a particular ideology, religion, or solution to social problems, regardless of the opposition. For this same reason such regimes try to control all aspects of society and deal with conflict by force, coercion, and fear, that is, by power. Moreover, such power breeds political paranoia by the dictator or within a narrow ruling group. This is the fear that others are always plotting to take over rule and would execute those in power. Finally, there is one single coercive organization, one hierarchical pyramid of power rather than a multitude of such pyramids as in a democracy. This turns all sociopolitical and economic issues and problems into a matter of us versus them [see earlier text for a further discussion of this mind-set], of those with power versus those without. We should therefore find that the less democratic a regime, the more unchecked and unbalanced power at the center, the more it should commit [genocide]. [Genocide] becomes a device of rule, as in eliminating possible opponents, or a means of achieving one’s ideological goal, as in

the purification of one's country of an alien race or the reconstruction of society."⁹⁴

The Party Center of the Khmer Rouge is the most glaring example of such *political paranoia within a narrow ruling group*. It is fair to assert that Pol Pot and his close inner circle made political paranoia the central focus of policy in Democratic Kampuchea.

Author Michael Mann takes Rummel's argument several steps further. He admits that, "*Stably institutionalized* democracies are less likely than authoritarian or democratizing regimes to commit murderous cleansing [i.e. genocide]." In other words, unchecked democracies, that aren't stably institutionalized, are as inherently dangerous as totalitarian regimes. In this regard he asserts that, "Murderous cleansing ... is the *dark side of democracy*." In short, because of its very nature, democracy carries with it the potential for the tyranny of the majority. This potential becomes much more ominous in the context of certain multiethnic societies. He expounds further on this idea, writing:

"Democracy means rule by the people. But in modern times *the people* has come to mean two things. The first is what the Greeks meant by their word *demos*. This means the ordinary people, the mass of the population so democracy is rule by the ordinary people, the masses. But in our civilization the people also means 'nation' or another Greek term, *ethnos*, an ethnic group – a people that shares a common culture and sense of heritage, distinct from other peoples. But if the people is [sic] to rule in its own nation-state, and the people is defined in ethnic terms, then its ethnic unity may outweigh the kind of citizen diversity that is central to democracy."⁹⁵

In Rwanda, under the Hutu Power regime, we find this notion of *the people* constituting a *nation*, which was bound together by its ethnic unity and *sense of heritage*. When mixed with other pressures, such as the civil war and refugee crisis, such an ethnicized

⁹⁴ R. J. Rummel, "Democracy, Power, Genocide, and Mass Murder," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Mar., 1995): 4-5.

⁹⁵ Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 2-3.

conception of democracy turned out to be fatal for the country's Tutsis. Similarly, in Bosnia, this ethnically based model of *rule by the people* left Bosnia's Muslim population, in particular, vulnerable to Serb aggression. In a true democracy, minorities and majorities alike are protected from such aggressions by the very structure of the system within which they are operating. When democracy is constructed upon a framework of ethnicity, then political out-groups are not recognized as legitimate players. In the toxic environments in which our cases occurred, once the out-groups were delegitimized and disenfranchised, they became easy targets for the aggressor groups.

AT RISK CULTURAL TRAITS

To build on what we have discussed so far, the mere presence of *difficult life conditions* in a country with an *authoritarian* regime or non-stably *institutionalized democracy* does not necessarily imply that genocide is even within the realm of possibility for that state. Though, in any case, as I believe we have outlined clearly, their presence does make it more likely. Staub asserts that certain "cultural characteristics" also foster the type of conditions under which genocide is more likely to occur. Obviously this sub-chapter considerably overlaps with the *cultural characteristics* that Afflitto and Vandiver discussed above, but I believe that it is important to examine genocidal cultural traits more fully here. One primary such characteristic is related to a group's historical record of devaluating other groups in the past. This is a trend that we saw develop over the long stretch of time in each of the three cases that we examined in Part 1. The more that a group moves in the direction of devaluating other groups, the more dangerous the situation becomes, and hence genocide moves more towards the realm of possibility. The next

cultural characteristic that Staub identifies is a “strong respect for authority” within a group. He writes that, “Accustomed to being led, people will turn to new leaders in difficult times, often to those with destructive ideologies.” Given this propensity for respecting or obeying authority, especially during *difficult times*, a people are much less likely to oppose the orders given by or actions of their leaders; even when these include the perpetration of harmful acts against such devalued groups as discussed above. Once such a trend of subjugation to and complicity with the regime has begun, the pendulum is moved dangerously in the direction of mass violence and genocide, while the likelihood of avoiding these deadly outcomes begins to grow increasingly slimmer. Staub continues, “Monolithic cultures – those with nondemocratic governmental systems [discussed above], a limited range of values, and little access by people to the public domain – also contribute to the likelihood of genocide and mass killing.” (Staub 2000, 370) Coming full circle, Afflitto and Vandiver draw a broad picture of the dangers inherent in such a perniciously balanced culture, asserting that, “Such an atmosphere of mistrust and hostility is emotionally charged and subjective at best. It breeds a situation which is ripe for exploitation by *self-serving political leaders*, who use it to promote their agendas and themselves.” (Kimenyi and Scott 2001, 11) In each of our cases this trend of unquestioned obedience to the genocidal regimes on the parts of the general populations certainly helped to create new and dangerous cultural norms, in which such acts of violence were not met with the shock and revulsion that we would expect to find in average, healthy cultures. In this complex web of complicity, we find that although the unconscionable acts that were committed were no doubt a means to the ends of the genocidal regimes, they could not have been perpetrated on such a large scale without the

direct assistance of average men and women operating under this type of toxic worldview (i.e. cultural characteristics).

The *cultural characteristics* of victimized groups, on the other hand, also play a critical role in the movement of societies towards genocide. The unhealed wounds of past victimizations weigh heavily upon the collective conscience of victimized groups. This tends to frame the way in which they perceive the world and interact with other groups, specifically aggressor groups. This sense of victimization makes the group feel “diminished and vulnerable,” and that the world is “dangerous.” Often, given such circumstances, a victimized group will respond to instigation from other groups with violence, feeling that they are acting in “necessary self-defense.” In response, the instigators vehemently push the pendulum in the other direction, in this *evolution of increasing violence* (see earlier text). Staub applies this model to the Bosnian case, writing:

“Serb violence in the 1990s seems a good example of violence that had its roots, in part, in past victimization and unhealed wounds. The Serbs were ruled for five centuries by Turkey [see Chapter 3]. Until fairly late in the 19th century. Hundreds of thousands of Serbs were killed during the Second World War by a fascist Croat republic allied with Germany. A victim identity and the belief in the necessity for aggressive self-defense have become part of Serb culture.” (Staub 2000, 370-371)

Looking to our other two cases, first, in Cambodia we have clearly seen, over several centuries, this historical evolution of violence between Cambodians and their Vietnamese neighbors. Historically the two groups had a rocky past of conflict, mixed with periods of strategic or coerced alliances. In the twentieth century, during the First Indochina War, Cambodia allied with Vietnam to push the French out of the region. Later, following the American War in Vietnam, whose destructive effects upon Cambodia we

discussed in Chapter 1, the relationship between the Khmer Rouge and Vietnam had soured. In the year prior to their usurpation of power in 1975, the Khmer Rouge demanded that Vietnam return some of Cambodia's lost provinces along the Mekong Delta. During the height of their power, the genocidal regime set about purging the region of Vietnamese, an effort whose brutal thoroughness we have already seen. In fact, it was this cycle of violence that eventually led to the Khmer Rouge's ultimate demise, when Vietnam invaded Cambodia and pushed them from power in 1979. The evolution of increasing violence between Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda, although wholly unique, followed along similar lines. That is, a vindictive tit-for-tat between each side in the decades and centuries prior to the 1994 genocide. As we saw in Chapter 2, in the years following World War I the Belgian colonizers worked to build a more direct control of their Rwandan colony. Toward this end, both the colonial Church and the Belgian administration fostered the Tutsi dominated monarchical system. Their pursuance of this system created an increasing cultural rift between Hutu and Tutsi. Following the administrative reforms of the latter half of the 1920's, which institutionally closed a number of doors that had previously been open to them, the Hutu began to feel more and more *diminished* and *vulnerable*. Such sentiments became a defining cultural characteristic of Rwanda's Hutu. Within the context of the wider, global anti-colonial movement of the 1950s and 1960s, an evolution of increasing violence arose out of these circumstances in Rwanda. This process ultimately culminated in the *revolution* of 1959, which ultimately hailed the end of her colonial system and the beginning of Hutu rule. The massacre of Tutsis that occurred during this era was not forgotten by Rwanda's Tutsi population and their descendants, both those who stayed in Rwanda and those who fled to

neighboring countries. By the 1990s the Rwandan exile community in Uganda was feeling increasingly *victimized* by both the regime in Uganda and the Hutu Power regime in Rwanda; as we saw, this was for good reason. The RPF invasion of Rwanda was the resulting backlash of such feelings and ultimately one of the major factors which created conditions conducive to genocide. In short, certain cultural characteristics of both the perpetrators and the victims in each of our cases created a cultural dynamic in which such violence was possible. In this dangerous cycle, the social attitudes of all sides played off of one another and served to solidify each group's perception of both itself and the other group.

IDEOLOGICAL FEATURES

Kiernan describes the many ideological foundations on which genocides have been based, asserting that, "They include not only racial or religious hatreds but also other idealist cults of ancient glory or pristine purity, more modern conceptions of biological contamination, and varied historical forms of agrarian romanticism and other obsessions with land use." He writes that such thinking is usually underlined by strong "idealized conceptions of the world." In modern times, largely fostered by the notions of Darwinism, *Racism* has often had a strong component in the ideology of genocidal regimes. He defines racism as the "prejudice against a race or subgroup on the grounds of its imagined inferiority or threat." Many times in such cases this racist conception of the world is accompanied by a "sense of historical change." Kiernan continues, "Even when sparked by real fear, racism is often accompanied by dominating ambition." When

such a racism pervades the political atmosphere, the members of one's own group are forced to distance themselves from the members of the rival group or groups. Racism carries the potential for genocide when a group takes the next, relatively short, step of imagining "a world without certain kinds of people in it." Additionally, Kiernan asserts that, "genocide requires material power over a sizeable population." In many such circumstances this material power is "relatively recent, either the result of startling new economic developments or the cause of unsettling social rearrangements." (Kiernan 2007, 21-24) In each of our cases we find such dangerous ideological foundations, tempered with this pervasive racism. First, Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge is perhaps the best example of such an *idealized conception of agrarian romanticism*. Based on such *religious hatreds*, the Khmer Rouge's worked to eradicate religious communities, which they perceived to be a direct threat to their power. Further, with regard to minority communities, the Vietnamese suffered the cruelest fate at the hands of the genocidal regime, though the Cham and Chinese communities fared little better. In the view of the Khmer Rouge, these communities, which had dominated Cambodia's economic life for centuries, were exploitative of the peasantry, the heart and soul of Democratic Kampuchea, and thus appropriate targets for destruction. The Khmer Rouge were very aware of this *sense of historical change*. To this haughty end, they set about turning back the clock in Cambodia to *Year Zero*, a notion which the, Paris educated, Party Center equated with the *Year One* of the French revolutionary calendar. The reign of terror that Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge wrought, in their attempt to bring back a society in twentieth century Cambodia similar to that during the height of the medieval Khmer empire (what Kiernan describes above as *idealist cults of ancient glory*), far surpassed

that of his bloody predecessor Robespierre and the Jacobins, some two centuries earlier, in both its scope and brutality. Certainly in Rwanda we see similar trends. The Hutu Power Regime's vitriolic, racist ideology was founded on such overblown notions of *pristine purity*, which ignored the realities of intermingling that had gone on between Hutu and Tutsi for centuries. Moreover, we clearly saw how the staunch racism or the Hutu regime was *accompanied by dominating ambition*. Finally, the Bosnian case was dominated by racist ideologies. The Serb campaign against Bosnia's Muslim and Croat populations was clearly based on, what Kiernan describes as, *prejudice against a race or subgroup on the grounds of its imagined inferiority or threat*. Further, Serb dominance in Bosnia was founded on the *material power over a sizeable population* that they enjoyed. This was largely attributed to the support of Serbia and the Serb acquisition of former Bosnian JNA units* (i.e. *relatively recent, either the result of startling new economic developments or the cause of unsettling social rearrangements*).

Another aspect of genocide that I believe belongs under the ideological heading is the element of nationalism. Alvarez asserts that Nationalism is the "bedrock of state ideology that has been a powerful influence on genocide." Further, he writes, "Indeed looking at the militant rhetoric so common to many ... nationalistic movements, one perceives a fervency, militancy, and self-righteousness that is more often associated with religious fanaticism than with secular notions of community." In a nutshell, nationalism is the focus of ideology, through which the state begets its legitimacy. Moreover, it is self-actualizing, having a unifying effect on the people. Thus, In Alvarez's assessment:

"Nationalism, then, is the perception that a group of people are somehow united because they share common attributes that bind them together and distinguish them from other peoples. These ties, however, are not inherent

* Which became the *Army of the Republika Srpska*.

or even always obvious. Nationalism is as much a state of mind as anything else, since it is often based on perceived connections rather than truly objective linkages... Nationalistic identity is created rather than innate. Individuals identify themselves with strangers because of some believed or imagined fraternity. If certain distinctions have political utility, they are amplified; if not, they are discarded.... Small differences between peoples are amplified to assume disproportionate significance” (Alvarez 2001, 62-63)

In the Cambodian case the nationalism promulgated by the Khmer Rouge was exceedingly xenophobic. In the regard Alvarez writes:

Many of the targets of the genocide were non-Khmer minorities living in Cambodia, such as Vietnamese and Chinese populations, who were believed to be racially inferior to the native Khmer. In the past, the Khmer kingdom had been a powerful empire and controlled much of Southeast Asia. The Khmer Rouge saw themselves as working to restore this ethnic Khmer greatness by destroying minority groups.” (Alvarez 2001, 63-64)

Thus, to use his words from above, because of their *political utility*, such distinctions between Khmers and non-Khmers were *amplified to assume disproportionate significance*. The rancorous split between Rwanda’s Hutu and Tutsi is an example of this *narcissism of minor difference*. Although centuries of intermingling had often blurred the lines between Hutu and Tutsi, the ethnic nationalism pushed so fervently by the regime amplified the perceived differences between them and transformed them into *all-important definitions of identity*. By the time of the catastrophic events of 1994, perceived differences had come to be based on such trivialities as “small differences of appearance, class, [and] even milk consumption.” Likewise, in the Bosnian case, where the ethnic divide was bitterly demarcated, Serbs, Croats and Bosnian Muslims all came from the same racial stock and they all spoke the same language and shared regional dialects. Despite these overarching shared cultural characteristics, ambitious strong arm political leaders, such as Milošević, used this *perception*, that their group was *somehow*

united because they shared common attributes that bound them together and distinguish them from other peoples, to buttress their own power. In each of our cases the onerous results of such unchecked nationalism are all too clear.

THE MEDIA AND GENOCIDE

In each of the three cases we have examined, the media was an important tool used to incite the public to perpetrate frenzied atrocities. Although this discussion could have fit into one of the other sub-chapters, I believe that the media played such a prominent role in each of the cases that it deserves special mention. Author Maryann Cusimano Love describes the role of the media, writing:

“In countries where the media are state controlled, they may bear particular responsibility for foreign policies of war or genocide. During the wars over the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, local television stations often inflamed war fever, presenting those on the other side of the conflict not as former neighbors and friends, but as barely human murderers. In Rwanda, radio was skillfully used as an integral part of carrying out genocide. Radio broadcasts not only incited people to violence generally, but also announced specific lists of people to be killed and instructions to do so.”⁹⁶

In the Cambodian case the Khmer Rouge used radio broadcasts to clear the cities once they had usurped power in 1975. They incited the populations to flee into the countryside, telling them that the Americans were going to begin a bombing campaign against the cities and brutally cleared all of those who remained. With the refugee populations forced into the countryside, the Khmer Rouge was able to dispose of them as it pleased. The verdict of the 2003 trial for the executives of the RTLM (see earlier text)

⁹⁶ Mark J. Rozell and Jeremy D. Mayer, eds., *Media Power, Media Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, Publishers, 2008), 264.

radio station in Rwanda further illustrates this pernicious phenomenon. In its ruling the *International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda* (ICTR) held that:

“The newspaper and the radio explicitly and repeatedly, in fact relentlessly, targeted the Tutsi population for destruction. Demonstrating the Tutsi as having inherently evil qualities, equating the ethnic group with ‘the enemy’ and portraying its women as seductive agents, the media called for the extermination of the Tutsi ethnic group as a response to the political threat that they associated with Tutsi ethnicity. (ICTR 2003: para. 72)”⁹⁷

In short, during the twentieth century, which we have already seen dubbed as the *Age of Genocide*, modern forms of media, such as radio and television, offered an unprecedented speed for the dissemination of information. Thus, the dark side of these innovations is that they provide an excellent avenue for the mass spread of propaganda.

WARFARE, DISEASE, HUNGER AND REFUGEE FLIGHT

Harff and Gurr identify four exacerbating elements that often accompany *complex humanitarian emergencies*.^{*} They write, “humanitarian emergencies have four aspects: warfare (mainly within states), disease, hunger and refugee flight.” (Harff and Gurr 1998, 551) These elements, of course, can be seen as extensions of what Staub described above as *difficult life conditions* and *group conflict*. I am addressing these more fully here because of the important role that each of them played in the cases we examined, most especially warfare and refugee flight. To begin, as Harff and Gurr point out, each of the cases that we examined occurred within the context of a broader civil war. The

⁹⁷ Allan Thompson and Kofi Atta Annan, *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide* (Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2007), 2.

^{*} Complex emergencies encompass genocide as well as a number of other disasters, both manmade and natural.

specifics of each of these conflicts have been outlined fully above and to further expand on them again here would risk being superfluous. Suffice it to say that such warfare, and its naturally destructive consequences, created environments in Cambodia, Rwanda and Bosnia, that were conducive to the sort of frenzied violence that ultimately occurred. In each of the cases the issues of *disease* and *hunger* were secondary effects to warfare and refugee flight, but caused untold death and suffering in their own right. In Cambodia thousands upon thousands died of hunger and disease as they were literally starved and worked to death in the countryside by the Khmer Rouge. Likewise, in Bosnia thousands wasted away in Serb internment camps that were all too reminiscent of Nazi concentration camps a half century earlier. Finally, each of our cases was accompanied by a massive refugee crisis, which was both a cause and effect of the larger disasters. In Cambodia the civil war and American bombing campaign had already created a significant refugee crisis before the Khmer Rouge took power in 1975. Following their evacuation of the cities the refugee problem reached an unprecedented crescendo. In Rwanda the RPF invasion resulted in an increasing tide of refugees, who had feared being liberated by the insurgents. As already noted, this crisis was a result of the broader civil war, but it also created an environment of fear and uncertainty within which many average people were swept along in the hazardous currents of propaganda and policy pushed by the Hutu Power regime. Lastly, in Bosnia the refugee crisis was a result of the ethnic cleansing of, particularly, Serb dominated regions. Those, especially Muslims, who were not massacred out right, were put to flight following the brutal sieges of a host of urban centers. As previously discussed, many of these were herded into detention camps, where they were held in the most abhorrent of conditions.

When discussing the connection between genocide and warfare it is important to point out that, despite the often blurred lines, they are in no way the same phenomenon.

Having made this distinction, author Eric Markusen asserts that:

“One connection between genocide and warfare on which there is a wide consensus in the scholarly community is the tendency for war to create social and psychological conditions conducive for the outbreak of genocide and genocidal killing. Several dimensions of modern war expedite genocide. First, war ... produces widespread psychological and social disequilibrium. This creates the potential for pre-existing inter-group tensions in a culturally and/or racially diverse society to flare into violence directed by the majority into violence directed by the majority against members of a minority group.”⁹⁸

Staub expounds further on the relationship between warfare and genocide, explaining why civil war in particular seems to engender this type of extreme violence. Tying this concept into what we have already discussed, he writes, “A civil war represents group conflict of the most extreme; it usually arises from, as well as engenders, difficult life conditions [discussed above]. Civil wars embody mutual devaluation [discussed above] or an especially intense form of it which I have called ideologies of antagonism. The evolution of increasing violence is inherent in war.” (Staub 2000, 373)

GENOCIDAL REGIMES

Thus, from what we have already discussed, it has been established that, given the right historical, societal and political conditions, genocidal regimes flourished in each of our cases. When such a toxic set of factors collide, the evil hand of these murderous regimes can be seen guiding the violence from the top down. In the preceding sub-

⁹⁸ Charles B. Strozier and Michael Flynn, eds., *Genocide, War, and Human Survival* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, Publishers, 1996), 78.

chapters I have endeavored to illustrate this relationship of accountability, while expounding on the various other aspects common to such cases as those examined in this analysis. Alvarez mixes no bones about where responsibility ultimately lies with respect to the perpetration of genocide. In this regard he writes that, "Responsibility for genocide ultimately rests with the leadership of the government in power, since the crime of genocide is largely planned and perpetrated by both formal and informal agents of the state." He defines modern states, the apparatus that murderous regimes have used to commit genocide, as "centralized, institutionalized, authoritative systems of political rule." Further, Alvarez continues, "it compromises the government and administrative institutions of a society and the ideologies that support the legitimacy of those institutions." He goes on, applying this to the Cambodian case, writing, "The simple reality is that Pol Pot was responsible for the genocide and the Khmer Rouge was an instrument of his will." As we saw in Chapter 1, the mass murder of millions of Cambodians was indeed carried out at the direct orders of Pol Pot and his small inner circle. (Alvarez 2001, 56-57) Similarly, in Rwanda the brutal Hutu power regime, which was made up of a number of Hutu political elites and military officers, was orchestrated the genocidal campaign against the Tutsis. In Bosnia, although all sides committed atrocities during the war, the overwhelming preponderance of the violence was committed by Serbs at the direct behest of Milošević and Serbia. Thus, with the full power of a modern state; guided and emboldened by dangerous ideologies, genocidal

regimes focus their energies on the implementation of their evil ideals. Mihran Dabag breaks down the ultimate aim of genocidal regimes to its simplest form, writing:

“Genocidal policy is primarily focused on designing new generations as a creative act and on providing for the development of a new, different generation... The atmosphere of annihilation, however, is primarily influenced by a sense of fulfilling a national duty, one which might be considered difficult: carrying out an important, honorable duty for the sake of a new beginning and the emergence into the modern age, in the face of a menacing threat to the ‘national body.’”

Looking to our three cases, no matter what end of the political spectrum each of the regimes hailed from, we find this reasoning to be correct. When guided by such a malevolent worldviews, the perpetrators of these unthinkable acts were able to move far beyond the traditional moral sphere; annihilation was no longer seen as a monstrous act. Instead, the regimes and their followers came to believe that they were carrying out “an important, necessary task, ... the realization of a new future.” (Kinloch and Mohan 2005, 51)

CONCLUSION

Thus, having traversed this long road together, which encompassed more than five thousand years of combined history, I believe that several points are fundamentally clear. Primarily, that genocide cannot be wholly attributed to the historical progression and context out of which it arose, on the one hand, nor to the brutal regimes who largely guided the violence, on the other. Instead, it is the result of a complex interplay between the two. First, with respect to regimes themselves, it is doubtful that without the guiding hand of these murderous administrations the wide scale and coordinated violence experienced by each of our sample countries would have resulted, even given the preexisting, historically based tensions. In my opinion the regimes in general and the individual actors who perpetrated the violence in particular are ultimately culpable for the genocides and, if they have not already, should face justice accordingly. Having made this distinction, let us turn to the broader historical, cultural, social and political circumstances out of which the genocides arose. As I asserted in the introduction, the major goal of this analysis is to create a *framework for understanding* the complex issue of genocide as a wider phenomenon and, more narrowly, the cases examined in Part 1 in particular. Through this broader lens, I believe that it is fair to assert that without the historical *context* out of which the genocides arose, the regimes would not have been provided with the opportunity to turn

to murderous cleansing as a means to their political ends. Thus, in final assessment, I believe that the ultimate conclusion of this analysis is manifestly clear, that the genocides in each of our sample countries were the result of a complex intermarriage of historical context coupled with contemporary circumstances. From beginning to end the aim of this project has been to provide a greater understanding of the phenomenon of genocide through a broad historical prism and, in so doing, to fight the good fight against this most odious scourge.

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