

Tuzla, The Third Side, and the Bosnian War

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We have always been a melting pot and have had the possibility to stay like that during the terrible war.
That's why the nationalist forces could not manifest themselves here, though they have tried it.
Selim Beslagic, Mayor of Tuzla

Introduction

More than 250,000 dead. 500,000 refugees. The worst war in Europe since World War II. Unfortunately, these facts and statements are only too familiar to those who experienced or witnessed the "Third Balkan War." This war ripped through the heart of Southern Europe from 1991 until 1995 leaving unspeakable atrocities in its wake, horrors most humans can't imagine, and a nationalist sentiment that appeared to doom the area for decades to come. The nationalist sentiment was so strong and pervasive that it moved people to commit acts even they would not believe they were capable of carrying out.

To briefly try to understand why the war occurred in Bosnia-Herzegovina (heretofore simply Bosnia) one must begin by understanding who was involved, why they were involved, and what the guiding forces were that tipped the former Yugoslavia into chaos. The parties to this conflict were numerous, but may be divided along three dominant national/ethnic lines. There were the Bosnian Croats (who were supported by their brethren in neighboring Croatia) lead by Franjo Tudman, the Bosnian Serbs (who were supported by their brethren in Serbia) lead by Slobodan Milosevic and Radovan Karadic, and the Bosnian Muslims (who did not have a direct surrogate, but did get help from some Islamic countries) lead by Alija Izetbegovic. The Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Muslims had a loose, and not always very trusting alliance against the Bosnian Serbs. The three parties became involved in the conflict due to proximity and a complex history of living together. In some portions of Bosnia the parties were intermingled, while in others they lived in their own enclaves.

Further, it is important to also understand that within the parties there were factions that were Nationalistic and others that were Multiethnic in their ideology. For example, in Bosnia it was critical to label Nationalistic Bosnian Serbs as “Chetniks” to distinguish them from other Bosnian Serbs that were not instigating and perpetuating the conflict.² More on this critical distinction and its connection to the Third Side is presented in the analysis section.

That having been stated, when trying to understand the Bosnian war it is critical to grasp the importance leaders carry in that part of the world.³ Dating back to the benevolent dictator Josep Broz Tito, a centralized system characterized by dominant leadership was how the former Yugoslavia operated. Somewhat ironically, the people of Yugoslavia appeared to be happy under that system. Once Tito passed away however, a vacuum at the top was created that left Yugoslavia vulnerable to those who were desirous of amassing power for power sake. Leaders who sought to create a “Greater Serbia” or a “Greater Croatia” filled this vacuum. This power grab divided those who had lived with together and set the stage for war. While nationalist leadership and desire for power are not the only reasons for the war, they are the reasons that stand out as critical to what transpired over those four devastating years. Equally important to recognize is that wars are lead by leaders, but fought by citizens. Thus, those that took part in this war, specifically those with nationalist aspirations, must bear some of the blame as well.

Like any war, the tragedy in the Balkans was disturbing in so many ways that it is hard to look for any silver lining among the rubble and stench of death. But in these tragic situations a way forward toward some kind of viable future emerges through the ashes. That future is emboldened by a city in northwest Bosnia-Herzegovina called Tuzla...and this is its story.

The story of Tuzla

Tuzla, whose name comes from the Turkish word for salt, is the fourth largest city in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Tuzla's is one of the oldest settlements in Bosnia and people remained there primarily because of its natural saltwater springs. The city straddles the Jala River and is pock marked with smokestacks from the industrial factories that dominate its landscape. Specifically, Tuzla is one of the largest rubber and chemical producers in Bosnia. Its communist past, evident from spotted drab apartments, is intertwined with spiraling mosques that date back to the days of Turkish occupation. As a result of this history, the city also boasts a unique mindset, combining the best of these hard working laborers with other historical and cultural curiosities.

Three such curiosities worth discussing are the presence of cultural and intellectual inquiry, a strong history of resistance, and a history of multiethnicity. By many accounts Tuzla has been dubbed a critical economic and cultural center in Bosnia with a close-knit and thriving intellectual population.⁴ This population was one that helped dispel myths as the war encircled the city and helped unite the people through constant reminder of the importance of a common cultural past.

This curiosity ties closely to the second, which is a strong history of resistance. Tuzla was the birthplace and center of activity for the independence struggle against Turkish rule, where the Austro-Hungarian empire was turned back during WWI, and the center for resistance to the Nazi occupation during World War II. And as Samphier adds, "Past struggles -- mainly fighting off invaders rather than fighting amongst themselves -- run through Tuzla's political identity like blood through veins. The people of Tuzla are very proud of their traditions...History gives life, meaning and direction to contemporary resistance."⁵

Finally, Tuzla has also been characterized by a strong multiethnic composition for much of its history -- with an interethnic marital rate of between 25% and 40% before the war.⁶ By one

estimate before the war Tuzla was comprised of 50% Muslims, 15% Serb, 15% Croat and 20% who characterized themselves as Yugoslavs.⁷ These ethnicities have, for the most part, supported each other in times of trouble. For example, according to historical accounts the Muslims in the city hid the Jews and Serbs from the Croatian Nazi sympathizers during World War II.⁸ This culture of tolerance in Tuzla before, during, and after the Tito years existed due to a broad level of integration. All these factors, along with this unique culture of tolerance, provides a small window into how the city staved off much of the fighting, making it a bastion for tolerance in a swarm of nationalist sentiment.

Make no mistake, however, Tuzla was not a panacea. The city was plagued with a number of problems during the war. While many citizens were multiethnic in their orientation, there were certainly forces within Tuzla that followed the nationalist political parties. These people did all they could to incite animosity and hatred in order to divide Tuzla the way they had done throughout Bosnia. If that was not enough, approximately 50,000 primarily rural internally displaced persons with a nationalist sentiment (out of about 250,000 who passed through) settled in Tuzla. The nationalist residents and their newly settled counterparts were also supported by nationalist forces from outside of Tuzla. These external forces continually tried to infiltrate Tuzla with hateful rumors and violent incursions in order to puncture the multiethnic cocoon that existed amongst its majority.

Even with fierce resistance from many sectors of society the war still took a dramatic toll on Tuzla. A war of this magnitude with the tremendous amount of force behind it could not be completely resisted. Out of a population of 130,000, some 1,200 people perished, while another 25,000 fled in fear -- becoming displaced persons or refugees.⁹ The city itself shows the scars of

war -- with blown out windows, disabled and maimed victims, and shrapnel lodged in many buildings.

The 10-month siege of Tuzla during 1993-1994 was a prolonged event that created tremendous despair.¹⁰ During this period the residents of Tuzla experienced some of the heaviest bombing in the war, the city ran drastically short of food and medicine, one hour of electricity was available each day, there was virtually no heat, and almost 60 people died a day from starvation.¹¹ Another infamous incident, which occurred on May 25, 1995, was the massacre of 71 youth who were in the town square celebrating a basketball victory. One shell killed them all. Since the end of the war, the people of Tuzla have struggled with the pain they experienced and have tried desperately to carry on their tradition of multiethnicity. Despite all these hardships and setbacks some argue that the struggling Tuzla went through only helped to solidify its tolerance and efforts to resist the war.

As should be evident, Tuzla gained international notoriety for the actions it took during the war to preserve its multiethnicity. While other cities and towns succumbed to strong nationalist sentiment perpetuated by various leaders, Tuzla collectively made difficult choices and resisted the nationalist temptation in a manner worthy of examination. Some have claimed that there was nothing particularly special about Tuzla itself, but simply that its citizens started with a strong belief that they would not turn their backs on their decade old neighbors. Nowhere is this attitude better exhibited than in the city's symbol – the goat. In one publication the significance of the goat is explained this way, "We view the Goat of Tuzla as our symbol of resistance and spite to all tyrants of this world and all troubles that may beset this town. Tuzla is the city where reason prevails."¹² Whatever the exact reasons for the successful resistance of the war there is little doubt that it took the collective effort of almost the entire city to make it work.

Research methods and goals

In order to investigate the activities and role of the Third Side in Tuzla, a number of anecdotal interviews were conducted via email with residents and others living in Tuzla before, during, and after the war. The sample of people was opportunistic and the interviewees emerged through contacts the author had or made in researching this project. The respondents came from many different sectors of society including local governmental officials, members of the Bosnian army, schoolteachers, local and international non-governmental organizations, and business people. In addition, documents were reviewed including books, newspaper reports, and previously documented interviews with inhabitants of the city.

The primary goal of the research was to help unearth and comprehend the Third Side and its role in Tuzla's efforts to resist one of the worst wars of the twentieth century. In addition to understanding the Third Side from that perspective, the analysis that follows focuses on who played what roles, how those roles were mobilized, what coordination -- if any -- took place between those playing different roles, and what the forces were that favored the emergence and persistence of the Third Side as well as those obstacles that tried to thwart its emanation. In order to understand the success of this effort, the Gramscian conception of ideological norms will be employed. Finally, at the end of the analysis some conclusions will be presented.

The Third Side: Preserving tolerance and keeping war at bay

The role of the Third Side was critical in preventing Tuzla's demise on the scale seen around Bosnia and resisting, to a large degree, the forces of nationalism that engulfed the country. In order to stop the nationalist from overwhelming the entire city it took a significant majority of

people to work together to stave off destruction. This conglomeration, which by many accounts was at least partially self-organizing and emerged out of necessity, was comprised of individuals, organizations, and officials.

These entities came at the task of resistance from many different perspectives. The mayor, local governmental officials, miners, women's groups, teachers, religious organizations, news media, and civic groups all mobilized to play roles in insulating Tuzla from the war. This analysis will briefly discuss some general notions about the type of Third Siders involved in Tuzla. Then there will be a shift to an overview of the mayor's actions as catalyst and indispensable agent. That will be followed by the heart of the effort, which focuses on the various local groups that enabled the Third Side to become strong in the face of overwhelming adversity. The emphasis is being placed on these groups and not the mayor for two reasons. The first is that the mayor has already received quite a bit of attention for his efforts and they are well documented.¹³ The second is that the local groups were really the backbone of the effort and without them and the support of the masses no resistance would have been possible.

If the parties to the conflict were the Bosnian Croats, Bosnian Muslims, and Bosnian Serbs, then the Third Side in this conflict is rather unique. In this instance, the people of Tuzla themselves were also Bosnian Croats, Bosnian Muslims, and Bosnian Serbs. However, it was their "other" identity as multiethnic Tuzlans that proved critical for the Third Side because it was this identity -- rooted in anti-nationalism -- that trumped their others.¹⁴ From Ury's perspective, these people were Inside Third Siders on the one hand and Outside Third Siders on the other. By being part of the three groups mentioned above and living in Bosnia they were *de facto* part of the conflict. This would be why they would be considered Insider Third Siders. By holding different beliefs than the nationalist segments of society who carried out the conflict they were

also outside of the conflict of clashing nationalist beliefs. Instead the multiethnic citizens of Tuzla acted as the surrounding community that sought to help foster tolerance and keep their communities from being pulled apart.

That having been stated, the most well-known and central figure in the Third Side movement was Mayor Selim Beslagic. In as much as leaders around Yugoslavia used their pulpit for negative purposes to start and continue the war, Beslagic's used his position and its stature (i.e. legitimacy) in society for positive ends. But Beslagic was not simply the right person at the right time. He is included herein because his persona and his actions -- like that of Martin Luther King Jr. -- were simply indispensable for the Third Side.

The Mayor's efforts have been well documented and he has rightly received much of the credit for Tuzla's success, including a Nobel Prize nomination. His roles can best be described as a meta-mediator, teacher, bridge-builder and provider. His undertaking as meta-mediator is most well known because he faced grave danger and was the highest profile individual in Tuzla. As a result, he became the catalyst for other groups to take the brave steps necessary to preserve the peace in time of war. He organized residents into multiethnic civic groups, such as the Association of Women and the Civic Forum, the latter's task being to protect the Serb minority population from harassment. The Mayor also helped Serbian residents form a group to work with other residents of Tuzla and to work with peace activist in both Serbia and Croatia.¹⁵ But the other prevention oriented roles of teacher, bridge-builder, and provider acted as the foundation for his meta-mediator activities.

His role as the teacher, in which he led through his actions, taught his people to stand firm in the face of fear. Beslagic's attitude was one of utter intolerance toward ethnic and nationalist hatred. As he once stated, ... "the true enemy besieging Tuzla is not the Serbs, it is the

ethnic animosity they represent."¹⁶ This attitude, which was repeated time and again, taught the people of Tuzla to resist the intolerance sweeping their nation. More importantly, he conveyed this message in a manner that taught his people that violence was not the answer and that tolerance for difference was the manner in which they would make it through this ordeal. As but one example of his approach to dealing with the conflict take the scenario that occurred early on in the war when the Mufti of Tuzla was kidnapped by Croatian extremists. Muslims in the city angrily went to Beslagic and told him that they were going to retaliate by kidnapping the Catholic priest of Tuzla, which surely would have quickly escalated the conflict into a nationalist battle. Beslagic replied that he would not allow them to do such a thing and convinced them he could handle the situation non-violently. Through the connections he had established he negotiated the release of the Mufti, all the while hiding the Catholic Priest of Tuzla just in case the Muslims did not heed his warning.¹⁷ Not only did actions like this preserve the multiethnicity that characterized Tuzla, but it kept nationalists from gaining a strong foothold in the city.

Beslagic's also acted in the capacity of bridge-builder and provider to his people of all ethnicities and, importantly, to the non-nationalistic forces in Bosnia. In the role of bridge-builder he forged ties between all the groups in Tuzla and kept lines of communication open with other multiethnic supporters around Bosnia. His famous mantra was "the citizens option", which referred to how he wanted to deal with problems as they arose.¹⁸ With regard to the provider role, he gave the non-nationalistic forces skills to address the problems they confronted. In addition, he protected and respected them all regardless of ethnicity. He also opened doors for his citizens by creating a user-friendly leadership structure supported by strong multiethnic coalitions. Finally, he provided them with a model of leadership worthy of emulation. In

preparing for the war, Beslagic sought not to divide his people, as most other leaders in the region, but to build bridges to keep them bound together. He was the glue that held it all together, but he could never have done it himself.¹⁹

What makes the story of Tuzla even more fascinating is the Third Side support behind Beslagic. Borrowing from Wulff and Blanche (this volume), if Beslagic was the channel factor, than the supporting Third Side individuals, organizations, and local officials were the driving forces. In other words, Mayor Beslagic provided the critical channel for people to act, but the people became the driving force behind the effort. These Third Siders were determined not to stand by and watch their city get swept up in the nationalist sentiment that was tearing apart their country. Without these actors, who took on many critical tasks, the preservation of multiethnicity would never have been possible. While there were many organizations and factors that contributed to the resistance, this review will highlight some that made a significant contribution.²⁰

The Forum of Tuzla Citizens (FTC), formed in 1993 by the citizens of Tuzla who wanted to take a stand against nationalistic forces that were pressing down on their city, played the critical roles of bridge-builder, equalizer, and healer. Their goal was to defend a unitary and multiethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina. The 10,000 citizens who comprise the FTC gathered together of their own volition in order to take on this challenge. Those participants were from all political, religions, or national affiliations.²¹ The composition of the FTC, in and of itself, acted as a critical bridge-building mechanism between the different communities in Tuzla.

Among the FTC's most important undertakings were a series of "How to Survive" public tribunes during the 10 month siege of Tuzla, organization of many cultural events exhibiting multiethnic tolerance, public debates on issues related to the war and its reconstruction, and an

international conference in 1994 examining whether Europe was possible without multiculturalism.²² However, possibly their most notable actions occurred in 1995. The first was when the FTC sprang into action to collect many thousands of signatures demanding that the liberal minded Prime Minister Haris Silajdzic withdraw his resignation in protest at being locked out of national decision making...and he did.²³ The second was when, shortly after the horrific bomb attack that killed 71 youths, the FTC took on the role of healer by leading the call for reconciliation...*but* only with justice. As the leader of FTC stated at the time, "Besides the horrible experiences, atrocities and temptations in this war, we cannot survive without making amends and living together... We do not propose total amnesty nor collective absolution, because that would mean the philosophy of forgiving crimes, which is exactly the same as participating in them."²⁴ It was their mantra of non-violence and refusal to hate that gave them the moral force to lead this charge with credibility.

The Unified List Political Party was a group of anti-nationalists that sought to counter the forces of nationalism from the inside -- through the political structure. In doing so, the Unified List gave further legitimacy to the multiethnic struggle and provided it with a voice in the political debates and in the policymaking process. In that sense the Unified List acted as an equalizer in balancing the power of the nationalist parties. This was critical because for the Third Side to be effective it needs to be able to influence the situation from not only the 'outside', but also from inside the system.

The Unified List also acted as a bridge-builder in two important senses. Their first capacity as bridge-builder was in bringing political allies together that shared their beliefs. Similar to many places, politics in Bosnia is a game of coalitions with those involved quickly being alienated unless they have others to ally with. In short, the Unified List empowered

politicians with a multiethnic persuasion to stand for their cause. Their second capacity as bridge-builder was to give multiethnic supporters a party to vote for and support. Allegiance to political parties is very strong in Bosnia and is also a powerful uniting element that stretches across religious, economic, and ethnic lines.²⁵ This party helped to build lasting bridges between communities in Tuzla that would not have had as much interaction if the party did not exist.

Equally important for the Third Side was the Miners Union. The Miners Union really embodied the heart and soul of the city. It was the miners who mobilized rallies and non-violent protests early on before the war reached Tuzla and gave Mayor Beslagic the necessary support and confidence that the people were behind him if he took his controversial multicultural stance. In this respect, the role of Equalizer is most applicable. The miners used democratic principles to empower their fellow citizens to resist the forces of nationalism closing in on them. In addition, because the miners were weaned on a Communist ideology and came from all the different ethnic groups they cut across cleavages and were a natural Bridge-Builder in the community. Their Bridge-Building capacity also stretched into keeping channels of communication open between communities. They also helped to infuse a worker mentality throughout the community, which further helped stave off the adoption of a nationalist mentality. Their working class identity interestingly seemed to trump their other, more ethnic, affiliations because it was more genuine.²⁶

Finally, the miners acted in the role of Witness. As was mentioned above, the miners took action very early on in the conflict because they saw the massive potential for escalation. In the capacity of Witness they provided the city with many sets of eyes and ears to look for trouble and help to head problems off before they got out of control. They played this role well by

speaking out loudly against the war and for the critical need to preserve Tuzla in its current state. Their voices acted as a rallying call for other groups, such as the FTC, to become involved.

Religious individuals and groups also played a constructive role in the resistance movement. Among the different religious individuals that assumed a leadership role none was more important than the main Imam of Tuzla, Muhamed Lugavic. Lugavic and others saw it as their duty and responsibility to act as Bridge-Builders between the different faiths in Tuzla. In a recent interview Lugavic explained that, "...during the war I wanted to communicate and cooperate with people who remained in this city, with other nations, and other religions..." He continued about his role, relationship with other religious leaders, and critics, "Every time I met Fr. Petar Matanovic, the abbot of the Franciscan Monastery in Tuzla, someone would always say 'look, you cooperate even with them'. It's always them and us. All the time I have been trying to establish a bridge through which people will one day understand that they are nothing but people who live here. Others here also know that Fr. Petar Matanovic assisted imams during the war."²⁷ It was this message of tolerance that helped keep religion from becoming divisive and encouraged religious leaders to work together to help resolve problems as they arose – thereby keeping Tuzla from unraveling within.

The next Third Side organization to be examined is Radio Klub Amatur (RKA). This organization, which at times was the only means of communicating to the outside world, played the roles of Witness and Provider. RKA acted as Witness by reporting to those outside of Tuzla what was happening to the city and by calling attention to atrocities that took place. More importantly, their role as Provider for the citizens of Tuzla – and particularly the Serb citizens -- was significant. RKA enabled all of Tuzla's citizens to communicate with relatives and friends in the rest of the Former Yugoslavia, which is a need that is very strong in times of war. More

specifically, the RKA went out of their way to make certain the Serb citizens of Tuzla would have this need met as well. Muslim nationalist and other secret police, operating in Tuzla, threatened the RKA if they gave Serb citizens' equal access. But the RKA stood strong, refusing to compromise their principles, and weathered the threats. While this may not seem to be very important in the big picture, the actions of the RKA were critical in keeping the Serbs from feeling alienated from other Tuzlans and from rifts emerging that could undermine the city's unity.²⁸

The last of the Third Side groups reviewed herein is the Women's Therapy Centre. This group of women operated on the front lines of the war to help victims affected by the fighting. As a result they acted in the roles of Provider and Healer by meeting the people psychological needs. This realm is one that is not discussed in great detail in the Balkans because many experienced atrocities they did not believe were possible. The Women's Centre recognized, however, that these victims have psychological needs that must be met. If these gaping wounds were not healed they would help initiate future conflict. Their work, therefore, is helping to prevent and possibly contain future conflicts.

An integrated effort?

One critical question surrounding the Third Side is how it operates and gets mobilized. In other words, it is important to understand whether the different actors playing their distinct roles were integrated and coordinated in their efforts or whether they were all taking their own actions separate from one another. If the efforts of the Third Side were integrated that may help explain some of the success they had resisting the war. If however, the Third Side actors operated independently and were still able to achieve some success than the issue of whether integration matters will be thrown into question.

There is little doubt that Beslagic did organizing across ethnic lines and really acted as the focal point for the effort. There are numerous accounts of his activities in *Tuzla, The City and Its Man* that document this catalytic and organizing role. In addition, some organizations quickly followed suit and took it upon themselves to reach out to the people of Tuzla and other Third Side organizations working to resist the war. In particular, the Miners Union and the FTC were two such organizations that, not only coalesced support within their organization, but also between them.

In short, there appears to be ample evidence that the Third Side organizations and individuals in Tuzla were coordinated. In fact, once the Mayor, Miners Union, and FTC emerged and began working together others seemed to join in and cooperate. Clearly, without this coordination the Third Side would never have been effective because resisting a war – particularly one fueled by nationalism – takes all the resources of the resisters. What then might help explain why the effort to resist the war not a total success? This may have been partially due to the Third Side roles that were not being played and the holes that these voids created in the overall effort.

Missing roles

Anytime war breaks out there must have been places within that society that were vulnerable. In order to explain the impact of the war -- even though it was countered to a significant degree -- we must turn to some small "tears" in the fabric of Tuzlan society that allowed destructive forces to infiltrate. These holes suggest that some Third Side roles were not played. While it is unclear whether the war's impact would have been lessened had these roles been played, there is little doubt the existence of these roles would have helped the situation in some capacity.

In the case of Bosnia, the very fact that people were ethnically mixed provided a window of opportunity for those that wished to divide and conquer. When people, more specifically leaders, want to focus on ethnicity they often talk about their “rights” as a people and how those are often being trampled upon by the other group(s). The situation in Bosnia was no different, which strongly points to the lack of the Arbiter role. The Arbiter, from Ury’s definition, is the one who helps to address claims and disputes over rights.²⁹ People both inside and outside of the court system can play this role. There did not appear to be many people outside the court system that were operating in Tuzla or Bosnia writ large and the court system itself fell victim to the nationalist divisions.

The other role that was noticeably missing was that of Referee, which is defined by Ury as an entity that sets limits and creates rules for fair fighting if it has to happen.³⁰ Unfortunately, as warfare has moved into the twenty-first century the “rules” that once guided war, namely Just War Principles, have become blurred, challenged, and tragically obsolete. For example, no longer do combatants only target each other, rather they increasingly target civilians and, if that were not enough, use horrific tactics against the unassuming. New systematic tools of war – such as rape – were used in Bosnia precisely because there were no Referees. These tactics had the dramatic impact of wrenching fear – a fear so deep it was only possible through such inexplicable actions.

Forces favoring the emergence of the Third Side -- A Gramscian Perspective

As was mentioned during the story of Tuzla, there were a number of forces that favored the emergence of the Third Side and contributed to its success in this case. The four most significant forces mentioned repeatedly in the interviews and documents reviewed were the aforementioned culture of tolerance, the culture of resistance that pervaded Tuzla for decades prior to the war, the

human ingenuity that seemed to be ingrained in the citizens as they confronted hardship, and the lack of a destructive media presence. In order to understand and explain these concepts, a Gramscian framework of cultural ideology is applied.

Antonio Gramsci developed many critical ideas that have helped explain how society functions and why some societies succeed and others fail. To Gramsci, ideology was a relational whole and the organic glue that kept a society and its critical institutions together. Moreover, that ideology was something that had to be widespread and wholly accepted by the majority of its people if it was to serve its cohesive function.³¹ If this were not the case, than institutions that were so critical to a thriving society would fail when confronted with turmoil. Within this ideological notion, Gramsci placed a tremendous amount of importance on the cultural and religious foundations of such belief systems.

Shifting to the culture of tolerance and culture of resistance that pervaded Tuzla, we notice the Gramscian notion of ideology strongly rooted therein. These two cultural constructs were first and foremost the ideological underpinnings that held Tuzla together in almost the exact manner that Gramsci described. This ideological penchant was so strong that the people of Tuzla and their respective institutions were unafraid to take what might have appeared to be controversial actions. Furthermore, the culture of resistance -- stemming from its history -- was so strong in Tuzla that anything other than taking a stand against the divisive forces facing them would have seemed to be a betrayal.

According to Gramsci, ideology should be comprised of both intellectual culture and traditional folk culture. He believed that folk culture was primarily commonsense and that this commonsense was derived from the very same societal values mentioned above. It was critical, however, for the people to take this folk culture to heart or they would not have strong faith in

the society in which they lived. According to Gramsci, the absence of this was the primary reason why so many people had not accepted their different societies throughout history.³² Interestingly however, Tuzla's ideological gaze was comprised of just these factors. As was mentioned, the close-knit intellectual community and the “humanity focused” Communist worker mindset brought two worlds into one. What is even more interesting is that people in this type of cohesive society are often unaware that they are bonded together in this manner. This atmosphere gave rise to another ingredient in Tuzla's recipe for success, which was human ingenuity.

The human ingenuity that emerged in this time of crisis fed off this embedded unity and was critical for the Third Side's perseverance. Instead of being crippled by the war and the problems it brought, the citizens appeared to take each problem that came their way as a problem to be solved -- sort of a necessary game of outwitting the forces of war. As Tony Samphier confirmed, "In the early part of the war, when Tuzla was blockaded and petrol in short supply, horse-driven carts were dusted off and put to work...because cash was hard to come by, most people dug a plot of land in their spare time and grew vegetables."³³ These everyday actions seemed to be yet another form of resistance and unity that the people of Tuzla employed.

Finally, the lack of a destructive media in Tuzla played a significant role in enabling the Third Side to take hold. In many places around Bosnia the nationalists controlled the media and were quickly able to counteract any positive efforts to resolve conflicts peaceably. In Tuzla no such countervailing messages were spewed and if they were they were thwarted almost immediately. This did not happen by coincidence. The lack of these destructive institutions was partially related to the Gramscian ideological notion because these organizations did not fit into Tuzla's mantra and therefore had little chance of taking root or persisting. This dynamic, in

conjunction with Mayor Beslagic's counter-propaganda actions, help to explain this non-occurrence well. In particular, Beslagic was adept at the art of public relations and was quick to use his bully pulpit to dispel fears and sway potential destructive forces from taking actions that could have quickly spun Tuzla toward chaos.

Obstacles to the emergence of the Third Side

In war it is a truism that there are many powerful forces operating toward destructive ends. These obstacles weighed heavily on the city of Tuzla. The most significant forces were the in-group/out-group dynamic that those pushing nationalistic sentiments create (i.e. the leaders) and those dynamics normally associated with war, such as suspicion, fear, frustration, anger, and exhaustion.

The mother of all obstacles was the nationalism that gripped the country and pulled it toward war. Out of nationalism came a number of other obstacles, but it was this problem that underlay the others. As an example, a reliance on the in-group/out-group dynamic underpins nationalism's tenets. By creating these distinctions the people caught in these situations gravitate to the group they are most closely affiliated with and begin to absorb the hate-filled suggestions about the other.

As previously mentioned, the byproducts of these nationalist attitudes are suspicion, fear, frustration, anger and exhaustion. When these three dynamics emerge they paralyze people from thinking in critical ways and questioning what they are being told about "the other." And remember that "the other" are people they know, often trusted, and lived side by side for decades. As a result, people begin to act on these dynamics, further committing them to a self-fulfilling prophesy of hatred and malcontent toward the respective target. The power of these

dynamics cannot be underestimated – as they have been the generator of some of humanity’s lowest and most disgraceful escapades.

Conclusion -- The Outcome of Collective Resistance and The Future

There is much to be extracted from the story of Tuzla for the Third Side. In this particular situation, Tuzla was confronted with a choice of succumbing to hate or fighting for tolerance. In choosing the later they took the harder path -- a path that is rarely traveled in these circumstances. To achieve success on this path they needed a strong Third Side -- one that believed steadfastly in what they were doing and one that was comprehensive in its scope. For resisting war is a challenge few are capable of unless support is widespread and the system itself is strong enough to withstand its daunting challenges.

The people of Tuzla were also blessed because they possessed a critical piece of a successful Third Side effort -- a dynamic catalyst. Mayor Beslagic's vision and intolerance for hate bred followers in droves. His multiethnic message resonated with a city already steeped in a culture of tolerance and resistance. But a leader is only as good as the people he or she leads, and if a catalyst has nobody to take up his or her call then they simply don the hat of lone critic or rabble-rouser. It was the average citizens, playing their roles in a coordinated fashion, with a perspective of coexistence, that made it impossible for the forces that sought to divide and conquer to succeed.

This case also points to some interesting questions that the Third Side must confront in the future if it is to become a viable option for communities to consider. Namely, what does a system do that is leaderless or lacks a catalyst? How then does the Third Side become mobilized? How can societies develop their own cultures of mobilization so when they are confronted with trouble they are able to challenge it head on? Can the dynamics and elements of

Tuzlan society be transferred elsewhere as a model of how to resist the pangs of war? Can we notice – in the throws of chaos – what Third Side roles are being played and what Third Side roles are not? And if so, Can the Third Side help to foster those roles not being played before tears in society’s fabric occur, conflicts turns destructive, and generations are lost? Only time and research will answer these vital questions.

Appendix I

Interview Questions

1. As you know, Tuzla has been described as a success story by many due to its resistance during the war and preservation of multiethnicity? Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
2. What do you believe were the primary reasons for this success? Please list them and provide an explanation.
3. How much of an impact did Tuzla's history of multiethnicity and culture of tolerance have on Tuzla's ability to resist the nationalist forces?
4. Specifically, how much of an impact did Mayor Beslagic have on Tuzla's success? If he had not been Mayor would Tuzla have succeeded in resisting the war?
5. Specifically, how much of an impact did local political parties have on Tuzla's success? If they had not acted in the way they did would Tuzla have succeeded in resisting the war?
6. Specifically, how much of an impact did citizen groups and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have in resisting the forces of nationalism and trying to preserve Tuzla's multiethnic tradition? Can you please mention some specifically that had a big impact and why? If they had not acted in the way they did would Tuzla have succeeded in resisting the war?
7. To the best of your knowledge, were the Mayor, local politicians, citizen groups and NGOs working separately or together in a coordinated manner? Do you know who acted to organize all these actors -- if so, who?
8. Were there any particular defining moments or incidents that mobilized the different actors to get involved? If so, what were they?
9. In your opinion, was there anything else that could have been done to help Tuzla during this period?
10. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about why you think Tuzla was successful in remaining multiethnic and resisting the war?

Endnotes

¹ The author is a doctoral candidate in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University. He served as an election monitor (1997) in Dokanj, a small town outside of Tuzla. He would like to thank Scott Lang for his help in arranging interviews with citizens of Tuzla.

² This held true for the Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats as well.

³ For accounts of leaderships importance in the Balkans see Holbrooke, R. 1998. *To End A War*. New York: Random House. Glenny, M. 1992. *The Fall of Yugoslavia: The Third Balkan War*. New York: Penguin. Kaplan, R. 1993. *Balkan Ghost*. New York: Vintage Books. Zimmerman, W. 1996. *Origins of a Catastrophe*. New York: Times Books.

⁴ European Centre for Conflict Prevention. "Tuzla, City of Hope in War-Torn Bosnia." In *People Building Peace: 35 Inspiring Stories from Around the World*. 1999. Utrecht, European Centre for Conflict Prevention. 156-159.

⁵ Samphier, T. March 1996. "Springs of hope (in Bosnia)." *Canadian Business and Current Affairs*. 28.

⁶ Ibid, 30.

⁷ Egbert, B. October 9, 1997. "A Noble Act of Harmony in the Balkans." *The Christian Science Monitor*. 17.

⁸ Ibid, 30.

⁹ European Centre for Conflict Prevention, 158.

¹⁰ See Beslagic, S. "The Blockade is Taking Its Toll." In Alispahic, F. 1998. *Tuzla, The City and Ist Man: Selim Beslagic*. Tuzla, BH: Non Plus Ultra Press. 112-114.

¹¹ Cantrell, M. 1994. "Balkan Misery: Spirit of Unity in a Divided Land." www.soviet62.freemove.co.uk/e-j/balkan.html. According to Mayor Beslagic approximately 5,000 bombs were dropped on Tuzla in the first 4 months of the war. See Beslagic, S. "5,000 Shells Fired at Tuzla." In Alispahic, F. 1998. *Tuzla, The City and Ist Man: Selim Beslagic*. Tuzla, BH: Non Plus Ultra Press. 405-406.

¹² Anonymous, 1994. "Bosnian city filled with hope at U.S. arrival." www.pub.umich.edu/daily/1995/12-04-95/news/bosnian.hope

¹³ As an example, see Alispahic, F. 1998. *Tuzla, The City and Ist Man: Selim Beslagic*. Tuzla, BH: Non Plus Ultra Press.

¹⁴ See Weiss, J. 2000. Multiple Identities in Negotiation: The Shifting, Trumping, Individual, Context Theory. *Wisconsin Journal of Peace and Conflict Resolution*. Forthcoming. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin.

¹⁵ Egbert, 18.

¹⁶ Ibid, 19.

¹⁷ Interview with Scott Lang, January 4, 2001.

¹⁸ Interview with Christopher Bragdon, March 14, 2001.

¹⁹ Dalmacija, Slobodna "Interview with Selin Beslagic: The Tuzla Model of Co-Existence." In Alispahic, F. 1998. *Tuzla, The City and Ist Man: Selim Beslagic*. Tuzla, BH: Non Plus Ultra Press. 583-590.

²⁰ The organizations reviewed herein were based on available documents and a series of interviews conducted via email with inhabitants of Tuzla. There were many more organizations and individuals who contributed to the Third Side effort but could be reviewed herein due to page restrictions.

²¹ www.forumtz.com/eforumtz.html

²² Ibid.

²³ Samphier, 28.

²⁴ Ibid, 29.

²⁵ The author witnessed this first hand as an election monitor in Bosnian municipal elections in September of 1997.

²⁶ What makes this a very interesting finding is that traditionally the working class is very susceptible to nationalist manipulation. In many of the interviews conducted the participants stated that the working class was certainly rife with biases, but they were still able to see through them to the core of those they worked with and had come to know as people. This appears to have been more powerful than the nationalism that filtered into Tuzla.

²⁷ Imamovic, E. "Religion Must be Modernized: Interview with the dismissed chief imam of Tuzla, Muhamed Lugavic." www.cdsp.neu.edu/info/students/marko/dani/dani36

²⁸ Incidentally, Radio Kameleon was a radio group that also played an important role in thwarting Serb Nationalist propaganda. These small radio clubs played an important role in fighting rumors along side the Mayor's anti-propaganda efforts.

²⁹ Ury, 149.

³⁰ Ibid, 176-177.

³¹ Gramsci, A. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Translated by Hoare, Q. and G.N. Smith. New York: International Publishers. 24.

³² Ibid, 26.

³³ Samphier, 31.