

STANDING DOWN: THE LOGIC OF SECURITY FORCE DEFECTION

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Abstract

From Egypt to Venezuela, authoritarian regimes live and die by the sword. Amongst students of democratization, it has become axiomatic that a dictator's fate in mass uprisings turns largely on whether the coercive apparatus decides to defend him. Yet, despite its significance, the literature equivocates on the fundamental question of *how defection happens*. One strand holds that defection is carried through by unhappy soldiers: the defeated, disillusioned, and dispossessed. The other views defection as a strategic coordination game, disconnected from preexisting grievances and fealty to the incumbent.

In this thesis, I seek to produce a more unified way of explaining why and how security force defections occur. My analytical starting point is the stretch of time before mass uprisings gather full momentum, in which security agents are optimally placed to foresee incoming contention. Anticipating the revolutionary coordination problem, I contend that potential defectors assess the feasibility of sparking seamless defection cascades by using positional factors (such as patronage and ethnic stacking) as proxies for unobservable loyalties across the coercive apparatus. Positional factors are important not only as first-order motives but as crucial structural context for first-movers.

If grievances are sufficiently acute and prevalent, I argue that defectors face strong incentives to engage in coalition-building before the revolution begins. By leveraging their extant professional networks and crystallizing their social capital, first-movers enlist colleagues in 'defection networks' to stack the deck in their favour before the uprising starts in earnest. During the revolution itself, defectors and regimes promulgate strategic frames to elicit support from erstwhile loyalists and those caught in indecision. The logic of coalition-building and strategic framing has been overlooked in studies of defection: fast-moving contention occludes dogged work behind the scenes to tip cascades in a particular direction.

To probe these arguments, I analyze the overthrow of Serbian dictator Slobodan Milošević on 5th October 2000. Drawing on a range of qualitative sources, I adduce evidence of clandestine coalition-building and strategic framing within multiple branches of the Serbian security apparatus. I also document how the Milošević regime and the political opposition vied for the loyalty of the security forces. Altogether, the thesis makes three contributions. First, it evinces that positional factors and coordination logics are both germane to the defection process once we rethink how they exert causal force. Second, it shows that processes of *social* mobilization (e.g., networking and strategic framing) are useful for understanding secretive sedition within the ruling coalition. Third, it extends the literature empirically by analyzing non-military security forces and by targeting an unexplored case of defection.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

"Can you not see that they will all revolt on the slightest pretext, when success means freedom and failure brings no very dreadful consequence."

Speech of Cleon to the Athenian Assembly
Thucydides, 3.39

"Fear is the air that dictators breathe."

The Power of Laughtivism
Srdja Popović

1.1 The Ontology of Revolution

At 5:50pm on 5th October 2000, Branko Stojadinović surrendered his police station in the centre of Belgrade to the protesters who encircled it. Seeing that the policemen were finally out of teargas and rubber bullets, the protesters had commandeered a nearby water truck and rammed it straight through the station's façade. As the last police station to fall in the Serbian Revolution, Stojadinović's surrender marked the end of Slobodan Milošević's iron-fisted grasp over Serbia's politics and society. Brutal, egregious, and venal in equal measure, precious few commiserated Milošević's departure from power. The next day at 10:39pm, Milošević appeared on national Serbian television to concede defeat to his rival in the presidential election, Vojislav Koštunica. One of the opposition's catchiest slogans, 'Gotov Je' ('He's Finished'), turned out to be prophetic.

Serbia's 'Bulldozer Revolution' has rightly gone down in the annals of revolutionary history as an extraordinary example of people power. Although Belgrade was the epicenter of the uprising, the majority of the protesters arrived from Serbia's provinces in five colossal

cavalcades early on 5th October, coordinated by the political opposition to bolster their revolutionary ranks. Belgrade had seen massive protests before in March 1991 and the winter of 1996, but the Bulldozer Revolution was bigger by an order of magnitude: almost one million Serbs congregated in Belgrade's streets, out of Serbia's population of barely nine million. The police barricades along the arterial routes to Belgrade and the forces deployed to key government buildings in the capital proved derisory: police radio records show that the parliament was overrun in 37 minutes and the convoys swept through the undermanned barricades unimpeded.

Serbia's revolution is also celebrated for its strategists. In particular, the youth resistance group Otpor (meaning 'Resistance') has emerged as the protagonist of Serbia's revolutionary narrative. On 26th November 2000, *The New York Times* commissioned a long read entitled 'Who really brought down Milošević?'.[1] The answer: Otpor. With its emphasis on blending humour, satire, and more traditional repertoires of non-violent resistance, as well as its leaders' fearlessness and charisma, Otpor was indeed a galvanizing and critical vanguard organization. Even now, Otpor's 'human resources' man, Srdja Popović, cuts a glamorous picture of an inveterate revolutionary, directing a global nonviolent campaign organization and authoring popular books on civil resistance. Otpor has even featured in revolutionary filmography: *Bringing Down a Dictator*, for instance, is an indispensable part of the revolutionary canon and focuses heavily on Otpor and its activities.

Yet, Otpor's standout place in Serbia's national history is symptomatic of an enduring pathology in revolutionary accounting. In the media and elsewhere, revolutions are portrayed as bilateral battles between dictators and citizens. Generally speaking, we are wedded to portrayals of uprisings that show protesters hauling down monuments to former dictators, storming the barricades, and physically throwing off the chains erected by rulers long past their sell-by date. And with good reason: these spectacles display the *raison d'être* of revolt, the liberation of ordinary people from the yoke of dictatorship so that they might taste the fruits of democracy. These visuals perfectly capture the catharsis and justice of revolution: anachronistic dictators finally getting their comeuppance at the hands of their former subjects.

But for all the delicious sense of 'just deserts' contained in these images of successful revolution, the reality (as many commentators recognize) is more complicated. Political scientists have made great strides forward in problematizing reductionist accounts of revolution. For one, 'dictators' and 'revolutionaries' are not unitary actors: dictators rule with the assistance of ruling coalitions and participants in uprisings are usually 'negative

[1] See: R. Cohen, "Who Really Brought Down Milošević?" *The New York Times,* 26/11/2000.

coalitions', disparate groups temporarily united for the sole purpose of overthrowing the incumbent.[2] Moreover, revolutions do not always start out as pro-democracy events. For instance, the Tunisian revolution in 2011 that overthrew President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali evolved from a parochial protest about socio-economic issues into a nationwide democratic revolution. Thus, the stylized two-player revolutionary struggle one observes on television is only one part of the story: there are multiple sites of revolutionary contention, it is not a 'one-shot' game, and diverse motives exist to oust autocratic incumbents. Pro-democracy demonstrators waging their struggle in the streets are just one facet of the revolutionary process.

In this dissertation, I aim to contribute to the body of work in political science and sociology that disaggregates revolutionary actors and processes. In particular, I hone in on the coercive apparatus: the collection of organizations jointly responsible for internal security and intelligence-gathering, including the military, police, intelligence services, praetorian guards, militias, and death squads (Greitens 2016). As researchers have long recognized, the coercive apparatus is a vital member of any dictator's ruling coalition: without the capacity to mete out violence, autocrats cannot project and enforce their will. Thus, how individuals within the coercive apparatus set about defecting from dictators is critical. While the set of reasons why security agents might want to defect is well charted, we are comparatively unsure of the defection process: the set of mechanisms and contextual factors that explain why individuals with latent defection tendencies sometimes choose to actualize their inner disloyalty as defection - sometimes after harbouring disloyalty for decades. Therefore, the fundamental question that drives this dissertation is: what is the logic of defection?

I use the Serbian revolution in October 2000 as a vehicle for understanding how the hidden side of revolution plays out, both within the coercive apparatus and in broader anti-incumbent coalitions. While Otpor and Srdja Popović immediately became revolutionary icons, key defectors within the Serbian security forces have been denied the revolutionary mantle. Both inside and outside Serbia, Boško Buha (commander of the Belgrade Police Brigade), Nebojša Pavković (Chief of Staff of the Yugoslav Army), and Milorad 'Legija' Ulemek (commander of the Special Operations Unit in the State Security Service) are unknown to most people. Yet, they all denied crucial succour to Milošević before, during, and after the revolution. Regardless of their motives, the story of their defection is as important to understanding how Milošević was overthrown as the more visible fight on Belgrade's streets on 5th October 2000. More broadly, the words of Gene Sharp, nonviolent

[2]For seminal works on ruling coalitions, see Svolik (2012) and Slater (2010). For revolutionary negative coalitions, see Beissinger (2013) and Beissinger *et al.* (2012).

strategy luminary and inspiration to Otpor, resonate: "it will be exceptionally difficult, or impossible, to disintegrate the dictatorship if the police, bureaucrats, and military remain fully supportive of the dictatorship and obedient in carrying out its commands."

1.2 The Importance of Defection

This thesis aims to provide a revamped understanding of how defection episodes unfold and what determines their success or failure. This research agenda is worth pursuing because of two complementary empirical regularities. First, the vast majority of human misery is concentrated in non-democratic countries. Second, security force defections are usually a prerequisite for certain types of democratic transition, particularly those that are spurred by mass protests. This section explores these observations to vindicate the research topic.

On the one hand, a raft of literature shows that everyday life in non-democratic states is poor, nasty, brutish, and short. This is both unsurprising and uncontroversial: by definition, dictatorships rule not by the consent of voters but through careful cultivation and management of a ruling coalition (Svolik 2012). Therefore, non-democratic governments face minimal incentives to perform well on redistribution, public goods provision, accountability, and general popularity beyond what is necessary to forestall serious uprisings. Instead, the state's resources are funnelled to the ruling coalition to keep its members onside and occasionally, and only when necessary, to citizens. Self-evidently, this results in consistent under-performance on important dimensions of social and human welfare.

In particular, non-democratic states under-perform democratic states in a number of key areas. Humanitarian catastrophes such as famines and epidemics are more likely to occur in dictatorships because such states typically lack institutionalized ways for afflicted citizens to communicate with policy-makers.[3] More broadly, dictatorship is correlated with lower life expectancy and higher infant mortality rates (Pieters *et al.* 2016, Wigley & Akkoyunlu-Wigley 2017). As for individual diseases, democratic experience explains a greater proportion of the variance in mortality rates from tuberculosis, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, cirrhosis, and transport injuries than GDP per capita (Bollyky *et al.* 2019). There are, of course, exceptions: states like China and Cuba have been able to improve healthcare markers at a meteoric rate due to internal growth and foreign aid respectively. Electoral autocracies like Uganda, Myanmar, Rwanda, and Ethiopia all increased their life expectancy by 10

[3] On famines in dictatorships, see Sen (2000). On epidemics in dictatorships, see 'Coronavirus Spreads, and the World Pays for China's Dictatorship.' Nicholas Kristof, *The New York Times*, 29/01/2020.

years or more between 1996 and 2016, mainly by drawing down colossal sums of foreign aid.[4]

Non-democratic states are also more violent than democratic states. The vast majority of civil wars since the Second World War have occurred in non-democratic states, though civil wars are most likely to take place in hybrid states (Hegre 2014).[5] Likewise, democracies wage war against each other less frequently than non-democratic states (Maoz & Russett 1992, Hegre 2014). Moreover, state repression is heavily concentrated in non-democratic and incipient democratic states (Davenport & Armstrong 2004); serious human rights abuses are only eliminated in impregnable and highly democratic states. As Davenport (2007) remarks: "the road to political openness is thus paved with political coercion but the arrival is generally pacific." The so-called 'domestic democratic peace' stems from several deterrents: the electoral costs of blatant government repression, the entrenchment of democratic norms such as toleration and respect for human rights, and democracies' ability to channel dissent into institutionalized means of redress.

In short, dictatorships are miserable states. Some manage to achieve solid economic growth and so-called 'inclusionary autocracies' (see Neundorf *et al.* 2020) use redistribution to pacify citizens, but this material plenty is eternally compromised by the stresses and insecurity that accompany political subjugation. In democracies, however, these public goods are experienced alongside intrinsic benefits such as self-determination and *de jure* political equality.[6] While valid uncertainty persists surrounding whether newborn democracies are more peaceful, less repressive, and more equitable distributors than their authoritarian progenitors, it is telling that few people consider democratic transition undesirable in itself, even if it isn't a panacea. Principally, this is because the benefits of full democracy are perceived to trump both transition costs and any benefits dictatorships can deliver.

Given all of this, the question of how to transform non-democratic states into democracies is profoundly important and morally urgent.[7] The intractability and significance of democratization largely explains why it has occupied political scientists for decades and the formidable range of possible answers that confronts researchers who seek to apprehend how,

[4]Data: Global Burden of Disease Study 2016 (GBD 2016): all-cause under-5 mortality, adult mortality, and life expectancy 1970–2016.

[5]Data from Kalyvas and Balcells (2010) indicates that 83% of civil wars between 1944-2004 occurred in non-democratic states.

[6]Swift (2019), and political theorists of democracy more generally, divide the benefits of democracy into intrinsic and instrumental benefits. The intrinsic benefits of democracy stem from the values that underpin its processes: equality, autonomy, fairness, accountability, and so on. The instrumental benefits of democracy are the positive outcomes that correlate with democratic processes.

[7]Some deontologists would argue that those who are fortunate enough to live in democratic states have binding 'rescue duties' towards those whose welfare is threatened by dictatorship, if they can do so without undue harm to themselves. For example, see Singer (2009).

when, and where democratization occurs.[8] Independent variables such as economic development and inequality,[9] ruling party strength,[10] leadership death and succession crises,[11] mass mobilization, resistance strategies and diffusion,[12] political institutions,[13] elite pacts,[14] and the international arena[15] have all been adduced to explain the emergence of democracy in almost every corner of the world. The result is a rich but inconclusive domain of possible democratic precipitants. The literature is, quite simply, chaotic: necessary and sufficient conditions intermix, general and parochial explanations commingle, and different methodological approaches often talk past each other.

Amidst the jostling hypotheses, however, democratization scholars are united in ascribing immense consequential impact to one factor in particular: security force defections.[16] O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986), for instance, assert that the security service are the only actor that "retains the ultimate capacity to kick over the board." Almost two decades later, Bellin (2004) argued that "democratic transition can be carried out successfully only when the state's coercive apparatus lacks the will or capacity to crush it."[17] More recently still, Nepstad (2013) concluded that "in short, where defections occurred or troops became unreliable, movements prevailed. But when troops remained loyal, regime leaders held on to power." Finally, Grewal (2018) pronounces: "How militaries respond to mass uprisings can make or break a revolution." Defection, it seems, is understood well enough for researchers to generate strident hypotheses about how it matters to democratization - a field that, given its domain, ought to be characterized by nuance.[18]

Yet, the defection-transition hypothesis has intuitive appeal. In what Svolik (2012)

[8] I define democratization as the process by which countries eliminate reserved domains and come to hold regular, competitive, free, and fair elections and protect the vast majority of civil liberties. It is the conjunction of two separate sub-processes: democratic transition and consolidation, where transition is "the interval between one [non-democratic] political regime and another [democratic regime]" (O'Donnell & Schmitter 1986) and consolidation is the process by which democracies become highly unlikely to revert to authoritarianism (Schedler 1998).

[9] For example, see: Lipset (1959), Przeworski *et al.* (1996), Boix & Stokes (2003), Acemoglu & Robinson (2006), Kapstein & Converse (2008), Houle (2009), Ansell & Samuels (2014).

[10] For example, see: Smith (2005), Brownlee (2007), Greene (2007), Levitsky & Way (2010), Magaloni & Kricheli (2010).

[11] For example, see: Howard & Roessler (2006).

[12] For example, see: Chenoweth & Stephan (2011), Nepstad (2011), Gleditsch & Rivera (2015).

[13] For example, see: Svolik (2008), Capoccia & Ziblatt (2010), Sing (2010).

[14] For example, see: O'Donnell & Schmitter (1986), Slater (2010).

[15] For example, see: Levitsky & Way (2010), Tansey (2016).

[16] Lee (2009) observes that researchers "have consistently argued that obtaining the armed forces' support or acquiescence is pivotal in initiating transitions from authoritarian rule."

[17] After the Arab Spring, Bellin (2012) reiterates her conclusion: "In every Arab country where serious protest erupted, regime survival ultimately turned on one question: would the military defect? Or, more specifically, would the military shoot the protesters or not?"

[18] Barany (2011) uses the language of necessary conditions to describe the relation between defection and transition: "support from a preponderance of the armed forces is surely a *necessary* condition for revolutionary success."

terms the 'authoritarian problem of control', dictators confront manifold intelligent, well-resourced, and determined internal opponents. The ability to repress these actors contemporaneously and to deter future sedition is paramount to dictators' survival and usually only possible with the aid of a loyal security apparatus to do the dirty work (Gerschewski 2013). Indeed, for decades at a time security forces in authoritarian regimes have been known to perform egregious crimes against humanity to keep dictators in office. If loyalty in the security forces falters, however, dictators are left without their enforcers. For their opponents, the removal of repression as a cost of opposition drastically changes the calculus of dissent: in expectation, there is everything to gain and precious little to lose. Defection doesn't merely render dictators defenceless; their new vulnerability also catalyses opposition, expediting their departure. Thus, countries apparently destined for democracy can be foiled by loyal security forces and countries seemingly marked out for authoritarianism can be fast-tracked to democracy by perfidious soldiers. Whether they realize it or not, security agents at every level are potential gatekeepers of democratic transition, capable to greater or lesser extents of preserving or dissolving the authoritarian status quo.

This is not to say that transitions facilitated by security force defections are necessarily durable. As many researchers recognize, it is necessary to decouple the process of authoritarian breakdown and the sequel process of democratic installation and routinization.[19] Nor is defection a panacea for ingrained societal problems: defection may be symptomatic of underlying structural weaknesses in the ancien regime such as fiscal frailty or ethnic strife that hinder democratic consolidation.[20] Moreover, defectors are not necessarily democratically-minded or magnanimous: the inception of a new regime creates opportunities for self-interested security forces to gut their rivals, widen their access to political power, and sequester larger portions of state patronage (Lee 2014). In turn, competition between security forces over the spoils of regime change can provoke destabilizing transitional violence if security forces become diverted from (or actively subvert) their internal peace-keeping role (Gledhill 2012). As Lichbach (1995) emphasizes, the mode of authoritarian overthrow is not a "trivial epiphenomenon" but has "independent repercussions on state and society." For now, however, I make the less demanding claim that defection greatly aids democratic transition.

The relationship identified between defection and democratic transition, then, is one of rare regularity in politics. Unless autocratic incumbents decide to peacefully cede power to the people or undertake a pacted transition, transition is impossible without the disloyalty of

[19]For example, see: Mainwaring (1989), Valenzuela (1990), Diamond (1999/2002), Schedler (1998).
[20]For example, see: Herbst (2001), Lee (2009), Levitsky & Way (2010), Nepstad (2013), Grewal (2019).

the coercive apparatus.[21] Defection derives its importance and merit as an object of study from this fact. The coercive apparatus, in its interaction with the revolutionaries who confront it, decide whether democracy is given a chance and by extension whether citizens will benefit from democracy. Defection, therefore, is a process that we should know well. Yet, we do not: political scientists cannot agree on what sort of process defection is. One approach characterizes defection as a coordination game in which the coercive apparatus has to align on loyalty or defection under conditions of collective and pervasive ignorance about what others are doing. Another approach argues that defection is driven by antecedent loyalties to the incumbent based on the government's performance, coup-proofing policies, and patronage. This thesis takes the downstream effects of defection seriously by seeking to reconcile these two views and explain *how* defection happens.

1.3 Defining Defection

Defection occurs when former loyalists in the ruling coalition shift their loyalty from the incumbent regime to its opponents during a popular revolt.[22] In an authoritarian context, the ruling coalition refers to the set of elites and institutions that use their collective resources to keep the incumbent in power (Svolik 2012). Thus, defection can be predicated to a number of actors including the dictator's inner circle, the coercive apparatus, state media, ruling party, courts, economic and cultural elites, civil servants, trade unions, and international actors (Chenoweth & Lewis 2013). From now on, however, all references to defection denote security force defections.

Defection is a form of elite rebellion, a broader repertoire of political actions when factions within the ruling coalition seek to oust the incumbent ruler.[23] As Figure 1.1 shows, this encompasses a variety of technologies of rebellion. In autocratic states, elite rebellion can manifest as defection, coup d'états, political assassinations, and civil wars; in democratic states, it arises through parliamentary votes-of-no-confidence, political party defection, and even skullduggerous tactics to force one's own leader to leave office (e.g., bringing up a sordid past); in both regime types, civil war can be used by former insiders to violently

[21] For an overview of pacted transitions, see Stepan (1997) and Valenzuela (1990).

[22] For a similar definition of defection, see Nepstad (2015; Chapter 7): "Defections entail a shift of allegiance from one side to another. It means that security forces break ties with the state and cast their support with the opposition."

[23] Many authors (e.g., Tansey [2017], Kalyvas *forthcoming*) straightforwardly call this set of actions 'coups'. However, this practice spawns terminological confusion since 'coup' is often used as shorthand for coups d'états (e.g., Marinov & Goemans [2014:801]). Since coups d'états (a *form* of overthrow) and coups (a *repertoire* of different forms of overthrow) are distinct, I choose to eschew this elision by using the term 'elite rebellion.'

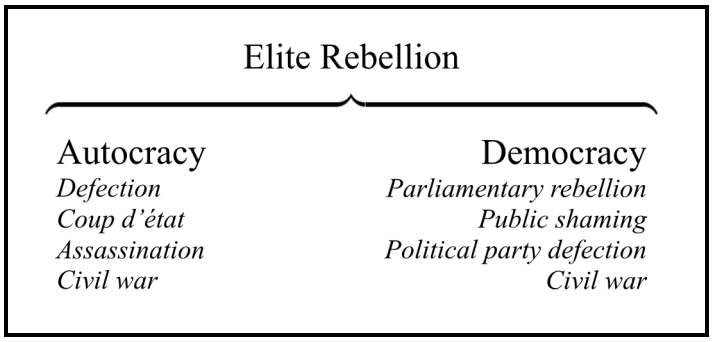


Figure 1.1: Forms of elite rebellion

expel incumbents from power.[24] Clearly, elite figures outside the ruling coalition often rebel (e.g., by mobilizing mass protests, ordering assassinations, or launching civil wars) but here I focus on challenges to dictators from within the ruling coalition.

There are two necessary conditions of defection. First, a faction of the ruling coalition must transfer its loyalty to an opposition actor. This is implicit in the transitivity of the verb 'to defect': one does not defect simpliciter but defects *to* an opposing side. Accordingly, the Oxford English Dictionary defines defection as "the action or fact of deserting a person, party, organization, cause or country, especially in favour of an opposing one." Absconding from the political scene (i.e., simply removing one's loyalty to an autocrat) is insufficient for defection: defectors must throw their loyalty behind opposition actors and sponsor them in some way, either privately or publicly. If no sponsorship takes place, actors are simply falsifying their preferences - which is too commonplace in authoritarian regimes to deserve the name 'defection'. Second, defections must occur during an episode of mass anti-government contention. Conceptually, it is not germane whether protests act as a genuine democratic 'wake-up call' to security agents or serves as useful cover for nefarious aims: the minimal definition of defection simply requires loyalties to shift from the incumbent to the opposition and for that shift to be spurred by popular revolt.

The way in which defectors endorse the oppositions depends on the political opportunity structures they face, which determine the incentives and costs of collective action (Tarrow 1996/1998, Schock 2004).[25] Looking to Figure 1.2, there are several key dimensions of the

[24]These means of overthrowing incumbents clearly intersect on practical and conceptual levels. Roessler (2011), for instance, finds that "coups and insurgencies represent alternative anti-regime technologies" in sub-Saharan Africa.

[25]This mirrors Marinov and Goemans' (2014) observations that coup d'états can be staged with varying levels of violence: "the use of force may be overt, such as fighting in the capital, or may come in the form of tacit support for the power grab by the military and security apparatus." In the context of civil wars, Seymour (2014) describes the various forms defection can take: "factions might privately inform on their allies, arrange informal cease-fires or more formalized non-aggression pacts with enemies, cooperate over zones of control and spheres of influence, or engage in forms of trading and exchange."

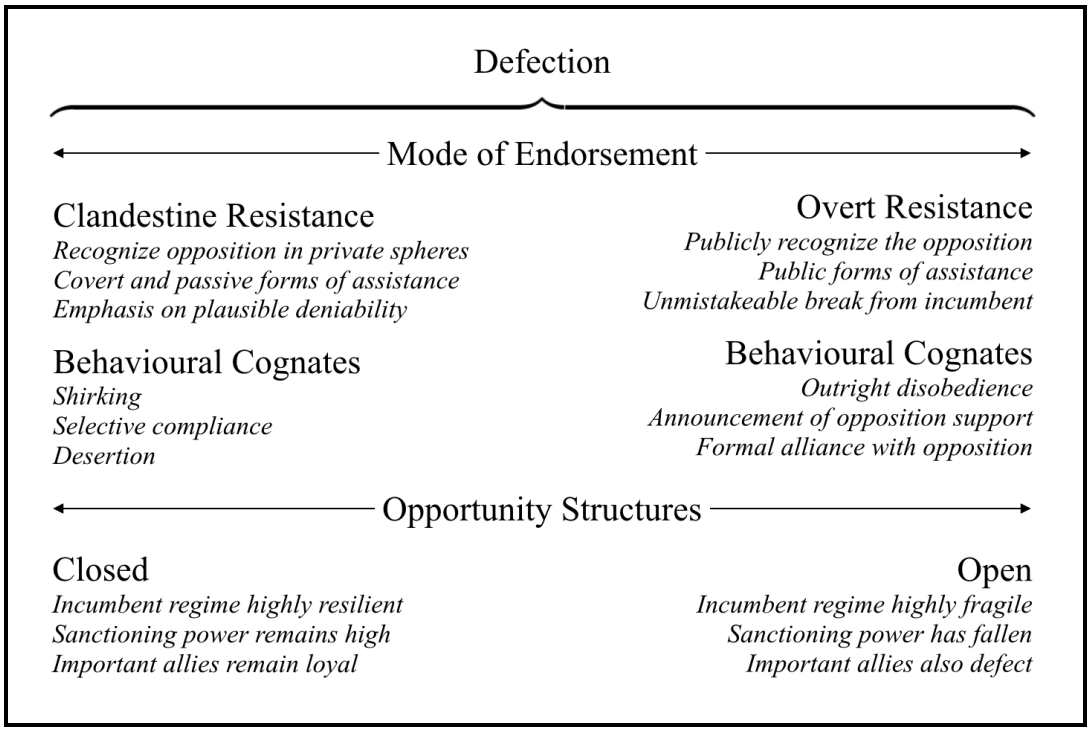


Figure 1.2: Mode of endorsement and opportunity structures

opportunity landscape exemplified by the perceived resilience of the regime, its ability to sanction defectors, and the extent to which it retains support from key allies (Tansey 2016). When the regime's sanctioning power weakens, the prospective costs of formal coalescence with the opposition fall. This results in greater incentives to engage in more overt forms of endorsement and extend public, explicit, symbolic, and material support to the opposition. For instance, before Indonesian President Suharto was ousted in May 1998, the Indonesian military engaged in open fora with the opposition and transported them to protest sites (Lee 2014). This was defection *qua* overt resistance, where loyalty transfer takes on a proactive and public form of support for the opposition. Other forms of overt resistance include 'outright disobedience' where the coercive apparatus ignores repressive orders and withdraws from political contention (Nepstad 2015).[26]

At the other extreme, defectors feel unable to openly support the opposition because the incumbent regime looks likely to survive, retains its sanctioning power, and still enjoys support from important allies. This is especially likely in the early phases of the revolution when the incumbent's strength has not been tested or in farflung areas outside the capital

[26]The Egyptian military's conduct in the later days of the massive protests against Hosni Mubarak's government in 2011 accurately captures outright disobedience. Refusing to both clear the demonstrators and endorse the opposition until the very closing stages of the revolution, the military appeared to withdraw from political contention for more than a week before ousting Mubarak.

city where information about what is happening in the capital is sparse. In these situations, defectors acknowledge the opposition's right to govern in private spheres such as their squads, units, officers quarters, command groups, and social-professional settings. They do not proffer overt assistance, preferring to aid the opposition covertly or passively by refusing to implement repressive orders. In the Serbian revolution in 2000, for instance, the Chief of Staff of the Yugoslav Army privately recognized the opposition's legitimacy to his colleagues in the Supreme Command but did not promulgate this support more widely or offer material aid. Instead, he avoided Slobodan Milošević's direct orders to clear the demonstrators by inventing logistical obstacles. As one Otpor leader told me, it was safer for the Chief of Staff "to play the fool than openly disobey" by creating a sense of "plausible deniability."[27] This was defection *qua* clandestine resistance.

Clandestine resistance includes other repertoires of less public and more deniable defection. If orders are unpleasant and penalties for non-compliance are severe, troops can turn to shirking: pretending to misunderstand commands, feigning illness, or embroiling themselves in their other duties. Security agents may also desert by leaving their post without permission or the intention to return.[28] Many Venezuelan national guardsmen, for instance, deserted their posts by fleeing to Colombia in hijacked military vehicles during the anti-Maduro riots in early 2019.[29] Defection, therefore, is behaviourally ambiguous and the type of defection we see captured in the media - soldiers and protesters embracing atop tanks - is just one way in which defection can manifest.

1.4 The Lacuna and Argument

1.4.1 Positional and Coordination Approaches to Defection

The literature that aims to unpack security force defections is still relatively nascent. The Arab Spring revolutions in 2010-11 sparked a renaissance of interest in the subject, as uprisings were foiled or catalyzed across the region by the security forces. The resultant scholarship has been instructive, especially regarding the 'aetiology' of defection: the set of factors that affect the loyalty positions of individuals within the coercive apparatus. These factors fall into three main categories: authoritarian coup-proofing strategies such

[27] Elite Interview #17. Ivan Marović. One of twelve leaders of the Otpor resistance group in Serbia, 2000.

[28] For desertion to constitute an instance of defection, the security agents in question must have affirmed their loyalty to opposition actors. As McLauchlin (2015) notes, desertion in the context of civil war can be caused by many factors such as war fatigue, heightened attractiveness of outside options, and failure of insurgencies to provide perquisites. The same is true of desertion from authoritarian regimes.

[29] See: C. Woody, "Here's why Venezuela's soldiers are breaking ranks, in their own words." *Business Insider,* 02/03/2019.

as ethnic stacking,[30] the composition and tactics of anti-incumbent movements,[31] and the institutional interests and ethos of the security forces.[32] The fundamental assumption undergirding these studies is that individuals in the coercive apparatus actively weigh the costs and benefits of defection and, in turn, these costs and benefits are shaped by the three broad factors above. Throughout, I refer to this as the 'positional account' of defection.

In the positional account, the likelihood and scale of defection is seen as a positive function of the acuteness and prevalence of grievances within the coercive apparatus. Its core logic essentially mirrors Gurr's (1970) theory of mass collective violence whereby the "scope" and "intensity" of "relative deprivation" (the discrepancy between what people expect and what they receive) fuel violent outpourings. More generally, the positional account is the coercive apparatus analogue to what Lichbach (1995) calls the "deprived actor" approach to civil resistance whereby "collective dissent is ... ultimately caused by people's preferences, beliefs, and attitudes towards personal deprivations." When it comes to defecting, the positional account similarly expects the dispossessed, the deprioritized, and the demoralized to abandon the incumbent. The key strength of this literature is the formidably broad range of causes of disloyalty that scholars have identified (epitomized by works such as Barany [2011] and Nepstad [2013]) which gives us a useful way to appraise the constellation of grievances in a particular coercive apparatus.

The positional account is seductive for its simplicity: disloyal security forces defect, loyal ones do not. And yet, disloyalty is ontologically distinct from defection. Whereas disloyalty is a psychological attitude, defection is an action with a set of significant costs and benefits. As Gallopin (2019) puts it, not altogether hyperbolically: "rebels who fail die." The fatal pathology of the positional literature is that it elides disloyalty and defection and therefore struggles to explain when and why defection emerges. For instance, Brooks (2013) and Willis (2016) argue that the Tunisian military defected from President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali during the Arab Spring in 2011 because it had been systematically under-funded and marginalized. Given this, however, why did the military not seek to overthrow Ben Ali in the 24 years of his premiership before the Arab Spring? Moreover, how can the positional account explain cases where seemingly loyal security forces defect with alacrity, such as Slobodan Milošević's praetorian guard in October 2000? These simple examples suggest that defection cannot be explained solely by antecedent positional factors.

[30] For example, see: McLauchlin (2010), Brooks (2013), Lee (2014), Greitens (2016), and Willis (2016).

[31] For example, see: Binnendijk & Marović (2006), Chenoweth & Stephan (2011), Said (2012), Ketchley (2013), Nepstad (2015), and Morency-Laflamme (2018).

[32] For example, see: Nordlinger (1977), Geddes (1999), Barany (2011), Bellin (2012), and Grewal (2019).

To explain cases like Tunisia and Serbia, scholars have begun to reconceptualize disloyalty (both coups and defection) as governed by coordination and cascade logics rather than by positional factors.[33] Throughout, I refer to this as the 'coordination account' of defection. By drawing on the wider literature about revolutionary participation and coordination games at the mass level, this vein of research posits that endgame scenarios create pervasive collective ignorance within the security forces surrounding which side - the rebels or the incumbent - will triumph.[34] Combined with strong personal and institutional incentives to align with the majority, this generates a coordination problem whereby actors in the coercive apparatus are all trying to end up on the same side but without complete knowledge of what their colleagues are doing. This coordination problem is resolved by the promulgation of 'focal points' which point to one side gaining the upper hand, thereby facilitating cognitive alignment and behavioural cascades (Schelling 1960/1978, Ermakoff 2008, Singh 2014).[35] Thus, the coordination approach sees defection as governed by informational flows and snowballing rather than a product of positional interests within the coercive apparatus (Gallopin 2019).

The coordination account resolves some of the flaws in the positional account. For one, the coordination-cascade logic explains why historically loyal units sometimes defect: confronted by a crushing tide of defections around them and the mounting costs of loyalty, it makes sense to abandon the incumbent to escape recriminations in the post-revolutionary period. Second, it provides a schema for understanding how defection episodes unfold and whether they succeed in toppling the incumbent: sequential participation in defection releases hitherto private and atomized information about loyalties to those who are waiting to declare their stance (Lohmann 1992, Ermakoff 2008). With every new piece of information about others' participation, potential dissidents reassess the merits of rebellion in Bayesian fashion. If enough security agents defect and critical mass is reached, defection cascades may become self-sustaining and even staunch loyalists, who would never usually abandon the incumbent, remove their support for the regime (Schelling 1978, Van Belle 1996).

On the other hand, the coordination account raises its own problems. Its key premise is that revolutions throw the coercive apparatus into a profound coordination problem and collective uncertainty. Yet, the security forces are well positioned to learn about incoming

[33]For example, see: Geddes (1999), Tyson & Casper (2014), Singh (2014), Little (2017), and Gallopin (2019).

[34]The literature on cascades and coordination problems is large but the following are salient works: Schelling (1960, 1978), Granovetter (1978), Oliver & Marwell (1985), Kuran (1989,1991), Bikhchandani *et al.* (1992), Lohmann (1992,1993), Lichbach (1995), Van Belle (1996), and Ermakoff (2008,2015).

[35]Schelling (1960) defines 'focal points' as prominent, unique, simple, and conspicuous coordination aides in the emergent environment which help concert actors' expectations and behaviours when communication is impossible.

revolutions before they actually happen. This is for a variety of reasons: revolutions are often the culmination of longer periods of contention which imply a day of reckoning, the intelligence services are often the first to find out about dissident activity, and conscript armies and the uniformed police are embedded within populations. To avoid the prospect of brutal repression, it seems reasonable to assume that disloyal security agents do not simply sit and wait to receive their orders but make plans to evade this dilemma and attract others to their cause. The coordination account provides no insight into the conditions under which first-movers make such plans, what form these plans take, and what governs their success or failure. The result is that we have little sense of the applicability of the coordination and cascade logic to defection until we understand the ability of first-movers to preempt and stage-manage these processes.

The other shortcoming of the coordination account is that it explicitly removes any role for positional factors. Gallopin (2019), for instance, writes that defection is "driven by expectations rather than preferences, *positional interests*, or institutional rules." Similarly, Ermakoff (2008) argues that "fearing isolation, actors put their *positional interests* aside and behave on the basis of what they believe their peers will do." In other words, the costs of isolation are deemed to be so towering that positional factors simply never enter the equation, making the coordination and positional accounts theoretically irreconcilable. Yet, it seems unlikely that interests play no part whatsoever in defection. Positional factors are important as motives for first-movers and, as this thesis aims to show, crucial strategic data for first-movers as they decide whether to defect or not. Moreover, cascade dynamics are partly determined by antecedent loyalties: defection thresholds (i.e., the number of other defectors it takes for a given individual to defect) are partly influenced by the individual's loyalty to the dictator (Kuran 1989/1991).

1.4.2 The Strategic Approach to Defection

Our understanding of defection is consequently bifurcated: defection researchers appear to be divided on the fundamental question of *how defection happens*. Does it hinge on antecedent factors such as grievances and preexisting loyalties, or is it the result of successful coordination and cascades in the coercive apparatus? In this thesis, I argue that this is a false dichotomy: positional and coordination logics operate in different phases of the defection process. Moreover, I contend that they do not exert causal force in exactly the ways envisaged by the two approaches described above. The result, I hope, is a more realistic theory of defection that satisfies two weak but intuitive conditions:

Existing Theories of Defection			
Theory	**Key Strengths**	**Key Shortcomings**	**Empirical Predictions**
Positional Account	(1) It has generated a very broad range of causes of disloyalty within the coercive apparatus. (2) It recognizes the diverse sources of disloyalty: the incumbent's policies, negative exogenous shocks, opposition strategies, international actors, and the institutional ethos of the security forces.	(1) It elides disloyalty and defection, precluding mechanismic, step-by-step explanations of how defection emerges from disloyalty. (2) It struggles to account for situations where seemingly loyal units defect.	Large-scale defection is expected to occur: (1) when grievances are acute and widespread within the coercive apparatus, (2) when dissidents use inclusive and non-violent strategies, and (3) when the incumbent regime appears weak.
Coordination Account	(1) It offers a possible explanation for why highly loyal units might defect. (2) The underlying coordination and cascade logics provide a schema for understanding how defection episodes unravel and whether they succeed or fail.	(1) It is debatable whether the entire coercive apparatus is thrown into a deep coordination problem during the revolution. (2) It neglects first-movers and how they use mobilizational resources to shape defection processes. (3) It allocates no causal force to positional factors at any stage of the defection process.	(1) The repression-disloyalty dilemma sparks a coordination problem in the coercive apparatus during the revolution. (2) Defectors use 'focal points' to create public knowledge about the defection attempt. (3) Successful defection is arrived at through a mass cascade.

Figure 1.3: Summary of existing approaches to defection

New Theory of Defection			
Theory	**Key Strengths**	**Key Shortcomings**	**Empirical Predictions**
Strategic Account	(1) It allows both positional and coordination-cascade factors to exert causal force on the emergence and success of defection attempts. (2) Novelly, it leverages findings in the social mobilization and revolutionary participation literatures to explain the conditions under which defection attempts emerge and succeed within the coercive apparatus. (3) It recognizes the various ways in which the opposition, the regime, and other actors compete over loyalties in the coercive apparatus.	(1) The theory is relatively demanding, making it unlikely that each component of the theory is vindicated by single defection episodes. (2) The theory is most applicable to revolutions that are scheduled to occur at a given time or otherwise in cases where there is sufficient time for defectors to organize. (3) It does not incorporate first-movers' exact motives to defect which could, if accounted for, shed light on the viability of post-revolutionary consolidation.	(1) There are actors within the coercive apparatus who foresee revolution and the issuance of repressive orders. (2) First-movers assess the viability of defection by surveying the landscape of (positional) grievances and loyalties in the coercive apparatus. (3) Anticipating the costs of isolation and to spark a defection cascade, first-movers use their mobilizational resources to construct defection networks in the pre-revolutionary period. (4) Anticipating the revolutionary coordination problem, defection networks and regimes engage in strategic framing to tip defection cascades in their favour. (5) The remainder of the coercive apparatus is caught in a coordination problem and the efficacy of strategic framing determines the extent of defection cascades.

Figure 1.4: Summary of the strategic account of defection

1. Defection should, in some way, reflect loyalties within the coercive apparatus (central in the positional account but sidelined in the coordination account);

2. Defection should, in some way, be sensitive to the powerful strategic incentives that emerge during revolutions (central in the coordination account but sidelined in the positional account).

The result is the 'strategic theory' of defection, which is laid out in Chapters 3-5. As will become clear, the theory is deeply influenced by two axioms. First, anti-incumbent mobilization amongst citizens might be instructive for understanding more clandestine processes of sedition within the ruling coalition. Both sets of dissidents face similar imperatives to enlist followers, portray themselves as strong and united, and to undermine the incumbent's perceived authority. In some cases, the two sides' solutions to these problems are the same in spite of the wildly different environments in which they wage their struggle and the different resources afforded by their respective positions. Ordinarily posed as separate factions with distinct repertoires of contention, I submit that we might learn more about elite mobilization against dictatorships by considering it alongside social mobilization. Second, our analytical starting point should be when first-movers first begin to contemplate defection. This move acts to avoid selection bias by focusing on all defection attempts and not just those that become sizeable and impactful.[36]

Theory I (Chapter 3) begins from the assumption that certain figures within the coercive apparatus, particularly high-ranking officers, foresee revolutionary uprisings. Often, this foreknowledge extends to the recognition that the incumbent will order them to use repression to subdue the revolt. If they find this possibility deeply unattractive, first-movers plan to defect if they operate in favourable opportunity structures. Originally conceived to explain the emergence and survival of social movements, opportunity structures can be defined as consistent (but not necessarily permanent or formal) features of the external environment that shape the incentives for collective action (Tarrow 1996/1998, Schock 2004). Specifically, the key dimension of their political environment is whether disloyalty in the rest of the apparatus is sufficiently widespread and intense to allow a seamless defection cascade to occur. In this sense, positional factors are pivotal: they are crucial data for first-movers who, in their attempt to avoid defecting in isolation, seek to forecast the viability of defection cascades. While individuals' loyalties are unobservable, particularly if preference falsification is rampant across the coercive apparatus, first-movers can use positional factors

[36] See Lewis (2012/2016) on the importance of inspecting the early origins of insurgent groups for similar reasons.

(such as sources of grievance, patronage, and close relations to the incumbent) as observable proxies for loyalty.

If first-movers conclude that disloyalty is pervasive, they attempt to form 'defection networks': coalitions of individuals in the coercive apparatus bound together by their shared desire to oust the incumbent. These networks serve two functions: they provide a baseline level of safety in numbers for the defectors and help to kickstart defection cascades. Their size and cohesion depends on first-movers' mobilizational resources, defined by Gledhill (2018) as "the means that boost the internal organizational capacity of a set of (non-state) actors to mobilize for, and realize, collective violence [or non-violence]." In particular, the breadth of first-movers' socio-professional networks, extant trust between coalition partners, and first-movers' ability to offer credible rewards to erstwhile loyalists in exchange for joining defection networks determine their ability to construct robust defection networks: no contacts, no incentives, no defection network.

Even where key actors can draw on high levels of social capital and offer favourable terms of cooperation with loyalists, they will not be able (or wish) to bring everybody into the fold. This means that the majority of the security forces will still be caught in a coordination problem during the revolution: they are not privy to any plans that help them to escape collective indecision. Anticipating this problem and the need to trigger a sizeable defection cascade, first-movers engage in 'strategic framing' to magnify their publicly perceived chances of ousting the incumbent. Another concept borrowed from the contentious politics literature (e.g., Lichbach 1995, Benford & Snow 2000, Lim 2013), strategic framing involves strategically moulding information flows to mobilize potential dissidents. To this end, first-movers use promulgation, exaggeration, and deception techniques to tip the balance of power in their favour and facilitate collective alignment on defection.

In practice, strategic framing can be conducted in a number of ways. First-movers usually seek out 'big hitters' such as military generals or police commanders to join defection networks. These are high profile, powerful, and historically loyal individuals whose defection will signal pervasive disloyalty and the frailty of the incumbent regime (Ermakoff 2008). Defections can also be choreographed to occur in highly public and symbolic locations such as parliament buildings or the dictator's palace, so that the news travels far and wide (Tilly 1986, Lichbach 1995). On some occasions, first-movers might disseminate outright lies to elicit defection cascades, from premature claims of victory to fallacious evidence of support (Singh 2014). These "focal points" are designed to signal that the defection attempt is destined to succeed and the incumbent's demise is imminent, thereby lowering the perceived

costs of disloyalty (Schelling 1960). By creating the myth of safety in numbers, first-movers can in fact generate that reality.

In Theory II (Chapter 4), I use formal modelling to unpack the first-mover's defection in more detail by applying the logic of cascade models of revolutionary participation at the *mass* level (e.g., Granovetter 1978, Kuran 1989/1991) to defection cascades within the coercive apparatus. Unlike the mass public, however, members of the coercive apparatus are nested within several overlapping institutions alongside their colleagues. This common membership generates a degree of common knowledge about loyalties that helps to overcome mutual ignorance and rampant preference falsification. A range of factors help to foster this common knowledge: coffee breaks, commuting together, gossip, meetings, directives, circulars, training, and the news media all play their part. As Lichbach (1995) notes, "communal relationships beget communal understandings, which beget communal action." Using their institutional knowledge of positional factors, first-movers informally forecast how the defection cascade will play out and by extension their chances of success.

Transposing the logic of mass cascade models to the coercive apparatus is one of the key theoretical innovations of the thesis. In particular, it allows me to unpack the subtleties of the defection process. Specifically, I distil first-movers' ability to cajole potential dissidents and erstwhile loyalists as two key mobilizational resources, 'leverage' and 'reach', which interact with the perceived array of defection thresholds to either magnify or diminish the first-mover's power to enlist others in his defection network. The rational choice set-up also allows me to succinctly disaggregate the costs facing the first-mover given different courses of action: the costs of preference falsification if he fails to defect, the possibility of being found out before the revolution, or the reprisals from repressing an ultimately successful revolution. These nuances would be hard to bring out in a verbal theory but add value in the context of a deductive formal model.

Theory III (Chapter 5) expands the scope of defection networks to include alliances between the coercive apparatus and other factions in the ruling coalition and political opposition. These 'anti-incumbent coalitions' emerge because they are mutually advantageous: dissidents recognize that overthrowing the incumbent is impossible without security force defections and members of the security forces coalesce with the political opposition and ruling elite to extract benefits from future power-holders such as official amnesty for past crimes or kickbacks for their institution. Like defection networks within the coercive apparatus, the emergence and impact of anti-incumbent coalitions depends on opportunity structures at the domestic and international levels and first-movers' gamut of mobilizational resources. They also face similar imperatives to enlist big hitters, overstate their size, and

plan how to broadcast their defection in advance in order to maximize defection cascades. Finally, Theory III considers the tactics incumbents use to shore up loyalties in the coercive apparatus including remuneration, punishment, and strategic redeployments.

Together, the three theory chapters aim to reconcile the positional and coordination approaches and lay out a detailed logic of defection. According to the theory, there are three core mechanisms involved in defection attempts: coalition-building, strategic framing, and coordination. In the first instance, coalition-building offers security to first-movers that they will defect as part of a broader network. Strategic framing, by contrast, aims to portray the defection attempt as an auspicious undertaking to the rest of the security forces to facilitate collective alignment. Finally, a coordination logic governs whether the coercive apparatus defects or remain loyal, depending on the relative effectiveness of the strategic framing carried out by the defectors and the incumbent regime. Combined with the activist policies of incumbents trying to cement loyalties in the run-up to a revolution, the analysis demonstrates that the coercive apparatus is as much a field of revolutionary contention as the streets.

As well as preserving the causal force of both positional factors and strategic coordination, my strategic account of defection also seeks to rectify the key shortcomings of alternative explanations. Looking to Figure 1.4, I sought to correct the weaknesses in the positional account by explicitly decoupling disloyalty and defection. In my theory, psychic disloyalty is perfectly consistent with outwardly loyal behaviour if first-movers sense that the overall loyalty structure is not conducive to safe defection. As for the issues with the coordination account, I contend that first-movers preempt coordination problems by using their mobilizational resources to construct networks of defectors and applying strategic frames to their defection attempt. In turn, this mitigates both the depth and breadth of the revolutionary coordination problem in the coercive apparatus. Importantly, my theory invites positional factors back into the fray whereas the coordination account expels them.

Yet, the strategic account is imperfect in other ways. First, it posits three causal mechanisms which makes it relatively demanding to prove in its entirety. My hope is that this shortfall is also a strength, since it makes the theory sufficiently pliable to apprehend diverse instances of defection through time and space. Second, the theory relies on first-movers having foreknowledge of the revolution which limits its application to genuinely explosive and unforeseen uprisings. However, I think that coalition-building and strategic framing is still possible in time-constrained situations, especially where preexisting networks facilitate rapid coalition-building. Third, I deliberately avoid specifying first-movers' motivations to defect despite evidence that defectors' commitment to democracy can influence

democratic consolidation further down the line (e.g., Mainwaring 1989, Valenzuela 1990, Lichbach 1995).

1.5 Research Design

1.5.1 Selection Bias in Defection Studies

As well as being theoretically confused, the current literature on defection also suffers from two selection biases which have shaped findings. First, recent studies of security force defections predominantly focus on the Arab Spring cases.[37] This geographic selection bias is relevant for several reasons. Principally, these regimes were extraordinarily authoritarian until they fell, relying on dynastic rules of succession or autocratic appointment to fill political vacancies rather than elections. Many of the rulers had been in office for well over twenty years, including Muammar Gaddafi, Hosni Mubarak, and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. In Syria and Bahrain, the al-Assad dynasty had ruled for over forty years and the al-Khalifa monarchy for well over two hundred years. Their resilience derived from a combination of characteristics that facilitated robust coup-proofing: fiscal fortitude from natural resource rents for patronage and deeply embedded social cleavages that could be exploited to 'stack' the coercive apparatus with the dictator's in-group. The result was that each state possessed "an exceptionally muscular coercive apparatus endowed with both the capacity and will to repress" (Bellin 2012).[38]

Yet, such bastions of authoritarianism are not representative of non-democratic regimes as a whole. Other autocratic states, like Romania under Ion Iliescu and Russia during Vladimir Putin's early premiership, are 'competitive authoritarian' regimes that rely on farcical and manipulated elections, state media, international support, and captured judiciaries to hold on to power (Levitsky & Way 2010). Many others, such as the destitute North Korea under the Kim dynasty and the Afwerki regime in Eritrea, do not have access to stupendous resource rents that can be used as patronage to both appease elites and assuage citizens. And others still, such as Mexico under the PRI and Aliyev's Azerbaijan, are more culturally and demographically homogeneous than the MENA countries, precluding ethnic stacking as a means of coup-proofing. All told, the Arab Spring nations were formidably

[37] There are some exceptions. For instance, see Lee (2009) for an account of defection in the Philippines in 1986 and Indonesia in 1998; Pion-Berlin and Trinkunas (2010) for defection in Argentina, Bolivia and Venezuela; Croissant *et al.* (2018) for analyses of Burma in 1988, Sudan in 1985, and East Germany in 1989; and Hundman and Parkinson (2019) for defection during the Sino-French War.

[38] Chapter 2 ('The Limits of the Defection Literature') explores the character of authoritarianism in the Arab Spring nations in much greater detail.

authoritarian owing to their natural cocktail of resource rents, geo-strategic importance, and embedded social cleavages.

Second, the defection literature focuses heavily on the military's behaviour during revolutionary situations - an organizational selection bias. Sometimes, this is for good reason: the military is usually the largest and best equipped security force, which often makes it a dictator's defender of last resort once other units have been overwhelmed (Croissant *et al.* 2018). However, these analyses overlook the hybrid nature of the coercive apparatus, which also contains the intelligence services, police, militias, paramilitaries, death squads, and praetorian guards. All of these forces have the capacity to mete out significant violence in the course of a revolution. This is especially true in counterbalanced security forces where non-military units may have benefited from munificent patronage in the form of heavy weapons, troop carriers, helicopters, and military training (De Bruin 2020a/b).

In addition, internal security forces like the police are usually an incumbent's first resort when large protests strike. Thus, their loyalty or defection sets the stage for military intervention. In this sequentialized Stackelberg set-up, first-responders' actions become critical. At one extreme, protest control units unleash an unfettered crackdown on dissidents which either obviates the need to involve the military or draws them into conflict with the police. At the other extreme, first-responders refrain from repression and put the onus on the military to implement the crackdown or allow the incumbent to fall. In other words: first-movers shape the option set available to last-movers regardless of their repressive capacity.

1.5.2 Case Selection: Serbia, October 2000

To ameliorate the geographic and organizational biases in the defection literature, the bulk of my empirical evidence is drawn from a forensic case study of the revolution that overthrew the Serbian dictator Slobodan Milošević on 5th October 2000.[39] Unlike the Arab Spring states, Serbia was an abjectly poor country. In the 1990s, the country suffered two bouts of severe hyperinflation, ignited four egregious and pyrrhic wars in the former Yugoslavia, endured draconian international sanctions and vital goods shortages, and was bombarded by NATO during its gruesome campaign in Kosovo (Glenny 1996, Dinkic 1999). The result of this decade of successive crises was that Serbia's GDP collapsed and only surpassed its 1989 level in 2004.[40] It is also socially homogeneous: there are no deep tribal or ethnic

[39] As discussed in Chapter 6, single-country studies also offer the opportunity to inductively generate theories about complex and dynamic political phenomena whose precise facets are not amenable to either high-level or cross-national analysis (Pepinsky 2019).

[40] Maddison Project Database, Version 2018. Jutta *et al.*: "Rebasing 'Maddison': New Income Comparisons and the Shape of Long-Run Economic Development," Maddison Project Working Paper 10.

cleavages and although 12% of the population speak a non-Serbian language, this cleavage is not politically salient. Consequently, the Serbian state lacked the wealth and social heterogeneity that allowed dictators in the Arab Spring states to bribe and stack their security forces.

In addition, Serbia was not a fully closed authoritarian regime but a quintessential competitive authoritarian state in which Milošević's Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) bludgeoned, intimidated, and cheated its way to electoral victories.[41] On some occasions, it even lost. In 1997, for instance, Vojislav Šešelj beat the SPS candidate to become president of Serbia - by this time, Milošević had been elected president of the moribund Yugoslavia. In 1992, Milošević himself barely made it over the 50% threshold in the first round of the presidential election (Sekelj 2000). Nevertheless, Milošević's hold over Serbia's media, particularly the popular daily newspaper *Politika* and Radio Television Serbia, meant that his government could broadcast a relentless slurry of pro-government propaganda and criticism directed at the opposition (Roberts 2016). Meanwhile, the "completely disunited and atomized" Serbian opposition were reduced to broadcasting on small, independent, and usually illegal radio stations (Sekelj 2000).

When it came to opposition protests, Milošević's security forces were notoriously heavy-handed. Opposition leader Vuk Drašković, for instance, was badly beaten by police while in prison for organizing demonstrations in Belgrade in 1993.[42] On other occasions, Milošević didn't take any chances: his praetorian guard, the Special Operations Unit, was twice instructed to assassinate Drašković in October 1999 and June 2000. Both of these attempts on Drašković's life failed, but the Unit successfully executed many other high-profile dissidents including Ivan Stambolić, Milošević's former mentor, and Slavko Ćuruvija, the owner of an influential independent newspaper *Dnevni Telegraf*.[43] Thus, regular elections disguised the political reality in Serbia under Milošević: an "iron fist in a glove" that was prepared to commit any number of crimes to remain in power.[44] Yet, the very existence of minimally competitive elections and the political openings that this afforded sharply differentiates Serbia from the Arab Spring nations.

[41] Competitive authoritarian states can be defined as as a subset of authoritarian regimes that hold minimally competitive elections in which the incumbent has a self-engineered comparative advantage vis-a-vis his opponents that positively skews (though doesn't assure) his chances of victory. For a broad reading of how competitive authoritarian states subvert elections, see: Zakaria (1997), Schedler (2002), Gandhi & Lust-Okar (2006), Magaloni (2006), Levitsky & Way (2010), and Cheeseman (2015).

[42] See: D. Stojanović, "Serbs release Vuk Draskovic: Opposition leader pardoned but he still faces charge that could bring five years in jail." *The Independent,* 10/07/1993.

[43] See: N. Wood, "Milošević aides found guilty of Yugoslav political assassination." *The New York Times,* 19/07/2005.

[44] Elite Interview #9. Jakša Šćekić (lead Sky News and Radio Television Belgrade/Serbia journalist throughout the 1990s and 2000s).

The Serbian revolution also offers the opportunity to compare military defection to defection in the police and praetorian guard, thereby helping to ameliorate the second selection bias in the defection literature. During the revolution, several branches of Serbia's coercive apparatus independently defected which enabled me to conduct parallel case studies of defection across the security forces. To my knowledge, no other study attempts to capture defection across the security apparatus. In part, this was made possible by the fact that the Serbian revolution took place twenty years ago and this hiatus has increased participants' willingness to divulge their actions and perceptions (Ahram & Goode 2016). However, it also introduced two biases: a 'survivor bias' since many of my preferred interviewees are now dead (some murdered) and an 'inaccessibility bias' given that other are in high security prisons for crimes they committed during Milošević's tenure.

1.5.3 Micro-Cases: The Police, Army, and Praetorian Guard

Across four empirical chapters (Chapters 7-10), I adduce evidence of the defection process within three branches of the Serbian coercive apparatus and document the broader coordination problem that afflicted the security forces. Specifically, I explore defection in the Belgrade Police Brigade under Colonel Boško Buha (Beogradska Policijska Brigada, BPB); in the Yugoslav Army under General Nebojša Pavković (Vojska Jugoslavije, VJ); and in Milošević's praetorian guard under Commander Milorad 'Legija' Ulemek, the Special Operations Unit (Jedinica za Specijalne Operacije, JSO). Apart from the intelligence services, which completely withdrew from politics during the Serbian revolution, these three units represent the key coercive players. Moreover, the BPB and the JSO were highly trained and elite units that benefited from enormous patronage. Therefore, they represent interesting 'hard cases' for the positional account.

For the most part, the case studies confirm my theoretical predictions. Initially, first-movers were only willing to defect once they knew that disloyalty was widespread throughout the coercive apparatus. This knowledge assuaged their concerns about defecting alone and being hung out to dry. The commander of Milošević's praetorian guard, for instance, was reassured by anti-Milošević sentiment amongst other senior officials in the Serbian state security service when he came to defect. Subsequently, all three commanders formed defection networks both within the security forces and sought to enlist members of the ruling coalition and political opposition. For example, General Nebojša Pavković transformed the General Staff into an alliance of defectors and sought to induct Federal Information Minister Goran Matić, one of Milošević's most important cabinet members.

The commanders' success in constructing large and impactful defection networks was conditioned by their mobilizational resources, specifically leverage, reach, and social capital. For example, Boško Buha was able to form a defection network across the Belgrade police apparatus by leveraging his extensive contacts. Buha's reach was thanks to several factors: his long career in the police, experience of policing and fighting in the Kosovo War, and an overlapping social network. Already knowing their political leanings, Buha perceived some of his contacts as ready-made defectors with whom he shared considerable history and trust. Junior officers in his defection network, however, encountered much more difficulty enlisting their colleagues owing to their lower rank and reduced leverage.

The first-movers also thought deeply about how to portray their defection attempt and maximize their chances of persuading Milošević's erstwhile supporters to defect. The JSO, for instance, deliberately defected in the centre of Belgrade in front of the Serbian parliament and the Radio Television Serbia building, both widely detested emblems of Milošević's rule. They arrived (without orders) in their Humvees and camouflaged fatigues and led a procession around central Belgrade in an unmistakable, public display of defection. At this stage, the police were still fighting protesters and the JSO's defection sent a powerful signal at a crucial moment. The news that Milošević's praetorian guard had abandoned him spread like wildfire and, within hours, the last police units in Belgrade had surrendered.

Finally, I adduce indicative evidence that the wider coercive apparatus was caught in a coordination problem. Fence-sitting, in the form of shirking and selective compliance, was widespread. Helicopter pilots in Belgrade, for instance, reported that they could not drop teargas on protesters because the cloud-cover was too dense when, in fact, the weather was clear (Bujošević & Radovanović 2003). Collective ignorance and attempts to coordinate were also pervasive. For example, witness statements from soldiers stationed in barracks around Belgrade indicate that junior officers (excluded from the General Staff's defection network) spent the entire revolution on the phone to colleagues in other units, trying to find out as much as possible without giving their stance away (Marović 2007).

Inevitably, I also identified divergences between the case studies and my theoretical predictions. In particular, while the case study of Milošević's praetorian guard provides key evidence of coalition-building and strategic framing, it does not vindicate three of my hypotheses: that first-movers are more likely to defect when there are few staunch loyalists in the coercive apparatus, when the regime's ability to punish defection is low, and when they find repressive duties morally repugnant. Praetorian guards do not confirm these theses because, more so than any other branch of the coercive apparatus, their *raison d'être* is to demonstrate unwavering loyalty to the incumbent. Being the most loyal unit, they do

not have to worry about loyalists or punishment since they are the repressors of last resort. Thus, the set of risks they face in defecting are different to other defectors. The greatest risk facing praetorian guards is being held to account for historic crimes in service of the incumbent. If praetorian units can negotiate immunity with future power-holders, defection can offer a way out of this predicament.

Instead of using this divergence to inductively change the theory, I leverage it to mine insights into the defection tendencies of highly loyal units. This is an under-studied dimension of democratization in political science. Indeed, the largest body of work on praetorian guards is the classical literature on imperial praetorians in the Julio-Claudian period (e.g., Durry 1938, Bingham 2013). While there are some descriptive accounts of notorious praetorian units, like Saddam Hussein's Special Republican Guards, these make no attempt to formulate behavioural theories of praetorian action and loyalty. Therefore, I use the example of Serbia's Special Operations Unit alongside secondary evidence on other praetorian units to generate a set of working hypotheses specifying the conditions under which these units defect. Specifically, I theorize that praetorian units will only turn on the incumbent if they perceive deep fractures in the regime and extract credible promises of immunity from future power-holders. These promises separate the fates of the incumbent and the praetorians, meaning that the praetorians do not necessarily have to go down with the sinking ship.

1.5.4 Methodology and Data

Throughout my time working on this thesis, my approach can be accurately described as 'inductive iteration': I allowed new insights from the field to inform my theory-building (Yom 2015).[45] Like most researchers, I began with several hunches about defection drawn from my intuitions, secondary materials about defection, and my knowledge of other literatures, in particular the political violence and civil war fields. However, these conjectures underwent a series of inductive recalibrations as I spent more time in Serbia and read more widely. The theory outlined above has truly hybrid origins: it is a syncretic product of my pre-fieldwork, deductive expectations about how defection *might* work and inductive realizations that I came to during or after fieldwork.

While some might perceive it as thermidorian, the inductive iteration approach has some key strengths. First, it is useful for initial forays into relatively uncharted areas (such as

[45]Others (e.g., Peirce 1965, Friedrichs & Kratochwil 2009) have called this approach 'abduction', whereby researchers begin work by reasoning about their phenomenon of interest at "an intermediate level" between deduction and induction.

the micro-dynamics of defection) for which there might not be elaborate extant theoretical frameworks. Second, it is suitable for researchers who have minimal initial familiarity with the process they wish to study. Having been at the same university for eight years now, it is clear that I cannot defect from so much as an educational institution let alone an authoritarian regime. Fieldwork allowed me to apprehend the defector's dilemma with more clarity and to start theory-building from a firmer baseline. Third, inductive iteration promotes researcher transparency: by acknowledging at the outset that one allowed data to influence theory-building, one can specify the crucial inflexion points. For me, there were three such turning points which I outline in full at the beginning of the theory section.

The case studies are underpinned by 45 interviews held with Serbian defectors, regime politicians, members of the opposition, journalists, domestic and foreign intelligence officers, and foreign diplomats.[46] Pursuing both purposive and snowballing routes to interviews, I used three Serbian fixers from academic or journalistic professions (all unpaid) to contact farflung individuals. Many of the interviews were conducted in Serbia in 2019, though the COVID-19 pandemic forced me to cancel my second spell of fieldwork planned for 2020. To compensate, I looked for alternative evidence across a variety of sources: journalism, filmography, archives, and interviews conducted by other academics and reporters. Many of these sources became vital, including transcripts from General Staff meetings before the revolution, Florian Bieber's interviews with Serbia's first president after Milošević, and Dragan Bujošević's compilation of police radio records from Belgrade during the revolution.

I used the assembled data to construct a granular chronology and network analysis for the separate security forces before and during the revolution and to build a detailed picture of loyalties within each branch of the coercive apparatus in October 2000. The information I obtained enabled me to map the defection process by looking for empirical 'causal process observations' that signified coalition-building, strategic framing, and coordination (Brady & Collier 2004, George & Bennett 2005). The qualitative nature of the data also allowed me to record actors' subjective perceptions and motivations, albeit twenty years on from the events. The result, I hope, is that the empirical narratives in Chapters 7-10 amount to persuasive causal explanation. Chapter 6 ('Methodology') outlines my strategy for identifying interviewees, my interview format and style, and ethical considerations relating to consent, attribution, and storage of data in much greater detail.

[46] These interviews were approved by the University of Oxford's DREC with Research Ethics Approval Reference Number: SSH_DPIR_C1A_19_014.

1.6 Civil Resistance and Defection

The legitimation of revolutionary violence as a necessary evil has a long history in political thought (e.g., Engels 1878, Sorel 1908). The perceived capacity of violence to upend entrenched regimes made it seem emancipatory and utopian - the exclusive route to realizing heady ideological or democratic visions. In such a way, the noble telos of revolutionary struggles was seen to legitimize violence as not just a morally neutral tactic but an ethical imperative. Some have even seen violence as vital to the consolidation of the new regime as well as facilitating transition. For instance, Fanon (1961) viewed violence as a "cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his deeper inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect."[47] Sartre (1965) saw revolutionary violence the same way: "...to shoot down a European is to kill two birds with one stone, to destroy an oppressor and the man he oppresses at the same time: there remains a dead man and a free man." In one fell swoop, revolutionary violence was perceived to deliver liberty, catharsis, and lustration for the oppressed.

In recent years, however, activists and political scientists have reversed their views about the utility of violence in revolutionary struggles and there are now good theoretical and empirical grounds for rejecting paeans to revolutionary violence. Chenoweth and Stephan (2011), for instance, use exhaustive data from 1900 to 2006 to show that nonviolent resistance campaigns are nearly twice as likely to achieve full or partial success than violent campaigns. Likewise, Nepstad (2011) finds that 70% of recent successful revolutions were nonviolent. This literature reasons that nonviolent campaigns are more inclusive than violent ones owing to the lower physical, moral, and commitment barriers to engaging in nonviolent resistance. This fosters greater participation in nonviolent anti-regime activity. In addition, nonviolent resistance encompasses more tactics than violent resistance, allowing dissidents to adopt safer and more effective repertoires of resistance and build more resilient movements. Consequently, it appears that refraining from violence is strategically superior to waging violent struggle.

Defection is often overlooked as a key exercise of non-violence during revolutions. This is despite the most iconic image of defection: heavily-armed soldiers and policemen refusing orders to brutalize protesters. The full truth is not that successful revolutions are waged by nonviolent opposition movements but that successful revolutions are usually characterized by *bilateral* nonviolence. As many have observed, protester and security force nonviolence are linked: faced with nonviolent crowds, security forces find it harder to square abusing

[47] Quoted in Lawson (2019: 12).

political opponents when their personal safety is not under threat (Nepstad 2011). By contrast, regimes find it easier to drum up support for brutally suppressing violent opponents who tangibly endanger lives and social order. Problematically, our understanding of how opposition movements elicit defection and how the security forces perceive these strategies is limited and uncodified.[48] In recognizing that nonviolence propitiates revolutionary success, we should also recognize that defection and nonviolent resistance are colligated forms of nonviolence.

In Chapter 10, I seek to unpack this side of loyalty contention by exploring how Otpor and the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) sought to elicit defection and undermine loyalty to Milošević in the coercive apparatus. Stymied by a lack of contacts and leverage, the opposition were mostly unable to interact directly with decisive figures within the security forces. This 'coalition failure' prompted the opposition to develop a menu of 'subcoalitional' tactics to help them pull security agents to their cause. In particular, Otpor deliberately used the spate of opposition arrests in early 2000 as an opportunity to fraternize with the police, learn about their grievances, and humanize the opposition (Marović 2007). They also initiated 'facilitation' arrangements with the police and secret police, divulging logistical information about protests in exchange for advice about where the elite riot police would be stationed.[49] Both Otpor and DOS also formulated policies that they hoped would appeal to the military, such as ending the relentless Yugoslav wars and emphasizing their opposition to the NATO bombings.[50] These multifaceted interactions between the coercive apparatus and the opposition evince that visible fraternization on the streets is only one dimension of how civil resisters seek to demobilize repressors.

[48] For an exception, see Ketchley (2014).
[49] Elite Interview #12. Srdja Popović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor and Head of Activist Training.
[50] Elite Interview #44. Milja Jovanović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor.

Chapter 2

The Limits of the Defection Literature

"The same government which smiles on church services bringing together a thousand people assembled to pray for salvation shoots without hesitation into a crowd of a thousand workers assembled to pray for justice."

Charles Tilly
From Mobilization to Revolution

Introduction

Since the Arab Spring uprisings in 2010-11, there has been a rekindling of scholarly interest defection. First, I delineate those works that employ a 'positional' approach, which places causal emphasis on defectors' utility and loyalty: happy soldiers remain loyal and unhappy soldiers defect. According to this literature, there are three main (though porous) determinants of loyalty: the effects of coup-proofing strategies; the characteristics of anti-government movements; and the institutional interests and ethos of the constitutive parts of the security apparatus. Next, I pivot to explaining the 'coordination' approach to defection. This younger literature posits that pre-existing loyalties are relatively unimportant and that strategic incentives to align with the perceived winners of a defection attempt are the dominant factor in deciding whether to defect. Thirdly, I critique these literatures and draw out their empirical implications. Finally, I identify three key lacunae: theoretical flaws in the pure coordination account, an organizational and geographic selection bias across the two literatures, and unambitious data collection on defection. This lays the groundwork for this thesis which attempts, in small part, to address all three of these issues through its theoretical and empirical foci.

2.1 The Positional Approach to Defection

The positional approach sees defection as the product of grievances and loyalties within the coercive apparatus. Thus, it mirrors the Gurrian explanation of mass revolt which views the "scope" and "intensity" of "relative deprivation" (the discrepancy between what actors expect and what they receive) as sufficient cause for anti-regime action (Gurr 1970). It also reflects Stewart's (2008/2009) approach to mass collective action whereby "horizontal inequalities" between social groups generate "deep [collective] resentment" and conflict: security forces that find themselves marginalized and deprioritized relative to their sister institutions are most likely to defect. Antecedent features of the security apparatus are, therefore, salient in this view of defection.[1] As this section shows, the main strength of this literature is the broad array of causes of psychic disloyalty that it identifies. Its main weakness is that, by eliding disloyalty and defection, it struggles to explain how ubiquitous disloyalty causes such a rare phenomenon as defection. In other words, it fails to compel us on the key issue of collective action: it is not the case that "people who 'really care' about an issue can ... overcome all difficulties" in actualizing their grievances (Lichbach 1995). This critique is the basis for the coordination approach to defection which I explore in the next section.

2.1.1 Coup-Proofing Strategies

The most common type of explanation for defection sees it as a function of various coup-proofing measures, defined by Quinlivan (1999) as "the set of actions a regime takes to prevent a military coup." Dictators rarely possess enough resources to govern unilaterally: they must share power with other powerful actors in exchange for their support (Svolik 2012). Owing to its inherent capacity for meting out violence, the coercive apparatus becomes a fundamental part of any dictator's ruling coalition. In a fundamental paradox of authoritarian rule, however, competent security agencies are well-placed to launch coups against dictators if they violate the perceived terms of the coalition agreement. Consequently, dictators have built up a repertoire of strategies for minimizing the likelihood of coups and keeping the coercive apparatus on their side. Naturally, scholars have recognized that the efficacy of these coup-proofing methods hold relevance for defection since coups and defection are both manifestations of disloyalty.

[1] Barany (2016) exemplifies this: "I believe that we might be able to anticipate — or, at the very least, make a highly educated guess about — the army's response to a revolution if we know enough about that army, the state it serves, the society it comes from, and the international environment in which it exists."

Studies have identified three principal coup-proofing strategies that affect the likelihood of defection: 'stacking', counterbalancing, and material incentives.[2] Stacking involves dictators positioning individuals with whom they share close ethnic, tribal, sectarian, social, regional, and historic ties in key positions within the security apparatus. In addition to exploiting the personal loyalty these individuals are likely to feel towards the dictator, this strategy creates "shared aversions" to pro-reform actors by inextricably linking individuals' status to the survival of the regime (Nassif 2015). Stacking is especially effective when the dictator and the 'stackees' are members of a common ruling minority group that could face recriminations, discrimination, and prosecution under a future democratic government, such as the Alawites in Syria and the Sunnis in Bahrain (McLauchlin 2010).

Counter-balancing and the provision of material incentives are generally considered less effective ways of ensuring loyalty. Counterbalancing is the practice of creating parallel institutions within the security apparatus to increase inter-agency competition, functional overlap, and infighting (De Bruin 2020a, 2020b). The rationale is that by dividing repositories of coercive power, diverting possible contenders' attention to one-upping their rivals, and creating confusion and redundancy, the ruler himself will be more secure in power (Greitens 2016). This is often complemented by "musical chair" reshuffles to prevent officials from amassing too much personal power (Roessler 2011). However, counterbalancing can also create grievances that commanders seek to rectify by bringing about regime change (Lee 2009/2014, Makara 2013, Albrecht 2015). For example, it has been postulated that the Egyptian military defected from Hosni Mubarak in 2011 in part because the regime was building up the internal security agencies which threatened the army's influence (Stein 2012).

Material transfers to the military in the form of massive budgets, shares in state industries, management of important firms, high salaries and employment perks, and lucrative involvement in criminal operations can also be successful loyalty devices. If personnel think that their access to these benefits are conditional on the survival of the current incumbent then, *ceteris paribus*, they will be more willing to intervene to defend him. However, if the distribution of perks is patterned so as to ignite tensions within the security apparatus they can become divisive. Not only can dictators use economic kickbacks to "segregate" the military from coveted political power (Albrecht 2015) but side-payments may also cause deep ructions between commanders and low-ranking subordinates who do not benefit from perquisites (Albrecht & Ohl 2016, Grawert & Abul Magd 2016). Like counterbalancing, pa-

[2]For example, see: McLauchlin (2010), Barany (2011), Lutterbeck (2013), Makara (2013), Albrecht (2015), Nassif (2015,) Morency-Laflamme (2018), Grewal (2019), and De Bruin (2020a, 2020b).

tronage can ignite grievances in untargeted sections of the security apparatus which reduce loyalties.

2.1.2 The Opposition Movement

The identity, size, and strategies adopted by opposition movements are also thought to matter to the likelihood of defection. If demonstrators are perceived as members of a threatening out-group, this can make repressing them more psychologically tolerable (Barany 2011, Lutterbeck 2013). Pischedda (2020), for instance, finds that movements manned by exclusive ethnic groups are less likely to elicit civilian and military defections. This is especially likely when the security forces are stacked and stand to lose great privileges if the regime is overturned. On the other hand, unstacked militaries manned by conscripts may sympathize with protesters' demands because of shared grievances (Nepstad 2013, Grewal 2019). Larger protests are likely to make a greater diversity of claims which resonate with security agents, leading them to defect. And if coup-proofing material incentives do not trickle down to the rank-and-file, front-line soldiers may balk at the prospect of brutalizing citizens whose concerns they share and may even know personally (Chenoweth & Stephan 2011, Grawert & Abul-Magd 2016).

The repression of large gatherings is a costly undertaking for high-ranking military commanders too. Large-scale beatings and killings are visceral moral wrongs that commanders may not be able to bring themselves to order. They also jar with the military ethos of national defence and might lead to prosecutions of the military elite in the future (Pion-Berlin & Trinkunas 2010, Bellin 2012). The conundrum is magnified when the opposition employs nonviolent tactics. Repressing unthreatening, peaceful demonstrators "carries the whiff of massacre" and invites opprobrium which threatens the sanctity of the military's reputation (Bellin 2012). Nonviolent civil resistance also tends to foster greater participation and offers more varied repertoires of contention than violent insurrection, making it physically harder to coordinate targeted repression (Binnendijk & Marović 2006, Chenoweth & Stephan 2011). Several researchers (e.g., Summy 1994) make the case that nonviolent resistance can even be successful against extremely brutal opponents, such as Norway's civil resistance campaign against the Nazis.

Scholars have also studied the specific relationships that are forged between the opposition and soldiers. For instance, opposition movements that promise the military amnesty for historic crimes, provide budgetary assurances, and guarantee the military a role in the transition process are more likely to bring about defections (Morency-Laflamme 2018). By actively assuaging the security sector's institutional concerns and assuring that proffered

terms will be fulfilled, opposition movements can orchestrate defections *if* the security apparatus is not stacked.[3] Other work has pointed to the possible importance of fraternization between protesters and the military, hypothesizing that the creation of solidaristic bonds facilitates empathy, de-escalation, and ultimately defection (Said 2012, Ketchley 2013).

2.1.3 Institutional Interests and History

Alongside the nature of the opposition, scholars have highlighted that the individuals who command security forces also consider the corporate interests of the institution they lead. All branches of the security apparatus have similar impulses to preserve and increase their share of political power, economic resources, and autonomy; minimally, they must act to assure their long-term survival (Nordlinger 1977, Stepan 1988). Confronted by a revolution, politically marginalized and under-funded security forces might spy an opportunity to improve their access to rents, resources, and political power under a new regime, thereby spurring defection (Brooks 2013, Willis 2016).

If economic and political endowments are 'hard' interests, security forces also have various 'soft' interests that demonstrably affect their loyalty. Militaries that see themselves as defenders of the nation rather than the sentinel of an exclusive stratum might be more likely to defect in the face of large crowds (Bellin 2012, Nepstad 2013). The military's reputation is on the line when orders come through to publicly repress protesters and the top brass may prefer to ensure the military's social esteem going forwards than sully its record (Brooks 2013, Grewal 2019). Conversely, security forces with poor human rights records face strong incentives to avoid regime change and possible reprisals (Pion-Berlin & Trinkunas 2010, Barany 2011). For these organizations, the status quo provides immunity as well as any rewards promised for historic repression in defense of the regime.

Security forces also cherish internal cohesion and are wary of actions that endanger their unity and heighten the risk of civil war (Singh 2014, Barany 2016). Highly repressive commands threaten to undermine the chain of command if frontline soldiers refuse to carry them out. Consequently, senior officers may choose to sit on or dilute repressive orders (Pion-Berlin & Trinkunas 2010, Nassif 2015). The compliance of NCOs and enlisted men depends on a number of factors including punishments for disloyalty, indoctrination (Barany 2016; Chapter 3), patronage in the lower ranks (Albrecht & Eibl 2018), and how the rank-and-file are recruited (Barany 2016). In any case, inter-rank dynamics are fundamental to

[3]The caveat reflects the consensus in the literature that the special importance of identity ties in cleavaged societies makes stacking a dominant strategy for dictators seeking to engineer military loyalty to their regime.

the outcomes of defection episodes. Just as an arm (as well as the brain) is required to throw a punch, compliant soldiers are necessary for successful implementation of repression.

2.2 A New Direction: Defection *qua* Coordination

In this section, I chart the 'coordination account' of defection. In this framework, defection is viewed as a coordination game in which security agents are all trying to make the same decision as their colleagues in conditions of deep collective uncertainty. By drawing on the broader literature on revolutionary participation and coordination at the mass level, this approach sits squarely within the 'revolution *qua* process' approach which views revolutionary outcomes as functions of behavioural cascades and information diffusion rather than fixed structural features of the regime or individuals.[4] Thus, while the positional approach sees the causal impetus of defection as taking place in the pre-revolutionary period when grievances are fomented, the coordination account sees defection as the product of behavioural alignment that takes place during the revolution.

2.2.1 From Positionality to Coordination

The positional account holds that interests and grievances, and the resultant loyalty positions of actors within the security forces, shape the defection decision that security agents make. The coordination account begins with a different assumption: that security agents primarily want to align with the majority of other security agents during revolutionary episodes and therefore disregard their own internal loyalty position. Thus, defection is not a matter of atomized individuals each consulting their internal compass but of everybody seeking to align on the same compass reading. As Nepstad (2013) puts it:

> "There is a gamble involved: if only one soldier defects, that individual will be punished; if many defect, it will be difficult for the regime to retaliate and therefore the risks are low. However, how does an average security officer know what others plan to do? How does a soldier achieve some degree of assurance that he or she will not be the only defector?"

The concept of 'isolation costs' is at the core of the coordination approach to defection. When a critical mass of actors has defected, the costs of remaining loyal skyrocket. Even for

[4] The broader literature is large but the following works are particularly instructive: Schelling (1960, 1978), Granovetter (1978), Oliver & Marwell (1985), Kuran (1989,1991), Bikhchandani *et al.* (1992), Lohmann (1992,1993), Lichbach (1995), Van Belle (1996), Ermakoff (2008,2015).

dogged loyalists, the costs of defending a dictator become unsustainable when faced with a rebellious majority: fratricidal infighting, dishonourable discharge, prosecution, court martial, imprisonment, and possible death await those who defend a moribund regime. At the other extreme, those who defect without the cushioning of numbers on their side can expect similarly grim fates. As Gallopin (2019) puts it, "rebels who fail die." The reality is that a large majority of the security forces must align on defection to ensure that the incumbent is toppled and to avert civil war.

By contrast, ending up on the winning side means avoiding reprisals. Defectors, especially first-movers, might even be rewarded with promotion and material benefits if they succeed. The stark disparity between the net benefits of backing the winning versus the losing side creates clear imperatives to choose the side that is most likely to win. In turn, these powerful strategic incentives may override even deeply-held loyalties and disloyalty alike. Consequently, defection may not be precipitated ineluctably by intense grievances or interests within the security forces: unloved children don't always leave home and beloved ones don't always stick by their parents. Situational dynamics matter too because they produce hard and decisive incentives.

2.2.2 Collective Ignorance in Revolutions

Accordingly, political scientists have begun to remodel defection as an n-person coordination game defined as where actors are all trying to be on the same side (i.e., full loyalty or full defection) but without knowledge of what others are doing. Drawing on insights from the early literature on coordination (e.g., Schelling 1960/1978), defection has been reconceived as a multilateral 'battle of the sexes' game - a classic game theory scenario in which a couple must decide whether to go to the cinema or the ballet without communicating and where the payoff to both is higher if they manage to coordinate. Viewing defection as a coordination problem also follows a large literature that interprets coups, a kindred form of disloyalty, in a similar way where the security forces are "concerned, first and foremost, with what other actors are likely to do" (Singh 2014).[5]

The multiplicity of actors and sites of contention during revolutions means that they are typically highly fluid and chaotic events (O'Donnell & Schmitter 1986, Nepstad 2013). The revolution that overthrew Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia, for instance, took place across the entire country and saw the participation of a diverse network of opposition actors and security forces (Barrie *forthcoming*, Gallopin 2019). This complexity means that information

[5]For other examples, see: Lichbach (1995), Geddes (1999), Tyson & Casper (2014), Singh (2014), and Little (2017).

is often out-of-date and spurious by the time it reaches security agents caught in indecision. Moreover, the costs of isolation mean that there are steep incentives to delay proclaiming one's loyalty stance which, in aggregate, deepens informational deficits. Many interactions related to defection also take place behind closed doors which limits the creation of public knowledge about which way important actors are leaning.

For all of these reasons, the coordination approach holds that revolutions precipitate considerable "collective doubt and uncertainty" amongst security agents who have yet to make up their mind (Gallopin 2019). Like the couple in the battle of the sexes game, undecided security agents must decide how to coordinate on the same decision without the ability to seamlessly communicate. Keen to avoid splits within the security forces and personal isolation, this is a "critical decision" with "momentous and collective stakes" wherein payoffs depend heavily on coordinating with the side expected to win (Ermakoff 2008). The problem is magnified by its one-shot nature and the (presumably) unprecedented circumstances.

2.2.3 Resolving Collective Ignorance: Focal Points

Given that it is *ex ante* expectations of victory rather than actual victory that matter in the coordination account, events that signal that one side is gaining the upper hand in an ongoing defection attempt can trigger a cascade towards that outcome (Ermakoff 2008, Singh 2014, Gallopin 2019). Once a cascade is underway, the incentives to align increase as the personal security of counter-cascade individuals falls and the likelihood of infighting between the security forces rises. Thus, large-scale defection may occur because the need to coordinate with others overrides the rewards of staying loyal, not because the security forces are particularly aggrieved. Equally, security forces that stand by a dictator may do so because it is the risk-dominant strategy, not because they feel loyalty towards the incumbent.

Unlike underlying loyalty positions, situational doxa are highly sensitive to new information about which side is going to prevail. Thus, "the stance of the armed forces as a whole is highly sensitive to small events" and "flows of information [between officers] prove to be decisive" - not positional interests (Gallopin 2019). Actors and events that contribute to a sense that one side is rapidly approaching victory are, therefore, the important causal drivers in the coordination approach. These so-called 'focal points' create common knowledge about the likely winner which serves to align everybody's expectations

(Schelling 1960).[6] Effective focal points include public statements of intent from well-known and historically loyal individuals; capturing symbolic political targets such as the parliament building; using telecommunications infrastructure to proclaim victory before it is assured; and statements supporting or condemning repression from foreign governments (Ermakoff 2008, Dreyfuss 2011, Singh 2014, Tansey 2016).

From inside the Bastille, incumbent regimes do their best to undermine the credibility and reach of the defectors' focal points and broadcast their own strength (Lichbach 1995). As Arrow (1974) writes: "Authority is viable to the extent that it is the focus of convergent expectations. An individual obeys authority because he expects that others will obey it ... It may therefore be important to make authority visible, so that it serves as a coordinating signal." When two senior officials defected from Filipino President Ferdinand Marcos in 1986, for instance, Marcos forbade broadcasters from transmitting the defectors' bulletins and ordered the military to cut off electricity to the rebel camps (Lee 2014). Thus, both regimes and defectors strategically seek to manipulate and create information to mitigate collective uncertainty in their own favour.

2.2.4 Achieving Coordination: Behavioural Cascades

Focal point events are thus key to resolving coordination problems within the coercive apparatus. When enough credible information points towards the victory of one side over the other, officers respond by disregarding their positional interests and cascading towards the side expected to win (Gallopin 2019). Depending on which side wins the battle for informational supremacy, behavioural cascades can go in either direction. For instance, one reason why defection succeeded in Tunisia in 2011 was that Ben Ali failed to counter pro-defector information with a coherent, pro-regime propaganda campaign to reassure loyalists. Instead, contradictory and confused statements (amidst long silences) from the president validated the growing public perception that defectors were gaining the upper hand against the regime. Ben Ali made the mistake of assuming that the struggle for control was material; in fact, it was also informational.

Thus, the coordination approach posits that focal points and cascades resolve coordination problems within the coercive apparatus during defection episodes. The news that others are declaring their stance creates powerful incentives for others to do the same. Similarly, the key premise in models of both elite and mass participation is that sequential

[6] Schelling (1960) defines focal points as prominent, unique, simple, and conspicuous coordination aides in the emergent environment which help concert actors' expectations and behaviours when communication is impossible.

participation releases hitherto private and atomized information to those who are waiting to declare their stance (Lohmann 1992, Ermakoff 2008). With every new piece of information about others' participation, potential dissidents reassess the merits of rebellion in Bayesian fashion. If enough people participate and critical mass is reached, revolutionary cascades may become self-sustaining and even staunch loyalists, who would never usually abandon the incumbent, remove their support for the regime (Schelling 1978, Van Belle 1996).

The nascent effort to characterize defection attempts as coordination problems has drastically changed how we understand defection. By casting defection attempts as informational battles rather than the inevitable expression of antecedent interests and grievances within the security forces, the focus of theoretical and empirical investigation has shifted to the dynamics and ecology of events in the regime's final moments.

2.3 Strengths, Weaknesses, and Empirical Implications

2.3.1 Strengths and Weaknesses

Figure 2.1 summarizes the positional and coordination approaches to defection. Both have their distinct strengths and weaknesses. On the one hand, the positional account has researched an impressive range of causes of disloyalty within the coercive apparatus which offer a useful toolkit for appraising why security forces act as they do. On the other hand, work in this tradition often passes over the collective action problem that plagues defection. By merging disloyalty and defection, these theories seem underspecified in terms of the situational factors that make it more or less attractive for disloyal individuals to defect. Moreover, this approach struggles to account for situations where loyal units defect apart from instances where they have recently fallen out of favour ignominiously. Why would historically loyal and privileged units with every incentive to preserve the status quo switch sides? Clearly, something other than positional interests explains these drastic shifts.

The coordination account offers an explanation for why such units might defect: faced by a rising tide of defections, commanders see the writing on the wall and flee the incumbent's sinking ship. The cascade logic is persuasive: dire costs do indeed await those who fail to switch sides when regime change is imminent. Furthermore, the coordination framework offers a useful way of understanding why defection succeeds or fails: depending on the relative efficacy of the defectors and regime's focal points, cascades can seamlessly sweep through the coercive apparatus, fizzle out midway through, or immediately stall. However, I argue in the next section that revolutions do not necessarily generate deep and intractable coordination problems in every part of the coercive apparatus if the revolt is foreseen by

defector first-movers. Broadly speaking, the coordination account neglects the possibility that first-movers defectors use this period before the revolution to raise the odds of success.

Importantly, the coordination account doesn't merely relegate the causal force of grievances and interests in understanding defection attempts. Rather, it is thought to follow *a fortiori* from the coordination and cascade logic that these factors are of no importance whatsoever to understanding the outcomes of defection attempts. Gallopin (2019), for instance, writes that defection is "driven by expectations rather than *preferences, positional interests, or institutional rules*" and that "the explanatory relevance of 'structural' factors loses much of its edge when we can observe this indeterminacy late into the revolutionary process." Similarly, Ermakoff (2008) argues that "fearing isolation, actors put their *positional interests* aside and behave on the basis of what they believe their peers will do." However, it seems wrongheaded that positional interests play no part in the causal chain: first-movers are motivated by interests rather than coordination, the number of loyalists they perceive in the coercive apparatus seems like useful data for them, and the structure of loyalties condition the defection thresholds which underpin cascade dynamics (Granovetter 1978, Kuran 1989/1991).

2.3.2 Divergent Empirical Implications

The positional and coordination accounts predict starkly different ways in which defection occurs. The positional approach predicts the scale of defection on the basis of the underlying grievances and interests across the coercive apparatus. In particular, when there are a critical number of intensely aggrieved individuals within a given security force, this renders defection highly likely as these individuals spy an opportunity to unseat the incumbent. However, several factors could militate against defection even in this instance, including the risk of splitting the coercive apparatus and igniting civil war. Furthermore, the positional approach predicts that defection becomes more likely when protesters use nonviolent and inclusive tactics to unwind troops' loyalty to the incumbent.

By contrast, the coordination account predicts the scale of defection as a function of how effectively defectors mobilize others to spark defection cascades. It predicts that the issuance of repressive orders creates an urgent dilemma for security forces between meting out violence and disobeying direct commands. In turn, the coercive apparatus should be beset by collective indecision and uncertainty. To alleviate this coordination problem and arrive at full defection, defectors have to overcome the regime's strategic framing and frame their defection attempt as propitious, strong, well-organized, and widely supported. Thus,

if the coordination approach is correct we should observe collective indecision, the creation of public knowledge and focal points, and behavioural cascades.

2.4 Remaining Lacunae and Puzzles

2.4.1 Flaws in the Coordination Approach

One of the key conclusions of the coordination account is that that grievances do not matter to defection. This relies mainly on the unspoken premise that the popular revolt takes the security forces by surprise. If security forces are blindsided, it follows that they won't have planned for defection or even discussed what to do with their colleagues. This lack of preparation precipitates collective ignorance on the day of the revolution: without a plan or credible commitments from colleagues, uncertainty reigns. In such conditions, security agents are best served by disregarding their personal loyalties and supporting the side that looks most likely to win. In short: surprise fosters uncertainty which gives rise to a coordination problem.

Yet, it is unclear whether the premise of surprise is justified. Firstly, major revolts are usually the culmination of lengthy spells of anti-regime mobilization which escalate into possible endgame scenarios. Secondly, the intelligence branches of the security apparatus are well positioned to uncover planned protests and revolutions through interrogations, surveillance, and informants. Moreover, many branches of the security apparatus, especially the police and conscript militaries, have close familial and social connections to the population who may inform them of impending revolts.

The foreseeability of endgame scenarios suggests that security agents are usually aware of major anti-regime mobilization before it occurs. It follows that agents recognize, ahead of time, that they may face a "critical decision" between defying orders and committing harsh acts of repression against citizens. This dilemma is unlikely to pass them by. The deeply unpalatable prospect of harming fellow citizens will be salient in agents' prognoses. For those in senior positions, the dilemma also brings with it concerns about splits in the security apparatus. Even if individual security agents do not recognize the dilemma in the pre-revolution phase, conversations with colleagues and official communications are likely to bring it to their attention. The reality is that security agents do not first contemplate the repression-disloyalty dilemma when protesters are already pressed against their riot shields.

Suspending the premise of surprise entails that the coordination logic may not fully apply to defection processes. If the "critical decision" described by Gallopin (2019) and Ermakoff (2008/2015) is truly critical then it will be in agents' interests to plan how to evade

Existing Theories of Defection			
Theory	**Key Strengths**	**Key Shortcomings**	**Empirical Predictions**
Positional Account	(1) It has generated a very broad range of causes of disloyalty within the coercive apparatus. (2) It recognizes the diverse sources of disloyalty: the incumbent's policies, negative exogenous shocks, opposition strategies, international actors, and the institutional ethos of the security forces.	(1) It elides disloyalty and defection, precluding mechanismic, step-by-step explanations of how defection emerges from disloyalty. (2) It struggles to account for situations where seemingly loyal units defect.	Large-scale defection is expected to occur: (1) when grievances are acute and widespread within the coercive apparatus, (2) when dissidents use inclusive and non-violent strategies, and (3) when the incumbent regime appears weak.
Coordination Account	(1) It offers a possible explanation for why highly loyal units might defect. (2) The underlying coordination and cascade logics provide a schema for understanding how defection episodes unravel and whether they succeed or fail.	(1) It is debatable whether the entire coercive apparatus is thrown into a deep coordination problem during the revolution. (2) It neglects first-movers and how they use mobilizational resources to shape defection processes. (3) It allocates no causal force to positional factors at any stage of the defection process.	(1) The repression-disloyalty dilemma sparks a coordination problem in the coercive apparatus during the revolution. (2) Defectors use 'focal points' to create public knowledge about the defection attempt. (3) Successful defection is arrived at through a mass cascade.

Figure 2.1: Summary of existing approaches to defection

the dilemma in advance. Rational security agents will want to avoid coordination problems because uncertainty is potentially costly since the cascade logic predicts that if loyalists look likely to win then aggrieved agents will have to either shoot or desert. Conversely, if the rebels gain the upper hand then loyalists will have to either risk their future by defending the old regime or lay down their weapons. Being averse to these against-the-grain outcomes, it is in security agents' best interests to seek ways to escape the repression-disloyalty dilemma before it is foisted upon them.

Essentially, evading the dilemma involves rigging the coordination game on revolution day. Rebels face strong incentives to 'stack the deck' such that coordination problems and mutual uncertainty will be resolved in their favour and they will not have to harm protesters. First-movers' goal is to achieve the impression of critical mass and initiate a cascade before the other side has even had the chance to mobilize. Two of the mechanisms mentioned in the introduction, coalition-building and strategic framing, are key ways in which defectors seek to overcome mobilizational barriers and construct successful defection attempts. Through these measures, rebel leaders aim to limit uncertainty on revolution day by creating public knowledge of disloyalty and a blueprint for defection within the security apparatus.

2.4.2 Selection Bias in Defection Studies

Thirty years ago, Barbara Geddes (1990) wrote an article about "how the cases you choose affect the answers you get." Whilst Geddes' focus was how selecting on the dependent variable can generate specious results, other forms of selection bias can contaminate findings. In recent work on defection, two problematic selection biases stand out. Firstly, these works draw on a limited, recent range of cases in the MENA region that experienced the 'Arab Spring' democracy movements in 2011 - a geographic selection bias. Secondly, defection studies focus heavily on the loyalty of the military during endgame scenarios - an organizational selection bias. Together, the geographic and organizational selection biases conspire against nuanced understandings of defection.

Geographic Selection Bias

On the one hand, focusing on the MENA region makes a good deal of sense. The number of endgame scenarios in recent history is low, meaning that defection will likely always be a highly leveraged field, its voluminous findings balancing atop small pillars of cases. As one would expect, the 'Arab Spring' therefore sparked an upsurge of scholarly interest in defection as the supply of material dramatically increased. With the universe of cases of defection

(e.g., Egypt and Tunisia), partial defection (e.g., Syria and Libya), and non-defection (e.g., Bahrain) greatly expanded, new opportunities to study the security apparatus abounded. Relentless news coverage of the events at the time and since means that there is now a raft of information available for each case, making it an accessible and fertile area of inquiry.

Whilst the 'Arab Spring' cases have certainly proved fecund, they share characteristics which affect how far the resultant scholarship can travel. Taking Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, Egypt, Syria, and Bahrain as the epicenters of the democracy movements in 2011, the demography and power structures in these states creates a peculiar (though not unique) setting in which defection occurs. In turn, this informs the mode of defection we observe, including the number of willing defectors and the way in which they exercise disobedience. The six states are by no means identical; indeed, each is host to complex idiosyncrasies beyond the grasp of non-experts. Below, however, I draw out some high-level similarities which impact how defection happens and illustrate the geographic selection bias.

In the first instance, four of these states (Libya, Yemen, Syria, and Bahrain) are wrought with deep social cleavages. Whereas divisions in Libya and Yemen are mainly tribal, Syria and Bahrain are riven by religious divides. In turn, a factionalized social fabric gifts dictators access to arguably the most powerful coup-proofing strategy: the ability to appoint members of one's own primordial group to critical positions within the regime. Muammar Gaddafi, for instance, exploited the "deeply rooted sense of tribalism" in Libya by promoting fellow members of the al-Gaddadfa tribe to the government and military (Hweio 2012, Ladjal 2016). Like Libya, "tribes are a fundamental element of Yemen's social fabric" (Lackner 2016) and Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh accordingly populated the government and military with Sanhan tribesmen from Yemen's Amran province and the northern highlands (Albrecht & Ohl 2016).

Syria and Bahrain's rulers were equally skilled at exploiting religious cleavages to construct hitherto impregnable regimes. In Syria, the al-Assads packed the Syrian military with co-ethnic Alawites, a religious ethnos representing just over 11% of the Syrian population. By 2000, 90% of general-rank officers were Alawite (McLauchlin 2010). Elite units such as the Defense Companies, the Republican Guard, and the Third Armoured Division are commanded exclusively by Alawites, many of them close relatives of the al-Assad dynasty (Nassif 2015). In Bahrain, the Sunni al-Khalifa monarchy promotes loyalty by ensuring that members of the government are almost exclusively Sunni.[7] The Bahraini military does not admit Shia Muslims; rather, it is a "fighting force of Sunni Muslims who are charged with protecting a Sunni ruling family and Sunni political and business elites" (Barany 2011).

[7]See: T. Lulu, "The real story of Bahrain's divided society." *The Guardian,* 03/03/2011.

The ability to pack senior positions with diehard loyalists from a preexisting social bloc is a decisive advantage for dictators. Whilst recent scholarship has advanced our knowledge of how social heterogeneity can entrench dictators, it sheds comparatively little light on dictators' loyalty-promotion policies in countries with more homogeneous social structures. Are there ways of replicating the ready-made, until-death-do-us-part loyalty between members of in-groups that serve to tightly bind members of the security apparatus to dictators? Many of the 'Arab Spring' countries are ill-suited to answer this important question because its answer depends on authoritarian robustness in states with fundamentally different social tapestries.

Admittedly, Egypt and Tunisia are significantly less cleavaged than Syria, Bahrain, Libya, and Yemen. Egypt is host to a community of Coptic Christians who comprise roughly 15% of its population. Whilst some tensions persist between the majority Sunnis and the Copts, the two religions have coexisted peacefully for over 45 years. Unlike Shia Muslims in Bahrain and Sunnis in Syria, many perceive Copts as "privileged guests" in their nation and Copts hold many influential commercial and political positions in Egypt (Sidra 1999). Likewise, Tunisia is 98% Arab and 99% Sunni Muslim (CIA World Factbook). In both countries, the locus of political contention is primarily within their majority-status Sunni communities, not between tribal or ethnic blocs. Thus, neither President Hosni Mubarak nor President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali could exploit social divisions to activate the loyalty of their respective security forces.[8]

Mubarak and Ben Ali, therefore, had to rely on patronage and parallel institutions for coup-proofing. States do not need to be particularly affluent to do this, but they do need to be capable of stable cash-generation over time to distribute to their beneficiaries (Quinlivan 1999). Mubarak was able to buy off the Egyptian military by allowing it to sequester roughly 40% of the Egyptian economy and offering senior officers lucrative positions in business and politics (Nepstad 2013). At the same time, he let the internal security forces' influence wane by starving them of funds and political clout. Ben Ali, by contrast, heaped munificence on the Tunisian intelligence services and police whilst sidelining the military, all the time allowing senior internal affairs officers to siphon off significant sums (Willis 2016).

The striking fact about the 'Arab Spring' states is that they were all exceptionally durable dictatorships. Their resilience derived from characteristics that facilitated coup-proofing: an embedded cleavage structure and sufficient wealth allow dictators to elicit support from otherwise fickle constituencies within the security apparatus. Bellin (2012)

[8]However, both placed close relatives in senior positions within the government and security apparatus. It is likely that dictators use historical personal connections and family members to 'pick up the slack' in homogeneous settings.

concurs: fiscal fortitude and conducive international support networks combined to make the MENA region "extraordinarily" and "singularly" authoritarian until, and mostly after, the Arab Spring. In each state, the cornerstone of this entrenched authoritarianism was "an exceptionally muscular coercive apparatus endowed with both the capacity and will to repress" (Bellin 2012).

By contrast, the genesis and withdrawal of security force loyalty in poor, unstable, and homogeneous states is altogether hazier territory. For instance, many potential (e.g., Venezuela) and historic (e.g., Eastern Europe in the late-twentieth century) cases of defection remain under-explored relative to the Arab Spring events. Yet, the puzzle of loyalty is even more intractable in these inauspicious settings: how do dictators extract loyalty without plentiful material resources or social capital? Looking to these more obscure cases suggests a new gamut of factors that may feed into the loyalty calculus. Loyalty, for instance, can be created *de novo* by (self-)selection into the security apparatus, training, indoctrination, intimidation, and propaganda (e.g., Scharpf & Glässel 2020). Alternatively, if loyalty is attached to the perceived competence, desirability, or necessity of a given dictatorship then disloyalty may be a more perceptual, gradual change than if it is contingent on material reward or primordial connection.

Organizational Selection Bias

The majority of work on defection focuses on the loyalty decisions of the military. References to the police force tend to be fleeting and the intelligence services, special forces, praetorian guards, and irregular units are barely mentioned. The rationale for focusing on the military rests on the presumption that they are decisive: given the will to do so, the military's superior manpower, heavy weaponry, aircraft, and tanks mean that it can usually suppress massive uprisings that other security agencies cannot. Thus, it is taken as axiomatic that the military is a dictator's ultimate saviour or nemesis (e.g., Bellin 2012, Albrecht 2015, Barany 2016).[9] A latent justification is that information about the military is often more readily obtainable than for other branches of the coercive apparatus. For instance, the military plays a leading role in public and political life in many dictatorships and senior officers often issue statements in the midst of democratic upheavals.

Military decisiveness and methodological tractability are not good reasons to neglect other branches of the security apparatus. As far as decisiveness is concerned, the military's

[9] Barany (2016) exemplifies this assumption: "No institution matters more to a state's survival than its military."

coercive strength vis-à-vis the police ultimately depends on the coup-proofing strategy pursued by the dictator. Some dictators, such as Slobodan Milošević and Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, proactively enfeeble the military whilst fortifying the police and intelligence services. In Serbia and Tunisia, this systematic policy resulted in the military and internal control agencies converging on similar operational capacities. This counterbalancing of the police and military is especially likely when dictators create elite militarized police units equipped with weaponry and armour usually reserved for the military.

Moreover, whilst the military is usually a 'last-mover' in endgame situations, this presumes the existence of 'first-movers'. Ordinary and special police forces are usually a dictator's first port of call when large protests strike: their domestic remit and training make them the obvious choice to defuse fledgling sedition. Likewise, intelligence services are often asked to provide information that will lead to the arrest and imprisonment of key opposition figures to thwart nascent democracy movements. In this way, crackdowns by loyal and well-equipped internal control agencies can fundamentally change the course of events by either suppressing or magnifying dissent (Hess & Martin 2006). The reality is that some would-be endgame scenarios are stamped out by non-military coercive forces before they become regime-threatening and the military is asked to act. In this Stackelberg set-up, the behaviour of protest 'first-responders' shapes the strategic situation that confronts the military.

As far as methodological tractability goes, it is not altogether clear that studying the police, intelligence services, and irregular units is drastically harder than properly excavating the military's internal dynamics. First, the vast majority of police units are composed of ordinary citizens who can be approached for interview. Second, intelligence officials may be willing to divulge clandestine dealings to researchers after sufficient time has passed. This thesis, for instance, has benefited from the testimonies of several intelligence officers who were comforted by lengthy hiatuses between present day and the events they were speaking about. Third, revelatory archival documents and personal memoirs may be able to shed light on the dim insides of internal security agencies (e.g., Greitens 2016, Scharpf & Glässel 2020). Fourth, various articles (e.g., Forney 2015, Staniland 2015, Carey & Mitchell 2017) indicate that studying militias in depth is possible and fruitful. Venturesome political scientists have even managed to unpack elusive paramilitaries and death squads (e.g., Campbell & Brenner 2000, Ron 2000, Mazzei 2009).

To be clear, I am not arguing that studying authoritarian security apparatuses is easy work. To the contrary, coup-proofing strategies such as creating institutional redundancy

and inter-agency competition make the whole structure unhelpfully byzantine. The individuals within those structures are likely to be suspicious of researchers, especially if they have egregious pasts to hide or if a culture of silence pervades their unit. It is far from easy to lift the lid on any security organization, but there is no strong reason to expect the military to be more translucent than the others. In summary, the substantive and methodological arguments advanced for focusing on the military are bunk.

2.4.3 Data Problems

Besides a few exceptions (e.g., Albrecht & Ohl 2016, Gallopin 2019), the majority of studies on defection rely on high-level data to test their hypotheses. This leads to a number of issues. For one, studying causes of defection (e.g., coup-proofing) at the institutional level often fails to capture the manifold concerns and incentives that confront individual actors in the security apparatus. In Libya and Syria, for instance, Muammar Gaddafi and Bashar al-Assad combined multiple different coup-proofing measures to extract as much loyalty as possible from elite units. Without interviews or surveys, however, it is hard to ascertain which policies are collectively and individually decisive in bringing about loyalty (Nepstad 2013). Coup-proofing policies also have divergent effects on loyalty *within* the coercive apparatus that may be overlooked by high-level analyses. For instance, De Bruin (2020b) points out that counterbalancing has bidirectional effects, simultaneously reducing the ability of security forces to stage coups and fomenting grievances by increasing rivalry and 'losership'.[10]

Moreover, disloyalty can be expressed in a number of ways. As Nepstad (2015) points out, explicit defection and loyalty are extreme ends of the spectrum and there are a range of less decisive options in between. For instance, security forces can choose to shirk their orders, selectively comply, desert their posts, or remain barracked. These behaviours are often less visible to researchers in the first instance, meaning they are often omitted from analyses. However, these interstitial behaviours are crucial to understanding the dynamics of endgame scenarios. Tactics like shirking and selective compliance delay repression which allows opposition movements to grow, thereby shaping the fabric of contention. Moreover, early signs of disloyalty can be powerful signals to the rest of the coercive apparatus that an autocrat is losing his grip on power. By contrast, the use of high-level data has encouraged a binary conception of defection since explicit defection is more visible than its early warning signs. The latter are often only unveiled by more detailed process tracing of events leading up to full defection.

[10] Also see: Lee (2014) and Albrecht (2015).

This is not to say that alternative research technologies are a panacea. What interviews, archival research, and events analysis deliver in theoretical depth and empirical nuance is paid for heavily in the researcher's time and effort. Developing a working knowledge of 'the lay of the land' can take months if that includes identifying an exhaustive list of relevant actors, institutions, and events that together comprise a defection episode. After that, the usual problems still apply: authoritarian regimes in general are research minefields, let alone their most brutal and closed-off institutions (Ahram & Goode 2016). Yet, the yield for tenacious researchers is potentially great: new data facilitates conceptual and theoretical advancements, both of which the defection literature is ripe for.

THEORIZING DEFECTION

Chapter 3

Theory I: A New Logic of Defection

"The first duty of an iconoclast is to know his icons."

Gianfranco Poggi
The Development of the Modern State

"No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main."

John Donne
Meditation XVII, Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions

3.1 Inductive Iteration

Before launching into the theory, it is worth stating my epistemology and overarching approach to theory-building at the outset. My approach can be accurately described as 'inductive iteration': where the researcher's exposure to new data results in reformulations of their working theory which reciprocally inform empirical strategy (Yom 2015).[1] I began the project with several uncodified hunches about how defection happens. These conjectures were deductively drawn from a variety of sources: common-sense, intuition, and my knowledge of several other literatures in political science, especially those focusing on political violence and social mobilization.

Over time, the data that I was collecting compelled me to make multiple, sometimes

[1]This is similar to 'abductive' approaches to theory generation and empirical discovery (e.g. Peirce 1965, Friedrichs & Kratochwil 2009) whereby the researcher begins by reasoning about a class of interesting phenomena at "an intermediate level" between deduction (inferring from abstract theoretical templates) and induction (inferring from facts).

drastic recalibrations: some hypotheses became more salient, others were reshaped to reflect the inherent variegation of the political world, and others still were rendered irrelevant by the cold light of new knowledge from the field. Thus, the theory presented below has truly hybrid origins and represents a convergence of pre-, mid-, and post-fieldwork realizations. My only unshakeable axiom throughout has been that defection is a process undertaken by humans operating in a social world and that I could not hope to ascertain its complexities without interacting extensively with those who have been at the centre of defection attempts.

While inductive iteration does afford the researcher greater flexibility in their approach than strictly deductive and inductive research designs, it does introduce new burdens of transparency (Yom 2015). In particular, it becomes important to specify the critical turning points in one's research process where the previous direction became unsustainable or simply wrongheaded in the light of new information. In my case, there were three crucial inflexion points. At the beginning of my theory-building phase, I initially conceptualized defection as a pure coordination game. However, several months later when I started to interview my informants in Serbia, I realized that many important players in defection episodes already have more or less complete awareness of impending revolutions and formulate collective plans of how to respond in the preceding days and weeks. This forced me to turn my attention to the pre-revolutionary phase, debunking the 'premise of surprise', and the construction of defection networks - all of which now feature as integral components of the theory presented in this chapter.

Second, my original intention in writing this thesis was to focus on the rank-and-file and junior officers as overlooked actors within defection episodes. I had borrowed this perspective from the civil war literature which in recent years has focused increasingly on why seemingly normal people join, leave, and kill for insurgent groups.[2] For civil wars, the question of mass participation is a natural one: some impulse (e.g., coercion, compulsion, greed, or grievance) has to account for risky mobilization. I soon recognized, however, that defection attempts are usually launched by high-ranking officers and guaranteed in the lower ranks by the chain of command. My preliminary fieldwork in Serbia, along with a reading of the Venezuelan, Filipino, and Indonesian cases, made this abundantly clear. Therefore, I pivoted to building a theory that would help to explain the regularity of elite-led defection while not precluding the few occurrences of mass rank-and-file defection.

Third, as I continued my fieldwork it became obvious that defectors not only seek to elicit disloyalty from their colleagues but regimes simultaneously create strong incentives to

[2]For example, see: Kalyvas (2003), Collier & Hoeffler (2004), Viterna (2006), Humphreys & Weinstein (2008), Beber & Blattman (2013), McLauchlin (2015), and Tezcur (2016).

remain loyal. For instance, I was told that Milošević transferred one of his special forces commanders 250 miles south of Belgrade after the commander was overheard saying he would refuse to repress his fellow Serbs. The third theory chapter germinated from these observations: a handful of actors, not just defectors, seek to realign and contest loyalties in the run-up to revolutions, including the formal political opposition, international actors, members of the ruling coalition, and the regime itself. In summary, the theory presented below is a syncretic product of deduction and induction and, hopefully, all the stronger for it.

3.2 Debunking the Premise of Surprise

The coordination account sees defection as one outcome of successful strategic alignment - the other being full loyalty. In the confusion and uncertainty of a mass uprising, individual security agents are assumed to disregard their positional preferences and seek to ally with the majority to avoid the costs of isolation (Ermakoff 2008, Gallopin 2019). To do this, the coordination account argues they have to look to clues in their environment that shed light on which side, defectors or loyalists, has the upper hand in the battle for support.

This assumes that the uprising takes members of the security forces by surprise. If the coercive apparatus is blindsided by a revolt, it follows that they won't have planned or discussed what to do in the event of revolution. This lack of preparation creates collective ignorance and uncertainty on the day, leading to a fully-fledged coordination problem. Without a plan to govern the actions of multiple individuals, the security forces would indeed be thrown into an intractable coordination problem. In such conditions, most individuals in the coercive apparatus *are* best served by following their coordination instincts rather than their positional preferences.

Let us therefore say that the 'premise of surprise' is a crucial sunk premise in the coordination account. Otherwise, the security forces can preempt repressive orders by making plans which form an underlying organizational lattice which mitigates coordination problems. However, it is unclear whether the premise of surprise is justified. First, endgame scenarios are often the culmination of longer episodes of anti-regime contention that signal pervasive rancour and an eventual day of reckoning. In the Tunisian revolution of 2010-11, for instance, the first protests against Ben Ali started on 17th December 2010 in the remote city of Sidi Bouzid but President Ben Ali fled the country much later on 14th January 2011.[3] The early processes of revolution reveal critical information to first-movers.

[3]See: E. Abouaoun, "Tunisia Timeline: Since the Jasmine Revolution." *United States Institute of Peace,* 12/07/2019.

Second, revolutions are often organized in advance by a vanguard organization and the security forces are well placed to discover those plans ahead of time. This is especially true in authoritarian states with strong secret police forces and established informant networks, like the al-Assad regime in Syria. There, children were raised on the admonition, "whisper, the walls have ears" (Pearlman 2020) and internal intelligence represents nearly one third of the coercive apparatus' entire budget (Middle East Watch, 2009). Operating in secret with little accountability and great autonomy, secret police forces are free to use brutal techniques to identify, apprehend, and interrogate suspected dissidents (Scharpf & Glassel 2020). The result is that these units are often the first to learn about insurrection, even before ordinary citizens have the chance to take to the streets. Vanguard leaders also sometimes set precise dates for mass rallies which provide explicit notice periods for security forces. In Serbia in 2000, for instance, the Democratic Opposition of Serbia announced ten days in advance that its biggest demonstration yet would be held in Belgrade on 5th October (Bujošević & Radovanović 2003).

Third, many security agents have strong ties to ordinary citizens who may inform them about impending revolutionary activity. In particular, conscript militaries and the ordinary uniformed police are embedded within local populations and regularly perform community functions which increases informational diffusion between security forces and citizens. To individuals in these security forces, mass disillusionment and its expression as mass protest may not come as a surprise. Many will find the prospect of unleashing violence on their fellow citizens dreadful and it is unlikely that such a vile possibility in the near future simply passes individuals by. Even for those individuals who whistle past the graveyard, conversations with colleagues and official communications are likely to bring the prospect of repression to the forefront of their minds.

Nevertheless, the expanse of time between members of the security forces recognizing the possibility of revolution and the beginning of the revolution may be limited. Even tightly choreographed revolutions that issue a precise date for mass rallies do not tend to plan too far in advance to preserve popular momentum and zeal. The revolution that overthrew Slobodan Milošević, for instance, left only 10 days between the announcement and the revolution on October 5th 2000. Other, more spontaneous revolutions come as completely unexpected by the vast majority of bystanders and participants. The uprisings in Eastern Europe in 1989, for example, "stunned the world" as "tiny oppositions mushroomed into crushing majorities" (Kuran 1991). In a representative survey of East Germans after the fall of the Berlin Wall, fully 76% of respondents recorded that the revolution had completely

surprised them.[4]

Of course, this general sense of bewilderment does not necessarily transfer seamlessly to the coercive apparatus, whose constituent security forces have functional and personal reasons to identify dissent. Short time-frames and general ignorance of impending revolutions do not necessarily imply that the coercive apparatus does not plan for revolutionary activity. As far as awareness is concerned, insofar as regimes are incentivized to deploy the security forces against protesters, police and military commanders are likely to be amongst the first to know about nascent revolutions. Indeed, the intelligence branches of the coercive apparatus may be the first to discover germinal revolutionary activity. Likewise, limited time does not necessarily preclude agents making plans to escape having to repress the population. And in any event, plans to defect may naturally predate the opposition's formal plans to revolt. More than most, the security forces are coded to preempt revolution. The premise of surprise, therefore, is suspect: surprise is a variable rather than a constant across revolutions. Consequently, a good theory of defection should make surprise endogenous to the actors' behaviour rather than an exogenous assumption.

3.3 The Potential Defector's Decision

3.3.1 Setting the Stage: First-Movers and Motives

In the following sections, therefore, I suspend the premise of surprise. I argue that this makes events and mindsets in the pre-revolutionary period relevant to whether first-movers initiate defection attempts. In particular, I contend that the distribution of loyalties and grievances directed at the incumbent are critical because they shape the political opportunity structures facing potential defectors. Throughout, I draw on the distinction between the pre-revolutionary and revolutionary periods. The former is the time bracket that begins when security agents first acknowledge the possibility of a revolution occurring and ends when a mass uprising is underway. At this point, the revolutionary period begins and ends when the incumbent has either been deposed or has suppressed the revolution. Whilst revolutions themselves often happen with "astonishing rapidity" and "stunning pace", the pre-revolutionary phase can stretch over weeks or months (Kuran 1991).

Let us start by imagining a non-democratic country. In that country's coercive apparatus, there are varying degrees of loyalty to the dictator: some are loyal, others are ambivalent, and others are disloyal. One day, a security agent is passed credible information about

[4]Question 36 on the East German Survey of the Institut fur Demoskopie Allensbach (Kuran 1991: 10).

an incipient revolution in the capital. This marks the beginning of the pre-revolutionary period. Naturally, the agent considers how this news affects him. After some time, the thought hits him: if the revolution grows and threatens the incumbent's position, the dictator will ask the security forces to suppress the protests using violence if necessary. Regardless of his rank and the security organization he belongs to, the agent knows this might implicate him in repression. Commanders have to order repression just as the rank-and-file have to carry it out; the intelligence services may need to provide the police with crucial information, even if they do not do the actual beating and killing. After the revolution, nobody will be safe from blame.

Let us now assume that the security agent is a potential defector. Throughout, I will remain agnostic about the origins of his disloyalty which could be driven by a number of different factors: egocentric, sociotropic, or hybrid concerns. Disloyalty is a complex belief structure that individuals can develop in a number of ways - this is the subject matter of the positional literature. In this thesis, I am more interested in identifying the conditions under which preexisting disloyalty is actualized as defection. Thus, my analytical focus starts with individuals (hereafter 'first-movers') who are sufficiently disloyal to contemplate defecting from the incumbent regime. Minimally, I assume two things: firstly, that there is at least one such first-mover; secondly, that they are motivated to defect.

For purely illustrative purposes, let us now imagine that this security agent has grown disillusioned. Over his career, he has seen his salary reduced and his country repressed and pillaged. He attributes these problems to the incumbent, who he sees as corrupt and venal. Given the right opportunity, he will take action to unseat the dictator because that will best satisfy his preferences vis-à-vis seeing him persist in office.[5] For him, failing to act involves 'preference falsification': a costly disjunction between personal beliefs and action (Kuran 1989, 1991). The agent knows that he will regret his indolence if he doesn't act.[6] Nevertheless, he is rational and so it is possible for the benefits of defection to be outweighed by inauspicious circumstances.

Let us also assume that the agent's choice is binary: when the time comes, he can either defect or remain fully loyal to the dictator.[7] The agent knows that defection is only a viable choice if sufficient numbers of other security agents also decide to defect or can be

[5]These motivations to defect are purely illustrative. This 'natural defector' could just as easily be motivated by egocentric reasons, such as the desire to oust a rival, gut a competing organization, or secure promotion through regime-change.

[6]Regret is the obvious psychological cognate of Kuran's 'personal integrity' costs: the mental discomfort that results from acting contrary to one's own beliefs.

[7]I return to more complex, non-binary repertoires later. For now, I assume that first-movers consider defection *necessary* to oust the incumbent and therefore do not consider engaging in intermediate acts of disloyalty such as shirking and desertion.

persuaded. Otherwise, he will be an easy target for persecution by the government. In other words, he has foreknowledge of the coordination problem. Understandably, the severe threat to life and freedom if coordination fails forces the individual to think carefully about how to act and the support they will need to ensure their personal security.

3.3.2 Loyalties as Opportunity Structures

Foreknowledge of the coordination problem throws up three crucial questions in the potential defector's mind. Firstly, how many others already want to defect? Secondly, how many others could reasonably be persuaded to defect? Thirdly, is that total number high enough to trigger a defection cascade of sufficient size to allow the incumbent to be overthrown? As well as sheer numbers, the identities of the individuals also matter: high-ranking, respected, and influential figures usually make better allies than anonymous foot-soldiers. The potential first-mover realizes that a small number of key defectors (members of the top brass, police commanders, intelligence chiefs, top officials in the ministry of internal affairs) will probably be sufficient to spark a bandwagon, given that the chain of command remains intact. If the answer to the third question is 'no', the agent decides not to organize a defection effort and either falls in line or, more likely, shirks his responsibilities.

Therefore, the agent's defection decision fundamentally depends on his assessment of two things. Firstly, the current distribution of loyalties in the coercive apparatus (questions 1 and 2). Secondly, his perceived ability to convince erstwhile loyalists and apathetics to become defectors (question 2). By considering these two factors, he can work out whether there are the numbers to support a reasonably safe defection. It is strongly in his interests to organize, persuade, cajole, and blackmail others to join him to lower the probability of being isolated and targeted by the government. Assuming that he attaches great value to deposing the incumbent, the success of the defection cascade is also paramount to achieving his political objectives.

The distribution of loyalties within the coercive apparatus is a crucial datum for the agent because it gives him some insight into the feasibility of organizing defection. It is useful to think of the loyalty distribution in the coercive apparatus as part of the 'opportunity structures' facing the first-mover, where these are consistent (but not necessarily permanent or formal) features of the external environment that shape the incentives for collective action (Tarrow 1996/1998, Schock 2004). Drawing on Gledhill's (2018) distinction between material and social opportunity structures, the loyalty distribution constitutes a material (i.e., coercive) constraint on action because loyal units can be called upon to repress defectors and disloyal units can serve as a protective shield against loyalists. Apart from the limited

number of agents within his extended network, the security agent is unable to drastically change the loyalty structure he is confronted with in the short term. Thus, loyalties should be thought of as 'sticky' and inert, though not completely exogenous, features of the political opportunity structure.

In turn, loyalties are heavily determined by positional factors: grievances attributed to the incumbent, shared primordial identity with the incumbent, and material incentives to either abandon or defend him. Crucially, positional factors are *observable* proxies for loyalties. Just as Kuran (1989,1991) posits that preference falsification is rife within the mass publics of authoritarian regimes, there are particularly strong imperatives for state employees (including those in the coercive apparatus) to hide their true views about the incumbent. Indeed, many dictators, including Augusto Pinochet and Slobodan Milošević, made political loyalty a precondition of joining the armed forces. Those who failed to demonstrate the requisite loyalty faced dismissal, withdrawal of privileges, or worse.

Unlike loyalties, however, positional factors are usually clear for the world to see. The first-mover can reasonably suspect that well-paid riot police will be more loyal than poorly paid ones; that military officers who share friendships and communal relationships with the incumbent will be more loyal than officers who are socially distant; and that marginalized intelligence officials are more likely to let the dictator fall than ones who enjoy political centrality. Within the coercive apparatus, information about positional factors flows through formal and informal channels: meetings, directives, gossip, social gatherings, lunch breaks, documents, inter-agency projects, and the everyday news media. As Lichbach (1995) notes, "communal relationships beget communal understandings, which beget communal action."

Now, it will not always be the case that positional factors are unambiguously linked to loyalties. As the literature review explained, for instance, coup-proofing policies can generate loyalty and grievances in different parts of the coercive apparatus. Generally, though, positional factors are relatively straightforward proxies for loyalty. All other things equal, if the vast majority of the coercive apparatus is rivalries and grievances this increases the probability that a defection cascade will occur, lowering the risks for first-movers. By contrast, the knowledge that many elite units will remain staunchly loyal to the incumbent may deter defection because this places hard limits on bandwagoning (McLauchlin 2010). In other words, loyalties are broadly reliable reflections of individuals' defection thresholds, or the proportion of other people who need to defect in order for a given individual to also defect.

In short, positional factors matter by shaping the strategic environment in which first-movers make their decisions. Large numbers of doggedly loyal units lower the likelihood

that a full defection cascade will occur. For potential defectors considering their next move in this context, the corollaries are bleak. At best, they will have to fight a civil war; at worst, they will be instantly defeated and at the mercy of a vengeful government. In this scenario, the first-mover faces 'closed' opportunity structures since the regime retains control of coercive units who are able and willing to carry out repression - repressive capacity being a key dimension of rebels' external environment (Tarrow 1996/1998, Schock 2004, Davenport 2007). Moreover, there is little room to form alliances with the incumbent's forces and thereby create divisions in the ruling coalition.

It is a completely different story, however, if key individuals or units are known to harbour resentment towards the regime or could be swayed to defect. The strong possibility of support ameliorates the outlook for first-movers, who envisage a defection cascade spurred by the disloyalty of a core group of high-profile individuals and units. Where the incumbent's repressive capacity is curtailed and opportunities to coalesce with other factions are forthcoming, the first-mover is operating in 'open' opportunity structures. Of course, loyalties in the coercive apparatus are just one relevant facet of the opportunity landscape: the magnitude and mode of civil resistance, international pressure on the regime, international protection of the regime, cohesion of politico-economic elites, the regime's ability to reward loyalty and punish disloyalty, and the structural design of the security forces are all exogenous factors that weigh heavily in the defection decision (Nepstad 2013).[8]

Figure 3.1 summarizes the arguments in this section. In the first row, it shows that first-movers are forced to use positional factors as proxies for unobservable loyalties and defection thresholds. In turn, these provide an insight into the likely dynamics of the cascade that first-movers will be able to spark. In the second row, I provide a hypothetical example of an aggrieved security apparatus. The loyalty and defection threshold distributions thus have a positive skew (on these diagrams, the left-hand side indicates disloyalty). In the diagram on the far right, I suppose that this leads to a full defection cascade where mobilization is on the y-axis. In the third row, I illustrate the opposite scenario of a loyal security apparatus. The loyalty and defection threshold distributions have a strong negative skew and the defection cascade consequently peters out after the initial defection attempt.

[8] In the second and third theory chapters, I return to international support and sanctions on the regime as a key dimension of the political opportunity structure facing first-movers.

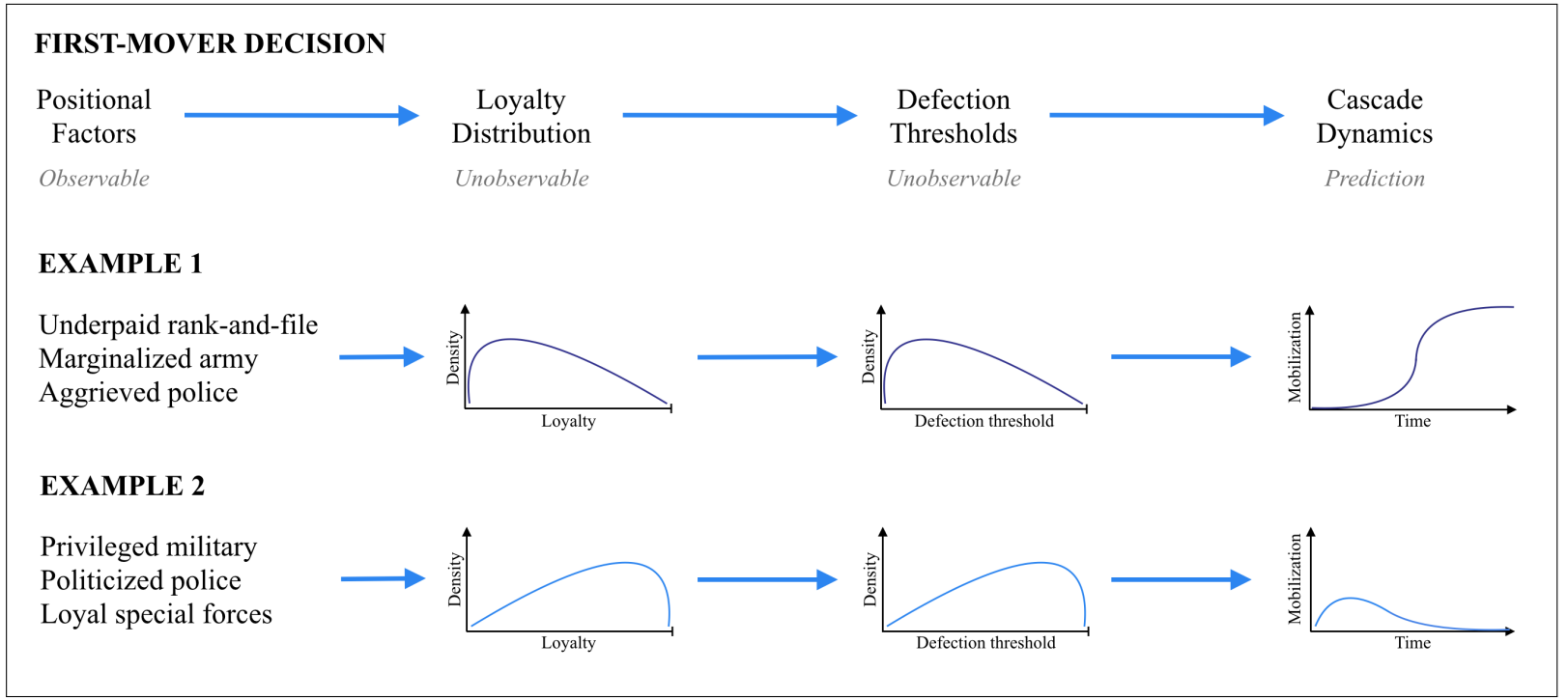


Figure 3.1: Positional factors, loyalties, and cascade dynamics

3.4 Defection Networks and Coalition-Building

3.4.1 The Function of Coalitions

Let us return to the disillusioned first-mover and imagine that he detects disloyalty all around. Disaffection runs high amongst his immediate colleagues and his social and professional contacts elsewhere within the coercive apparatus report a similar fatigue with the incumbent. He can find out very little about the prevailing sentiment within some units - the praetorian guard, the special forces - but suspects they would roll if faced with a seismic number of defections. Yet, despite the auspicious backdrop, the first-mover still faces an acute collective action problem (Olson 1965). After all, overthrowing the incumbent is a non-excludable public good: everybody will stand to benefit from leadership change regardless of their personal efforts to ensure it. More to the point, being a first-mover is excessively costly (Van Belle 1996): the leaders of unsuccessful defection attempts will likely be discharged, surveilled, imprisoned, or killed by the government (Gallopin 2019).

The question is, therefore, how does the first-mover solve his collective action problem? How does he mitigate the severe prospective costs of isolation? Intuitively, the costs of isolation only matter if the defection attempt fails; if it succeeds, on the other hand, the first-mover can expect to be lauded and rewarded for his bravery. The best way to avoid isolation, therefore, is to ensure a successful defection cascade and to share the first-mover costs between several individuals. The natural option available to the first-mover is to expand his ranks and create a 'defection network': two or more individuals within the coercive apparatus who have contracted to defect. Borrowing from the social mobilization literature, this can be called '*gesellschaft*': where rebels engage in "face-to-face encounters during which they bargain about the type of institutions to create to solve their collective action problem" (Lichbach 1995). As Rapoport and Bornstein (1989) note:

> "[W]hen permitted to discuss the dilemma, groups achieve structural solutions requiring coordinated activity that is difficult or even impossible to achieve under conditions that deny within-group communication."

Defection networks are one such structural solution to the collective action problem. Mirroring the concept of minimum winning coalitions in democratic politics (e.g., Riker 1962, Hardin 1976), defection networks allow defectors to reach a "prior agreement ... as to who constitutes the members of a Minimum Contribution Set" (Lichbach 1995). In other words, defection networks give first-movers the opportunity to establish a critical mass of defectors before the revolution has even started, thus increasing the *ex ante* chances of

triggering a successful defection cascade. Undecided security agents are more likely to join a preexisting and organized group of defectors than single individuals who take on the regime: the optics are simply much better if a seemingly strong and united coalition of security agents challenge the regime. Moreover, with every potential loyalist enlisted in the defection network the first-movers subtract a potential represser from the incumbent's roster. This will be especially impactful when defectors manage to co-opt historically loyal units that function as crack counter-revolutionary squads such as riot police, the special forces, and praetorian guards.

An illustrative example suggests the importance of defection networks to successfully overthrowing autocratic leaders. When President Suharto was overthrown in Indonesia in May 1998 amidst large protests, for instance, the commander of the Indonesian armed forces (ABRI), General Wiranto, formed a defection network with the military's head of Social-Political Affairs, Lieutenant General Yudhoyono, which was pivotal in ousting Suharto (Lee 2005/2009/2014, Mietzner 2009). The coalition also extended to regional military commanders such as Major Generals Syafrie Syamsuddin and Suaidi Marasabessy, the respective commanders of the Jakarta military garrison and the Wirabuana Regional Army Council. The coterie of senior military officers in Wiranto's defection network enabled him to rebuff Suharto's requests to implement martial law and a state of emergency, safe in the knowledge that he had allies in important parts of the coercive apparatus. The fact that the officers originated from different parts of the armed forces was also important for creating the appearance of a large united front, both to Suharto and to undecided security agents.

Thus, defection networks ameliorate the first-mover's collective action problem in several ways. First, it means that critical mass is easier to reach during the revolutionary period. Second, group defection creates a more credible challenger to the incumbent which ambivalent security agents are more likely to join. Third, it diminishes the incumbent's repressive capacity by subtracting from loyalist forces. Fourth, strong coalition agreements provide reassurance that one will not bear the costs of isolation alone.

3.4.2 Mobilizational Resources for Defection

But coalition-building is no panacea for the collective action problem that first-movers face. If it were, we would not observe failed cases of defection. Nicolás Maduro, for instance, would have been toppled by the repeated defections that characterized Venezuelan politics in the first half of 2019. Yet, dictators survive defection attempts and may emerge stronger from these challenges if they identify a hidden dissident faction or use them as grounds for

widespread purges. What, then, explains first-movers' ability to co-opt their colleagues into cohesive defection networks?

To answer this question, I invoke the concept of 'mobilizational resources,' defined by Gledhill (2018) as the "the means that boost the internal organizational capacity of a set of (non-state) actors to mobilize for, and realize, collective violence [or non-violence]."[9] Used until now to describe processes of *social* mobilization (e.g., McCarthy & Zald 1973/1977, Jenkins 1983, Eltantawy & Wiest 2011), I argue that defectors' mobilizational resources determine the success of their coalition-building efforts. After all, defection is a form of anti-regime mobilization and mobilization is, at least in part, the process "by which a group secures collective control over the resources needed for collective action" (Jenkins 1983).

As many social mobilization scholars have pointed out, mobilizational resources are manifold. A simple typology could view resources as four-fold: material, human, technical, and social. While these categories are porous, they do have the advantage of capturing the diversity of resources that successful groups need in order to advance their cause. In the first instance, groups clearly need certain material prerequisites: a (virtual or physical) space to meet, transport, office supplies, mobile phones, and monetary backing to meet all of these obligations (McCarthy & Zald 1977). Recently, scholars have proposed that social media has become a key mobilizational facility for "resource-poor" activists (Della Porta & Mosca 2005) that enables them to circumvent repression and communicate with "speed and interactivity" (Eltantawy & Wiest 2011).

Groups also need people to remain operationally and functionally alive: administrators, leaders, benefactors, and supporters who join collective actions. The massive Extinction Rebellion rallies in London since 2018, for instance, rely not only on visible supporters but on a host of organizers, leaders, donors, and elite allies.[10] A group's technical resources refer to its intellectual and strategic capital including astute leadership, tactical nous, and mobilizational flair. When the Arab Spring protests erupted in Egypt in 2011, for instance, experienced Tunisian activists provided revolutionary counsel via Facebook (Negm 2011). Leadership is also fundamental: achieving critical mass, coordinating, and exerting pressure on the regime all heavily depend on tactical decisions at the cadre level (Kuran 1989, Van Belle 1996).

[9] More generally, Gledhill (2018) contends that it is important to separate the concept of mobilizational resources from that of political opportunity structures. The latter are external conditions that shape the prospective rewards and costs of collective action over which rebels have little control; the former describes a rebel organization's internal capabilities.

[10] See: J. Gray, "How Extinction Rebellion Is Funded – And Where It Spends The Money." *The Huffington Post,* 17/10/2019.

So far, the parallels to organizing defection are relatively straightforward. While defectors arguably do not require many *material* facilities to orchestrate disloyalty, they do need people to join their defection networks and the strategic ability to market the defection attempt as a successful challenger. In building defection networks, however, the most important resource available to first-movers is preexisting social capital nested in their extant networks within, but not necessarily unique to, the coercive apparatus. As Coleman (1990) notes, social capital is "embodied in the relations among persons" and therefore represents the accretion of historic interactions between people within a given context - work, social life, family, organized groups, and so on. The real-world cognate of social capital in the context of risky collective action are high levels of trust. Trust is a vital mobilizational resource for defection: conspirators want to be sure that their defection network will not disintegrate.

As far as social mobilization is concerned, social capital is generated through any number of collective activities. Risky mobilization often supervenes on extant social and communal networks because the commitment problem between members is already partially solved: a combination of social sanctioning and rewards compound to create strong incentives to participate (Marwell & Oliver 1984, McCarthy 1996). Like social movements, defection networks are not created *ex nihilo*: there is no immaculate conception or seamless unification. Rather, first-mover defectors seek to stack their defection networks with friends and colleagues they can count on. Security agents, although they are members of a common overarching institution, are situated in multiple networks (Hundman & Parkinson 2019). In the Serbian revolution, for instance, senior defectors in the Belgrade police apparatus were colleagues but also members of a shared social network and community of memory from their experience of fighting in the Kosovo War. Their existing fora for casual information-sharing like bars and restaurants in Belgrade and the enduring connections between them facilitated the emergence of defection networks in 2000. In particular, we can distil the mobilizational resources of first-movers down into two key dimensions: 'reach' and 'leverage'.

Leverage. This is a function of the '*depth*' of the first-movers' networks within the coercive apparatus. Leverage describes a first-mover's ability to persuade those within his network to join the defection attempt, where 'persuasion' can be understood broadly as any means of inducement from coercing to rewarding potential defectors. Now, leverage relies partly on the first-mover's idiosyncratic ability to cajole his colleagues into defection: knowing to apply the appropriate pressure, frame the endeavour in an auspicious light, and playing down the risks. Charm, wit, and wiliness are the name of the game here. On the other hand, leverage is clearly a matter of rank. Those occupying more senior ranks have

extensive "soft power" which enables them to impose professional pressure on their juniors to defect along with them via the chain of command.[11] They are also viewed as safer bets than junior defectors whose ability to defend themselves against the regime is limited. Senior ranks, by contrast, control barracks, bases, men, weapons, and vehicles which deter recriminatory state attacks.

As mentioned above, trust and mutual assurance between defectors is a critical means of overcoming their collective action problem. Thus, leverage also reflects the level of social capital that exists between the defectors: it is the first-mover's ability to extract firm assurances from the members of his defection network. Later, I adduce the attempted defection network between General Nebojša Pavković and Federal Information Minister Goran Matić just before the onset of the Serbian revolution. Pavković was able to approach Matić because they had been friends and shared information in the previous months: their reliable track record of interaction showed Pavković that Matić "would not sell him out."[12] Leverage, then, is a measure of the density of "strong ties" between individuals (Granovetter 1973): the kind of linkages that are characterized by deep interpersonal trust and solidarity which facilitate risky collective action. These ties are likely to be prevalent at all levels of the coercive apparatus: they are evident in the camaraderie of the rank-and-file as well as the longstanding relationships between senior officials.

Reach. This is a function of the *breadth* of the first-movers' networks. Without the ability to initiate contact with other potential dissidents, building defection networks is a non-starter. As with leverage, reach is a function of seniority within the coercive apparatus: namely, the ability to contact far-flung individuals in different institutions is only available to senior officers. This allows them to engage with and possibly co-opt units perceived to be pivotal to the outcome of the revolution (Singh 2014). Moreover, seniority gives officers a mandate to convene meetings with their own forces which, in the case of very high ranking officers such as chiefs of staff and intelligence directors, constitutes sizeable reach. Officers with extensive contacts also have an advantage over their junior colleagues in gathering information about loyalties in other parts of the armed forces.

Importantly, seniority grants first-movers a convenient cover story for seditious meetings. Their normal duties may naturally involve them in coordinating and interacting with other units, which means that they can create discussion fora within the envelope of their ordinary duties (Singh 2014). Senior officers might also be well-connected in non-coercive spheres,

[11] It would arguably take huge commitment to the incumbent for a junior officer to defy his senior officer to mete out repression, though as Singh (2014) points out juniors may not feel obligated to follow their seniors' commands during exceptional series of events.

[12] Elite Interview #31: Goran Matić. Federal Minister for Information until October 2000 and senior JUL party official.

such as to the political opposition, the ruling coalition, or international actors. In turn, these contacts might be able to broker further introductions and artificially extend the first-movers' reach. In Chapter 9, for instance, I recount the defection network that emerged between the Serbian leader of the opposition, Zoran Djindjić, and the commander of the Special Operations Unit, Milorad 'Legija' Ulemek. This meeting was brokered by Jovica Stanišić, the former director of the Serbian secret service, who retained contact with both Djindjić and Legija after his dismissal.

Together, leverage and reach are useful heuristics for appraising first-movers' ability to assemble successful defection networks. Lichbach's (1995) observation at the mass level similarly applies to the coercive apparatus: "one expects that protests and rebellions will occur where extensive, intense, durable, mutual reinforcing, and exclusive preexisting political, economic, and social ties among dissidents are found." In turn, professional seniority (or rank) is a good real-world proxy for both leverage and reach. Assuming broadly rational security agents, then, we can hypothesize that defection attempts led by senior officials will be more frequent and more successful than those led by junior officers. This appears as a hypothesis at the end of this chapter.

By suspending the premise of surprise, studies of defection can invite the pre-revolutionary period back into the analytical fold. In so doing, it becomes clear that defection is neither a pure coordination game nor driven entirely by positional factors. Come revolution day, many actors are unprepared and undecided but others will have been secretly working to make their decision easier by persuading key personnel to defect. The expanded theoretical aperture sheds light on the understudied but critical 'persuasion phase' of defection when first-movers attempt to solicit defection from others. Contrary to the coordination school of thought, defection is as much coaxed as it is spontaneous: defectors have to be rigorous organizers, formidable networkers, and effective communicators. Communication during the pre-revolutionary period governs the extent of the coordination problem in the revolutionary period and ultimately the resilience of the incumbent. Antecedent positional factors are important insofar as they determine what can be achieved during the persuasion phase, along with the unique skills and rank of first-movers.

3.5 Strategic Framing and Coordination Problems

3.5.1 The Limits of Coalition-Building

Nevertheless, the first-mover's ability to stack the deck is limited: he will not always be able to get all his ducks in a row. Regardless of his seniority, he is likely to find that some

loyalists are unreachable so he must wait until the revolution to see how they will react. Also, if his reach is limited then his insight into the loyalty distribution is likely to be imperfect, leading him to incorrect forecasts about how the defection cascade will unravel. Amongst the loyalists and waverers that he can contact, he may find that his persuasive power and leverage are insufficient to elicit firm guarantees of defection. This means that a coordination problem still exists during the revolutionary period because many individuals (particularly in junior ranks) are not made privy to plans made in the pre-revolutionary period. For these people, the revolution is a period of genuine uncertainty and angst in which their positional preferences are mostly dominated by the incentives to ally with the side expected to win.

From the first-movers' perspective, this collective indecision is not helpful since expectations are more likely to be anchored around the regime's survival than around the defectors' success. As Falcoff (1976) observes, regimes often "seem inevitable in power and impossible to defeat." Part of this perception is inertia: the incumbent government continues to be the political barycenter until it is shown to be otherwise. But the key problem is that the state enjoys a comparative advantage in resolving the revolutionary coordination problem in its own favour. Its preexisting centralized mechanisms for distributing selective incentives through pay and patronage, issuing threats, and disseminating information puts it at a great advantage vis-à-vis the challengers (Olson 1965, Lichbach 1995). The question is, therefore, how do defectors overcome their perceived comparative disadvantage? How do they dispel the aura of ineluctability that surrounds the regime?

3.5.2 Strategic Framing: From Dissidents to Defectors

For a long time, activists have understood that mobilizing people involves strategically altering their beliefs and perceptions such that they perceive certain goals as urgent and desirable. This process can be thought of as forming a '*gemeinschaft*' or common belief system that members of an aggrieved community subscribe to. The *gemeinschaft* consists of "schemata of interpretation" that enable potential followers "to locate, perceive, identify, and label" occurrences within their life and the world at large (Goffman 1974). More generally, strategic framing to facilitate civil resistance entails three distinct enterprises: diagnosing a political problem and attributing responsibility, issuing a prognosis for the problem, and motivating potential dissidents to join the collective action (Benford & Snow 2000).

Strategic framing is thus recognized as one way of solving dissidents' collective action problem at the *mass* level. Leaders know that "meaning is prefatory to action": dissidents

are not fearless, risk-neutral automata but individuals who judge dangerous actions based on their congruence with their value frameworks (Benford 1997). And while this process of signification often occurs over long periods of time before mass rebellion strikes, leaders also use a different kind of strategic framing in the midst of revolution to resolve their mass coordination problem. As Edelman (1971) notes, "potential rioters are peculiarly anxious to respond to any information that will resolve their gnawing uncertainty about their support and the risks they run." In other words, the leaders of social movements face a similar problem to first-mover defectors: how to persuade bystanders to actualize their support in the right direction.

At the mass level, the coordination problem can be solved by creating common knowledge that proclaims the auspiciousness of the revolution. Dissident groups claim that they command the majority of support and make "unqualified predictions of eventual victory" in their bid to encourage people to support them (Lichbach 1995). The idea is to portray the challengers as the tip of the opposition iceberg, underpinned by a hidden groundswell of subaqueous support in the broader population. Deeds matter too: protesters seek to capture highly public and symbolic political sites such as the Winter Palace in the Russian Revolution and the Bastille in the French Revolution. The signal to onlookers is clear: those who hold the literal seats of power hold power itself. Seizing telecommunications infrastructure is also a common means of prematurely broadcasting victory to the nation to align people's expectations on rebel victory.

Strategic framing, therefore, treads the thin line between fiction and fact: credible exaggeration, ostentation, and mendacity are the names of the revolutionary game (Lim 2013). Although they are seeking to align a very different set of actors, first-mover defectors confront a similar situation to dissident leaders within the mass public. Both face crushing imperatives to resolve the coordination problem. And just as first-mover defectors anticipate the critical decision they will face between disobedience and complying with repressive orders, they may also preempt the coordination problem that needs to be solved during the revolution. As Lichbach (1995) posits: "dissidents know that the Rebel's Dilemma is solvable, so the question they must answer is, "what kind of appeal is most effective in getting people to contribute to an organization seeking a public good?"" In other words, once the revolution is underway the natural question that first-movers confront is how to resolve the coordination problem in their favour. Their solution should be similar to that of dissidents in the mass public: to create a strategic *gemeinschaft* that urges defection.

3.5.3 Creating a Defection *Gemeinschaft*

What does creating a defection *gemeinschaft* mean in practice? The task essentially involves choreographing 'focal points' to aid coordination within the coercive apparatus when communication falters. Schelling (1960) characterizes focal points as prominent, unique, simple, and conspicuous features of the environment which help to align "each person's expectation of what the other expects him to expect to be expected to do." A focal point can be as simple as an intuitive meeting place for a couple who have lost each other in a large shopping mall: the atrium, their favourite shop, or the information point. In more complicated settings with numerous participants who cannot draw on a history of interactions to coordinate such as protests and revolutions, effective focal points must be general enough to resonate with the majority of the referent population. In defection episodes, their function is not to change people's underlying attitudes or interests but to alter their assessment of the defectors' probability of success: probabilities, after all, are more volatile and erratic than interests. Thus, focal points don't aim to persuade loyalists that their loyalty is in error but rather that the odds are stacked against them. Over time, dissidents have made use of a number of focal points to oust incumbents.

Coalition-building. While the immediate purpose of building defection networks is to increase the first-movers' personal safety by defecting as a group, its ultimate purpose is to kickstart a defection bandwagon by signalling that a core of rebels exists and aims to overthrow the government. The more unified and organized the defection attempt seems, the more effective it will be in persuading onlookers that it will be successful. As many have recognized, operational effectiveness is itself a strong piece of marketing. Lichbach (1995), for instance, comments that "a successful military operation is the best propaganda in guerrilla warfare." In non-democratic regimes, the very emergence of organized dissent within the armed forces is demonstrative of deep-seated fracture given the towering costs of disloyalty.

Prominence. As far as composition is concerned, the prominence of the individual defectors has a sizeable impact on the outcome of the defection attempt. Consider the resonance of a highly respected general or even chief of staff announcing his defection compared to that of an anonymous junior officer. On a material level, onlookers cannot dismiss the political defection of senior officers as easily as they can for rank-and-file and junior officers. Their ability to command large reserves of men and armaments makes their defection directly injurious to the regime's capacity to target opponents with intimidation and violence. The withdrawal of these counter-mobilizational resources from the incumbent's arsenal could drastically alter the opposition's perceived chances of winning, especially if the

defectors originate from parts of the security apparatus that traditionally act as last-resort repressors like the army and praetorian guards.

As well as signalling an actual diminution in the incumbent's sanctioning power, the defection of prominent individuals within the coercive apparatus may reveal secondary information to onlookers. For one, very senior officers (chiefs of staff, police commanders, intelligence directors, etc.) may be perceived to have especially profound insight into the resilience of the incumbent regime. Observers might well assume that such figures would not have defected if they had assessed the incumbent's chances of survival as insurmountable. Additionally, declarations by salient individuals in the security forces facilitate coordination by shedding light "on the [wider] group's preferences when there is ground to believe that the author or authors of the statements make their own stance conditional on that of the group" (Ermakoff 2008). In other words, security agents might correctly believe that prominent individuals would only defect if they believed disloyalty was widespread. In such circumstances, defection acts to illuminate the extent of preference falsification in the security forces. The upshot is that "prominent actors are focal points. They draw the attention of everyone, and everyone knows it" (Ermakoff 2008).

Historic loyalty. As well as enlisting prominent individuals into defection networks, first-movers have strong incentives to bring historic loyalists into the fold. On the one hand, this removes impediments to seamless defection cascade by co-opting exactly the units most likely to support the incumbent (Granovetter 1978). On the other hand, it sends a variety of signals to the wider coercive apparatus which helps other security agents to tacitly align on the same behaviour. First, it shows potential defectors that the risk of repression has tangibly reduced because 'repressors of last resort' are no longer a threat. This will be an especially impactful signal when the commanders of units with highly repressive records, such as the riot police, defect from the incumbent.

Moreover, security agents expect historic loyalists to have elevated defection thresholds. In other words, loyalists only defect when they sense that they are facing a tidal wave of dissidents. As Ermakoff (2008) observes, because the first-mover's "threshold is relative - she makes her choice conditional on her peers' behavioural choice - her statement reveals that she expects a high proportion of the group to oppose the challenger." Thus, this type of defection is revelatory because it suggests that loyalists also perceive an unassailable level of opposition.[13] During the Serbian revolution, for instance, the defection of the traditionally loyal Special Operations Unit informed other commanders that even Milošević's staunchest

[13] As Christopher Hitchens once quipped: "If the Pope tells you that he still believes in God, you think that's the Pope doing his job again today. If the Pope tells you that he has started to doubt God's existence, you start to think he really might be on to something."

unit perceived defending him as futile. In addition, the Serbian opposition leaders were most concerned about the risk of repression from the special forces and the Special Operations Unit's defection materially allayed this risk.[14]

Time and place. While the composition of a defection network is critical to its success, the way in which it is presented to its target audience is also decisive. Ideally, defections should occur in public and well-known locations such as central loci in the capital city or at seats of military power. When the chief of staff and defence minister defected from Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines, for instance, they barricaded themselves in two military bases, Camp Crame and Camp Aguinaldo, in central Manila (Lee 2014). Public defections that onlookers learn about in real-time are the most effective ways of generating common knowledge: if somebody defects in the centre of town, everybody knows that everybody knows about the defection.

It helps for displays of defection to be arranged in advance. Delays are death sentences for defectors because they give incumbents time to publicly reassure loyalists and the population that they are still in power.[15] Turkish President Recep Erdogan, for instance, gave an interview to CNN Turk via a FaceTime call on an iPhone during the failed coup attempt against him in July 2016 in which he confirmed that he had not been ousted (see Figure 3.2). The public broadcast demonstrated that Erdogan was still in power and confirmed that the coup had failed.[16] In Venezuela in April 2019, opposition leader Juan Guaido orchestrated a mutiny of Venezuelan troops against Nicolás Maduro's government. Maduro swiftly made a public announcement claiming that he had spoken with military leaders who had shown him "their total loyalty." With that, the rebellion was thwarted. Hiatuses give incumbents the opportunity to resolve coordination problems in their favour by filling the informational void with pro-regime content.

Tacit coordination at the mass level during revolutions confirms that displays of strength at critical sites matters. The Place Du Grève, for instance, served as a rallying point during the French Revolution (Tilly 1986). When the Arab Spring visited Bahrain in 2016, the Pearl Roundabout in Manama became the "focal point" of pro-democracy protests until the regime demolished it.[17] There are infrastructural reasons for this, not least that these central spaces can accommodate large numbers of protesters and offer numerous entrance

[14]Elite Interviews #12 & #30. Srdja Popović and Milja Jovanović. Leaders of the Otpor! resistance group.

[15]Singh (2014) observes the same dynamic for coups, describing how Ghanaian dictator Jerry Rawlings' first coup attempt in 1979 failed because the conspirators were unable to quickly requisition weapons and transport.

[16]See: K. Healy, "Turkey Coup: How FaceTime and social media helped Erdogan foil the plot." *Vox,* 16/07/2016.

[17]See: M. Chulov, "Bahrain destroys Pearl roundabout." *The Guardian,* 18/03/2011.



and exit points. Just as important, however, is that they are locations where protesters can appreciate their size first-hand - which then becomes common knowledge. Timing also matters: to mobilize supporters, "the dissident group sequences its actions to show steady progress" (Lichbach 1995). Thus, the optics of timing and location are a key part of resolving the coordination problem that defectors and protesters alike face.

Information manipulation. Finally, defectors try to win over undecided or loyal security agents by transmitting optimistic or exaggerated news about the defection attempt. This may extend to premature announcements of victory to force everybody's hand and compel the undecided to align on defection. Singh (2014), for instance, calls this process "making a fact" in the context of military coups: coup-makers, like defectors, announce their victory as a *fait accompli* even when the incumbent remains in situ. The aim is to create a self-fulfilling prophecy: defection and coups succeed when everybody believes that they have already succeeded. Often, this is achieved by using national communications infrastructure like radio and television networks to ensure that the message is heard by all.

A recent example of exaggerating the case for defection was showcased when Venezuelan Air Force General Francisco Yanez defected from Nicolás Maduro in February 2019. In a video posted to YouTube, he urged other military figures to defect by purporting to have inside knowledge about the general loyalty of the security apparatus, saying "90 percent of the armed forces are not with the dictator."[18] These types of tactic aim to convey that

[18]See: S. O'Grady. "Francisco Yanez: Venezuelan Air Force General Defects from Maduro's Side." *Wash-*

disloyalty is widespread, thereby tipping ambivalent and loyal security agents into defecting. Yanez went on to claim (without offering proof) that Maduro was preparing to flee Venezuela and to declare that "the transition to democracy is imminent."[19]

All of this goes to show that first-movers have a repertoire of ways in which they can fashion a strategic *gemeinschaft* that aims to present the incumbent's dethronement as a foregone conclusion. By the time the revolution strikes, it is too late to interrogate and undermine the ties between loyalists and the incumbent. Rather, first-movers use strategic framing to alter loyalists' assessment of their probability of winning. By exaggerating their achievements, enlisting prominent and historically loyal individuals, and choreographing public and well-timed defections, defection networks play on the inherent volatility of probabilities to persuade their opponents to defect.

3.5.4 Collective Alignment

The section above describes one half of the strategic framing equation: the other half comprises the regime's ability to portray itself as immortal and the defection attempt as ephemeral (Lichbach 1995). Like defectors, the regime promulgates a narrative in which it is the enduring protagonist and its opponents are transient antagonists. Like a juggernaut thundering over a pothole, the regime seeks to use its various organs and resources to project its relative might. After the defection of the head of the Filipino Army and his defence secretary, for instance, Ferdinand Marcos and his inner circle began to signal that "they were ready for anything" and that "if necessary, they would fire on the crowd and there could be large numbers of casualties."[20] In addition, the government tried to sever the defectors' lines of communication by cutting off power to the rebel bases and forbidding broadcasters to transmit any information about the defection. For now, however, I focus on strategic framing and alignment within the coercive apparatus and leave the state's menu of tactics until Chapter 5.

Figure 3.3 summarizes the points made so far in this chapter. In the pre-revolutionary period, first-movers set about forming defection networks. The total number of people they can enlist in their defection attempt is a function of those who are already willing to join and those the first-mover can persuade. In turn, the latter quantity is a function of the first-mover's reach and leverage (i.e., his mobilizational resources) and the loyalty distribution.

ington Post, 02/02/2019.

[19] Ibid.

[20] American Embassy (Manila) to Secretary of State, "Conversation with [deleted]," Telegram, February 14, 1986, in *The Philippines: U.S. Policy during the Marcos Years, 1965 – 1986*, (ed.) C. Nelson & E. McQuerry (Washington, DC: National Security Archive and Chadwyck-Healey, 1990).

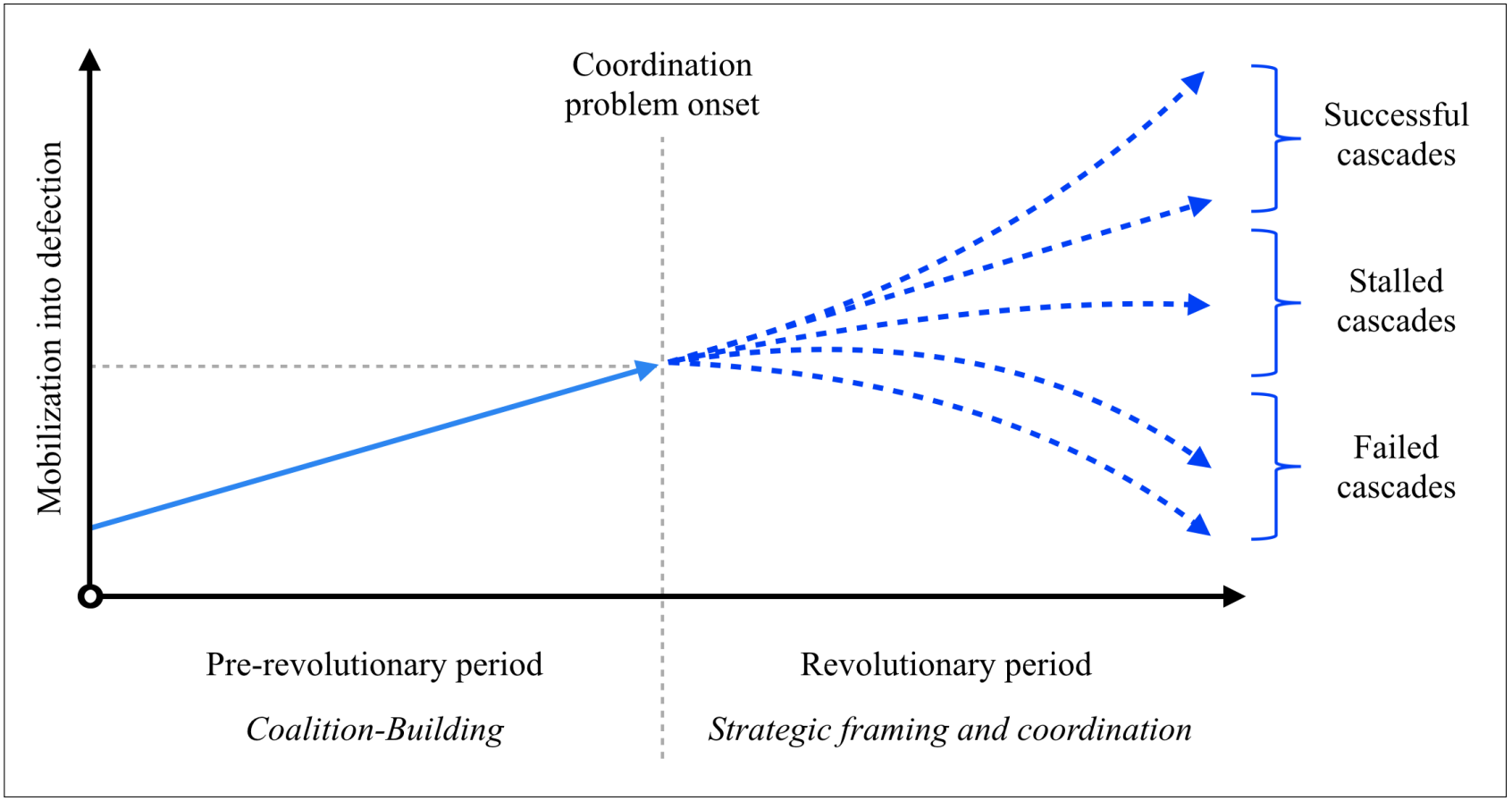


Figure 3.3: Mobilizing defection: coalition-building, strategic framing, and coordination

The better connected and more powerful the first-mover, the steeper the solid line will be and the more people he will be able to mobilize into the defection attempt. Similarly, the greater the number of disloyal types in the coercive apparatus, the easier it will be for the first mover to enlist multiple others into defecting.

When the revolution begins, the security agents not included in the original defection networks are thrown into a coordination problem. Seeking to align with the side they expect to win, this remainder waits for cues as to whether the defectors or loyalists will be victorious. In response, defectors and the regime both engage in strategic framing and the effectiveness and credibility of this framing determines the direction and speed of the cascade that follows. Figure 3.4 shows how the level of information changes throughout the defection attempt. Before the revolution, the emphasis is on secrecy whilst defectors construct networks that they seek to keep hidden from loyalists. During the revolution, strategic framing by both dissidents and the regime creates a positive step-change in the available information. As more and more people declare their loyalty or defection, this releases hitherto private information into the public sphere which allows others to assess the merits of defection. As more people declare and cascades in either direction gather speed, the informational space converges on full information.

If the defectors manage to project themselves as powerful and successful challengers and the incumbent government fails to mount an effective counter-narrative, one of the successful cascades in Figure 3.3 is likely to occur as uncertain security agents perceive the loyalists' strength waning. For instance, a complete defection cascade swept through the Tunisian coercive apparatus during the Arab Spring protests, from the special forces to the military to the police (Gallopin 2019). On the other hand, defectors often fail to create an effective frame surrounding their size, support base, and future success. For instance, as a single defector in hiding in the United States, Venezuelan General Francisco Yanez was ultimately unable to persuade others in the top brass to defect from Nicolás Maduro despite his seniority and reputation. When this happens, undecided security agents are unlikely to risk defecting since the government appears likely to triumph over the rebels. This results in the failed cascades shown in Figure 3.3 where the number of defectors ultimately falls as limited numbers join the attempt and the regime rounds up the defectors.

The third alternative is stalled defection cascades: attempts that initially gain supporters but face strong growth constraints because of resolutely loyal units. Nevertheless, they gain enough supporters in the first instance to resist the regime's attempts to quash them. Stalled cascades are often the product of stacking within the coercive apparatus where units from the same tribe, religion, or region as the incumbent remain loyal and others (perhaps

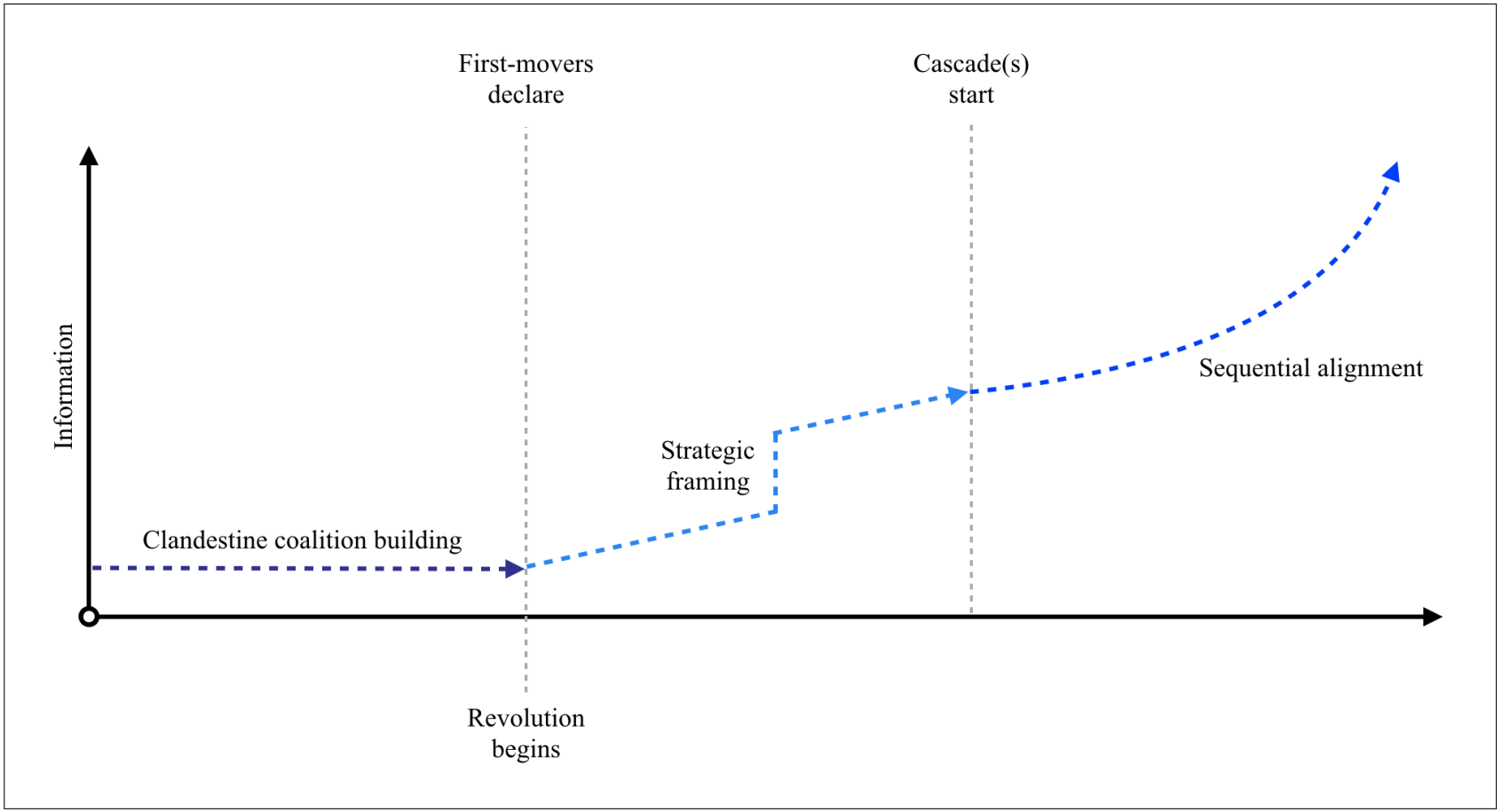


Figure 3.4: Information flows in defection attempts

marginalized and oppressed) defect. The recent Syrian civil war, for instance, was precipitated by the large-scale defection of historically oppressed Sunni rank-and-file and the staunch loyalty of stacked Alawite units who were loyal to Bashar al-Assad.

Thus, the defection process consists of three key mechanisms. Before the revolution, first-movers build coalitions of defectors to maximize the likelihood of overthrowing the incumbent and avoiding repression. When the revolution begins, defection networks promulgate strategic framing to persuade the remainder of the coercive apparatus to withdraw support for the incumbent. Finally, the rest of the coercive apparatus decides who to support based on a coordination logic: that is, they support the side that looks most likely to triumph. The interplay of the three mechanisms can give rise to three broad outcomes: successful, stalled, and failed cascades.

3.6 Empirical Vindication

What would a good empirical vindication of this theory look like? In this section, I argue that it would involve three fundamental steps. First, a set of observable descriptive criteria (or 'axioms') that should be more or less present across defection episodes. Second, the three constituent mechanisms (coalition building, strategic framing, and coordination) in successful defection processes. Third, three 'theses': directional and testable implications of the theory. Together, these three steps provide a demanding but rigorous test of the theory.

3.6.1 Axioms of Defection

Axioms are the fundamental assumptions undergirding a theory. In rational choice models, axioms usually specify actors' perceptions, behaviours, abilities, and the overarching environment. They do not usually feature in the empirical testing phase other than in passing, simply because they are neither independent nor dependent variables. Yet, this theory of defection began with an empirical restatement that goes against the grain of recent literature, namely that the security forces are likely to foresee revolutions in advance. For one, revolutions are usually the culmination of longer episodes of contention that push security agents to consider how they would react to the order to shoot on protesters. In addition, the intelligence services and socially-embedded police forces and conscript militaries are likely to be the first actors to detect the buds of revolution. Finally, those security agents who are averse to repression face strong incentives to preempt revolutionary activity and plan how to avoid repressive orders. Thus, I argued that the 'premise of surprise' (i.e. that security

apparatuses are caught off-guard by revolutions) is unsound. The logic of the rest of the theory relies on the empirical veracity of this argument. Hence the axiom:

> **A1:** Some security agents foresee the possibility of revolution and repressive orders before the onset of revolution.

3.6.2 Mechanisms of Defection

Mechanisms are causal and portable explanations of how a hypothesized set of independent variables affects a dependent variable (Falleti & Lynch 2009). Each part of this definition is important. Firstly, mechanisms are 'causal' because they aim to specify the exact interactive relationship between independent and dependent variables. Secondly, they are 'portable' because they may apply across multiple settings and engender different outcomes across those settings.[21] Thus, mechanisms are not deterministic: they interact with context to produce different outcomes. Thirdly, they are 'explanatory' because they are "relational concepts" that "reside above and outside the units in question," whilst seeking to causally connect them (Falleti & Lynch 2009). In other words, mechanisms are not reducible to variables: they occupy a different ontological space altogether (Waldner 2015).

According to the theory above, defection episodes involve three key mechanisms. Firstly, the mechanism that I have informally called 'stacking the deck' is more formally known as 'coalition-building'.[22] In politics, coalition-building centrally involves uniting previously separate political actors within one larger faction to achieve political goals. It encompasses two principle activities: brokerage and direct coalition-building. Brokerage involves a mediating group or individual linking two or more previously unconnected actors, whereas direct coalition-building doesn't require a mediator.[23] Coalition-building is a mechanism because the amalgamation of multiple distinct actors into one united actor has the potential to alter the relationship between all manner of input variables and outputs by removing veto-players through cooptation, creating positive momentum behind certain initiatives, and concentrating power from multiple loci into one central locus.

Regarding defection, if security agents have foreknowledge of revolutionary activity (per A1) then some of them might be minded to defect. However, even the most senior officers realize that defecting alone is futile. To ensure one's personal safety and to have a reasonable

[21] Tilly (2001) also defines mechanisms in terms of their portability: "a delimited class of events that change relations among specified sets of elements in identical or closely similar ways over a variety of situations."

[22] Tilly (2001), for instance, counts "coalition formation between segments of ruling classes and constituted political actors that are currently excluded from power" as a mechanism that promotes democratization.

[23] Falleti and Lynch (2009) define brokerage as when "a mediating unit (group or individual) links two or more previously unconnected social sites."

chance of overthrowing the incumbent, one has to build a coalition. Ideally, the coalition will be as large and its members as influential as possible. The coalition-building process is a mixture of brokerage and direct linkage: previously disconnected (and likely suspicious) actors may need to be persuaded to work together by a mutually trusted mediator but other actors will not require mediation.

> **M1:** First-movers plan to defect by building coalitions of defectors ('defection networks').

The second key mechanism in defection episodes is strategic framing, defined as when "elites shape behaviour via subjective orientations and beliefs about appropriate or desirable political actions" (Falleti & Lynch 2009).[24] First-movers know that coalition-building is not sufficient to overthrow the incumbent. Those who they cannot co-opt before the revolution starts need to believe that the defection attempt will be successful in order to join it. In order to do that, defectors face strong incentives to exaggerate their strength to create the impression that they are a strong challenger to the incumbent. In addition, arranging for high-profile defectors to defect publicly can help to indicate that the defection attempt is likely to succeed. Otherwise, the remainder of the coercive apparatus is likely to support the incumbent.

> **M2:** First-movers engage in strategic framing to persuade erstwhile loyalists to join the defection attempt during the revolution.

The final mechanism in defection episodes is coordination, according to which the benefits of an activity increase as the number of participants increases. After a certain point, defection is a coordination activity: as more people defect, the incentive structure changes to favour defection since isolation is costly. However, coordination is hindered by confusion and communication breakdown during revolutions. First-movers can only do so much to prepare the stage for defection via M1 and M2: at some point, they have to rely on other security agents to follow environmental cues and align on defection.

> **M3:** Following the creation of defection networks and strategic framing efforts, the remainder of the coercive apparatus tries to collectively align on either defection or loyalty ('coordination').

[24] More broadly, other work suggests that the organs of the coercive apparatus readily evaluate the audience effects of their actions. For instance, Yukawa *et al.* (2020) find that coup leaders use press conferences, public speeches, and television/radio addresses to frame coups as democratic and transitional arrangements to citizens and the outside world. By substituting the word 'revolution' for 'coup' and presenting their administration as the voice of the people, coup leaders seek to frame their illegal and unconstitutional actions as legitimate.

3.6.3 Theses: Determinants of Defection

Above, I contended that certain mobilizational resources are crucial for coalition-building: greater leverage and reach make defection more attractive to first-movers. In turn, leverage and reach are functions of professional seniority. Higher ranking members of the military, police, and intelligence services are endowed with authority over many subordinates (via the chain of command) and deep organizational knowledge that makes them good negotiators with loyalists. They are also likely to be able to contact multiple parts of the coercive apparatus without arousing suspicion since this falls within the normal envelope of their duties (Singh 2014). In addition, high-ranking officers are likely to have spent longer in the security forces and built up a broader network of trusted colleagues with whom they can gauge and arrange support for defection.

By contrast, junior members of the coercive apparatus are likely to have poorer insight into general loyalties by dint of their parochial duties within their unit. Moreover, they possess fewer resources and strategic nous with which to persuade loyalists to join their cause. As Lawson (2019) writes: "Revolutionary leaders need the social skills to connect fragmented opposition groups. They also need to occupy positions that endow trust and legitimacy. Successful brokerage means linking revolutionary struggles with influential allies, both local and international." It is unlikely that junior security agents possess these qualities and even less likely that they can project them to a sufficiently broad network. All things considered, senior ranks can reach and persuade more loyalists more efficaciously than their junior colleagues.

As mentioned above, leverage also describes the first-movers' ability to hold together defection networks until the revolution begins and ensure that defectors do not lose their nerve at the critical moment. These assurances must be strong enough to outweigh the considerable incentive for early movers to delay revealing their disloyalty until others do and safety-in-numbers kicks in. There are two possibilities. On the one hand, positive assurances could be built up through high levels of social trust within the defection networks from pre-existing and long-standing relationships and mutual respect. On the other hand, first-movers can blackmail or negotiate certain individuals into defecting if the latter's pressure points are known.

> **H1:** Senior ranking members of the coercive apparatus are more likely to initiate defection attempts than junior ranks.

I also contended that first-movers assess the loyalty landscape of the coercive apparatus when deciding whether to defect. Lower defection thresholds in the coercive apparatus

make defection more attractive since they imply that thoroughgoing defection cascades are possible. In turn, any number of factors could affect the shape of the loyalty distribution. Skocpol (1979) rightly counts military defeat amongst the causes of military disillusionment (and, of course, popular discontent).[25] Defeat runs counter to key military objectives and jeopardizes resources and manpower, especially for the services actively embroiled in conflict. If it is attributed to the incumbent, defeat can therefore reduce loyalties amongst affected parts of the coercive apparatus. In addition, numerous scholars (e.g., Gurr 1970, Foran 2005, Robinson 2006, Pepinsky 2009) have underscored the negative impact of economic crises and hardship on individuals' willingness to defend dictators. If the incumbent is seen as responsible for economic issues then this increases incentives and pressure to overthrow him. In Georgia, for instance, Eduard Shevardnadze was overthrown by a small crowd of protesters in Tbilisi because unpaid police refused to defend the parliament building (Levitsky & Way 2010). The protesters literally entered the parliament through an unguarded back door.

As outlined in Chapter 2, coup-proofing strategies can foment intense grievances as well as loyalty. Encouraging institutional redundancy and competition creates losers. Losers can become spoilers, especially if promises of promotion, patronage, or institutional favour go unfulfilled. Returning to the example of the Philippines and the overthrow of Ferdinand Marcos, General Fidel Ramos defected, at least in part, because he sensed he was being overlooked for promotion (Lee 2009). Moreover, withdrawing funding and privileges from security forces which the incumbent suspects to be disloyal only serves to increase rancour. Even the provision of munificent patronage to shore up loyalty in the coercive apparatus can work against incumbents if the beneficiaries sense that their assets and future income will be better protected by an alternative ruler. It is alleged, for instance, that the Egyptian military sided with protesters to overthrow Hosni Mubarak because his anointed successor (Mubarak's son, Gamal) planned to privatize some of the military's vast economic holdings. In short, the dispossessed, the disenfranchized, and the defeated make good allies for defectors.

> **H2:** First-movers will be more likely to organize defection when there are deep wells of acutely aggrieved individuals within the coercive apparatus.[26]

Conversely, large pools of resolute loyalists within the coercive apparatus will make defection less auspicious and more dangerous. Not only are staunch loyalists ideologically,

[25] Skocpol (1979: 286) describes wars as "the midwives of revolutionary crises".

[26] I leave this thesis deliberately vague: as many sceptics of the structural approach to revolution have pointed out (e.g. Skocpol 1979), grievances are omnipresent and manifold.

personally, and pragmatically bound to the regime, they are also harder to approach because they are likely to expose defectors if they learn their identities. Moreover, their hardline commitment to the incumbent makes negotiation over the terms of their defection very thorny. Unless defectors can match the stream of benefits that loyalists expect from incumbents, bargaining will be ineffective and dead-ended. Incorrigible loyalists, therefore, can prematurely end defection cascades and potentially trigger civil wars. Their strength is therefore a key datum for first-movers. Below, Table 3.1 summarizes the axiom, mechanisms, and theses. In the next chapter, I lay out a formal model of coalition-building in the coercive apparatus which generates some additional testable theses.

> **H3:** First-movers will be less likely to initiate defection attempts when there are large numbers of loyalists within the coercive apparatus.

3.7 Summary

This chapter argued that defection is not determined purely by pre-existing loyalties or coordination logic. Rather, first-mover defectors use their limited knowledge of loyalties across the coercive apparatus to decide whether to defect. Security forces wracked with grievances make better allies for defectors: grievances are proxies for loyalty to the incumbent, which in turn indicate lower defection thresholds. All other things equal, defection cascades are easier to trigger and more likely to run their full course in unhappy militaries. In their attempt to orchestrate large-scale defection, first-movers also carefully create and manipulate common knowledge about the defection attempt to make it seem larger, stronger, and more likely to succeed.

Revolutions are seductive objects of study. The drama of the uprising combined with the human consequences that hang on their success or failure is bewitching. Yet, like defection, revolutions are framed as one of only two things: determined long in advance of their occurrence by underlying structural factors or by contingent, aleatory dynamics during the revolution itself. The reality, as this chapter indicates, is hybrid. For information-deprived and time-short defectors, grievances matter because they make convenient sign-posts for latent loyalties and defection thresholds. Yet, during the revolution itself many security agents are caught up in a serious coordination problem. First-movers seek to resolve these coordination problems in their favour through strategic framing, creating what Lawson (2019) calls "rhyme to the revolutionary unreason."

Summary of Theoretical Expectations	
Theoretical Component	**Expectation**
Axiom	Some security agents foresee the possibility of revolution and repressive orders before the onset of revolution.
Mechanism 1	First-movers plan to defect by building coalitions of defectors ('defection networks').
Mechanism 2	First-movers engage in strategic framing to persuade erstwhile loyalists to join the defection attempt during the revolution.
Mechanism 3	Following the creation of defection networks and strategic framing efforts, the remainder of the coercive apparatus tries to collectively align on either defection or loyalty ('coordination').
Thesis 1	Senior ranking members of the coercive apparatus are more likely to initiate defection attempts than junior ranks.
Thesis 2	First-movers will be more likely to organize defection when there are deep wells of acutely aggrieved individuals within the coercive apparatus.
Thesis 3	First-movers will be less likely to initiate defection attempts when there are large numbers of loyalists within the coercive apparatus.

Figure 3.5: Summary of theoretical expectations (1)

Chapter 4

Theory II: Formalizing Defection

"We have all had the experience of reading and rereading a discursive essay and remaining undecided as to whether or not the conclusions hold. Far less often will such uncertainty remain after studying a formal argument. Given the definitions and assumptions, a conclusion is either valid or invalid."

Morris Fiorina
Formal Models in Political Science

In this chapter, I express the intuitive theory of coalition-building within the coercive apparatus as a rational-choice formal model. The benefits are threefold. First, as Svolik (2012) notes, a key advantage of transposing verbal theory to a formal framework is that one can be more specific about the empirical implications of one's thinking. Hence, I formally derive two more theses of defection which improve the explanatory power of the theory. Second, formalization allows one to be more explicit about the assumptions and steps required to formulate the theses arrived at in the first theory chapter. Third, modelling the first-mover's defection decision clearly emphasizes that first-movers weigh both positional and coordination factors when deciding whether to defect.

I begin by modelling the first-mover's defection decision as an expected utility calculation. Next, I contend that defectors use their knowledge of positional loyalties across the coercive apparatus as proxies for unobservable defection thresholds. From the first-movers' perspective, I model the cascades that result from a given distribution of defection thresholds and derive expressions for the size of two important subgroups: those who will defect seamlessly given their defection thresholds and those who the first-mover can co-opt. Once I have integrated these expressions into the first-mover's defection decision, I use partial differentiation to deduce some key factors which affect the defection decision: the first-mover's rank, the constellation of loyalties in the coercive apparatus, the incumbent's track record of dealing with defectors, and the personal integrity costs of repression.

Some brief typographical notes are in order. Individuals are indexed by i and '|' denotes a conditional relationship such that '$X|Y$' should be understood as 'X given Y.' The model is a revolutionary thresholds model like those developed by Granovetter (1978) and Kuran (1989, 1991) but adapted to describe defection. In particular, I transpose these models of *mass* participation to the coercive apparatus where similar conditions of widespread preference falsification and asymmetric information are also pervasive. The difference is that members of the coercive apparatus are part of a common institution, albeit a highly heterogeneous one, which generates a certain degree of common knowledge about loyalties that helps to overcome mutual ignorance and facilitate decisions about defection. The formal theory in this chapter helps to clarify how first-movers use this limited amount of information to assess the viability of defection.

4.1 The Defection Decision

I begin with the same caveat as in the verbal theory chapter. The formal theory presented here is agnostic about the origins of first-movers' disloyalty, which may be driven by egocentric, sociotropic, or hybrid concerns. Defection is one result of an individual's political belief structure in which reasons compound and countervail in complex and idiosyncratic ways.[1] I take first-movers' belief structures as given and instead analyze the conditions under which psychological disloyalty is actualized as defection. My analytical focus begins at the point when sufficiently disloyal individuals start to contemplate the viability of defecting.

Let us then start by assuming that a non-democratic country's coercive apparatus contains n individuals whose loyalties collectively generate the loyalty density distribution L. Individual i's loyalty to the incumbent ($l^i \in [0,1]$) is the normalized net utility i would derive from the incumbent remaining in power. A loyalty value of 1 indicates that i will benefit maximally from keeping the incumbent in power; a loyalty value of 0 indicates that i will benefit maximally from the incumbent being overthrown. Figure 2.1 shows four stylized loyalty distributions. L_1 displays a coercive apparatus in which the majority have middling loyalty to the incumbent. L_2 and L_3 are also unimodal but indicate that the majority of agents are loyal and disloyal respectively. Finally, L_4 is a symmetric bimodal distribution, indicating that this coercive apparatus is split on loyalty: one faction is relatively disloyal whereas the other is relatively loyal.

Amongst the n individuals, I assume there is some positive number who are 'first-movers': those who, upon receiving news of a budding revolution, have preferences and a

[1] In a similar vein, Van Belle (1996) remarks of leaders in collective action: "The specific conditions that lead a person to become a revolutionary leader are probably idiosyncratic."

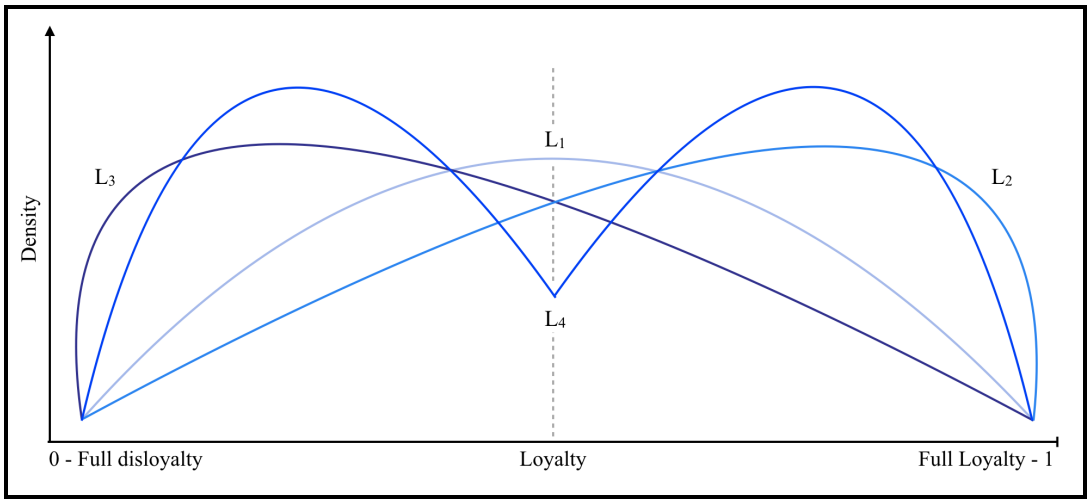


Figure 4.1: Stylized loyalty distributions

disposition such that they will defect if they can. Owing to the non-rivalrous and non-excludable benefits of regime-change and the costs of leading a defection attempt, each first-mover will face a collective action problem.[2] Despite experiencing a common problem, first-movers will psychologically reconcile the costs of leadership in diverse ways. Some may expect to receive 'selective incentives'[3] or 'leadership benefits'[4] from organizing defection, whereas others may choose to act because they expect all of their colleagues to free-ride.[5] Indeed, first-movers may perceive any number of benefits to initiating a defection attempt which are captured in their individual loyalty value l. However, this theory will have more to say about how first-movers can minimize the costs of collective action by forming defection

[2]Olson (1965) posits that "*rational, self-interested individuals will not act to achieve their common or group interests*" (emphasis in original) if those 'interests' involve the costly supply of a public good. Instead of incurring the costs of obtaining a good that will benefit the collective irrespective of individual participation, individuals sit back and expect to 'free ride' on others' efforts to secure the good, especially if each person's perceived marginal efficacy is negligible. The problem is damning because it is reflexive: each individual supposedly faces an identical decision and therefore nobody exerts themselves. Consequently, public goods materialize far less often than they should despite their social benefits.

[3]Olson (1965) contends that "Only a separate and selective incentive will stimulate a rational individual in a latent group to act in a group-oriented way . . . The incentive must be 'selective' so that those who do not join the organization working for the group's interest, or in other ways contribute to the attainment of the group's interest, can be treated differently from those who do." Selective incentives can take a variety of forms including pecuniary and non-pecuniary perquisites (Gates 2002).

[4]Van Belle (1996) argues that first-movers are well-placed to receive benefits such as political power, prestige, and wealth if their collective endeavour succeeds. He writes: "The benefits of leadership is a factor in the cost/benefits equation that might represent a solution to the collective action problem. These benefits are selective in nature, reward earlier participants with greater gross benefits than later participants, and are significant enough in magnitude to account for the risks incurred by the initiators of high-stakes collective activities."

[5]Oliver (1984) finds that some first-movers act in defiance of collective action problems because they feel "nobody else would". Using survey data, she calculates that first-movers are generally more pessimistic about the prospects of neighbourhood collective action than "token members" - those who are only partially involved in local collective activities.

networks in the pre-revolutionary period than the *ex ante* benefits of regime-change for first-movers.

For now, I assume that first-movers face a binary decision: to defect and pursue disloyal action of some variety or to remain fully loyal, denoted d and $\neg d$. In deciding whether to defect or not in the pre-revolutionary period, first-movers weigh the utility of defection versus loyalty [$U^i(d)$ and $U^i(\neg d)$] as in Expression (1). The utility i derives from defecting depends on several factors: the utility i would gain from overthrowing the status quo (which I simplify to $1 - l^i$) weighted by the probability of successfully overthrowing the incumbent given that i defects $(p|d)$; the utility he derives from the status quo (l^i) and the costs of being a defector if the revolution fails ($x^i > 0$) weighted by the probability of the revolution failing $[(1-p)|d = (1-(p|d))]$; and the probability-weighted costs of being exposed as a defector $[c^i(d) > 0]$ before the revolutionary period begins. I omit a probability term from $c^i(d)$ to avoid complication. Expression (2) sums these factors.

$$\text{Defect if}: \; U^i(d) \geq U^i(\neg d) \tag{1}$$

$$U^i(d) = (p|d) \cdot (1 - l^i) + [(1-p)|d] \cdot (l^i - x^i) - c^i(d) \tag{2}$$

The utility i derives from remaining loyal depends on the utility they would receive from overthrowing the incumbent (again simplified to $1 - l^i$) and the reprisals he will face for repressing an ultimately successful revolution ($y^i > 0$).[6] This time, though, these are weighted by the probability of successfully overthrowing the incumbent given that i remains loyal $(p|\neg d)$. In addition, i must consider his utility in the event the revolution fails (l^i) weighted by that probability given that he didn't defect $[(1-p)|\neg d]$. However, in this eventuality there are no costs associated with being outed as a defector (i.e., no x^i). Finally, by remaining loyal i incurs psychological costs (i.e., Kuran's 'personal integrity' costs) from acting contrary to his beliefs $[c^i(\neg d) > 0]$. Expression (3) sums these factors.

$$U^i(\neg d) = (p|\neg d) \cdot (1 - l^i - y^i) + [(1-p)|\neg d] \cdot l^i - c^i(\neg d) \tag{3}$$

I now make another simplifying assumption. The potential first-mover i is predisposed to initiating a defection attempt. I assume this means he derives very little utility from the

[6] These needn't be formal or judicial sanctions. The social stigma attached to 'enemies of the revolution' and even those who displayed torpor during the revolution can be acute. In Egpyt, for example, the term 'hizb al-kanaba' ('the party of the sofa') is used as a slur against those who watched the 2011 revolution be won on television rather than fighting for it on the streets.

status quo. That is, l^i tends to 0. Whilst this makes the model cleaner, it doesn't change its conclusions. Setting l^i equal to 0, substituting Expressions (2) and (3) into Expression (1), and rearranging yields Expression (4):

$$\text{Defect if}: \ (p|d) - (p|\neg d) \cdot (1 - y^i) - [(1 - p)|d] \cdot x^i \geq c^i(d) - c^i(\neg d) \tag{4}$$

Expression (4) reiterates the basic logic described in the intuitive theory in Chapter 3. For the left-hand side to be greater than the right-hand side, the first-mover needs to be able to significantly increase the probability of revolutionary success by encouraging other security agents to join the defection attempt. This highlights the importance of rank: higher-ranking officers have larger networks, more personal authority, and better insight into pan-apparatus loyalties. This gives them a strategic advantage when it comes to organizing defection attempts compared to their subordinates. More senior personnel will also perceive lower values for $p|\neg d$ because their loyalty could drastically increase the incumbent's chances of survival.

The first-mover is also more likely to defect if he believes that others will not. This suppresses his evaluation of $p|\neg d$ and increases the difference between the first two terms on the left-hand side. Widespread preference falsification within the coercive apparatus may create the illusion that discontent is minimal and defection is doomed, contributing to a sense of 'if I don't do it, nobody else will.' The first-mover's self-assessed 'marginal efficacy' (i.e., the amount by which he can personally increase the probability of overthrowing the incumbent) is also conditioned by the number of decisive actors he perceives. This number is likely to be relatively small and includes figures such as the Chief of Staff, his advisors, police commanders in the capital city, intelligence chiefs, special forces commanders, and security chiefs in government. If he views himself as able to sway this group or some critical members of it, his perceived efficacy will be higher.

As for the other parameters, the higher the reprisal costs of remaining loyal if the revolution succeeds (i.e., higher y^i) the more likely the first mover is to defect. Equally, the more severe i's expectations of reprisals if the revolution fails (i.e., higher x^i), the less likely he is to defect. Note that x^i is magnified by the probability of failure given that i defects, creating stronger incentives for i to ally with other defectors to boost the likelihood of successful overthrow. On the right-hand side, we see that a lower probability and severity attached to detection [i.e., lower $c^i(d)$] will favour defection, as will higher preference falsification costs [i.e., higher $c^i(\neg d)$]. Again, high-ranking officers are more likely to be able to avoid detection as their role requires them to interact with a variety

of other institutions and senior officers which allows them to avoid raising suspicion in the organizational phase (Singh 2014).

4.2 How First-Movers Calculate Support for Defection

Expression (4) underlines that first-movers' assessment of probabilities are crucial to their decision about whether to defect or not. Each of the three terms on the left-hand side are probabilistic. But how do first-movers evaluate these critical probabilities of revolutionary success? In this section, I argue that first-movers think of these probabilities as attached to the defection cascades they will be able to trigger. To forecast the dynamics of defection cascades, first-movers use their knowledge of observable grievances and privileges within the coercive apparatus to infer individuals' (unobservable) loyalty to the incumbent.[7] In turn, these loyalties are a natural *ex ante* proxy for 'defection thresholds': the proportion of one's colleagues who have to defect before one defects. Unable to assess their colleagues' true defection thresholds, first-movers use loyalties as a heuristic to construct a mental map of defection thresholds for individuals across the coercive apparatus. Finally, they use this knowledge to estimate the number of strong supporters they have and to identify who they need to co-opt in order to sustain the defection cascade. In the next section, I explicitly link these cascade expectations to the decision-rule in Expression (4).

In the first instance, first-movers use observable positional factors as proxies for the actual loyalty of individuals to the incumbent. Above we defined loyalty as follows: individual i's loyalty to the incumbent ($l^i \in [0,1]$) is the normalized net utility i would derive from the incumbent remaining in power. Net utility is heavily determined by positional factors which are usually observable to first-movers, especially if their position affords them deep and broad insight into the various levels and organizations within the coercive apparatus and others' mindsets. For instance, first-movers will rightly suspect that historically privileged and elite units will be more loyal to the incumbent than security forces which have been systematically underfunded and marginalized.[8]

[7] Lawson (2019) correctly notes that "there is no such thing as non-structured action." Indeed, the assumption of individual rationality demands that a theory explains the information key actors can access and how they process it as inputs in their political decisions. Grievances and privileges within the coercive apparatus supervene on structural features (as well as the framing efforts of agents) and are therefore natural and meaningful dimensions of the first-mover's defection decision.

[8] The theory does not require that first-movers think in terms of loyalty distributions, cascades, and positional factors; these are technical vocabulary used here to describe an intuitive process. The theory only requires that first-movers construct a mental sketch of loyalties within the coercive apparatus based on observable signifiers such as economic privilege, patronage, power, and grievances.

Once he has used positional factors to map the loyalties of the coercive apparatus, the first-mover turns to practical matters. Loyalties are useful data to him because they are a good proxy for individuals' 'defection thresholds': the proportion of other security agents an individual needs to observe defecting before he himself is willing to act. Loyalty and defection thresholds will be strongly and positively correlated: the more an individual benefits from overthrowing the incumbent, the easier it will be to get them to defect and the lower their defection threshold. Let us assume simply that i's defection threshold is equal to their loyalty (i.e., $t^i = l^i \Rightarrow \mathrm{t}^i \in [0,1]$). The first-mover counts those with low thresholds amongst his potential allies. By contrast, those with high thresholds he counts as regime stalwarts whose loyalty will only be overturned by a large defection cascade. Ultimately, the first-mover develops an idiosyncratic notion of defection thresholds throughout the coercive apparatus. Let us call the ordered set of the n actors' defection thresholds within the coercive apparatus T. The first individual, t^1, is the first-mover described above:

$$L = T = \{t^1, t^2, ..., t^n\}; \quad \forall(i)\ t^i \in [0,1]$$

In reality, defection thresholds may diverge from loyalty values. While defection thresholds can be expected to covary with positional loyalties, they are also inherently based on how many others choose to defect. This means that thresholds are actually synthetic reflections of particular instances of collective action, the individual's risk sensitivity, and their positional interests. Consequently, the equivalence drawn here between an individual's loyalty and their defection threshold is a simplification. Two observations justify the equivalence. Firstly, thresholds, ideology, and the utility to be gained from collective action tend to move in tandem. Other things equal, materially or politically disadvantaged soldiers will have lower thresholds for defection compared to their politically and economically privileged analogues because they have more to gain from collective mobilization. Secondly, first-movers can't access information about their colleagues' true risk preferences because it is mostly kept private, deliberately obscured, and unobservable. Conditions of asymmetric information force first-movers to equate defection thresholds with positional loyalties because they cannot observe anything else.

Raw participation is important for individuals contemplating joining a collective activity, but the profile and identity of participants also matters. Some actors, regardless of their political attachments, are recognized as objectively influential and endowed with superior insight into which side, defectors or loyalists, will win the day. These figures are likely be prominent, senior, and respected since these characteristics lend credibility and impact to their pronouncements. Consequently, others attach greater weight to the decisions of these

individuals in their deliberations, just as ancient ships in a storm navigated via lighthouses rather than by their more fallible instruments onboard. Below, T^* incorporates weightings (w^i) to reflect the variance in influence across individuals within the coercive apparatus.

$$T^* = \{w^1t^1, w^2t^2, ..., w^nt^n\}; \quad \forall(i)\ w^i \in [0,1]; \quad \sum_{i=1}^{n} w^i = 1$$

The first-mover's imperative task is to work out the profile of T^* to the best of his ability. Previous threshold models maintained that potential participants in protests and revolutions do not know the thresholds of their fellow participants. Kuran (1991), for instance, writes: "Neither private preferences nor the corresponding thresholds are common knowledge." Whilst this might be a useful (though sweeping) assumption for mass events such as large protests where participants don't know each other, it is less realistic for individuals who are part of a common organization such as the coercive apparatus. As mentioned before, working within the same institution fosters common knowledge about the collective sentiments inhabiting each sub-group (Lichbach 1995).

Chapter 3 established that the first-mover has some foreknowledge of the coordination problem during the revolutionary period. He is unlikely to overlook the strong possibility of having to repress his fellow citizens. Thus, the dilemma he and his colleagues will face between following orders and defection is apparent to him at the outset. He also understands that only a cascade towards defection will resolve the coordination problem in his favour. The general logic of a cascade is described by Expression (5), where the bar above w^il^i denotes that individuals 1 through *j-1* have defected - that is, that their defection thresholds were met.

$$j \quad \begin{cases} \text{Defects if} & w^jt^j \leq \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{j-1} \overline{w^it^i}}{n}; \forall(j>1) \\ \text{Loyal} & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \tag{5}$$

Expression (5) simply states that individual j in the coercive apparatus will remain loyal to the incumbent unless his defection threshold is met by a sufficient number of people defecting before him. Using (5), we can begin to construct a more precise expression for the proportion of defectors the first-mover expects, denoted $E^1[\frac{d}{n}]$ where d is the number of defectors and '1' refers to the first-mover. In particular, we can now re-write $E^1[\frac{d}{n}]$ in cascade notation:

$$E^1\left[\frac{d}{n}\right] = E^1\left[\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} \overline{w^it^i}}{n}\right] \tag{6}$$

Following Chapter 3, the number of defectors the first-mover expects in the first instance ($E^1[\frac{d}{n}]$) is a composite of those who will defect without prompting and those who can realistically be persuaded to defect by the first-mover. The first group are those who will join the defection attempt in the pre-revolutionary period simply because their defection thresholds are met by the first-mover and a small number of others declaring defection. This group will seamlessly cascade towards defection without pressure from the first-mover: their positional interests and risk preferences are such that they are willing to exercise their disloyalty without persuasion, blackmail, or cajolement.

The second group are individuals who the first-mover hopes to be able to bring onside. It is unlikely that there will be a natural 'domino effect' leading to full defection: there will be breaks in the cascade where the next individual's threshold is not met by the existing number of defectors. These inflexion points are pivotal. If these hesitant security agents can be co-opted and their defection threshold lowered, this allows the cascade to continue unabated until the next inflexion point. If not, the cascade will be terminated and the defection attempt will be quashed or degenerate into civil war if a sufficient number have already defected. As discussed above, first-movers seek to eschew both of these outcomes by bringing would-be spoilers into the fold.

How does the first-mover predict who he can persuade to join him? His power to convert would-be spoilers into signed-up defectors rests on two key characteristics that we can think of as the mobilizational resources introduced in Chapter 3. Firstly, it depends on his 'reach' ($r^1 \in [0,1]$). I operationalize reach as the proportion of the security apparatus he judges he can safely and realistically get in touch with. Without the ability to initiate contact, nothing can be done. Secondly, it depends on his 'leverage' ($s^1 \in [0,1]$). Leverage reflects the first-mover's capacity to deploy his resources and personal ability to persuade spoilers to defect. It also reflects his ability to extract firm assurances from the members of his defection network. Defecting in the early stages of revolution when the strength of the incumbent is unclear is risky, and part of his network is likely to abscond. Thus, the social trust that exists between the first-mover and his fellow defectors is highly important for keeping the network united.[9] Both r^1 and s^1 are probabilistic because they are a first-mover's *ex ante* assessment of his own capacity to bring about defection. I therefore describe them as the mean of a normal distribution: $r \sim N(r^1, \sigma)$ and $s \sim N(s^1, \sigma)$.[10]

[9] As Gledhill (2018) argues: "[T]he networks of trust that bind members of tight-knit social organizations - such as ethnic groups, trade unions, sports clubs, and beyond - are known to increase the willingness of members to join high-risk, violent collective actions." In particular, "strong social ties then facilitate within-group communication and, thus, the coordination of insurgent activities." Also see Staniland (2012) for how pre-insurgency societal organizations and social networks shape the success of rebel groups.

[10] Whilst it is true that r and s are likely to be correlated, it is useful to keep them as separate variables. Many junior and mid-ranking officers in the coercive apparatus are likely to have strong local influence over

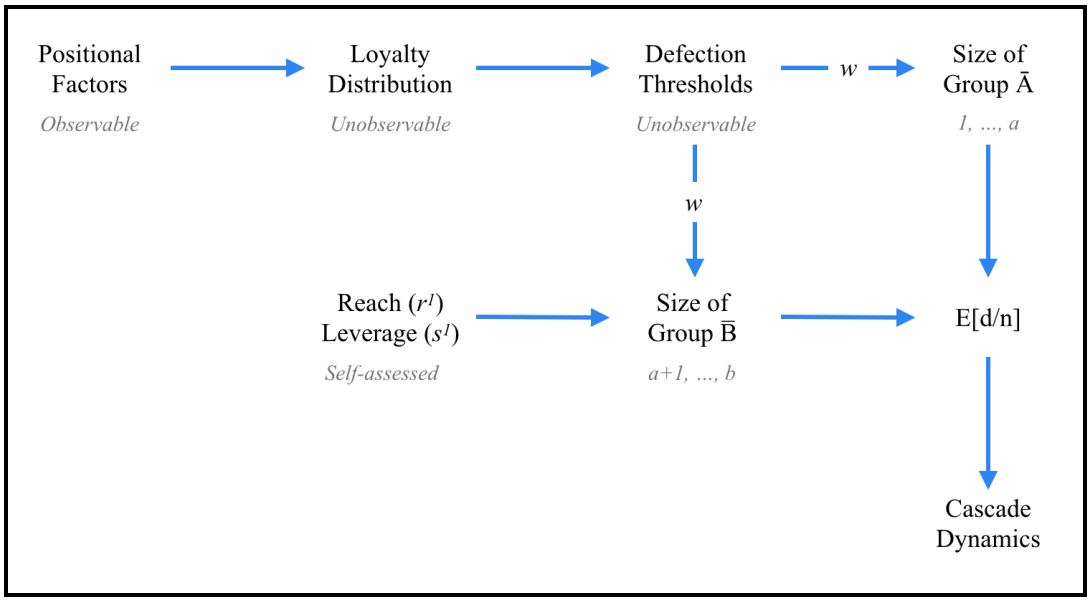


Figure 4.2: Decision time: calculating the expected number of defectors

We can formalize these insights. Let us say that the first group of automatic defectors comprises individuals 1 through a and the second group comprises individuals $a+1$ through b. Using a and b, we can re-write Expression (6) as Expression (7) below. The interaction between the s^1 and r^1 variables indicates that higher values of one does not necessarily mean the first-mover will be an effective mobilizer: both reach and leverage is required. The equation below Expression (7) extends the logic to multiple (z) possible breaking points in the cascade that the first-mover has to deal with. Expression (8) expresses the minimum condition that needs to hold true for the cascade to break: there must be at least one individual, here called $a+1$, whose defection threshold is not satisfied.

$$E^1\left[\frac{d}{n}\right] = E^1\left[\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n}\overline{w^i t^i}}{n}\right] = E^1\left[\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{a}\overline{w^i t^i}}{n}\right] + E^1\left[s^1 \cdot r^1 \cdot \frac{\sum_{i=a+1}^{b}\overline{w^i t^i}}{n}\right] \tag{7}$$

$$E^1\left[\frac{d}{n}\right] = E^1\left[\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{a}\overline{w^i t^i}}{n}\right] + E^1\left[s^1 \cdot r^1 \cdot \frac{\sum_{i=a+1}^{b}\overline{w^i t^i}}{n}\right] + \ldots + E^1\left[s^1 \cdot r^1 \cdot \frac{\sum_{i=y+1}^{z}\overline{w^i t^i}}{n}\right]$$

$$\text{Distinct groups if: } \exists(a+1)\ \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{a}\overline{w^i t^i}}{n} < w^{a+1}t^{a+1} \tag{8}$$

their subordinates and immediate colleagues (high s, low r). High-ranking officers, by contrast, may be able to contact most corners of the coercive apparatus but have limited leverage with distant personnel (high r, low s).

Expression (7) is an important result. It says that the number of people the first-mover expects to defect is the sum of two distinct groups. To make this calculation, he needs to estimate the number of individuals who will join seamlessly and without pressure (i.e., individuals 1 through a) and the number of individuals who might be convinced to defect (i.e., individuals $a+1$ through b). The size of both groups depends on the first-mover's assessment of loyalties within the coercive apparatus, which offers a window into individuals' defection thresholds. This allows first-movers to construct rudimentary forecasts of how defection cascades will play out and which actors represent premature obstacles to the cascade. First-movers' ability to enlist these potential spoilers depends on the probabilistic r^1 and s^1 vectors.

4.3 Integrating Loyalties and the First-Mover's Decision

In this section, I tie together the insights from the two previous sections and show how positional factors, loyalties, and thresholds enter the first-mover's defection decision. To remind the reader, the first-mover's defection decision is as follows:

$$\text{Defect if}: \ (p|d) - (p|\neg d) \cdot (1 - y^i) - [(1-p)|d] \cdot x^i \geq c^i(d) - c^i(\neg d) \tag{4}$$

By rewriting $(1-p)|d$ as $1-(p|d)$, we can obtain the following mathematically equivalent expression:

$$\text{Defect if}: \ (p|d) \cdot (1 + x^i) - (p|\neg d) \cdot (1 - y^i) - x^i \geq c^i(d) - c^i(\neg d) \tag{4}$$

Let us now introduce some simplified notation:

$$\overline{A} = E^1 \left[\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{a} \overline{w^i t^i}}{n} \right]$$

$$\overline{B} = E^1 \left[s^1 \cdot \ r^1 \cdot \ \frac{\sum_{i=a+1}^{b} \overline{w^i t^i}}{n} \right]$$

We can integrate $\overline{A}$ and $\overline{B}$ into the first-mover's defection decision. The absolute level of $p|d$ relies heavily on the number of people who will seamlessly defect following the first-mover's declaration because their defection thresholds are met automatically (i.e., $\overline{A}$). The more people with defection thresholds consistent with a seamless cascade, the more likely a first-mover will ultimately overthrow the incumbent. Additionally, $p|d$ depends on the size

of the second group, $\overline{B}$, weighted by the first-mover's reach and leverage. Expression (9) reports this relationship, where $f^{+}(\cdot)$ denotes a positive function:

$$(p|d) = f_1^{+}\left(\overline{A} + \overline{B}\right) \tag{9}$$

Another of the crucial elements of Expression (4) is $p|\neg d$: the probability of revolutionary success if the first-mover decides not to defect. The best indication available to the first-mover of somebody else triggering defection is the size of the first group, $\overline{A}$, since this is a proxy for the density of intensely disloyal individuals in the coercive apparatus. However, the first-mover will use this estimate conservatively since only the most disloyal types (those with thresholds at or close to 0) are likely to risk being a first-mover. This implies Expression (10):

$$(p|\neg d) = f_2^{+}\left(\overline{A}\right) \tag{10}$$

The remaining components of Expression (4), namely y^i, x^i, $c^i(d)$, and $c^i(\neg d)$, are not plausibly linked to thresholds or the first-mover's reach and leverage. Substituting Expressions (9) and (10) into (4) yields Expression (11). I change the indices to '1' since we are explicitly considering the first-mover:

$$\text{Defect if}: \; f_1^{+}\left(\overline{A} + \overline{B}\right) \cdot (1 + x^1) - f_2^{+}\left(\overline{A}\right) \cdot (1 - y^1) - x^1 \geq c^1(d) - c^1(\neg d) \tag{11}$$

We can now slightly adapt the summary diagram from Chapter 3 to incorporate the terms introduced in the model. The y-intercept of the mobilization line in Figure 4.3 is $\overline{A}$ - the number of defectors that the first-mover expects to need very little encouragement. The gradient of the mobilization curve is a function of the first-movers' mobilizational resources (r and s) and the wider pattern of grievances and loyalties within the coercive apparatus. Therefore, total mobilization into defection at the time when the revolution starts is the sum of groups $\overline{A}$ and $\overline{B}$. Thereafter, the relative efficacy of the defectors' strategic framing vis-à-vis the regime determines the direction and degree of the cascade.

In summary, this section has traced the fundamental decision faced by first-movers to its core drivers. The defection literature holds that either coordination logic or antecedent loyalties determine defection. This theory, however, shows that these approaches are not irreconcilable. As Expression (11) indicates, first-movers use observable grievances and

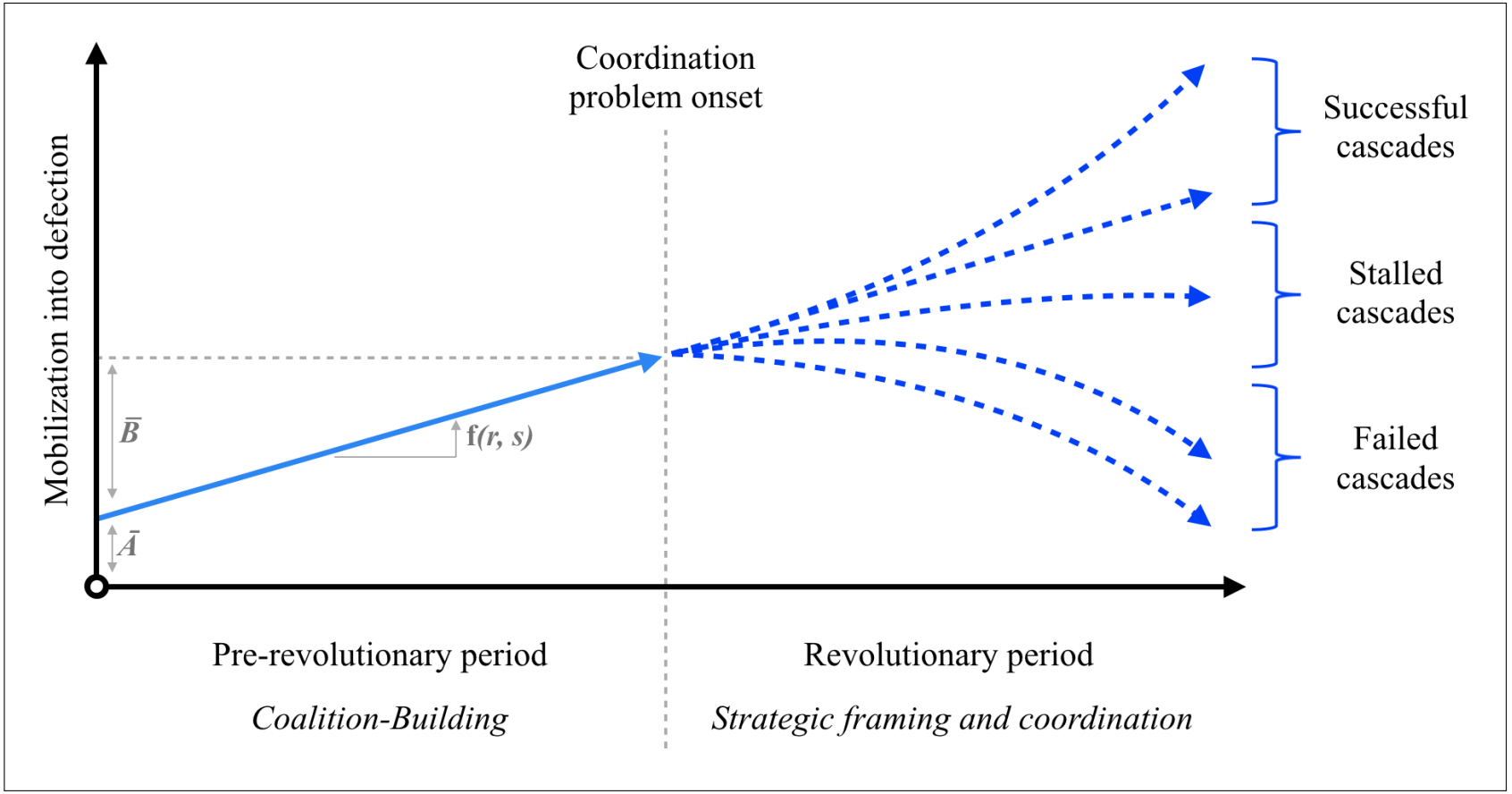


Figure 4.3: Mobilizing defection - integrating formal terms

sympathies directed at the incumbent as proxies for loyalties within the coercive apparatus. Using loyalties to impute the distribution of defection thresholds within the coercive apparatus, this reveals important information about how defection cascades will unravel during the revolution. In particular, a basic awareness of loyalties gives the first-mover a rough idea of how many natural defectors he can count on and who he needs to lean on in order to ensure that the cascade flows smoothly. It is strongly in his interests to rig the revolutionary coordination problem in his favour to ensure his personal security and avert civil war.

4.4 Comparative Statics

In this section, I use simple comparative statics based on Expression (11) above to formulate several theses about the emergence of defection attempts to confirm and extend the existing theses in Chapter 3. Theses are defined here as directional, testable implications of a theory. The partial differentiation tells us about the independent variables' *directional* effect on the likelihood of defection; the next section tackles how to operationalize the variables to make them testable. To simplify matters, I shift the terms on the right-hand side of (11) to the left-hand side to leave zero on the right. I then call the left-hand side $\overline{X}$ to give:

$$\text{Defect if: } \overline{X} \geq 0. \tag{12}$$

I then partially differentiate $\overline{X}$ with respect to each of the terms in Expression (11). If the derivative is positive, higher values of the independent variable make defection more likely. If the derivative is negative, higher values of the independent variable make defection less likely.

$$\frac{\partial \overline{X}}{\partial s^1} = \left[\frac{\partial f_1^+\left(\overline{A} + \overline{B}\right)}{\partial s^1} \cdot (1 + x^1) \right] \geq 0 \tag{13}$$

$$\frac{\partial \overline{X}}{\partial r^1} = \left[\frac{\partial f_1^+\left(\overline{A} + \overline{B}\right)}{\partial r^1} \cdot (1 + x^1) \right] \geq 0 \tag{14}$$

$$\frac{\partial \overline{X}}{\partial a} = \left[\frac{\partial f_1^+\left(\overline{A} + \overline{B}\right)}{\partial a} \cdot (1 + x^1) \right] - \left[\frac{\partial f_2^+\left(\overline{A}\right)}{\partial a} \cdot (1 - y^1) \right] <=> 0 \tag{15}$$

$$\frac{\partial \overline{X}}{\partial b} = \left[\frac{\partial f_1^+ \left(\overline{A} + \overline{B} \right)}{\partial b} \cdot (1 + x^1) \right] \geq 0 \tag{16}$$

$$\frac{\partial \overline{X}}{\partial y^1} = f_2^+ \left(\overline{A} \right) \geq 0 \tag{17}$$

$$\frac{\partial \overline{X}}{\partial x^1} = f_1^+ \left(\overline{A} + \overline{B} \right) - 1 <=> 0 \tag{18}$$

$$\frac{\partial \overline{X}}{\partial c^1(\neg d)} = 1 > 0 \tag{19}$$

$$\frac{\partial \overline{X}}{\partial c^1(d)} = -1 < 0 \tag{20}$$

Expressions (13) and (14) confirm H1 from the previous chapter: senior ranks are more likely to defect, owing to their superior combination of leverage [s^1 - (13)] and reach [r^1 - (14)]. As Lawson (2019) writes: "central to revolutionary leadership is the capacity for brokerage - the ability to close a gap between competing coalitions through the effective use of organizational resources and rhetorical strategies." Together, leverage and reach describe the first-mover's ability to enlist loyalists in his defection attempt and to ensure they actually defect when the going gets tough. High levels of efficacy grant the first-mover strong opportunities to add to his ranks which insulates him from repression and goes some distance in averting civil war. Low levels of efficacy, by contrast, mean that first-movers can only form small, loose-knit bands of defectors with less auspicious hopes of toppling the incumbent.

Expressions (15) and (16) confirm H2 and H3 from the previous chapter: larger concentrations of disloyal security agents propitiates defection. Expression (15) actually yields an ambiguous result: larger values of a do not necessarily make defection more likely if it gives first-movers the impression that there is a large pool of potential others who will take on the risks of being a first-mover. This accords with Oliver's (1984) finding that some first-movers overcome the costs of collective action because they are pessimistic about whether others will act. Conversely, those who are more optimistic about others' commitment to obtaining a public good are less likely to feel pressured to exert themselves since they can free-ride.

$$\frac{\partial \overline{X}}{\partial a} \quad \begin{cases} > 0 \text{ when } \left[\frac{\partial f_1^+ \left(\overline{A} + \overline{B} \right)}{\partial a} \cdot (1 + x^1) \right] > \left[\frac{\partial f_2^+ \left(\overline{A} \right)}{\partial a} \cdot (1 - y^1) \right] \\ \leq 0 \text{ otherwise.} \end{cases} \tag{21}$$

By rearranging Expression (15), Expression (21) shows what needs to be true for (15) to be positive. This indicates two good reasons to think that Expression (15) is indeed positive. For one, the positive effect of a is magnified by $(1 + x^1)$ whereas the negative effect of a is magnified only by $(1 - y^1)$. Therefore, if x^1 and y^1 are both non-zero, the negative effect of a will be reduced and its positive effect will be increased. Second, we noted above that f_2^+ is a weak positive function because it is only the most disloyal types who the first-mover considers as likely alternative first-movers - not the whole of group $\overline{A}$. By contrast, the total size of groups $\overline{A}$ and $\overline{B}$ are critical inputs in the first-mover's calculation of the probability of revolutionary success, suggesting that f_1^+ is a stronger positive function than f_2^+.

Expression (16) indicates that the effect of increasing the size of group b is unambiguously positive: the more individuals likely to join the cascade, the more likely first-movers are to defect. This is via two mechanisms. First, bigger cascades mean that the first-movers gain some safety in numbers against the regime's attempts to quash the defection attempt. Second, more extensive bandwagoning increases the probability of overthrowing the incumbent (and first-movers realizing the gains underpinning their low l value) and reduces the risk of splitting the coercive apparatus. Expression (16) thus also underlines the importance of first-movers' mobilizational resources - particularly leverage, reach, and social capital - since these determine their ability to resolve inflexion points in the cascade.

Moving beyond the existing theses in Chapter 3, Expression (17) suggests that the greater the reprisals for repressing a successful revolution (y^1), the more likely the first-mover is to defect. Strong likelihood of stigmatization, prosecution, imprisonment, and worse in the post-revolutionary period are salient costs associated with remaining loyal to the incumbent. This is largely a function of regime characteristics and the opportunity structures the first-mover faces. Some particularly vicious dictatorships may kill defectors; others might opt for a less severe punishment such as dishonourable discharge or lengthy imprisonment. In making this assessment, first-movers will look to how the incumbent has dealt with defectors in the past and his general human rights record. Regimes that are constrained by foreign perceptions (e.g., some hybrid regimes) may be less draconian than ones that don't rely on a democratic facade to access perquisites such as funding, legitimacy, and membership of international organizations. I return to the international dimension of the political opportunity structure in the next chapter.

Reprisals (y1) depend on sectarian stacking:
- those in the in-group can expect to be treated more harshly if they repress the revolution.

> **H4:** First-movers will be less likely to initiate defection attempts when the incumbent has dealt with defectors harshly in the past, has a poor human rights record, or doesn't rely on foreign organizations for important benefits.

This is based on x1, not y1.

Expression (18) indicates that the effect of heightened costs of defecting if the revolution fails (x^1) is ambiguous: it depends on the size of groups a and b. Expression (22) below shows the necessary condition for (18) to be positive: the negative effect of x^1 must be cancelled out by sufficiently large groups of ready-made defectors. This provides reassurance to the first-movers that the defection attempt will succeed, meaning that the likelihood of incurring x^1 shrinks to nearly 0.

$$\frac{\partial \overline{X}}{\partial x^1} \begin{cases} > 0 \text{ when } f_1^+\left(\overline{A} + \overline{B}\right) > 1 \\ \leq 0 \text{ otherwise.} \end{cases} \tag{22}$$

Expression (19) reveals that higher personal integrity costs $[c^1(\neg d)]$ increase the probability of defection: those with intense political beliefs that prohibit them from standing by when there is an opportunity to unseat the incumbent experience strong urges to act - which are psychologically costly if suppressed. A good empirical sign of this is that first-movers and early-movers express discomfort and unease about the duties they were expected to fulfil in their jobs. This indicates that, for these individuals, protecting the incumbent didn't warrant the (high- or low-intensity) repression required to keep him in power. For instance, many policemen in Serbia were mortified by Slobodan Milošević's orders to arrest, imprison, and torture teenage Otpor activists, indicating they thought the measure's utility was misaligned with keeping Milošević in power.

> **H5:** First-movers will be more likely to defect when they sense a disjuncture between their professional duties and their personal belief in keeping the incumbent in power.

Expression (20) confirms earlier arguments that defection becomes less attractive as the costs of detection $[c^1(d)]$ rise. The likelihood of being exposed as a defector is correlated with reach: well-connected individuals are likely to have a better grasp of loyalties across the coercive apparatus which gives them insight into who to approach and who not to approach in the coalition-building phase. As argued above, the best observable cognate for reach is rank: more senior security agents are likely to have broader professional networks because their duties require them to coordinate with more branches of the coercive apparatus and have been serving for longer. For this reason, I subsume the effect of $c^1(d)$ under H1. Below, Figure 4.4 updates Figure 3.4 by incorporating H4 and H5.

This also backs up H4, as well as H1. C1(d) is a function of probability of detection (determined by rank) and the costs of detection (determined by the regime).

Summary of Theoretical Expectations	
Theoretical Component	**Expectation**
Axiom	Some security agents foresee the possibility of revolution and repressive orders before the onset of revolution.
Mechanism 1	First-movers plan to defect by building coalitions of defectors ('defection networks').
Mechanism 2	First-movers engage in strategic framing to persuade erstwhile loyalists to join the defection attempt during the revolution.
Mechanism 3	Following the creation of defection networks and strategic framing efforts, the remainder of the coercive apparatus tries to collectively align on either defection or loyalty ('coordination').
Thesis 1	Senior ranking members of the coercive apparatus are more likely to initiate defection attempts than junior ranks.
Thesis 2	First-movers will be more likely to organize defection when there are deep wells of acutely aggrieved individuals within the coercive apparatus.
Thesis 3	First-movers will be less likely to initiate defection attempts when there are large numbers of loyalists within the coercive apparatus.
Thesis 4	First-movers will be less likely to initiate defection attempts when the incumbent has dealt with defectors harshly in the past, has a poor human rights record, or doesn't rely on foreign organizations for important benefits.
Thesis 5	First-movers will be more likely to defect when they sense a disjuncture between their professional duties and their personal belief in keeping the incumbent in power.

Figure 4.4: Summary of theoretical expectations (2)

4.5 Summary

In this chapter, I used formal modelling to trace the drivers of the first-mover's defection decision and explore the role of mobilizational resources in coalition-building. The key theoretical innovation was to recognize that threshold models of revolutionary participation for mass publics (e.g., Granovetter 1978, Kuran 1989/1991, Lohmann 1992) are also helpful for understanding the logic of defection cascades within the coercive apparatus. The derivations of the formal set-up supported the intuitive theory in Chapter 3: under the given assumptions, first-movers are more likely to defect when they occupy senior ranks and when they perceive widespread disloyalty and grievances. Moreover, the model generated two new theses. First, in states where the incumbent regime is vengeful and enjoys impunity in conducting its internal affairs, first-movers will foresee worse consequences if they fail and become less likely to defect. Second, first-movers who experience moral disquiet about fulfilling repressive orders are more likely to defect.

Chapter 5

Theory III: Anti-Incumbent Coalitions

"Worst of all, he has hitherto been protected by the enormity of his crimes, while you are deterred from trying to recover your liberty by the fear of a still more cruel slavery."

Speech of the Consul Lepidus to the Roman People
Sallust, *Histories*

5.1 Theoretical Précis

In this chapter, I extend the concept of defection networks. I theorize that broader 'anti-incumbent coalitions' (AICs) emerge when factions within the coercive apparatus ally with other parts of the ruling coalition and the societal opposition. While AICs do not always include dissident elements of the coercive apparatus, I argue that there are strong multilateral incentives which make their involvement highly desirable. From the security forces' perspective, alliances with future power-holders can lead to benefits such as official amnesty and facilitate a united front against the incumbent. From the opposition's point of view, allying with the coercive apparatus simultaneously reduces their personal risk of being repressed and deals a potentially fatal blow to the incumbent's ruling coalition.

To reflect the revised view of defection networks, I adjust the mechanisms outlined in the previous chapter. Coalition-building takes place both within the coercive apparatus and between the coercive apparatus and other non-coercive organizations. Likewise, strategic framing is undertaken by all partners in AICs, who seek to enlist historically loyal, high-profile, and independently powerful actors. That is, optics remain crucial to bringing about successful defection cascades. As with defection networks between members of the coercive apparatus, the emergence of AICs depends heavily on the prospective partners' leverage,

reach, and inter-personal trust, as well as the domestic and international opportunity structure. When these sources of networking capital run dry and preclude the formation of fully-fledged AICs, 'sub-coalitional' arrangements between coercive and non-coercive actors can emerge which produce some - but not all - of the benefits of full coalitions.

Finally, I consider the other side of the loyalty equation: how incumbents use strategic redeployment, punishment, and inducements to shore up loyalties within the coercive apparatus. While coup-proofing policies such as ethnic stacking and patronage are used as long-term solutions to disloyalty, I focus here on short-term, reactive, and damage-limiting measures that dictators use to deter defection in the midst of severe uprisings. Like dissidents, incumbents also face a coordination problem during the revolution but their objective is to initiate a loyalty cascade by broadcasting their continued control of central state institutions and the enduring loyalty of their ruling coalition. Based on the relative efficacy of the incumbent and opposition's loyalty contestation, I identify three idealized revolutionary trajectories: unfettered crackdown, defection cascade, and polarization.

5.2 Anti-Incumbent Coalitions

Aristotle was amongst the first to point out that non-democratic leaders face a "double danger": "falling out among themselves and also with the people" (*The Politics*, Book 5).[1] Autocrats don't singlehandedly possess the ability or resources to subjugate their citizens, so they are compelled to form "ruling coalitions" to help them achieve various aspects of this grim task.[2] In Svolik's (2012) terminology, the "problem of authoritarian control" spawns the "problem of authoritarian power-sharing": oppression requires teamwork, thus dictators need to enlist henchmen. Dictators need the security forces to physically repress and deter popular challenges, the middle classes to act as a popular counterbalance to revolutionary working classes, economic elites to pay their taxes, and communal elites to promulgate the regime's political and ethical rectitude.

In short, authoritarian politics is definitively coalitional. A dictator's fate hinges on the cohesion of his ruling coalition. On the one hand, some regimes have managed to construct remarkably durable ruling coalitions which have engendered "authoritarian leviathans" (Slater 2010). These formidably resilient and seemingly invulnerable dictatorships, such

[1] As Svolik (2012) notes, researchers historically tended to focus on the second problem Aristotle mentions. This was because popular challenges to authoritarian rule are vivid and (mostly) observable, whereas elite politics in opaque authoritarian states is harder to observe. Thus, disaggregating the 'ruling coalition' was seen, for a long time, as substantively less important than unpacking the 'problem of authoritarian control' and as methodologically intractable.

[2] Svolik (2012) defines the "ruling coalition" as the set of "individuals who support a dictator and, jointly with him, hold enough power to guarantee a regime's survival."

as Singapore and Malaysia, are ruled by highly cohesive "protection pacts" whose unity stems from the historic need for elites to come together to overcome endemic class uprisings against the government.[3] Generally speaking, ruling coalitions cohere for so long as the autocrat can reward them economically (Buena de Mesquita *et al.* 2003, Bellin 2004) or if they face a persistent common threat that requires their unity to overcome (Hechter & Brustein 1980, Slater 2010).

Yet, most ruling coalition arrangements are mercurial. As Slater (2010) observes, "elite collective action is as elusive as it is elemental."[4] Many ruling coalitions are evanescent: Svolik (2012) finds that 68% of the 303 dictators who lost power between 1946 and 2008 were ousted by a coup d'état, when the incumbent's perceived ability to threaten violence against political rivals is impaired. This is most likely to be the case in military coups, when the security forces (the only actors capable of meting out violence on the dictator's behalf) overthrow and replace the incumbent. To fortify ruling coalitions, therefore, many dictators voluntarily establish institutions such as authoritarian legislatures and political parties to act as devices which other elites can use to monitor his actions and compel stated courses of action (Svolik 2012, Boix & Svolik 2013, Gandhi *et al.* 2020).[5]

Thus, ruling coalitions are the fulcrum on which dictatorships rest and their cohesion determines leadership survival, overthrow, and turnover. What is often overlooked, however, is that authoritarian leaders are overthrown and replaced not only by fragmenting ruling coalitions but by the construction of new anti-incumbent coalitions (AICs) which coalesce to leverage their shared resources and political capital to overthrow the incumbent. Cognizant that dictators have multiple bases of support and potential sources of succor, dissidents align with like-minded actors for the same reasons as members of the security forces do when they defect: isolated defection is costly, and perhaps deathly, in authoritarian regimes.

I call them 'anti-incumbent' coalitions because their foundational objective is to overthrow the incumbent simpliciter. Other motives, such as installing democracy or taking power oneself, are extraneous.[6] In Dix's (1984) terms, AICs are "negative coalitions": groups united by their common rejection of a particular political outcome but displaying

[3] Slater (2010) defines "protection pacts" as "broad elite coalitions unified by shared support for heightened state power and tightened authoritarian controls as institutional bulwarks against continued or renewed mass unrest."

[4] Also see Brown (1993): "Elite cohesion thus constitutes a political imperative, but one which remains elusive."

[5] For analyses of authoritarian parties, see Brownlee (2007), Greene (2007), Magaloni (2006), and Smith (2005). On authoritarian legislatures, see Gandhi & Przeworski (2007) and Wright (2008).

[6] Although, Beissinger (2013) notes that the heterogeneity of preferences and ultimate aims amongst members of "rapidly convened negative coalition[s]" can usher in problems in the post-transition period including political deadlock, civil war, authoritarian backsliding, and governmental fragmentation.

divergent preferences on other important policy dimensions.[7] Thus, the defining feature of AICs is their singularity of purpose rather than participants' shared set of underlying preferences or motives (Lichbach 1995). In many cases, the fortunes of AICs and ruling coalitions are inversely related: as members of moribund ruling coalitions defect to or form AICs, coalitions against the incumbent grow stronger and more tempting to regime loyalists. Like ruling coalitions, AICs are fissiparous: the diverse aims of their members and the risk of discovery and punishment makes them presumptively unstable.

Their members can include any person, faction, or organization within the ruling coalition such as senior politicians and high-ranking officers in the coercive apparatus, as well as resistance groups, the formal political opposition, foreign governments, and non-governmental organizations. Taking all of the above into account, AICs can be defined as coalitions of at least two actors from separate political spheres explicitly united by their common goal of overthrowing an authoritarian incumbent. This concept is deliberately situated at a high level of abstraction to accommodate the variety of different actors who seek to overthrow dictators and their disparate reasons for wanting to do so.

5.3 The Coercive Apparatus and Anti-Incumbent Coalitions

As well as these defection networks within the coercive apparatus, AICs are likely to emerge between the coercive apparatus and other dissidents in the ruling coalition, political opposition, and international community. High-ranking officers are likely to understand that coordinating with the political opposition, disloyal regime insiders, and other powerful elites will give them valuable insight into the coming events and spark more extensive defection cascades. Certain officers might also be keen to extract benefits from opposition politicians who will soon occupy positions of power such as immunity for past crimes, assurances on their institution's future budget and status, and promotions. As Lee (2014) puts it, pacts "assuage the defecting elite that the "threat from below" will be contained and moderated, and that there will be guarantees extended to the elite (especially to the military), that their interests would be secured in the post-authoritarian setting."

On the other hand, inter-organizational defection networks can be initiated by outsiders to the coercive apparatus or by 'brokers' - dissident intermediaries who realize that multilateral defection will be more impactful than unilateral defection. In Chapters 3 and 4, I made the assumption that high-ranking security agents in the coercive apparatus appreciate the pivotal position they occupy during revolutions. It is similarly reasonable to assume that

[7] Beissinger (2013) defines "negative coalitions" as "a coalition displaying highly diverse preferences on most politically salient issues but united primarily by their common rejection of a particular outcome."

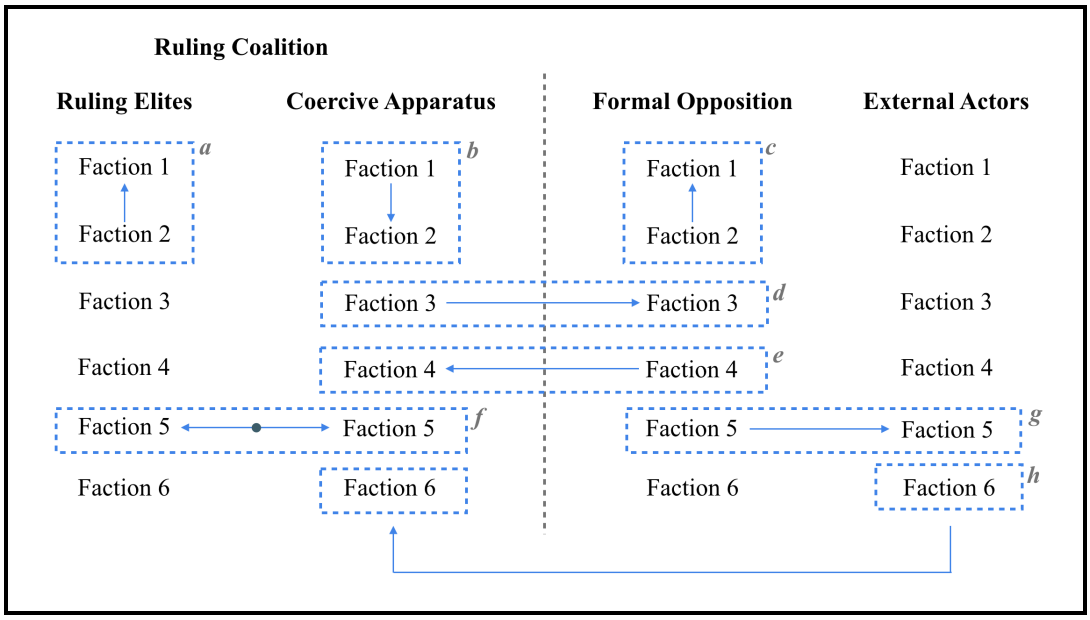


Figure 5.1: Different types of anti-incumbent coalition

the (domestic and international) political opposition and resistance groups, those who will be the victims of counter-revolutionary repression, also recognize the likelihood of repression. The centrality of the coercive apparatus to a regime's ruling coalition is not abstruse or obscure; it is self-evident to revolutionaries and elite defectors who grasp this fact with alacrity. Consequently, dissidents are usually keen to establish relations with the coercive apparatus in the pre-revolutionary period.

To clarify, Figure 5.1 illustrates eight stylized AICs (*a*-*h*). While *a*-*c* are intra-organizational, *d*-*h* are inter-organizational. The logic of how coalitions like *b* are formed is described in Chapters 3 and 4; this chapter describes how coalitions such as *d, e, f, and h* emerge. As mentioned above, inter-organizational coalitions can be initiated by either side: the directional arrows in Figure 5.1 indicate that the coercive apparatus initiated coalition *d*, the societal opposition initiated coalition *e*, a broker initiated coalition *f*, the formal opposition initiated coalition *g*, and external actors initiated *g*.

Thus, the same reasons that impel security agents to form defection networks also incentivize them to bring certain civilians into the fold. To minimize the risk of punishment if the revolution fails, rational security agents recognize that other members of the incumbent's ruling elite also need to defect. Just like when they build coalitions within the coercive apparatus, they use their reach and leverage to enlist support from their contacts in the ruling coalition and opposition: politicians, economic elites, opposition figures, and so on. Similarly, civilian actors recognize that insurrection will be futile without defanging the

incumbent's ruling coalition. Consequently, they use their connections and networking skills to build coalitions and extract assurances from important figures within the coercive apparatus. Thus, Mechanism 1 ('coalition-building') from the previous chapter can now be extended to reflect the fact that multiple parties both inside and outside the coercive apparatus have strong incentives to join forces:

> **M1.1:** First-movers within the coercive apparatus plan to defect by building coalitions of defectors with other security agents ('defection networks').
>
> **M1.2:** Dissidents within the coercive apparatus, societal opposition, and ruling coalition plan to defect by building inter-organizational anti-incumbent coalitions.

In addition to expanding their numbers, dissidents also think strategically about which individuals will be most impactful as defectors. The political opposition and ruling coalition are likely to seek out alliances with senior ranks who command historically loyal, large, or elite branches of the security forces. Dissidents in the coercive apparatus are likely to want to align with the leaders or parties with the best chances of holding high political office in the future since they will be able to repay defection with significant future benefits. Finally, all dissidents are likely to want to align with high profile members of the incumbent's ruling coalition with a track record of loyalty and whose position makes them indispensable to the dictator.

As in the previous chapter, defectors' best allies are those whose defection will create the most impressive public impacts. Generally speaking: the bigger they are, the harder they fall. Onlookers know the incumbent's days are numbered when former stalwarts and key allies start to fold. These revelations will have greatest impact when they come from well-known individuals who are perceived to possess penetrating insight into loyalties and the political situation. The goal is to create the impression that the incumbent's fall is inevitable by signalling that his ruling coalition is fracturing. All of this suggests that Mechanism 2 ('strategic framing') should be broadened to apply to multiple actors:

> **M2:** Dissidents within the coercive apparatus, ruling coalition, and societal opposition engage in strategic framing to persuade erstwhile loyalists to join the defection attempt during the revolutionary period.

It turns out that coalition-building and strategic framing are not exclusive to the coercive apparatus. Diverse participants in anti-incumbent coalitions share the same incentives to build far-reaching defection networks and promulgate their auspiciousness. While not all coalitions succeed in coopting factions of the coercive apparatus, civilian participants in revolutions realize that the sword is ultimately mightier than the protester. Forming

temporary negative coalitions with the coercive apparatus is one way of sheathing the sword.

5.4 The Emergence of Anti-Incumbent Coalitions

5.4.1 Opportunity Structures

The question of why different actors are motivated to form AICs is separate to the question of whether fully-fledged coalitions actually emerge. On the one hand, the opportunity structure that first-movers operate within determines their ability to form coalitions with external organizations and individuals. In particular, it will be difficult for security agents to reach out to dissident factions within the ruling coalition or wider society if the incumbent regime has already guaranteed their loyalty or quiescence. As mentioned before, certain 'authoritarian leviathans' such as Singapore and Malaysia are notorious for their steadfast "protection pacts" of unified political, military, economic, and cultural elites (Slater 2010). In other closed authoritarian regimes, such as the Kim dynasty's North Korea and the House of Saud's Saudi Arabia, civil resistance is forbidden by a range of legal, socio-cultural, and coercive measures which preclude coalition-building between the opposition and security forces.

These closed domestic opportunity structures militate against the construction of AICs. In some instances, the natural partner will simply be absent - as in the case of civil resisters in North Korea, much of China, and Saudi Arabia. In other cases, the prospective costs of coalescence will be prohibitive, outweighed by the regime's zero-tolerance approach to disloyalty and dissidence. More open domestic opportunity structures, by contrast, are more conducive to both the proliferation of dissident factions and the establishment of links between them. For instance, hybrid regimes that permit a minimal level of opposition in order to gain legitimacy and extract benefits from domestic and international actors (or because they are too weak to prevent it) create opportunity space for opposition actors to spring up and form alliances (Herbst 2001, Levitsky & Way 2010). In particular, this may lead to coalitions between formerly loyal elites, civil resisters, and the coercive apparatus: "where third parties withdraw existing support for a state, or actively try to undermine a state's capacity to maintain its monopoly on the use of force, opportunity space for insurgency expands" (Gledhill 2018; also see McAdam *et al.* 2001).

The opening of one opportunity structure may also prompt a similar easing in another. For instance, Lawson's (2015) analysis of repression and elite defection during Egypt's Arab Spring is instructive: "When widespread and large protests erupted in early-2011, Mubarak

was slow to react forcefully, promising both repression and concessions (e.g. that neither he nor his son would seek re-election). However, these contradictory actions served to splinter the coercive apparatus. Given the army and police's importance to the survival of the Mubarak regime, this encouraged other elites (mainly within his own party) to defect or desert." Similarly, dissidents "create opportunities, for their own supporters, for others, for parties and elites": "early risers" make claims on the regime that can be adopted by those with less daring and fewer resources (Tarrow 1998). Thus, the interdependence of opportunity structures means that seemingly small changes can result in drastic fluctuations in dissidents' ability to form coalitions.

The international opportunity structure is also vital to whether AICs materialize. In some cases, transnational organizations and foreign states have allied with or facilitated domestic actors to overthrow dictators. In March 2011, for instance, many Western nations and even the Arab League joined forces to enforce a no-fly zone over Libya to prevent outgoing dictator Muammar Gaddafi from bombing his own people (Alimi & Meyer 2011). Moreover, transnational advocacy networks foster relationships with domestic dissident groups to publicize their cause internationally and impose pressure on abusive regimes (Keck & Sikkink 1999).

On the other hand, transnational actors sometimes decline to ally with domestic groups and create closed opportunity structures. Human rights groups, for instance, are often forced by "donor dominance" to "follow the money" by covering high-profile, geographically proximate, and relatable issues (Murdie & Bhasin 2011). Foreign governments may evade moral imperatives to support dissident groups to protect their strategic interests. The Obama administration, for instance, declined to condemn the Bahraini crack-down during the Arab Spring because the United States' Fifth Fleet is based on Bahrain and because doing so could have drawn it into a conflict with Saudi Arabia (Fakhro 2016, Tansey 2016). International actors may even bolster incumbent regimes' ability to repress domestic challenges: Russia, Iran, and the Lebanese Hezbollah, for instance, provided life-saving material, human, diplomatic, and tactical support to Bashar al-Assad's beleaguered regime throughout the Syrian civil war (Alimi & Meyer 2011, Tansey 2016).

5.4.2 Mobilizational Resources

Another factor accounting for the emergence of inter-organizational coalitions are the mobilizational resources - reach and leverage - possessed by first-movers. In particular, coalitions are rare because of the absence of pre-existing connections between the societal opposition and the coercive apparatus - a failure of reach. Institutions like the military and secret

service are typically insular and inhabit sharply demarcated physical spaces such as barracks and other heavily guarded facilities. Without a willing and trusted fixer who can liaise with both sides without arousing suspicion, it is unlikely that the societal opposition can strike up talks with the coercive apparatus independently. Using the previous chapter's terminology, opposition figures have limited reach when it comes to initiating contact with the police, military, and secret service which precludes safe and effective coalition building.

The coercive apparatus should have less difficulty initiating coalitions with members of the ruling elite and the formal opposition. Top commanders are likely to be able to convene meetings with certain senior regime politicians and other members of the ruling coalition disguised as 'official business'. Moreover, the identities and whereabouts of opposition leaders and party headquarters are likely to be in the public domain. Coming from a position of relative weakness vis-à-vis the incumbent and ruling coalition, the opposition are also more likely to be open to negotiations with the coercive apparatus. However, dissident factions in the coercive apparatus might calculate that their defection alone will ensure the success of the revolution, in which case coalition-building with the opposition poses an unnecessary risk.

Coalition building can also be hindered by the parties' failure to agree acceptable terms of cooperation. On the one hand, pre-revolutionary coalition negotiations are fraught with commitment problems. If the revolution falters, either due to low turnout or strong loyalty in the coercive apparatus, dissidents within the coercive apparatus face strong incentives to go along with repressive orders or opt for low-level disobedience that allows them to avoid repression. New democratic leaders face similarly powerful pressures to renege on benefits they promised to their coalition partners in the coercive apparatus, especially state-sponsored immunity and institutional privileges that the newly enfranchised population would perceive as scandalous. These acute commitment problems can only be overcome by high levels of trust between the coalition partners or trust between the coalition partners and a mutual broker.

Even if the coalition partners trust each other, the terms that one partner is able to offer the other might be insufficient to induce defection. This is a failure of leverage. In some cases, strong alignment of interest or mutually shared antipathy for the incumbent between trusted associates might be enough to seal the agreement. In cases where members of the ruling elite and coercive apparatus need strong inducements to defect from the incumbent, the opposition may be unable or unwilling to offer the requisite level of compensation and prefer to take their chances without a formal coalition agreement.

5.5 Sub-Coalitional Revolutionary Politics

Fully-fledged anti-incumbent coalitions involving the coercive apparatus are the revolutionary gold standard. Yet, these coalitions are unlikely to emerge if potential partners have limited reach, leverage, or trust. Does this mean that interaction between the would-be partners ceases once and for all? In this section, I argue that failed coalitions metamorphose into 'sub-coalitional' political interactions which are less formal and resilient than their coalitional cousins. Without the ability to condition the security forces' behaviour through bargaining culminating in a coalition agreement, less powerful actors resort to other tactics to remould loyalties in the coercive apparatus to favour defection.

Sub-coalitional interactions between the coercive apparatus and the societal opposition are increasingly pursued by civil resistance groups. With less reach and leverage than official opposition politicians and parties to wield in coalition agreements with the coercive apparatus, even large resistance campaigns are forced to rely on more tacit understandings with the security forces, especially the police. In particular, the advent of non-violent resistance as an effective strategy for overthrowing dictators has given birth to a plethora of tactics that citizens can use to disarm and demotivate the security forces to carry out repressive orders. Amongst these tactics, fraternization receives the most attention. Repeated, non-violent encounters between the population and individuals within the security forces foster familiarity and communication between the two sides. In turn, this has a humanizing and individuating effect on each side's perception of the other: instead of seeing an amorphous collective enemy to be slain, the police and population begin to understand each other as individuals with common grievances and experiences. The creation of these solidaristic bonds engenders empathy, de-escalation, and possibly defection (Said 2012, Ketchley 2014).

Through fraternization, civil resisters can also learn about the level of discontent within the coercive apparatus and its key drivers, knowledge which they can then use to persuade the police and military to defect. They can also use insider knowledge to formulate specific policies which then appear in their manifestos and campaign slogans, thereby instantiating concrete benefits for security forces who defect. These measures indicate to security agents that they have something to gain by defecting and allowing the incumbent to fall, reducing their loyalty and defection thresholds. Sometimes, relationships with the police and military even become useful sources of information about the likely number of defectors. In turn, this information helps civil resisters, their political allies, and first-movers assess the loyalty distribution within the coercive apparatus and the associated risk of participating in the revolution.

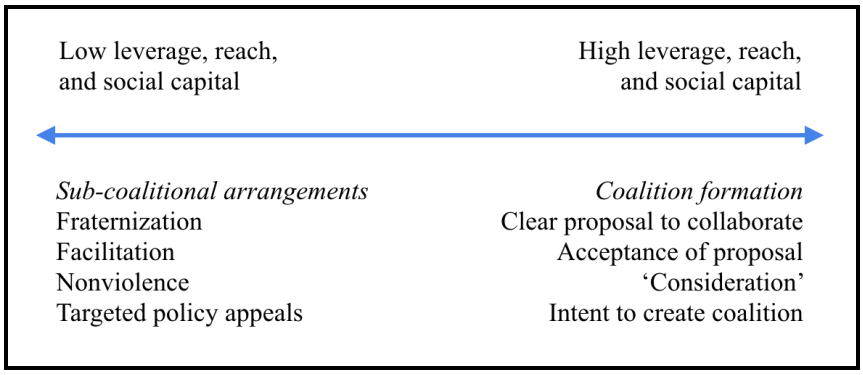


Figure 5.2: Coalition formation and failure

Civil resisters can also help the security forces do their jobs whilst avoiding bloodshed in the pre-revolutionary period. 'Facilitation' tactics involve activists proactively liaising with the police and intelligence services to inform them about key events such as marches and protests. For example, Otpor, the student resistance group in Serbia that worked to overthrow Slobodan Milošević, usually communicated details of the time and location of their rallies to the Serbian police. They also committed to keeping the protests non-violent meaning that the police could avoid deploying lethal force. In turn, the police would advise them about which streets they should avoid because they had elite riot police stationed on them. In some instances, protesters even physically defended police against belligerent football hooligans by forming human chains. Longstanding pragmatic relationships between the population and security forces increase trust and commitment between the two sides.

Nevertheless, persistent relations between the population and the security forces are not a panacea. After all, fraternization and facilitation are a reflection of coalition failure. Civil resisters are usually only able to fraternize with relatively junior individuals within the security forces. Moreover, the personnel readily accessible to ordinary citizens are policemen at protest events and police stations. The intelligence services and to a lesser extent the military are far harder to intermingle with. Conscript militaries are an exception since dense social and familial ties are likely to connect conscripted soldiers and the population at large, facilitating information transfer. Moreover, the effectiveness of fraternization tactics is not known until the revolutionary period. For protesters, this leaves the extent of defection uncertain and therefore raises the risk of repression.

5.6 Securing Loyalty: The Incumbent's Repertoire

Just as defectors and the incumbent's political opponents recognize the importance of defection for revolutions to succeed, non-democratic incumbents realize that loyalty is vital

to surviving an uprising. Even a relatively small number of gun-toting loyalists can be sufficient to disperse large crowds and buy the incumbent precious time to pledge reforms or enlist help from elsewhere. Incumbents, therefore, make active attempts to shore up loyalty amongst their historic allies within the coercive apparatus and devise ways of removing suspected defectors from revolutionary duties and locations.

Like defectors, the regime faces an asymmetric information problem: their insight into loyalties within the security forces is imperfect, especially if 'yes-men' pack the senior ranks who filter the information they pass up. If the revolution begins in earnest, incumbents (like defectors) have the opportunity to exaggerate their strength and the loyalty they retain. Even if their actual support is negligible, perceptions to the contrary may resolve the coordination problem in their favour. Hence, incumbents target three key groups within the coercive apparatus in the lead-up to revolutions: historic, trusted allies; the loyalty 'centre-ground' of ambivalent security agents; and those suspected of being disloyal.

As for loyalists whose fidelity has been proved time and again, incumbents seek to extract assurances that this fealty will stretch to brutal counter-revolutionary repression. On the one hand, the incumbent can convene meetings where he reminds acolytes that their post-regime fates are intertwined: the incumbent may have ordered past acts of repression, but theirs are the '*mains sales*' that carried it out. On the other hand, incumbents can rely on material incentives. As Croissant *et al.* (2018) point out, autocrats "have incentives to curry favours with the military and to promise to deliver political and material spoils if the military supports their side by cracking down on the protests." For instance, Slobodan Milošević's remuneration policy for the police paid bonuses to policemen who were on duty and meted out repression during protests which dwarfed the average policemen's monthly salary.

In addition, loyalists need to be deployed in situations where they can decisively quell rampant dissent. The prototypical revolution sees massive crowds amassed in large public squares with multiple points of access (e.g., Tahrir Square, Red Square, Tiananmen Square), wide and arterial avenues (e.g., Habib Bourguiba Avenue in Tunis), outside political buildings (e.g., the parliament), and at hated symbols of despotism (e.g., interior ministries, police stations, and the dictator's residence).[8] These locations act as 'focal points' during revolutions - natural places of assembly when chaos reigns. Critical mass, therefore, is most likely to be achieved in a few key sites which are usually all within the capital city. The

[8]See: M. Faleh, "How city spaces can be public places of protest or centres of state control." *The Conversation*, 03/10/2018.

incumbent's administration redeploys loyalists to these flash-points. These forces are often bolstered by extra-regional security forces brought from the dictator's strongholds such as their hometown.[9] By stationing proven loyalists in potential crucibles of revolutionary action, the regime tries to forestall its own death by numbers.

Conversely, the incumbent must also transfer suspected disloyalists away from critical locations to prevent them from being overrun. Often, these individuals and their units are transferred to peaceful rural areas during the revolution. This temporary strategic exile both removes the risk of unreliability in important revolutionary sites and reduces the risk of defection cascades. Dictators then try to replace them with proven stalwarts. Following massive protests in Belarus in October 2020, for instance, President Alexander Lukashenko appointed Ivan Kubrakov as his new interior minister following Kubrakov's merciless crackdown on demonstrators in Minsk while he was the city's head of police.[10] Three other Lukashenko votaries, including the former head of Belarus' notorious KGB secret police and the deputy interior minister, were assigned to key regional security positions to quell burgeoning dissident movements.[11]

In reality, though, it is not straightforward to engineer this personnel switch. For one, crack crowd-control units are usually smaller than regular security forces. Whilst they might be capable of shutting down smaller protest events, they cannot cover large swathes of the capital city. This means that incumbents are forced to rely on units with more questionable loyalty who are more likely to defect. Second, the proliferation of information-sharing technologies such as mobile and smart phones has made it easier for revolutionary protesters to reroute and regroup away from police units (Eltantawy & Wiest 2011). Third, the incumbent has imperfect information about loyalty within the coercive apparatus so may be unable to dispel all potential defectors.

Once the revolutionary period is underway, incumbents face exactly the same coordination problem as defectors. However, their strategic framing has the opposite objective: to prevent, rather than trigger, defection cascades. One strategy for aligning the whole coercive apparatus on remaining loyal is to make the top brass issue public statements confirming their continued loyalty. In Venezuela, for instance, Nicolás Maduro's generals offered their

[9]This measure may also increase the social distance between security forces and protesters, increasing the chances that the security forces will be willing to repress the protesters. For instance, Ne Win's Burmese government used this strategy to quash massive, nationwide demonstrations against its rule in late 1988 by stationing troops from remote parts of Burma in the capital city Rangoon (Chenoweth & Stephan 2011, Croissant *et al.* 2018).

[10]See: T. Balmforth, "Lukashenko shuts borders, shakes up security team to stamp out Belarus protests." *Reuters,* 29/10/2020.

[11]Ibid.



public support to Maduro several times during the attempted revolution in 2019.[12] Figure 5.3 shows Defense Minister Vladimir López flanked by Venezuelan generals declaring their support for Maduro on national television in the wake of Juan Guaido declaring himself the legitimate president.[13] The aim is to present potential defectors with a united and determined ruling coalition and a government that oozes strength and durability.

It is also essential for the regime to promulgate the impression that it is 'on top' of the situation. There are several dimensions to this. First, the government must communicate regularly and calmly with the population and elite allies. At the very least, this signals that the government still controls central communications infrastructure. The more impactful projection, though, is that they persist as a government that is seeking to re-introduce control. Communication implies an organized approach to containing and thwarting the revolution, suggesting that the central government is not in disarray and that the defection attempt is an insurgency rather than a government in waiting. When self-appointed president Juan Guaido tried to seize power from Nicolás Maduro on 30th April 2019, for instance, the government was quick to belittle the attempt by releasing a statement saying that it was "putting down a small coup attempt."[14]

By contrast, a government that falls silent or that issues inconsistent messages during the revolution plays into the defectors' narrative of state collapse and transition. In the

[12]See: C. Weddle, "Venezuelan generals pledge loyalty to Nicolas Maduro as leadership stand-off intensifies." *The Telegraph,* 24/01/2019.

[13]See: J. Wyss, "Venezuela's military pledges allegiance to Maduro amid political crisis." *Miami Herald,* 24/01/2019.

[14]See: J. O'Donnell, "Guaidó Is Stumbling Toward a Coup." *Foreign Policy,* 30/04/2019.

overthrow of Tunisian president Ben Ali in 2011, for instance, the regime failed to communicate effectively with the population and sent inconsistent and chaotic messages to military elites (Gallopin 2019). The result was that the opposition could seize upon Ben Ali's silence to spread a credible message of inevitable regime change. Similar scenes occurred in Belarus in late 2020 after Alexander Lukashenko made a series of ill-judged manoeuvres when dealing with the protests following a fraudulent election in August. His main opponent, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, wasted no time in highlighting Lukashenko's missteps: "The regime destroys itself. Both the closure of the borders and the next appointments are signals of a weakening of his power. He makes inconsistent decisions because he is in a panic," she said in a statement.[15]

5.7 The Dynamics of Loyalty

The loyalty distribution, therefore, is not static. Loyalties, as the introduction argued, are fluid and fungible. Before and during revolutions, multiple actors including potential defectors, the political opposition, and incumbents attempt to fortify a network of allies, persuade the loyalty centre-ground, and hollow out their suspected opponents. As Lawson (2019) writes, revolutionary trajectories are determined by the interplay of two crucial factors: "first, the ability of a state to limit fracture and maintain the loyalty of the coercive apparatus as the revolution develops; and second, the capacity of the opposition to generate a cohesive revolutionary movement through effective leadership and social technologies that mobilize - and unite - diverse coalitions." In turn, this suggests that there are three possible ways in which loyalties can evolve in revolutionary episodes.

We can illustrate these trajectories graphically using loyalty distributions. L_1 in Figure 5.4 shows a generic unimodal loyalty distribution for the coercive apparatus. L_2 ('defection cascade') shows the situation where defectors and the political opposition manage to engineer a shift in the loyalty distribution. By coopting loyalists into defection networks and promulgating powerful strategic frames, they can positively skew the loyalty distribution so there is a large mass of disloyal agents. This increases the likelihood of a seamless defection cascade and regime change. L_4, by contrast, shows the situation where the incumbent has successfully shored up loyalty in the coercive apparatus and disseminated convincing frames of resilient government. Ambivalent types are now generally more loyal than before the pre-revolutionary period and the number of highly disloyal individuals has been cut. In this situation, an unfettered crackdown is likely and defection cascades are likely to falter.

[15] See: T. Balmforth, "Lukashenko shuts borders, shakes up security team to stamp out Belarus protests." *Reuters,* 29/10/2020.

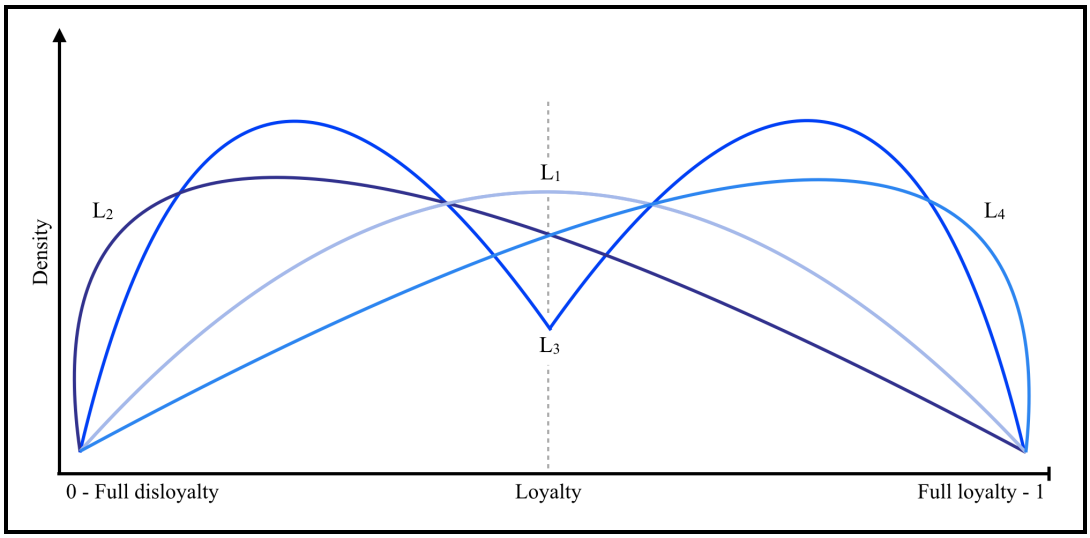


Figure 5.4: Loyalty trajectories during revolutions

L_3 illustrates a third alternative: polarization. In the pre-revolutionary period, both the incumbent and defectors are likely to be able to add to their ranks through coalition-building. In this situation, civil war and infighting within the coercive apparatus is likely, especially if the two sides are roughly evenly matched in terms of military capacity as defection cascades are only likely to falter once a sizeable portion of the security forces have already defected. In Syria, for instance, much of the Syrian Army's Sunni rank-and-file defected after the Arab Spring demonstrations. However, the cascade was halted because the units packed with Bashar al-Assad's fellow Alawites (by this point, 90% of generals in the Syrian Army were Alawite) remained loyal.

5.8 Summary

Security agents do not only try to form anti-incumbent coalitions with other security agents. Sometimes, they also seek to enlist members of the political opposition, the ruling coalition, and external actors. Where formal coalitions cannot emerge due to shortages of leverage, reach, or trust, sub-coalitional arrangements may emerge. Consequently, on the dawn of the revolutionary period there is no longer a clear division between the incumbent's ruling coalition and the opposition. Rather, political alignments of varying formality form a multi-lateral nexus of opposition, given a sufficiently open political opportunity structure. In the pre-revolutionary period, opposition leaders and regime insiders communicate, negotiate, and bargain over the terms of these alignments. They coalesce as uneasy 'negative coalitions': groups united by their shared desire to overthrow the incumbent. Meanwhile, the

regime seeks to shore up its position and intensify the dissidents' collective action problem by incentivizing loyalty and neutralizing pockets of disloyalty.

Empirics: Serbia, 2000

Chapter 6

Methodology: Ethics and Interviews

"Welcome to the land where logic stops!"

Jovan Petronijević
My Serbian fixer, 2019

The thesis now takes an empirical turn. In the following chapters, I seek to substantiate the theory using evidence from an in-depth single case study of the overthrow of Serbian dictator Slobodan Milošević on 5th October 2000. By October 2000, Milošević had been the "unrivalled autocratic leader of Serbia and then of the new shrunken Yugoslavia for more than ten years" (Roberts 2016). On 5th October, however, hundreds of thousands of Serbs flocked to Belgrade from every corner of Serbia to force Milošević out. They arrived in five enormous cavalcades which easily passed through the flimsy police barricades erected by the government. Despite the government issuing numerous (and murderous) orders for the police and military to repel the crowds, only two people died that day: a pensioner who died from a heart attack and another who was run over by a truck (Bujošević & Radovanović 2003). This remarkable absence of death was down, in part, to defection: key members of the coercive apparatus, usually willing to mete out violence on Milošević's whim, either planned to avoid bloody repression or outright defected before the revolution began.

Between April 2019 and September 2019, I spent three months in Serbia and conducted 45 interviews with senior politicians and opposition leaders, high-ranking members of the coercive apparatus, rank-and-file policemen, British intelligence officers, American and British diplomats, NGO directors, and both British and Serbian journalists. All of my interviewees were active in these professions in October 2000 and most had been working for over a decade by the turn of the millennium. I travelled through the entire country to

meet these individuals, but mainly held the interviews in the cities of Belgrade, Novi Sad, and Arandjelovac. Together with multiple Serbian artefacts such as documentaries, police radio records, published accounts of the revolution, and news articles, these testimonies uncovered new information about the Serbian transition and vindicated some more speculative accounts of the events. In this chapter, I explain how I obtained and conducted my interviews and how I subsequently processed the data.

6.1 Tracing Defection Processes

6.1.1 Process Tracing

The previous chapters arrived at several axioms, mechanisms, and hypotheses that together comprise a new way of understanding defection. All of them involve knowing highly personal details about the individuals who consider initiating defection: their perceptions, their preferences, and the nature and goals of their actions around the time of the revolution. The only ways to directly capture these individual-level observations is by interviewing key participants or observers in revolutions, or by reading their memoirs and other secondary materials. Given the complexity of the process I laid out, one also needs to adopt a rigorous and granular way of sequencing these observations to ensure that the resultant empirical narrative amounts to persuasive causal explanation.

The process tracing method meets these methodological desiderata. Process tracing "attempts to identify the intervening causal process - the causal chain and causal mechanism - between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable" (George & Bennett 2005). It works by generating multiple 'causal process observations' (CPOs) within a case and linking them in such a way that causally connects the input variable to a particular outcome. Collier and Brady (2004) define a CPO as an "insight or piece of data that provides information about context, process or mechanism, and that contributes distinctive leverage in causal inference." In contrast to data-set observations (DSOs), which are the type of data that would populate a rectangular data-set, CPOs may be able to provide standalone probative force or even 'smoking gun' evidence that a process occurred in the theorized manner (Brady & Collier 2004). Thus, the "burden of proof for a causal process observation is somewhat higher than for a data-set observation" since CPOs are themselves constitutive of good causal explanation (Martin 2013).

Thus, process tracing essentially aims to increase the inferential leverage of low-n studies by proposing and identifying empirical events that are themselves strong signifiers that

the underlying theory holds.[1] I use the word 'event' loosely here to mean any aspect of the state of the world that is germane to the theory at hand, including perceptions and decision-making processes, individual and collective action, and environmental shocks. Practitioners of process tracing must also have a strong focus on sequencing and mechanisms: the particular order and ways in which nodes in the causal chain affect each other. That is, process tracing should be grounded in detailed narratives that scrupulously reconstruct the ecology of events that led to an outcome (Laitin 2002, George & Bennett 2005).

6.1.2 Empirical Signifiers of Defection

I will now list exemplary CPOs for all of the axioms, mechanisms, and theses established in the previous chapters to guide the empirical work to come. The axiom states that some security agents foresee the possibility of revolution and repressive orders before the onset of revolution. This has several empirical signifiers:

> **CPO-A1:** Actors within the coercive apparatus and the opposition explicitly or implicitly recognize the prospect of revolution in conversations, written documents, or proclamations at the time.

The first mechanism states that first-movers plan for defection by building coalitions of defectors. The CPOs of this mechanism are as follows:

> **CPO-M1:** Actors within the coercive apparatus and the opposition secretly contact suspected sympathizers and seek to bring these and other influential figures into the defection network. To bind these coalitions together, they might issue inducements and/or threats to those they reach out to and engage in bargaining over the terms of joining the coalition.

The second mechanism states that first-movers engage in strategic framing to persuade erstwhile loyalists to join the defection attempt. The CPOs of this mechanism are as follows:

> **CPO-M2:** There is evidence that actors within the coercive apparatus and the opposition think explicitly about how to present the defection attempt to citizens and the coercive apparatus. For example, first-movers might plan how to broadcast the defection attempt using communications infrastructure such as transmission stations; defect in symbolic, political, and public places such as parliament buildings and the presidential palace; enlist well-known and historically loyal individuals

[1] Martin (2013) offers a similar summary: at the heart of process tracing is the "ambition to observe causal processes: direct evidence of the proverbial smoking gun can convince us that a given cause has had its expected effect."

and units; sequence defections to create the appearance of a cascade; and exaggerate their chances of success to onlookers.

The third mechanism states that after the creation of defection networks and strategic framing efforts, the remainder of the coercive apparatus tries to collectively align on either defection of loyalty. The CPOs of this final mechanism are as follows:

> **CPO-M3:** There is evidence that remaining members of the coercive apparatus encounter difficulty forecasting the behaviour of their colleagues during the revolution, initially perceive the revolution as open-ended, recognize the costs of isolation (e.g., civil war, infighting within the coercive apparatus, post-revolutionary recrimination), and attempt to align with the perceived majority of security agents regardless of their positional preferences.

Finally, the five theses can be vindicated by the following CPOs:

> **CPO-H1:** Defectors are aided in their rebellion by privileges attached to more senior ranks such as broad professional networks, increased ability to persuade others to join defection attempts, positional prerogatives like the right to convene meetings, and control over large combat units.
>
> **CPO-H2:** First-movers defect once they possess knowledge that a critical mass of key figures in the coercive apparatus harbour grievances against the incumbent and/or the intention to defect.
>
> **CPO-H3:** First-movers are deterred from defecting by the knowledge that large numbers of loyal security agents are still willing to defend the incumbent.
>
> **CPO-H4:** First-movers acknowledge that the historic penalties for disloyalty or the incumbent's general reputation for brutality deter them from defecting.
>
> **CPO-H5:** First-movers express distaste for implementing repressive orders or report a lack of commitment to keeping the incumbent in power by violent means.

6.2 Case Selection: Milošević's Serbia

As Chapter 2 mentioned, the literature on security force defections contains two problematic selection biases. Geographically, it overwhelmingly focuses on the 'Arab Spring' states in the MENA region which were "extraordinarily" and "singularly" authoritarian until they fell (Bellin 2012). Organizationally, researchers tend to focus exclusively on the military on the assumption that the military has a greater ability to suppress uprisings than other

branches of the coercive apparatus. I also argued that much of the literature analyzes defection using a 'birds-eye' approach that struggle to arbitrate between the different incentives that individuals may have to defect. Relying on high-level, aggregated data makes it almost impossible to reconstruct the defection decision in all its complexity. Consequently, this dearth of empirical leverage has usually led to broad-brush theories that lack crucial 'smoking gun' evidence and explicit attempts to delineate the defection decision and process.

Empirically, Serbia helps to address these shortcomings in the literature. On the one hand, Serbia under Milošević was not a stable bastion of authoritarianism. Rather, it was an archetypal 'competitive authoritarian' regime which saw Milošević's Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) gradually lose power over the 1990s. It became in embroiled in three egregious wars in Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo, none of which Serbia definitively won. As a result of these wars, Serbia also spent the majority of the 1990s completely destitute and was forced to endure two bouts of hyperinflation and crippling UN sanctions that led to years-long shortages of vital goods (Roberts 2016). Whilst many analysts have observed the MENA 'social contract' in which dictators exchanged material security for citizens' quiescence (e.g., Polk 2013), the complete opposite holds for Serbia under Milošević and the SPS: citizens tolerated skyrocketing deprivation alongside dictatorship.

Moreover, Serbia is socially homogeneous. There are no tribal or deep ethnic cleavages in Serbia, though a small percentage of the population (12%) speak a non-Serbian language such as Hungarian, Bosnian, or Romani.[2] Whilst some Croats and Bosnians live in Serbia, this is a legacy of Tito's policy to intermix the population of the former Yugoslavia to foster a pan-Yugoslav identity. Given Serbia's homogeneity, Milošević was not able to stack his coercive apparatus in the same way that dictators in the MENA region could. Instead, he relied on institutional favouritism, alternately favouring the police and military over the other (Edmunds 2008). He also appointed several people from his hometown of Požarevac to strategic positions within the government. Vlajko Stojiljković, for instance, was hopelessly underqualified to be the Minister of the Interior but Milošević lost no sleep over appointing his childhood friend to the government.

On the other hand, key figures from *all* parts of the Serbian coercive apparatus decided to defect on 5th October. The fact that certain senior officers in the police, military, intelligence services, and special forces defecting from Milošević, and that any one of their organizations had the capacity to be spoilers, highlights the importance of the loyalty of each branch of the coercive apparatus - not just the military. Whilst Milošević certainly viewed the army as his protector of last resort, ordering the Chief of Staff General Nebojša

[2]Source: CIA World Factbook, Serbia entry. Accessed: 25/03/2020.

Pavković to quell the uprising multiple times on 5th October, Pavković knew this would have engaged the military against the special forces and the police. The Serbian revolution demonstrates that the behaviour of the military depends on the loyalty of other parts of the coercive apparatus and *a fortiori* the significance of loyalty in the police, special forces, and intelligence services to both revolutionary outcomes and violence.

Finally, the Serbian revolution took place more than twenty years ago. From the outset, I hoped that this would mean that many participants and observers in the revolutions would now feel more comfortable talking candidly about their experiences in a democratic setting. As Ahram and Goode (2016) note, "studying fallen or defeated authoritarian regimes is far easier" not only from a researcher safety standpoint but also because "former elites may be less inhibited and citizens may be less likely to conceal their preferences concerning the prior regime in surveys and interviews." All stripes of non-democratic regimes create formal and informal prohibitions on free speech which influence the questions researchers can and do ask, not to mention the answers respondents feel comfortable giving (Loyle 2016). Moreover, dictatorships specialize in generating misinformation; researchers operating in post-authoritarian settings have a better chance of parsing propaganda from fact (Ahram 2016, Barros 2016).[3]

Many interviewees told me that they wouldn't have discussed the revolution with a Western researcher until recently. In Serbia, the narrative of 5th October is contested and controversial. In particular, many Serbs nationalists dispute a version of the revolutionary narrative that attributes a leading role to foreign intelligence services, especially Britain and the United States, who funded prominent resistance movements such as Otpor in the late 1990s and pressurized Milošević stalwarts to abandon him.[4] Many Serbs, therefore, would previously have interpreted an interview with me as lending an 'insider voice' and credibility to this version of the revolutionary narrative. The passage of time, however, has reduced the prominence of 5th October in Serbian politics, which made people more willing to talk to foreign researchers.

[3]Most research on *successful* defection attempts will, of course, take place in post-authoritarian settings. Conversely, research on failed defection attempts is likely to be hindered by continued authoritarianism and the barriers to research that this creates.

[4]Tellingly, Otpor leaders were concerned about the impact this funding would have on their image at the time and subsequently erected a Chinese wall around its financial affairs within the Otpor leadership (Elite Interview #30, Milja Jovanović. Founding member and one of twelve leaders of Otpor student resistance group). Consequently, only a small portion of the 12 Otpor leaders knew where the organization's money came from so they couldn't reveal any details if they were interrogated by the police.

6.3 Interviews

Quantitative data on defection is sparse. The Nonviolent and Violent Campaigns and Outcomes Dataset (NAVCO, Chenoweth *et al.* 2017) is the best dataset we have. It lists instances of security force defections in response to violent and nonviolent resistance campaigns between 1900 and 2013. However, its compilers describe it as "aggregate-level data" and, in any case, the focus of the dataset are the resistance campaigns, not the minutiae of defection. Thus, in order to unpack how defection episodes unfold, researchers must turn to qualitative methods. Amongst this range of technologies, interviews with key actors (both participants and knowledgeable non-participants) are most promising. As Bates *et al.* (1998) note, interviews allow researchers to "construct analytic narratives to reveal the underlying rational choice games that structure incentives and produce action." In other words, interviews offer a partial window into how actors within defection processes perceived, behaved, and responded to those processes. When combined with other portals into individuals' thought processes and actions, such as memoirs, press interviews, archives, and descriptive accounts, interviews can become a powerful and accurate window into all kinds of political processes.

6.3.1 Identification Strategy

Many of my 'Western' interviewees were relatively easy to find and initiate contact with whilst I was beginning my research from the UK. My very first interviewees were suggested to me by a former PhD student at Oxford who I met in Belgrade in early April 2019. Sir Ivor Roberts, for example, the former British ambassador to Serbia from 1993 until 1997, is an Oxford resident so we met at the Blackwell's bookshop on Broad Street, Oxford and spoke there. Likewise, Charles Crawford, the former director for Balkan Affairs at the Foreign Office, invited me to his house in the Cotswolds to talk. These settings were a far cry from the Belgrade taverns and *rostilj* ('grill restaurants') that I came to frequent later that year for interviews. The American diplomats I spoke with - William Montgomery, Jim Swigert, Jim O'Brien, and others - were easily found via LinkedIn or their own personal websites, and I held these interviews over Skype or WhatsApp calls.

At this stage, I used a combination of 'purposive' and 'snowball' methods to identify and contact interviewees. Tansey (2007) defines 'purposive' sampling as where the researcher's knowledge of the topic informs the composition of the sample.[5] Snowballing, by contrast,

[5]More broadly, Lynch (2013) points out that purposive sampling describes any sampling strategy that involves selecting elements of a population according to specific characteristics deemed relevant to the analysis.

is where the researcher finds new interviewees through his existing interviewees until he accumulates sufficient data.[6] As Tansey (2007) suggests, snowballing is "particularly suitable when the population of interest is not fully visible and when compiling a list of the population poses difficulties for the researcher." Thus, I initially used my knowledge of the Serbian revolution to identify my first set of interviewees. Subsequently, each interviewee connected me with several more, vouched for me and my integrity as a researcher, and passed on private contact details that made direct communication easier. I relied on snowballing to lead me to important actors or observers in the revolution whose accounts had been overlooked in previous analyses, such as Goran Matić, Milošević's Federal Minister of Information.

For my main spell in Serbia in July and August 2019, I made contact with three fixers. The first, Jovan Petronijević, a lecturer and well-connected figure in his hometown of Arandjelovac, would help me to find rank-and-file police officers to interview. The second, Zoran Kusovac, was a veteran Radio Television Belgrade (RTB) and Sky News journalist, whose list of contacts gave me access to a diverse cross-section of Serbia's elite from 2000. The third, Jakša Šćekić, another well-known RTB and Sky News television journalist, helped me to compile a list of people who would be helpful to talk to and connected me with some of the more obscure names on the list. In their respective circles, Jovan, Zoran, and Jakša had enormous reach and I continue to be amazed at how easily they pulled strings to secure interviews for me.

All of the interviews were one-to-one and semi-structured, apart from a few suspicious and skittish interviewees who requested structured questions.[7] Otherwise, I chose the semi-structured format because some Serbs are reluctant to discuss their role in the revolution in great depth with interviewers, particularly Westerners.[8] Following Kapiszewski *et al.* (2015), working upwards from a set of relatively uncontroversial but important questions both allowed me to collect basic material from each interviewee and gave me the option, if I

[6] Snowballing can also be referred to as 'chain referral sampling' and 'respondent driven sampling' (Lynch 2013).

[7] Wood (2006) defines semi-structured interviews as where the interviewer asks "open-ended questions from a prepared list and pursued topics in depth as seemed appropriate and relevant."

[8] This is for multiple reasons. First, since the NATO bombardment of Serbia in 1999 in a bid to force the Serbs to withdraw from Kosovo, many Serbs have been hostile to Westerners - particularly the British and Americans who spearheaded the bombardment. Incidentally, it didn't help that I was conducting my interviews during the exact months of Serbia's 20th anniversary of the bombardment. Second, many Serbs reject a prevalent interpretation of the 5th October revolution as caused primarily by liberal democratic governments in the West. Some interviewees would have therefore been reluctant to give ammunition to a Western researcher who might peddle this view. Third, the police officers and military officers I spoke to lived the majority of their life under either Tito or Milošević's dictatorship, when speaking out of turn could be cause for the government besmirching you in government-run news outlets (i.e. almost all news media). My fixers told me that this ingrained aversion to candid conversation was most certainly a vestige of decades of authoritarianism (however 'benevolent') in Serbia.

sensed the interviewee was comfortable, to broach more personal or sensitive material (Martin 2013). Some interviews organically became more 'oral histories' than semi-structured, especially if I met certain individuals multiple times and allowed the discussion to become more conversational - partly to reflect our evolving relationship but also to elicit more personal material.

6.3.2 Key Sources of Bias

Over the course of my interviews, I became aware of three biases. First, a 'survivor bias' plagues any work that seeks to study the Serbian revolution. Many of the key individuals described in the coming pages died before I started interviewing, either of natural causes or assassination. In particular, the commander of the Belgrade Police Brigade, Boško Buha, and the first prime minister of Serbia after Milošević was overthrown, Zoran Djindjić, were assassinated in June 2002 and March 2003 respectively. In addition, the Minister of the Interior in October 2000 who was responsible for the regime's maladroit response to the revolution, Vlajko Stojiljković, committed suicide on the steps of the Serbian Parliament in April 2002. Crucially, Slobodan Miloševic himself died in March 2006 and his wife, confidante, and political ally Mirjana Marković died in April 2019. As much as possible, I tried to understand these actors' tales through their living friends and relatives and via the reputable written and video sources that refer to them. In so doing, I was careful to filter out any attempts to sanitize the records of the deceased individuals by triangulating these testimonies with other types of evidence.

Second, there was an 'inaccessibility bias'. Many key participants in the overthrow of Milošević were subsequently found guilty of crimes against humanity and war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) at The Hague. General Nebojša Pavković, for instance, the Chief of Staff of the Yugoslav Army between February 2000 and June 2002, is now serving a 22-year prison sentence in Finland. Similarly, the head of Serbian State Security from 1992 to 1998, Jovica Stanišić, has been under effective house arrest since 2017. And before he could be put on trial for war crimes, Milorad 'Legija' Ulemek, the commander of the notorious Special Operations Unit, is now serving an 137-year sentence in a prison near Belgrade. On October 5th, Pavković, Stanišić, and Ulemek were three of five pivotal figures in the coercive apparatus. The impossibility of interviewing them directly is, therefore, potentially a major lacuna in the account.

Third, some interviewees gave self-aggrandizing or speculative accounts. The 5th October revolution spawned multiple myths that many Serbs have now absorbed as fact. For instance, a former army colonel I spoke to was convinced that Milošević ordered General

Pavković to bombard the Beogradjanka building, the tallest in Belgrade, on the night of October 5/6th so that a state of emergency could be declared. Whilst a small number of people share this view, there is no definitive corroborative evidence that this order was actually given. It is also difficult to reconstruct a logical train of thought that would see Milošević as benefiting from such a drastic and lethal course of action. The army colonel, however, did not present this nuanced view; he spoke as if the order to bomb the Beograanka was a statement of fact. Others, who I knew from more trusted sources to have had peripheral roles in the events, attributed greater weight to their actions than they actually had.

Inevitably, these three biases created distortions and lacunae in the causal narrative that emerged from the interviews. I sought to minimize these gaps in several ways. First, I omitted material that I could not triangulate between at least two credible interviewees. This resulted in dropping a raft of events, conversations, actions, and many other potentially relevant causal nodes that I could not verify.[9] I would only bend this precept if I met three or more times with the same individual and the critical details of their story remained exactly the same in each meeting: the names of key actors, locations, and chronology. Sometimes, interviewees emailed me afterwards with further information that vindicated the evidence they had supplied in the interview. In these cases, I would carefully weigh the case for including their evidence. Often, my fixers were able to help me to decide whether to include certain pieces of evidence, since they had a better sense than I did of each interviewee's credibility.

Second, I utilized secondary materials as an alternative way of cross-checking interview evidence. As Martin (2013) notes, "approaching the same question using different types of data also can serve to increase the researcher's confidence in the reliability and validity of her data." For instance, Bujošević and Radovanović (2003) use Serbian police radio records to construct a detailed chronology of the revolution from the 3rd October to 6th October 2000 which I used to cross-check the interviewees' portrayal of events. I also used journalistic evidence from the archives of Serbian periodical *Vreme* which gave me access to personal interviews with deceased elite figures that appeared in print. These offered a valuable window into the perceptions and mindset of key individuals around 5th October 2000, pending all the usual caveats about interviews that appear in the press. Given his death in 2003, I relied particularly heavily on a long interview between a *Vreme* journalist and Zoran Djindjić in which he appears to speak candidly about the lead-up to

[9]It is worth noting that I had several important corroborative interviews set up for late-March 2020 but my travel to Serbia was prevented by the coronavirus pandemic. Unfortunately, I do not know whether I will be able to return to Serbia to complete these interviews and many of my interviewees are too skittish to use WhatsApp or Skype calls.

5th October. Finally, I used several reputable documentaries that describe the course of events and obtained invaluable interviews with key figures. Two documentaries I referred to frequently were *Bringing Down a Dictator* and *Konačni Obračun* (*The Final Cut*) which both contain excerpts from interviews with Zoran Djindjić, other politicians, Otpor leaders, and journalists who were active in 2000.

6.3.3 The Sample Frame

Despite the steps taken to mitigate bias, my sample frame of interviews obviously cannot meet the gold standard that Tansey (2007) identifies for process tracing as "the most important political players who have participated in the political events being studied." As mentioned above, many of the key participants in the Serbian revolution are dead or inaccessible to researchers. Therefore, I tried to recreate these actors' accounts by modifying my sampling frame to those who knew and interacted closely with them (Loyle 2016). Goran Matić, for instance, the Federal Minister for Information under Milošević until October 2000, was able to feed me information about his friend General Nebojša Pavković's mindset and actions around the time of the revolution. Similarly, another senior Yugoslav Left (JUL) politician close to Milošević and Mirjana Marković was able to tell me their state of mind before and during the revolution.[10] These interviews ameliorated the blindspots left by the deceased and imprisoned.

This strategy also introduced a reliance on the close associates of the key players. For instance, readers will notice that certain policemen from Belgrade feature heavily in Chapter 7, Goran Matić is the primary source in Chapter 8, and testimonies from Goran Matić, another senior JUL politician, and British intelligence officers underpin Chapter 9. Yet, this reliance follows from the nature of the events: very few people are privy to accurate details about these defection networks and meetings which, in any case, were very intimate affairs. Both Matić and his colleague in JUL were optimally positioned within the regime to source intelligence on the events described in Chapters 8 and 9. Their ability to relay reliable information was corroborated by several Otpor leaders who I spoke to, who had been in contact with them before Milošević's overthrow. In particular, they told me they had access to "very exclusive political information" and were "very informed about the police

[10]The Yugoslav Left, or JUL (*Jugoslovenska Levica*) as it was known in Serbia, was Marković's own political party. JUL always formed a coalition with Milošević's SPS despite being extremely unpopular and was able to occupy seats in the Serbian parliament because the SPS always surrendered some of their seats to unelected JUL officials. The result was that the political team around Milošević was composed of SPS and JUL party members.



and army."[11] Former Otpor leaders ostensibly have little to gain by sponsoring Matić and the other JUL politician, suggesting that they are credible sources.

Two other sampling restrictions are worth stating at the outset. First, my sample is composed mainly of elite actors who held senior positions in the coercive apparatus, government, opposition, or journalism in 2000. My access to rank-and-file individuals in the police, military, and intelligence services was minimal, apart from three meetings with former policemen from Arandjelovac. One of my original aims for this thesis was actually to correct what I saw as an elite bias in existing studies of defection. In fact, through the few rank-and-file interviews I conducted and the elite interviews, I realized how little direct impact non-elite figures had on the Serbian revolution. Their impact, as the theory predicts, was indirect: elite actors took their subordinates' sentiments into account when making decisions about defection. I am not aware of many ordinary police officers or soldiers disobeying orders on 5th October, apart from those at roadblocks who let convoys of protesters pass through. The rank-and-file's experience of the Serbian revolution is undoubtedly interesting, but I am not convinced that any rank-and-file actions were significant in the defection.

[11] Elite Interview #40: Ivan Andrić. One of twelve leaders of Otpor and its Head of Marketing.

Second, snowballing does not guarantee that the sample one ends up with is representative. Indeed, if interviewees refer one another then it is likely that many will view the world through a similar lens, creating an interviewee 'echo chamber' (Bleich & Pekkanen 2013). However, I don't view this as a serious threat to internal validity for two reasons. First, I sought interviewees who had held positions across multiple different organizations which gave them varied perspectives on the revolution and distinct experiences of the events. As Bleich and Pekkanen (2013) note, drawing on "all classes and types of actors relevant to the research project helps ensure that researchers receive balanced information from a wide variety of perspectives." Second, I worked with three separate fixers who were able to suggest and connect me with different individuals to the others.

6.4 Ethics, Consent, and Attribution

6.4.1 Consent

First, it was important to determine the right way to obtain informed consent from my interviewees. Although I prepared a paper-copy of the consent form in Serbian, I quickly realized that written consent was unsuitable for the individuals I was talking to. Many were inveterate cynics and highly suspicious and others revealed information that they didn't want traced back to them. For the interviewees, written consent was a pointless paper trail that could come back to bite them at any time. Thus, I moved to a no less rigorous but more informal means of obtaining consent. I asked my fixers to prime the interviewees on my research interests and the questions I would ask. This gave them an easy way out at the outset: if they didn't like the questions, they could drop out of the study immediately. However, I am not aware that any people dropped out at this stage. Once the interview started, I would ask again whether the person was comfortable talking about the Serbian revolution and told them they could opt out of any questions at any time. Finally, I gave them the option of being named or anonymized in my records and the final thesis.

Many of my interlocutors were veteran interviewees or experienced political operators and set out their terms of consent sometimes before I had broached the subject myself. I stored each interview transcript under the name of the interviewee if they had given their consent, or under a randomly generated code if they hadn't. The document containing the name-code key is encrypted on an external hard drive in my possession. Thus, none of the anonymous interviewees will be identifiable without this document. This was especially important for certain political figures who provided me with insider information that could be obviously attributed to them through the position they held at the time.

6.4.2 Location Sensitivity

The most important point of social difference between myself and my interlocutors was my nationality. Sometimes, I deliberately held interviews in remote or obscure locations so that the interviewees wouldn't be seen talking to a Westerner. This was mainly necessary for the interviews with rank-and-file policemen in Arandjelovac, a very small city around 40 miles south of Belgrade, who wanted to keep their interaction with me separate from their social network. Cognizant of the social costs our interviewees could incur if they were caught speaking to a British researcher, Jovan and I decided to take them to dinner one by one at a rural restaurant just outside Arandjelovac (Restaurant 'Grb') where there was little chance of being observed.[12] It was clear from other chance interactions that I had with the policemen that this was a wise precaution. On two subsequent occasions, we ran into each other around Arandjelovac and their greetings were furtive and brusque, and they absconded as soon as possible. For most interviews, however, I followed Loyle's (2016) advice by asking interviewees to pick the location that suited them best - and mostly, they picked public spaces such as convenient bars and cafes close to where they lived.

6.4.3 Post-Interview Contact

Two key sources of power that researchers have over their interviewees is the ability to autonomously interpret the findings in aggregate once the research is finished and to author them in the way they see fit (Maclean 2013). On the one hand, this prevents contributors from shaping how their information is used. This is most harmful in projects whose aims and perspectives evolve over time and become different to those explained to interviewees at the time of information-gathering. Thus, interviewees can unwittingly become accomplices in projects they disapprove of. On the other hand, granting the researcher sole right of authorship acts to separate the ultimate research product from parochial and biased individual accounts. These accounts may illuminate particular aspects of the phenomena being investigated or be insightful in other ways, but the general slant of the interviewee may not reflect the balanced truth of the matter. Researchers should balance these competing concerns of authorship by allowing their interlocutors to offer feedback on the project.

I sought to offer this opportunity to my interlocutors. First, I plan to submit the finished product to several key interviewees and my fixers to check that their testimonies are recorded accurately and to see the end-product of the time they spent in interviews with me. Second, I keep up regular contact with many of my interviewees and update

[12] This worked every time apart from one, when the interviewee's former boss had dinner at a nearby table with a mysterious Russian military officer in full uniform.

them on how the project is evolving. Whilst these aren't direct forms of authorship, it has established a dialogue between me and the interviewees that transmits their thinking to me. Third, my fixers and I regularly communicate to retrospectively clarify and contextualize points from the interviews.

6.5 Preamble to the Empirical Chapters

6.5.1 'Unknown Knowns': International Actors

In the previous chapter, a key part of part of my argument was that political opportunity structures condition the emergence and success of anti-incumbent coalitions. In particular, I mentioned that the international opportunity space, particularly the availability of willing transnational coalition partners, was an important dimension of the opportunity space in which dissidents operate. Indeed, Serbia is one of the most famous cases of international involvement in domestic revolutionary processes: through their intelligence services and international organizations, Western governments provided a large portion of the funding needed by groups such as Otpor to keep up the fight against Milošević (Marshall 2003). While the vast majority of the opposition's strategic genius was autochthonous, $41 million from the US government and £6 million from the UK government paid for activist training, polling, laptops, mobile phones, and millions upon millions of campaign flyers and posters.[13]

Even this relationship between international actors and the anti-Milošević opposition in Serbia, however, is still not fully understood. Many Serbs are understandably loath to peddle the narrative that the revolution was driven over the finishing line by foreign governments, least of all those - like the UK and the US - that orchestrated the deeply unpopular NATO bombardment of Serbia in 1999. Both contemporaneously and since 2000, this has fostered a culture of obfuscation and silence surrounding Western influence in the lead-up to the revolution. This is especially true of the interactions between dissidents within the coercive apparatus and foreign intelligence services where organizational codes of secrecy compound the difficulty of obtaining detailed information about events in the build-up to the revolution. Without special access, therefore, it is largely impossible to uncover specific data surrounding the coalitions that emerged between Serbian security agents and external actors, including their participants, how and where they met, the information they shared, and the formality of the arrangements.

[13] See: M. Dobbs, "U.S. Advice Guided Milosevic Opposition." *The Washington Post,* 11/12/2000.
Also: Elite Interview #1: William Montgomery. US Ambassador to Croatia 1998-September 2000, Yugoslavia January 2002-February 2002, Serbia and Montenegro February 2003-February 2004.
Also: Elite Interview #2: Charles Crawford. UK Ambassador to Bosnia, 1996-98; director of Balkan affairs, London; UK Ambassador to Belgrade, 2001-2003.

However, there is a reasonable case to be made that such meetings did take place. For instance, the popular book '*Shadowplay*' written by Tim Marshall, the former Diplomatic Editor and Balkan correspondent for Sky News throughout the 1990s and 2000, chronicles several face-to-face meetings between Yugoslav military intelligence officers and the British secret service between June and October 2000. The first meeting reportedly took place at Biggin Hill airfield, about 15 miles south of London. Yugoslavia was invited to send two fighter jets to the famous airshow at Biggin Hill which were accompanied by the military intelligence envoys. A second meeting at Biggin Hill allegedly took place in September 2000 under the cover of the air show for the 60th anniversary of the 'Battle of Britain.' Here, Marshall (2003) reports that some critical information was shared between the sides:

> "This time the message from the Yugoslav side was that one of the circumstances in which the army might not fire on the people was if the people were defending a democratically elected government. They could not yet speak for all the high command but what was clear was that a significant part of it was now ready to see change."

The last mention that Marshall makes of this series of meetings is a face-to-face interaction on 4th October, one day before the revolution, in Latace near Banja Luka in Bosnia. Since the regime had cottoned on to the opposition's tactic of holding important meetings in Hungary by this point, obscure towns in Bosnia (especially those in the former Republika Srpska) were convenient for both foreign intelligence officials and Serbian dissidents. This time, the information reportedly shared was more specific:

> "This time the Army intelligence people spelt it out, saying that even if Milošević called the army onto the streets the high command would not respond. There were no guarantees and still no one knew if the entire high command agreed but the message was passed on to the opposition leaders in Belgrade."

It is difficult to know how seriously to take Marshall's depiction of these events. On the one hand, *Shadowplay* is co-written by Jakša Šćekić, one of the fixers I mentioned above and former Sky News journalist and Marshall's colleague in Serbia. Both Šćekić and Marshall were phenomenally well-connected and respected journalists throughout the Balkans, so it is likely that they had access to well-placed informants who could furnish them with the material they report in *Shadowplay*. A third informant corroborated some of the bare details for me:

> "I know that several air force officers were sent to UK in months ahead of 5 October. I am sure for one such meeting. However, it was (and still is) unclear to me whether they had any substantial political discussions with their hosts during this encounters. Also, it is unclear to me whether they were sent as a part of unofficial state diplomacy (as official channels were closed) ... or on behalf of wannabe plotters. ... But meeting(s) did take place, yes."[14]

On the other hand, *Shadowplay*'s account of events is completely unsourced which, although unsurprising in many respects, makes it difficult to assess any potential bias. More to the point, it is unclear from the book that anything beyond a one-way information exchange took place between the Yugoslav military intelligence officers and the British. And, as my informant above pointed out, it remains hazy whether the meetings were state-sanctioned or conducted by "plotters" which weighs heavily on our ability to infer the participants' aims. The collection of participants, their motivations, and whether any contractual agreements were reached are simply unknowable.

Keen to learn more, Jakša advised me to speak to a Serbian journalist who was actually present at some of the meetings in Banja Luka. Both he and Jakša told me that he attended the meetings, and I was able to corroborate this with a third informant. The journalist was assigned to the NATO Stabilisation Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (SFOR) media team in Banja Luka in 1999-2000 and was asked to assist with setting up the meetings.[15] When I met him in Belgrade in mid-2019, he told me that several meetings occurred in Bosnia and Republika Srpska from December 1999 until the revolution in October 2000.[16] He was able to give me some details beyond those in *Shadowplay:* high-level police commanders, army officers, and regime politicians travelled secretly across the Serbian border to meet with the British and US intelligence services. As far as he knew, he told me that the Serbian side had been more proactive in initiating the contact with the British.

The Serbs' main aim was to secure lenient treatment from the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). They "realized it was the end" and "they wanted to save their arses": with Milošević's strength waning, "they understood it was all over and they were scared of the Hague."[17] The journalist told me that "promises were made" regarding the ICTY, which is known to have happened for at least one other person.

[14] Private communication on 15/11/2020 from Elite Interviewee #14. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.

[15] Private communication from Elite Interviewee #14. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.

[16] Elite Interview #22.

[17] Ibid.

Jovica Stanišić, the director of the Serbian state security service (RDB) until 1998 was sharing information with the CIA before and after his dismissal. In return, the CIA leaned on the Hague to go easy on Stanišić. Both leaked official CIA documents[18] and credible witnesses[19] have since confirmed this. In return, the foreign intelligence services sought information and ran scenarios with the Serbian attendees about how key figures would respond to a revolution: "what would they do if anything happened?"[20]

Other interviewees with proven insider knowledge corroborated these details. I was told that the Serbian attendees "started some unofficial negotiations" with "Western diplomats and envoys, most of them using locations in Republika Srpska."[21] This interviewee received specific intelligence in mid-2000 that there were meetings between three to four police generals and Western intelligence officials and that "a lot of senior [police] commanders were already aware that they did a hell of a bad job in Kosovo by allowing war crimes and they could be easy targets for the Hague." Like the journalist I met, this individual told me that the envoys tried to blackmail the Serbs by showing them documents substantiating their war-crimes in Kosovo - "you *will* go to the Hague!"[22]

Another regime insider confirmed that meetings took place in Laktaši, a small town in Republika Srpska: this was "a very good place for secret ... activities against our regime."[23] The five top generals in the Ministry of Interior were present at this meeting, but I was unable to determine a clear date or the topics under discussion - other than that the meeting was with "international structures against Milošević."[24] Other interviewees alluded fleetingly to the meetings, but either deflected my questions when I probed further or professed they did not know enough to comment. The British military intelligence officers who were serving in Serbia at the time that I spoke to also made it clear that they were not willing to discuss anything to do with the meetings. These interactions, therefore, constitute one of the haziest episodes in the Serbian revolution.

For this reason, I consider the meetings between Western envoys and Serbian elites in Bosnia and Republika Srpska 'unknown knowns.' That is, I am satisfied that they occurred but do not feel confident reporting on details relating to their exact attendees, their aims, their actions, or their effect. Critically, I was unable to establish whether the Serbs were

[18] See: G. Miller, "Serbian spy's trial lifts cloak on his CIA alliance." *Los Angeles Times*, 01/03/2009.
[19] See: S. Bjelotomic, "Ivor Roberts: The former head of the Serbian security service Jovica Stanisic was a CIA agent." *Serbian Monitor*, 16/10/2019.
[20] Elite Interview #22.
[21] Elite Interviews #14 & #19. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Elite Interview #31. Goran Matić. Federal Minister for Information until October 2000 and senior JUL party official.
[24] Ibid.

successful in negotiating legal amnesty: all of my interviewees were particularly closed on this point, either out of collective uncertainty or secrecy. Without this key datum, we are unable to assess whether these meetings opened opportunity structures or not: if agreements were reached, then this would have raised the prospective benefits of defection; if not, incentives to defect would have remained unchanged. Moreover, the empirical chapters to follow aim to be highly granular and hold the reader's attention with a narrative flow. This would be impossible given the limited evidence that I was able to collect about these meetings and would render the present account stylistically and empirically incongruous. I flag the meetings here briefly as a methodological challenge for other researchers with better access than me since it would undoubtedly be profitable to unpack the clandestine side of Western involvement in elite Serbian politics in the run-up to the revolution.

6.5.2 Structure and Notation

In the next four chapters, I adduce evidence from the Serbian revolution on 5th October 2000 to vindicate my theory. The first three chapters each focus on coalition-building and strategic framing tactics within separate branches of the coercive apparatus: the Belgrade Police Brigade, the Yugoslav Army, and the Special Operations Unit (JSO). In the fourth chapter, I document the broader process of coordination that took place across the coercive apparatus on 5th October, as well as the informal relationships that emerged between the opposition and the security forces. I also cover the regime's response to the revolution in the fourth chapter, namely Milošević's failure to engage key loyalists in the pre-revolutionary period and frame the government as in control of the situation.

Throughout, I refer to interview data in the following format: 'Elite/Rank-and-File Interview #[X] [Name - if consent provided]. [Position - if consent provided.]'. The number X does not reflect the order in which the interviews occurred; rather, it links to the randomly generated codes mentioned above to guarantee anonymity for those who requested it. All of the chapters report on clandestine meetings between a (very) small number of participants and thus heavily rely on the testimonies of a few key individuals who were either present or absentees who presented with extraordinarily credible inside knowledge and proximity to the relevant events. Wherever possible, I have provided adjacent corroborative evidence of important causal process observations and critical junctures from alternative sources. On the occasions that I felt unable to fairly adjudicate on ambiguity in the historical record, I have signalled this so that the reader is aware.

The first three chapters adopt a uniform structure to allow readers to compare and contrast the cases more easily. They begin with a brief explanation of the security force

in question and the key actors that feature in the causal narrative. Next, they explain the origins and composition of the defection network within each force and the wider backdrop of grievances and loyalties that the first-movers looked to while contemplating defection. Once the drivers of the defection decision have been clarified, I use multiple sources to provide a step-by-step account of how the defection network and wider force behaved during the revolution. Where relevant, this is where I describe actors' attempts to strategically frame the defection attempt. Each chapter closes by distilling the key features of the case and demonstrating that existing theories fail to fully explain the defection process observed. To maximize transparency, I provide a table in this section which reports whether or not my hypotheses were confirmed and the supporting causal process observations.

Chapter 7

Empirics I: The Belgrade Police Brigade

"Boško chose us because he knew us and knew our ideas, our thoughts. Because we had discussed these subjects before."

Junior officer
Belgrade Police Brigade

Introduction

This chapter tells the story of the Belgrade Police Brigade (BPB) and its commander, Boško Buha, and their role in the Serbian revolution. On 3rd October, Buha met with colleagues from across the Belgrade police apparatus and planned to evade orders to repress the protesters. These agreements underpinned Buha's disloyalty in the coming days, from shirking orders to "clear" the Kolubara mine strike on 4th October to collaborating with the formal political opposition on 5th and 6th October by defending a crucial television transmitter station near Belgrade. Whilst it is unlikely that the BPB could have stopped the revolution altogether, it was an elite and heavily armed police force manned by seasoned veterans of the Yugoslav wars. The important counterfactual, then, is the amount of violence the BPB could have wreaked if Buha and his senior officers had decided to remain loyal to Milošević.

I begin with a detailed overarching narrative that charts Buha and the Brigade's defection, from its origins on 3rd October to its consequences and conclusion between the 4th and 6th October. Where necessary, I devote space to contextualizing the discussions between Buha and his colleagues and provide brief historical explanations of critical junctures. Buha himself was murdered in June 2002, hence I was unable to obtain primary evidence from

this chapter's main actor. Therefore, I relied on interviews Buha gave to other researchers, two interviews with his closest colleagues, three interviews with junior policemen in the ordinary police, and several discussions with well-connected journalists and regime insiders to build a granular chronology of the BPB's role in the revolution. I corroborated this timeline with an events analysis of 4-7th October created by Bujošević and Radovanović (2003), who used interviews with key participants (including Buha himself) and police radio records to construct a detailed record of the revolution.

To avoid disrupting the flow of the narrative, the chapter ends with a more discursive section in which I explain how the Brigade's behaviour supports the axioms, mechanisms, and theses formulated in previous chapters. Throughout, however, readers should look out for the key themes: how first-movers construct defection networks in the pre-revolutionary period and the conditions that make it more likely that they will do so in the first place. In particular, Buha's seniority afforded him considerable freedom to construct an intra-organizational defection network in the pre-revolutionary period. I also underline that the alternative theories of defection exert less explanatory leverage over the case than my theory: neither the positional account nor the coordination account satisfactorily predict Buha's coalition-building efforts. Essentially, the coalition is evidence that Buha's (positional) disloyalty alone was insufficient to spur his defection and that he preempted and thereby mitigated the revolutionary coordination problem.

7.1 Coalition Building: A Meeting in McDonald's, 3rd October

Heading out of central Belgrade to the southwest, one comes across the Čukarika suburb which hugs the south side of the Sava river. In Čukarika's Banovo Brdo neighbourhood, Požeška street stretches for more than three kilometers past the Park Banovo Brdo and the Hipodrom Beograd. Požeška is one of the neighbourhood's high streets, lined with shops, tram stops, coffee houses, and traditional grill restaurants. It is not a pretty street, but it is functional and popular: locals use it as a meeting place where they can eat and drink not too far from the park where their children play.

About halfway down Požeška, there is a McDonald's restaurant. It looks like any other McDonald's: the golden arches hang above the door and the menu could have been taken from the Leicester Square or Fifth Avenue outlets. By chance, however, the McDonald's is close to the headquarters of the Belgrade Police Brigade (BPB) on Trebevićka Street in Banovo Brdo, which adjoins Požeška. On 3rd October, two days before protesters stormed

the Serbian parliament, the commander of the BPB, Colonel Boško Buha, met four of his colleagues from other units at the McDonald's to discuss how his unit would respond to the incoming revolution.

The Belgrade Police Brigade (BPB) was an elite and highly trained unit of urban policemen containing 700 to 1,000 men at any one time. It was commanded by Boško Buha, a veteran from fighting on the front lines in the Kosovo War in 1998-1999. Many of his men were also veterans and had fought and policed under Buha for many years. A regime insider told me that Buha was "a very competent policeman" and highly regarded within the coercive apparatus, especially amongst those who he had fought alongside in Kosovo such as Milorad 'Legija' Ulemek, the commander of the infamous Special Operations Unit (*Jedinica za specijalne operacije*, JSO) that also defected on 5th October.[1] The Ministry of the Interior (*Ministarstvo unutrašnjih poslova*, MUP) made sure that the BPB were heavily armed with armoured combat vehicles, 12.9mm heavy machine guns, rocket launchers, and water cannons (Bujošević & Radovanović 2003).

In effect, the BPB were a crack anti-riot squad to be wheeled out by the MUP or Milošević when protests were getting out of hand, a "formidable fighting power."[2] They were a "trusted" and "seasoned" unit - "one of the best units available" to Milošević's administration in a pinch.[3] By his own admission, Buha was a fervent believer in Milošević's plans to unite all Serbs within one 'Greater Serbia' and supported the regime until late 2000. In an interview after 5th October, he told the interviewers: "How could I explain? I had lived in one system for 40 years: Tito's Pioneers, Tito's youth, Tito's communists. I just went on in the same way after that and then, suddenly, someone slapped me hard. I came to my senses and said, 'Hang on, f*** you!' That's how I felt!"[4] In other words, nobody was really expecting Buha and the BPB to defect before 5th October.

By 3rd October, Buha had already started to reconsider the BPB's track record of loyalty to Milošević. He called a meeting in the McDonald's on Požeška with four of his trusted colleagues from different branches of the Belgrade police apparatus.[5] One of the colleagues told me that Buha deliberately selected junior figures within the police, not seniors - Buha would communicate with those figures later, mainly on 5th and 6th October. Rather, they were junior officers from different branches and areas of Belgrade: a criminal investigations

[1] Elite Interview #19. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Interview conducted and recounted by Bujošević & Radovanović (2003).

[5] Elite Interview #26. Criminal investigations police officer in Belgrade 1991-2003; Chief of Internal Control in the Ministry of the Interior 2003-2007; 2010-present professor at the Belgrade Police Academy.

specialist, two junior officers in the BPB, and a police escort with connections to the political opposition through his wife. The group of five sat at the back of the restaurant wearing their civilian clothes, having left their uniforms in their lockers to avoid detection. They didn't eat because they didn't want to stay long enough to be observed or overheard. Instead, they sipped tea and coffee whilst they "discussed like friends" what would happen on 5th October.[6]

Buha had known the four colleagues at the meeting for over ten years by October 2000. Crucially, he knew their political leanings. One of the four recounted that "Boško chose us because he knows us and knows our ideas, our thoughts" because they had "discussed [these subjects] before."[7] He also recalled that he and Buha shared "similar views, values, and standards."[8] Having met him multiple times after work, his colleagues reported that there was already a strong bond of trust between the five of them. By contrast, Buha "was not in a good position to choose other [i.e., more loyal] colleagues" because they might have reported him to their superiors.[9] The four men he called to meet with him were close and trusted friends - people he knew wouldn't reveal him.

Buha scheduled the meeting for several reasons. Importantly, he wanted to know how the junior ranks within the Belgrade police apparatus perceived the political situation in Serbia. The others at the meeting sensed that Buha was reluctant to defect without getting a better read on mindsets across the police. He needed "support from the simple guys" and "wanted to hear [their] opinion."[10] At that time, the police were renowned to be strong supporters of Milošević and his political party, the Socialist Party of Serbia. Many were genuine supporters of the wars in Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo that Milošević had ignited; indeed, many had been happy to serve as soldiers in the conflicts when the regular military ran out of manpower. One of Buha's colleagues recalled that "every single colleague" blamed the West rather than Milošević for Serbia's endless stream of problems in the 1990s.[11] Another retired policeman emphatically (and probably hyperbolically) told me that 98% of Serbian policemen were fervent Milošević supporters in 1991 when massive protests had gridlocked Belgrade and the military and police were required to use force to clear the streets.[12]

[6] Ibid.

[7] Elite Interview #32. Junior officer in the Belgrade Police Brigade.

[8] Elite Interview #26. Criminal investigations police officer in Belgrade 1991-2003; Chief of Internal Control in the Ministry of the Interior 2003-2007; 2010-present professor at the Belgrade Police Academy.

[9] Elite Interview #32. Junior officer in the Belgrade Police Brigade.

[10] Elite Interview #26. Criminal investigations police officer in Belgrade 1991-2003; Chief of Internal Control in the Ministry of the Interior 2003-2007; 2010-present professor at the Belgrade Police Academy.

[11] Elite Interview #16. Criminal investigations police officer in Belgrade 1991-2003; Chief of Internal Control in the Ministry of the Interior 2003-2007; 2010-present professor at the Belgrade Police Academy.

[12] Rank-and-File Interview #3. Special forces police officer in Kosovo until 1999; police officer in Arandjelovac thereafter.

Moreover, the police selection process and training program in the 1980s and 1990s were specifically designed to cultivate loyal and ideologically blinkered police officers. One former police officer I spoke to commented: "in order to become a policeman, you had to have four years of brainwashing."[13] Alongside practical and physical police training, recruits were "literally indoctrinated in the philosophy of autocratic policing" in special classes that also nakedly emphasized all the benefits that loyal policemen could expect to receive from the regime including financial kickbacks, elevated salaries, and affordable housing.[14] Loyalty was a key theme of the training: recruits were taught that the force was their new "brotherhood" and that they should feel fully prepared to arrest their own mother or father if necessary.[15] The recruits themselves were selected on intelligence and behavioural traits: mirroring findings in other authoritarian police forces (e.g., Scharpf & Glässel 2020), the ideal Serbian police recruit exhibited "mediocre intelligence or below the average" and an "unquestioning" attitude.[16]

Consequently, the police force in Serbia throughout the 1990s was "highly politicized" (Binnendijk & Marović 2006). In contrast to the Yugoslav Army (*Vojska Jugoslavije*, VJ) which was a federal institution jointly controlled by the two remaining Yugoslav republics, the policing arm of the MUP was a republic-level organization. This meant that Milošević (who was President of Serbia, not Yugoslavia, for the majority of his tenure) could exercise unbridled control over the police and intelligence services through close ideological and political connections in the MUP (Kusovac 2000). Moreover, the personnel and activities of the police were closely monitored by the regime, which sought to coup-proof itself against the VJ by pumping money into the MUP and encouraging its nefarious but lucrative criminal activities (Binnendijk & Marović 2006, Edmunds 2008).

In particular, Milošević prioritized the uniformed police over the criminal investigations division (CID): he "privileged the muscle and sidelined the intelligent."[17] They also received perks that were not available to the CID, such as financial bonuses for being on duty during protests, more affordable dedicated housing built for policemen, and higher-than-average salaries.[18] The regime also turned a blind eye to uniformed police officers using their positions to run corrupt side-schemes that gave them "additional income" that was "tolerated by superiors."[19] This "mutual agreement" resulted in many ordinary uniformed

[13]Rank-and-File Interview #1. Police officer in Belgrade throughout the 1980s and 1990s.
[14]Ibid.
[15]Ibid.
[16]Ibid.
[17]Elite Interview #27. Sonja Stojanović Gajić: Head of the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy.
[18]Rank-and-File Interview #1. Police officer in Belgrade throughout the 1980s and 1990s.
[19]Elite Interview #19. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.

policemen, especially those in the senior ranks, collecting incomes far higher than those in CID and the military. The uniformed police were also trained to be an effective counter-revolutionary force: their basic training involved three times the amount of practice using missile launchers, rocket-propelled grenades, and automatic weaponry than the training program for the actual military.[20]

Even if they didn't genuinely support Milošević, policemen were made to sign letters of political support to him which could be wheeled out at the slightest sign of disloyalty. One of Buha's colleagues at the meeting at McDonald's on 3rd October had been suspended five times for refusing to sign the letter of support. He also had his pay and holidays docked and his superior resolutely refused to sign off on his engagement, as was necessary in the police force at that time.[21] And when he criticized atrocities perpetrated by Serb forces in Kosovo, his chief lambasted him for being a "traitor."[22] The coup de grâce came when he was sent to serve in Kosovo, a war which his seniors knew that he was opposed to. He was also trailed by the secret service and his house and family were surveilled. This was the standard treatment for dissident policemen, and it meant that the few who did oppose Milošević kept their thoughts to themselves, especially while they were at work.

7.2 The Strategic Backdrop I: Kosovo and Disloyalty in the Serbian Police

Knowing the pressures on rank-and-file policemen to remain loyal, his colleagues told me that Buha was cautious and reluctant to defect if it promised to be an isolated display of disloyalty. Ultimately, however, he was reassured by what his colleagues told him. They informed him that most rank-and-file policemen were now frustrated and disillusioned with Milošević's government: "don't worry, people don't like Milošević abusing power."[23] They reiterated to him: "many police want to be normal people and part of normal society. How can I live in everyday society when I'm fighting against ordinary people?"[24] They also tried to impress on him that they had nothing to lose and everything to gain if they acted together: "Don't worry, we are together. We can't lose anything, only this simple [impoverished] life."[25] They assured him the ranks had finally tired of the incessant "fighting

[20] Elite Interview #27. Sonja Stojanović Gajić: Head of the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy.
[21] Elite Interview #16. Criminal investigations police officer in Belgrade 1991-2003; Chief of Internal Control in the Ministry of the Interior 2003-2007; 2010-present professor at the Belgrade Police Academy.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Elite Interview #26. Criminal investigations police officer in Belgrade 1991-2003; Chief of Internal Control in the Ministry of the Interior 2003-2007; 2010-present professor at the Belgrade Police Academy.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.

against the opposition, the West, against everything."[26]

Given the police's historic loyalty to Milošević, Buha wanted to know why sentiment had changed in the ranks. In a time when most policemen willingly placed framed photographs of Milošević on their office desks, he needed to be sure that loyalties had shifted within the police apparatus before committing himself and the BPB to defection. His colleagues told him that the shift in sentiment was down to two key events. The first was Serbia's ignominious forced withdrawal from Kosovo in June 1999 following a 78-day NATO bombing campaign ('Operation Allied Force') that targeted Serb military installations and other strategic targets such as government broadcasting facilities in Belgrade. Unsurprisingly, the bombardment generated deep hostility to NATO amongst Serbs and actually generated a temporary surge of support for Milošević.[27] Public outrage and the fortress effect around Milošević was heightened by hundreds of accidental civilian deaths caused by the air strikes.[28] And until Milošević surrendered on June 10th 1999, support for him within the police remained high. A policeman remarked to me: "the bombing itself was actually strengthening their trust in Milosevic because the hate was too great towards the foreigners. There is no person who is going to explain to us why we should be bombed."[29]

Yet, Buha's four colleagues reported that many policemen were "finished" with Milošević after he gave the order to withdraw from Kosovo.[30] The majority of policemen at the time were Serb nationalists and supported the policy to unite all Serbian people and Serbia's historic territories (Kosovo included) within one set of borders. When Milošević ordered the invasion of Kosovo, many Serbs perceived this as a righteous mission to reclaim land that had been annexed and resettled by Albanian Kosovars. When he capitulated, however, support for him within the police plummeted especially amongst the units that had been dragooned into the fighting. For many, it confirmed suspicions that Milošević was not a genuine nationalist: that all along, despite the wars in Kosovo, Croatia, and Bosnia, he "actually despised the whole idea" of establishing a 'Greater Serbia.'[31] Consequently, after Kosovo many police "didn't really accept him [Milošević] as one of their own group" and

[26]Elite Interview #16. Criminal investigations police officer in Belgrade 1991-2003; Chief of Internal Control in the Ministry of the Interior 2003-2007; 2010-present professor at the Belgrade Police Academy.

[27]Elite Interview #7. James Dobbins. Special advisor to the US President for the Balkans in 1999.

[28]A Human Rights Watch report (February 2000, "The Crisis in Kosovo") found that between 489 and 528 Yugoslav civilians died in 90 incidents caused by Operation Allied Storm. Yugoslav sources put this number far higher at around 1,300.

[29]Rank-and-File Interview #3. Special forces police officer in Kosovo until 1999; police officer in Arandjelovac thereafter.

[30]Elite Interview #32. Junior officer in the Belgrade Police Brigade.

[31]Elite Interview #14. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.

"simply wanted to get rid of him because he failed to implement the [nationalist] project successfully."[32]

Indeed, Buha's colleagues told me that a significant minority of police officers had always suspected Milošević of being an opportunist when it came to nationalism. This chimes with the recollections of Ivor Roberts, the former British Ambassador to Serbia, who had private audiences with Milošević on over forty occasions, describes him as having "no ideological motivation at all" and "content to ride the tiger of nationalism" (Roberts 2016). Milošević, for instance, had always eschewed public alliances with the Bosnian and Croatian Serbs in the Bosnian and Croatian wars, opting instead for clandestine relations. For others, however, Milošević's willingness to surrender when NATO was running out of military targets to bomb was when the penny dropped. For the Serb nationalists in the police, it became clear that they needed a new representative who would fight for Serbian interests in the Balkans more vigorously and earnestly than Milošević. As a senior politician in the Yugoslav Left (*Jugoslovenska Levica*, JUL) with strong personal connections to both Milošević and his wife explained to me:

> "A significant number [of policemen] were thinking in a simple manner. Some of them genuinely knew that Milošević lost these wars [so thought] it's not possible for him to win them again. So in order to continue waging them successfully it is necessary to replace him with somebody not so worn out, not so compromised, not so willing to compromise, and more committed to our cause."[33]

My interviews with rank-and-file policemen corroborated the sharp drop in support for Milošević after the Kosovo War. One told me that policemen who had been asked to fight in Kosovo felt "betrayed" by Milošević's surrender, especially since policemen had bore the brunt of the military casualties on the Serbian side: "the moment he signed away Kosovo, that was the end."[34] Another policeman who had fought in the special forces in Kosovo told me that he had wept when Milošević signed the Kumanovo Agreement which brought hostilities in Kosovo to an end in June 1999.[35] These policemen had the sense that Milošević's propaganda machine had duped them into thinking Kosovo would be an easy victory for Serbia. Even afterwards, Milošević "was creating the impression we were

[32]Ibid.
[33]Ibid.
[34]Rank-and-File Interview #2. Policeman in Kosovo until 1999; commander in Arandjelovac 1999-2003; police officer in Belgrade 2003-2009.
[35]Rank-and-File Interview #3. Special forces police officer in Kosovo until 1999; police officer in Arandjelovac thereafter.

victorious... He created the aura of winning."[36] This, of course, turned out to be delusional and left many policemen sceptical about Milošević's commitment to Serb nationalism. This policeman was explicit: he was involved in "tonnes of [bad] things" in Kosovo but "in the end, the reason why we did it was not there."[37] Ultimately, Milošević's handling of Kosovo left many Serbs "completely disillusioned because they were believing and fighting in Kosovo which was now ultimately doomed to collapse."[38]

7.3 The Strategic Backdrop II: The Anti-Otpor Campaign and Misusing the Police

Kosovo was not the only reason why support for Milošević was ebbing in the police. Buha's colleagues informed him that regular policemen "felt used" and "abused" by Milošević.[39] Throughout the 1990s, the Serbian police were increasingly being used to suppress and brutalize political opponents instead of conducting ordinary police work. The four invitees reported that ordinary policemen were "having more and more problems" carrying out the increasingly dubious orders feeding down from Milošević via the MUP. They put it to him: "Why are we arresting innocent people without evidence? It's not legal."[40] They told him that the transmogrification of the Serbian police from respected anti-criminal force to Milošević's lapdog was affecting morale across the Belgrade police apparatus. Elsewhere, one policeman reported the same sentiment: "Before Milošević, policemen were highly regarded by the people."[41]

The police's main issue was with the regime's muscular campaign against Otpor, the student resistance group whose name translates as 'Resistance'. From mid-May 2000, Milošević decided to deal with Otpor more aggressively. He instructed the police to arrest their activists and government media outlets began to demonize Otpor as domestic "terrorists."[42] For instance, on May 16th the Yugoslav Minister of Telecommunications falsely accused Otpor of planting bombs in JUL and Social Party of Serbia offices in Belgrade and assassinating the head of the government in the autonomous Vojvodina province in north

[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Elite Interview #8. Aleksandar Vasović: Radio B-92 and Reuters journalist.
[39] Elite Interview #32. Junior officer in the Belgrade Police Brigade. Similar sentiments expressed in Elite Interview #26: Criminal investigations police officer in Belgrade 1991-2003; Chief of Internal Control in the Ministry of the Interior 2003-2007; 2010-present professor at the Belgrade Police Academy.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Rank-and-File Interview #3. Special forces police officer in Kosovo until 1999; police officer in Arandjelovac thereafter.
[42] The Human Rights Watch World Report for 2000 confirms that "[t]he Serbian authorities and the media they control, however, have repeatedly accused Otpor of "terrorism"."

Serbia.[43]

Both the police and propaganda campaigns backfired spectacularly. Throughout the police, it generated intense rancour by forcing policemen to arrest and interrogate thousands of local teenagers who clearly weren't terrorists or a threat to national security. In our interview, one of Otpor's leaders recalled that the police he encountered at the time were "reacting badly to these renewed demands from the regime to be harsh on us. They wanted to say, 'wait one second, these kids haven't broken the law."[44] Many Otpor leaders reported the same sense of fatigue and disillusionment amongst the police during the anti-Otpor campaign:

> "In so many different cities they [the police] were doing this so reluctantly. They would arrest half-heartedly, they would take you to the police station, they would say they were sorry, they would give you decent treatment and they would let you go as soon as possible."[45]

> "I think they [the police] saw it was nonsensical... They would come and pick up a bunch of kids, literally kids... They were like, 'what the f*** should we do with them now?' Especially in Belgrade, [where] there was no major violence [between the protesters and police]."[46]

> "The police knew that those people [Otpor detainees] were not criminals and not hooligans. They arrest and they see students, the best pupils in the class! So normal policemen, they don't want to do this - their job was to catch criminals."[47]

During the campaign against Otpor, policemen all over Serbia began to question the role that the police was being asked to play in keeping Milošević in power. The same Otpor leader commented: "They were treated as a rug. They felt used in a way, abused. They felt abused by the government and treated as a weapon against the people and they didn't

[43]Human Rights Watch World Report 2000. "Escalating Repression in Serbia: An Update on Harassment of the Otpor (Resistance) Movement: A Human Rights Watch Press Backgrounder." Chapter on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

[44]Elite Interview #12. Srdja Popović. One of twelve leaders and founders of Otpor student resistance group.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Elite Interview #30. Milja Jovanović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor student resistance group.

[47]Elite Interview #40. Ivan Andrić. One of twelve leaders of Otpor student resistance group and Head of Marketing. He also echoed Popović and Jovanović, saying that "it was their order to do so [i.e. detain Otpor activists] so they did it but they didn't show any enthusiasm. You were arrested and then you had to sit for an hour and then you went."

like that."[48] A particular heinous job was given to the police in Požarevac on May 2nd when three Otpor activists were heavily beaten by friends of Milošević's son. Požarevac, just east of Belgrade near Serbia's border with Hungary, was Milošević's home town, so the city's police were ordered to arrest the Otpor members and try them for the attempted murder of their assailants. Six days later, they were found not guilty only to be re-arrested the same day and retried by a different judge. When news leaked out about the beating, outrage within the police mushroomed: it was the "straw that broke the camel's back with the police."[49] After that, the police "wanted to get rid of him [Milošević] to avoid doing his [dirty] jobs."

The police were also expected to help Milošević pull off his electoral victories by perpetrating electoral fraud. In December 1997, several policemen told me that they helped to stuff ballot boxes in the Podujevo municipality in Kosovo, just south of the Serbian border.[50] At 7pm on 21st December after the voting station closed, policemen brought 2,000 votes cast for the Socialist Party of Serbia candidate, Milan Milutinović, who went on to win the election with 59% of the vote. When the policemen raised their concerns with their superior, however, they were told to keep their "mouths shut."[51]

Buha would have known much of this before the meeting in McDonald's on 3rd October. After all, he had fought in Kosovo and interacted with the policemen in the BPB on a daily basis. However, the BPB was just one specialized and small part of the Belgrade police apparatus. By talking to his colleagues from across the Belgrade police apparatus, Buha was able to get a broader insight into how policemen generally perceived the current regime across different units. Whilst he already knew that many policemen were dissatisfied with the outcome of the Kosovo War, he hadn't appreciated the intensity or prevalence of anti-Milošević sentiment created by the campaign against Otpor and the abuse of police power for political ends before his colleagues informed him. At the time, policemen were not necessarily political animals or comfortable with expressing their views at work, which made it difficult for Buha to ascertain detailed information about mindsets across the Belgrade police forces. As it turned out, these grievances were real, recent, and intense and were necessary information for Buha in his decision about whether to defect.

[48] Elite Interview #12. Srdja Popović. One of twelve leaders and founders of Otpor student resistance group.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Rank-and-File Interview #3. Special forces police officer in Kosovo until 1999; police officer in Arandjelovac thereafter.
[51] Ibid.

7.4 Broadening the Coalition: Leverage and Reach on 3-4th October

Towards the end of the meeting, Buha decided that he would support the protesters and defect from Milošević's regime. He told his four colleagues that he would "arrange with my Brigade to support the citizens."[52] If necessary, he would "engage the Brigade against the secret service," by which he meant the Special Operations Unit (*Jedinica za specijalne operacije*, JSO), the ruthless fighting force that effectively served as Milošević's praetorian guard. However, very few people before the night of 4th/5th October knew what the JSO was planning to do. Both within and outside the coercive apparatus, there was significant uncertainty about whether or not its commander would intervene or not to prop up Milošević's regime. A leader of Otpor told me he was most worried about the JSO because he "knew they had killed in the past and were ready to kill [again.]"[53] Another Otpor leader recounted that they were "more afraid of the army and especially the special forces" than the regular police: "ordering to shoot, for normal police they would think twice. But for these guys [the special forces], they wouldn't."[54]

To spread the word of defection, Buha asked his four colleagues to "arrange with other colleagues in local police stations in Belgrade to support us."[55] Unsurprisingly, they agreed: after all, they were already risking their jobs by even discussing defection. Indeed, by 3rd October one of the JSO's senior officers had already been transferred to the countryside hundreds of miles from Belgrade for saying he wouldn't fire on protesters. They decided that they wouldn't try to meet their colleagues in person so that they could reach out to more people in the little over two days that they had until the protesters were due to arrive in Belgrade. Instead, they told Buha that they would "try to discuss with other colleagues by phone," despite the risk of their calls being intercepted and monitored by the secret service.[56]

After the four colleagues left McDonald's, they did what Buha had asked them to do by phoning their contacts in the Belgrade police apparatus and informing them that the BPB was planning to defect on 5th October. Soon, however, they encountered great difficulty in persuading others to join them or even pass on their message to others. One told me that

[52] Elite Interview #26. Criminal investigations police officer in Belgrade 1991-2003; Chief of Internal Control in the Ministry of the Interior 2003-2007; 2010-present professor at the Belgrade Police Academy.
[53] Elite Interview #12. Srdja Popović. One of twelve leaders and founders of Otpor student resistance group.
[54] Elite Interview #30. Milja Jovanović. One of twelve leaders and founders of Otpor student resistance group.
[55] Elite Interview #26. Criminal investigations police officer in Belgrade 1991-2003; Chief of Internal Control in the Ministry of the Interior 2003-2007; 2010-present professor at the Belgrade Police Academy.
[56] Ibid.

he reached out to many contacts in his local police station and in the criminal investigations unit but that his words often fell on deaf ears. Some told him "I don't have time to talk to you" and avoided his calls because they were afraid of being discovered by the secret service: "some people are not so brave."[57] The other policemen were "scared for their jobs, [and] scared for their families" which meant that "the majority were very silent" and non-committal.[58]

However, a few of the calls were successful. Before the revolution, Buha himself reached out to several senior police commanders in Belgrade who he trusted not to expose him to the regime. Most of those he called had served with him in Kosovo: "all of them knew each other" from the war.[59] Many had been waiting for the call and agreed to defect together on 5th October. One particularly important call was to Colonel Goran Radosavljević, one of Buha's fellow unit commanders in the Kosovo War and his superior in the Belgrade Police Department. Radosavljević had been the commander of a number of counter-terrorism units known as the Operational Groups (*Operativna grupa*, OPG) within the MUP during the Kosovo War. The OPGs were responsible for rooting out fighters in the Kosovo Liberation Army and were heavily implicated in several massacres and other war crimes in Ćuška and Račak. After the Kosovo War ended, Radosavljević remained in charge of the OPG units, which eventually morphed into the Gendarmary of Serbia in 2001, an armed police force based in Belgrade.

Radosavljević had realized independently that "s*** will hit the fan. Slobo is part of the problem, not part of the solution."[60] As Buha's superior in the MUP, they were in regular contact, especially as they both commanded powerful divisions - Buha led the BPB and Radosavljević the OGP. He and Buha made an explicit agreement that they would not use violence to resolve the shutdown at the Kolubara mine, an event on 4th October described in detail below. On 4th October, Buha and Radosavljević met in person and agreed that they would not respond to orders to repress protesters on 5th October: going into the 5th October, they both "knew that they wouldn't intervene in people coming to Belgrade."[61] This put the commanders of two formidable MUP police divisions in agreement well in advance of the revolution.

The result of the high-level discussions between Buha and his senior colleagues across Belgrade was that the chain of command on 5th October "didn't function at all" apart from

[57] Ibid.
[58] Elite Interview #32. Junior officer in the Belgrade Police Brigade.
[59] Elite Interview #20. Aleksandar Vasović. Radio B-92 and Reuters journalist.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Konačni Obračun ('The Final Encounter'), *Vreme* documentary, 2015. Interview with Colonel Goran Radosavljević.

in the units directly stationed at the Serbian parliament and other key sites around Belgrade such as the Radio Television Serbia building.[62] Other commanders, who heard about the plan but weren't directly involved, "simply opted not to get involved - being suddenly ill or having their mobiles switched off in the critical several hours."[63] Even before the meeting on 3rd October, Buha and his colleagues had "discussed every day about the situation" and they kept in close contact until the revolution began in earnest on the afternoon of 5th October.[64]

7.5 Unintentional Strategic Framing: The Kolubara Incident, 4th October

On 4th October, the day after the meeting in McDonald's on Požeška, Buha and the BPB were ordered to go to the Kolubara strip mine near the town of Lazarevac around forty miles southwest of Belgrade. The mine had shut down on 29th September, in line with the nationwide general strike called by the opposition. This was problematic for the government as coal from the Kolubara mine provided a significant portion of Serbia's energy needs. In order to avoid further power cuts, the Serbian parliament passed a decree that ordered the Serbian Power Utilities to maintain a proscribed level of production. When the miners refused to comply with the decree, the MUP ordered Buha to use the BPB to clear the mine and guard it until replacement workers arrived.

At just after 10am, Buha set off for the mine with 200 policemen from the BPB. As he led the police motorcade down the Ibar Highway towards Lazarevac, he recounted in a previous interview that he was weighing two thoughts: "One, if he disobeyed orders he would be dismissed and maybe worse. Two, he had no intention of carrying out such orders."[65] Before he arrived, he had decided: "What the hell. I'll do it [i.e., follow orders] and I won't."[66] When he arrived at the mine, he noticed Colonel Nikola Ćurčić, the commander of the government's new anti-terrorist units (*Specijalne Antiterorističke Jedinica*, SAJ) who were under the MUP's control. This was a bad harbinger: "[t]his is a really nasty day," Buha thought to himself, "a seriously nasty one."[67]

[62] Elite Interview #14. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Elite Interview #16. Criminal investigations police officer in Belgrade 1991-2003; Chief of Internal Control in the Ministry of the Interior 2003-2007; 2010-present professor at the Belgrade Police Academy.
[65] Interview with Boško Buha conducted by Bujošević & Radovanović (2003).
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.

When he arrived, General Obrad Stevanović from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ordered Buha to "clear" the mine by 1:30pm when the second shift of miners was due to start. The order came straight from the top, from Milošević himself via the Minister of the Interior Vlajko Stojilković. At around midday, Buha asked the mine's management team to leave but they refused. As fresh orders to clear the mine squawked on Buha's radio, the miners warned him that they would passively resist any attempts by the police to move them out of the mine. They had also removed vital components from the machinery in the tunnels, so work couldn't continue until the machines had been reassembled.

In a bid to find a solution that didn't involve shooting at the miners, Buha asked them to leave in small groups through the front gate, well in view of the reporters and senior officers who had gathered at the mine. However, once they were out of sight of the entrance, Buha told them that they could re-enter the mine through holes in the fence. This would buy Buha several hours and create the impression that he had successfully got the miners to leave. By 4pm, however, the authorities had an even bigger problem to deal with: real-time radio broadcasting to the rest of Serbia had alerted citizens to a possible massacre at Kolubara. Soon, hundreds of protesters from the nearby towns of Lazarevac, Stepojevac, Ljig, and Arandjelovac broke through the police cordon at the entrance to Kolubara and swamped the mining complex, making production impossible (Marinković 2003).

Buha's reluctance to fire on the miners had important downstream effects elsewhere in the Serbian coercive apparatus. The police's inaction was broadcast live to the whole of Serbia by journalists at Radio Lazarevac, who used Radio 988, a music and sports station established by the opposition figure Nebojša Ković, to transmit their broadcasts nationwide (Bujošević & Radovanović 2003). When other radio stations such as the independent B2-92 radio and student broadcaster Radio Indeks started to run the story, the Kolubara story was simply impossible to miss. The result was that policemen and soldiers all over Serbia, but most importantly those in Belgrade who would face the protesters the next day, heard that even the elite BPB and SAJ had not been prepared to fire on the miners. As Nebojša Ković commented in an interview, "the teeth of the police were pulled at Kolubara. ... Not a single unit intervened at Kolubara, unless you call pushing and shoving an intervention. The blade was blunted there."[68]

Thus, Buha's disobedience and shirking at the Kolubara mine was an early indication to onlookers within the coercive apparatus that senior and historically loyal security agents

[68] Interview with Nebojša Ković conducted and recounted by Bujošević & Radovanović (2003).

were rejecting Milošević's orders.[69] It sent "multiple messages" to the security forces in Belgrade, including the fact that others were clearly resisting repressive orders on the eve of a massive protest, which helped to anchor expectations around widespread disloyalty rather than loyalty.[70] It also demonstrated to security agents and citizens that the government couldn't "control [its] infrastructure," even facilities for generating power, which seemed to verify hitherto informal rumours about the precariousness of Milošević's government.[71] The tide of opposition supporters who flocked to Kolubara once they heard the news on the radio suggested that there was "real power behind opposition structures that extended beyond talking and making futile protests but included leverage to control huge and vital technological [i.e., industrial] systems."[72] So far, Buha's defection was going to plan.

7.6 Strategic Framing and Defection: Revolution, 5-6th October

At 2pm on 5th October, police radio records show that Buha received orders from the Belgrade Police Department HQ to swiftly return to Belgrade from Kolubara.[73] Every policeman was needed in the capital. By 3pm, the police units stationed in the Serbian parliament had reported to HQ that there were 70,000 protesters congregated along Nikole Pašića Street and the Pionirski park in front of the parliament. With hundreds of thousands more on their way to Belgrade in enormous convoys, the government had realized the scale of the problem they were facing. Buha sped back to Belgrade with the 200 men he had taken to Kolubara the day before and headed for Ilije Garašanina, a street near the parliament building where the rest of the BPB were stationed.

At 3:10pm, he arrived at Ilije Garašanina but the massive crowds had thrown Belgrade into chaos. When he reached his deputy, Vladimir Ilić, Buha was informed that his units in Belgrade had been given no instructions about where to go or how to deal with the protesters. Finally, at 3:49pm, Buha's unit was told by Police HQ to move towards the Serbian parliament building via Takovska Street using teargas to forge a path through the

[69] Singh (2014) theorizes that sequentializing the declaration of stances sets the stage for cascades of similar behaviour. While early signs of disloyalty are not quite a sequentialization of defection, the same principle applies.

[70] Elite Interview #14. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.

[71] Elite Interview #31. Goran Matić. Federal Minister for Information until October 2000 and senior JUL party official.

[72] Elite Interview #14. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.

[73] All precise timings in this section were deduced from police radio records. Original in Bujošević & Radovanović (2003).

protesters. Taking 150 men with him, he ran from Garašanina to Takovska but was there immediately surrounded by protesters. The BPB men were overwhelmed and Buha himself took refuge in an apartment building on Kosovska Street directly behind the parliament. Meanwhile, Ilić managed to reach the Police HQ several hundred metres away on 29th November Street with most of the BPB, well away from the parliament and informed the commanders there that most of Belgrade's policemen were now under siege, holed up in apartment blocks around the city. They ignored him and Ilić had no choice but to return to the barracks on Trebevićka Street in Banovo Brdo.

After several hours, Buha was able to join the BPB back at base in Banovo Brdo. Once there, he met with his senior officers and they reaffirmed their commitment to defect. This was still a big decision: the military hadn't publicly declared its position for or against Milošević by the night of 5-6th October, and the regime would look to the BPB overnight and in the coming days to quell the crowds. Geography worked in Buha's favour: Trebevićka Street is some eight. miles away the Belgrade Police Department HQ at 29th November Street and the Ministry of the Interior at Kneza Miloša Street which are both in the centre of Belgrade. Anybody who really needed to talk to Buha from the government would have to circumvent the now impassable Belgrade. The Brigade's officers also implemented a zero-communication policy with the Police HQ and the Ministry of the Interior. If anybody phoned the barracks, the duty officer was instructed to reply "the colonel isn't here." Armed men were stationed on all the access roads to the barracks.

These were the measures that Buha and his senior officers took on the night of 5-6th October to ensure that they wouldn't have to carry out any repression for the regime. As it turned out, Buha told other interviewers that Nebojša Ćović, the leader of the Democratic Alternative Party in DOS, was the first external person to get through to him on that night (Bujošević & Radovanović 2003). Ćović asked Buha bluntly to secure the Radio Television Serbia (RTS) building at Košutnjak which contained the RTS control room which could switch off the entire national network. DOS was concerned that the regime would try to shut down RTS overnight to prevent news about the revolution's success being broadcast to every household in Serbia (Bujošević & Radovanović 2003). Indeed, when opposition activists reached the control station around 2pm on 5th October, they had found it locked and in disarray. It took the technicians two and a half hours to start transmitting.

Buha obliged and sent some of his men to defend the RTS station. By this point, the BPB was actively aiding the opposition. Once the opposition took control of RTS, the Brigade also made an announcement on 'New RTS' to explain "who we were and where

we were, just to let the people know, so they would be ready to help us if needed."[74] The announcement was impactful: on the morning of 6th October, the commander of the JSO, Milorad 'Legija' Ulemek, whose unit had defected publicly at 5:35pm on 5th October in the centre of Belgrade, came to Trebevićka Street having seen it on New RTS. This suggests that high ranking figures in the coercive apparatus were looking to national media networks for information about possible defection cascades. Buha recalled:

> "We threw our arms around each other and asked each other how things were. We'd known each other in Kosovo and we were in agreement immediately. If anybody attacked him, I'd be there, and if anybody attacked me, he'd be there. There'd be nothing any of the police could do to us. We were too strong a force."[75]

7.7 Discussion

The story of Boško Buha and the Belgrade Police Brigade tells us about the actions of a potentially regime-saving unit on 4-6th October. The regime looked to Buha for support on both days but he had already defected and instead dodged his duties and aided the protesters. The axiom outlined in Chapter 3 states that some individuals within the coercive apparatus foresee the possibility of revolution and repressive orders before the onset of revolution. The meeting that Buha held with his four colleagues in McDonald's on Požeška Street on 3rd October clearly supports this key premise: neither Buha nor his colleagues were remotely surprised by the revolution on 5th October and talked expressly about how they would manage the protests. Therefore, they were not thrown into an intractable coordination problem on 5th October. As the commander of one of the regime's crack anti-riot police units, it naturally occurred to Buha that he would receive repressive orders from the MUP during one of the biggest anti-government protests in Belgrade's history.

The theory also expects that when individuals minded to defect (for whatever reason) foresee a revolution, under certain circumstances they attempt to construct defection networks. The purpose of Buha's meeting at McDonald's was partly to ask his four colleagues to join forces with him, giving him bases of support in various units across the Belgrade police apparatus. He also asked them to contact colleagues in their units who they suspected might defect with them, or at least to spread the word to those people so that they could prepare themselves. Buha himself contacted other Kosovo War veterans within the

[74] Interview conducted and recounted by Bujošević & Radovanović (2003).
[75] Ibid.

MUP, including Goran Radosavljević. In short, Buha constructed a quintessential defection network within the Belgrade police apparatus. There is no evidence that Buha used inducements or threats to encourage other policemen to join his defection network, but his four colleagues do report remonstrating at length with their contacts trying to get them to defect.[76]

As for strategic framing, Buha volunteered to introduce himself and the BPB on the opposition-controlled 'New RTS' late on the night of 5-6th October. The broadcast stated that the BPB was now allied with the protesters and that they would henceforth be ready to defend them from crackdowns by loyal forces. Using national communications infrastructure to proclaim defection is a key indicator of strategic framing: Buha explicitly wanted to issue a public signal to the regime and opposition alike that a part of the regime's coercive apparatus had indubitably abandoned the regime. In the BPB's address, it emphasized to viewers the role it had already played in aiding the revolution, from Buha's nonviolent solution to the Kolubara incident, to their refusal to deploy force at the parliament, to the guards they had stationed around the RTS transmission station at Košutnjak. The public defection was deliberately sent out once night had fallen because the opposition feared that Milošević would use the cover of night to order a crackdown in Belgrade.[77] They perceived that the "most difficult time" was the early morning of the 6th, when "they can sweep us all off."[78] Buha's announcement signalled that crackdowns would draw the BPB into the fight to defend the protesters, thereby raising the costs of repression and matching the JSO's defection on the afternoon of the 5th October. Finally, the broadcast emphasized that loyalty to Milošević was crumbling in the police and that the government would soon fall.

It is hard to test the theses using one case. However, we can generate impressions of whether the relationships they posit were operative in this case. The first thesis predicted that senior ranking members of the coercive apparatus are more likely to initiate defection attempts than junior ranks. In terms of reach, Buha's seniority and experience in the police force had brought him into contact with his four fellow dissidents which allowed him to initiate and expand his defection network. In turn, his status as a commander of the Belgrade Police Brigade and famous veteran of the Kosovo War gave him leverage over his colleagues and other police commanders in Belgrade in the form of trust and social capital.

[76] Elite Interview #26. Criminal investigations police officer in Belgrade 1991-2003; Chief of Internal Control in the Ministry of the Interior 2003-2007; 2010-present professor at the Belgrade Police Academy.
[77] Elite Interview #30. Milja Jovanović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor resistance group.
[78] Ibid.

Buha's four junior colleagues, by contrast, struggled to persuade others to defect. When they called contacts in their units and departments, they told them: "I don't have time to talk to you."[79] They would try to press their point using moral and personal arguments, but usually with limited results: "You have children, we need to change something."[80] Their contacts were unconvinced because they were being approached by relatively unimportant individuals within the Belgrade police apparatus: the four colleagues lacked the authority of a ranking officer with tangible capabilities to rally people round their cause. It was also problematic that the conversations between the four colleagues and their contacts could have been intercepted by the state security service. Many of their contacts didn't want to openly discuss politics on the phone where they could be recorded. Buha, by contrast, could meet senior colleagues in the Belgrade Police Department in person as part of his professional remit.

As for Buha's evaluation of the costs to him of attempting to suppress a successful revolution or the chances of detection, there is little information available to assess the power of these factors accurately. Only one piece of evidence speaks to the former. Many interviewees both inside and outside the coercive apparatus mentioned how the coverage of the Romanian revolution in 1989 preconditioned Serbs' perceptions and expectations on 5th October. Footage of the revolution that resulted in the overthrow and execution of Nicolae Ceaușescu was filmed almost exclusively by Serbian cameras, as one of the only countries with seamless access to Romania at the time.[81] The Serbs' footage was beamed around the world but, crucially, was shown endlessly on Serbian television. In particular, there was video evidence of the military, conventional police, and Securitate (the notorious Romanian secret police) using lethal force against protesters in the Romanian city of Timișoara. Domestically and internationally, this generated enormous opprobrium. Buha was certainly aware of the events involving the Romanian security forces at Timișoara but the degree to which it motivated his actions is much more speculative.

The second thesis posits that first-movers will be more likely to organize defection attempts when they detect pervasive and intense grievances against the incumbent within the coercive apparatus. Buha convened the meeting with his colleagues partly so that he could ascertain the mindset of rank-and-file policemen across Belgrade. In interviews, his colleagues recalled that he seemed to want reassurance that if he led others would follow,

[79] Elite Interview #26. Criminal investigations police officer in Belgrade 1991-2003; Chief of Internal Control in the Ministry of the Interior 2003-2007; 2010-present professor at the Belgrade Police Academy.
[80] Ibid.
[81] Elite Interview #11. Zoran Kusovac. Radio Television Belgrade (RTB) and Sky News journalist, 1980-present.

demonstrating that Buha was concerned about being an isolated defector. They also reported to me that he needed to be persuaded that grievances about Kosovo, the anti-Otpor campaign, and misusing the police for sordid political goals were sufficiently strong to have turned a sizeable proportion of policemen against Milošević. Buha's need to be persuaded and his desire to collect information about the patterning of grievances across the police indicate that these factors were indeed a critical part of Buha's defection decision. In effect, he was checking whether the size of the group that would defect automatically was large enough to ensure his own personal safety and the success of the defection cascade.

The third thesis predicted that first-movers are less likely to initiate defection attempts when there are large numbers of loyalists within the coercive apparatus. My interviewees relayed that Buha wanted the inside line on attitudes within the rank-and-file precisely because they had a reputation in the 1990s for being card-carrying Milošević supporters. Many were rabid nationalists who lionized Milošević for triggering wars to extend Serbia's borders and believed the regime's propaganda that 'the West' were responsible for Serbia's litany of problems. Buha wanted to avoid a situation where he unilaterally defected with the BPB and was hung out to dry by the rest of the police.

He also explicitly recognized the threat of the historically ultra-loyal JSO when he told his colleagues that he was prepared to engage the BPB against the special forces if necessary. Since the JSO had been prepared to mistreat and kill innocent civilians in Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo on Milošević's orders, it was understandable that Buha (and many others) feared their intervention against pro-democracy protesters. Their violent record also gave the JSO something to lose if Milošević was overthrown: their state-sponsored immunity for past crimes. Thus, according to his close colleagues, Buha seems to have seriously considered the impact that resolute loyalists could have had on the success of the defection attempt.

The fourth thesis suggests that first-movers will be less likely to initiate defection attempts when the incumbent has dealt with defectors harshly in the past and has a poor human rights record. Milošević was widely known to act decisively to remove suspected disloyalists from key positions. For instance, after the election on September 24th, opposition leader Zoran Djindjic tried to establish contact between the commander of the anti-terrorist police units (*Specijalne Antiterorističke Jedinica*, SAJ) and the DOS's presidential candidate, Vojislav Koštunica (Bujošević & Radovanović 2003). Both the commander, Zivko Trajković, and Koštunica were for the idea but the meeting never happened because Trajković was summarily removed from his position and transferred to Kuršumlija, 160 miles south of Belgrade. More senior figures, such as Momčilo Perišić and Jovica Stanišić, the

Chief of the General Staff and head of the State Security Service (*Resor državne bezbednosti*, RDB) respectively until 1998, were also removed because of suspected disloyalty to Milošević.

The Milošević regime had also assassinated multiple political opponents in the lead-up to 5th October. A British intelligence officer working in Belgrade at the time reported that his contacts had told him that the killings had made a deep impression on figures within the coercive apparatus: "[it] makes you think, I could be next."[82] For instance, Željko 'Arkan' Ražnatović, the most powerful crime boss in the Balkans and commander of the Serb Volunteer Guard that fought in the Croatia and Bosnia wars on covert orders from Milošević's government, was assassinated on Milošević's orders in January 2000 in the lobby of the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Belgrade. At a time when war crime tribunals were fast becoming a reality, Arkan was thought to simply know too much.[83]

The fact that Buha only invited trusted associates at first into the defection network implies that he was worried about the costs of being exposed. His colleagues reported to me that he knew about Zivko Trajković's transfer to Kuršumlija and foresaw a similarly humiliating demotion or worse if the regime got wind of his disloyalty. The assassination of Arkan and others evinced that Milošević was unafraid to kill suspected rebels within the coercive apparatus. Perhaps most telling is that Buha didn't start proactively aiding the protesters until late on 5th October when it was becoming evident that Milošević's grasp on power was weakened, even though he had decided to defect on 3rd October. At Kolubara, Buha stopped short of siding with the miners and opted to find a compromise that would allow them to continue the shutdown and create the illusion that Buha had done everything in his power to stop them. Buha's reluctance to reveal his disloyalty until the last moment indicates that he recognized and feared the consequences that awaited him as a defector if the revolution was unsuccessful.

Finally, the fifth thesis posits that first-movers are more likely to defect when they sense a disjuncture between their professional duties and their personal belief in keeping the incumbent in power. His colleagues told me that Buha had decided to "protect democratic values and freedom" by recognizing DOS's victory in the first round of presidential elections in September.[84] Buha's own personal testimony, reported above, corroborates their

[82] Elite Interview #37. Former MI6 operative in Belgrade when Milošević was overthrown.

[83] Correspondence from interviewee #11. Zoran Kusovac. Radio Television Belgrade (RTB) and Sky News journalist, 1980-present. "He was killed by the secret service because he was a liability. During the 1999 bombing, he stayed high-visibility at the Hyatt [hotel] and made it a point to contact [the] foreign press daily. He wanted out and would have been cooperative to NOT be tried at the ICTY [International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia]."

[84] Elite Interview #26. Criminal investigations police officer in Belgrade 1991-2003; Chief of Internal Control in the Ministry of the Interior 2003-2007; 2010-present professor at the Belgrade Police Academy.

impression: "How could I explain [why I defected]? I had lived in one system for 40 years: Tito's Pioneers, Tito's youth, Tito's communists. I just went on in the same way after that and then, suddenly, someone slapped me hard. I came to my senses and said, 'Hang on, f*** you!' That's how I felt!"[85] For Buha, DOS's election victory - and Milošević's derisory 37.2% of the vote - represented an independent barometer of public support for change that the police ought not to impede. The election acted as a "key driver" that resulted in "some options simply fading out": supporting Milošević was no longer feasible after such a rout, which left unit commanders deciding between defecting or fighting against defecting units.[86]

7.8 Alternative Explanations

Alternative theories of defection offer less satisfactory explanations of the BPB's defection. If the positional account were correct, we should expect that the large number of disillusioned police officers across the Serbian police apparatus to have been sufficient to spark defection. Yet, despite the pervasive rancour generated by the anti-Otpor campaign, the regime's politicization of police work, and Milošević's mishandling of the war in Kosovo, Buha's defection is the only instance of impactful defection in the entire Serbian police apparatus that stands up to scrutiny. Moreover, the decisive factor in Buha's case seems not to have been an overwhelming disaffection with Milošević but rather the acquisition of credible information that grievances were sufficiently widespread within the police to assuage his concerns about isolated defection. This was why Buha began by conspiring with junior officers rather than senior officers: only the former could provide him with a window into the mindset of the rank-and-file. Thereafter, the emergence of a viable defection attempt was driven by Buha's contacts and leverage, not the acuteness of grievances within the police.

Moreover, the Belgrade Police Brigade was not the most aggrieved unit in the police. These were the sidelined criminal investigations division which felt prevented from doing proper detective work and the uniformed police who were conscripted into wars and political campaigns they had no enthusiasm for. The BPB, by contrast, was highly patronaged and its involvement in the Kosovo War was more reasonable than for other units because it was a military police force. The positional account, therefore, predicts that other units should have defected before the BPB when in fact the reverse was true. This may point to another oversight in the positional account: it overlooks the possibility that historically loyal and

[85] Interview conducted and recounted by Bujošević & Radovanović (2003).

[86] Elite Interview #19. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.

high-capacity units realize that their defection will be uniquely impactful both as a signal to the coercive apparatus and because it meaningfully detracts from the incumbent's firepower. This realization might prompt commanders to think about whether they stand to gain from defecting when usually this thought would not have occurred to them.[87]

As for the 'revolution as process' or coordination approach, it is clear that the premise of surprise does not hold in this situation. Neither Buha nor the senior police officers he reached out to were remotely surprised by the revolution or the regime's orders to repress the miners at Kolubara and the protesters in Belgrade. This gave them time to build defection networks to stack the deck in their favour and kick-start the defection cascade. Thus, the premise of surprise does not hold and *a fortiori* the Serbian revolution was not characterized by severely intractable coordination problems across the entire police. Rather, a conspiracy in its senior echelons reduced uncertainty amongst key actors. Further down the line, however, some the coordination approach's key processual hypotheses are vindicated by the BPB case, such as first-movers' efforts to create common knowledge of their impending success. However, Buha's meeting with the junior officers was not meant to 'make a fact' as coup theorists would posit; if that had been its purpose, Buha would have convened a meeting of more important policemen. Chapter 10 will delve into the coordination problem during the revolution in more detail, but it is evident that the BPB sought to manipulate the defection cascade to increase their odds of triumphing.

[87] Buha received a hefty promotion after 5th October. It is unclear whether this was linked to his actions during the revolution. I could find no evidence that Buha interacted with members of DOS before the revolution or that he was ever offered any inducements to defect.

Results Table: The Belgrade Police Brigade		
Theoretical Component	**Confirmation**	**Observation/CPO**
Axiom: first-movers foresee revolution and repression.	Yes	Buha met with four colleagues on Požeška Street on 3rd October (two days before the revolution) to discuss the revolution and how to avoid repressive orders.
Mechanism 1: coalition building.	Yes	The meeting that Buha convened created a small defection network spanning different units across the Belgrade police apparatus. His four juniors were instructed to co-opt others by phone and Buha himself contacted other veterans within the MUP such as his superior officer, Goran Radosavljević.
Mechanism 2: strategic framing.	Yes	Buha and the BPB appeared on the opposition's television station, 'New RTS', on the night of 5/6th October. The broadcast stated that the BPB would support the protesters and defend them if necessary and that loyalty to Milošević's regime was crumbling in the police.
Mechanism 3: coordination.	N/A	See Chapter 10 for evidence of coordination during the revolution.
Thesis 1: senior ranks likely to initiate defection.	Yes	Buha's seniority enabled him to convene the initial meeting with the four dissidents from across Belgrade's policing apparatus. His reach and rank also facilitated his communication with Goran Radosavljević who agreed to defect with him. Buha's junior colleagues, by contrast, failed to persuade their fearful colleagues to defect because they didn't have sufficient leverage over them.

Thesis 2: widespread disloyalty incentivizes defection.	Yes	Buha convened the meeting with his colleagues partly so that he could ascertain the mindset of rank-and-file policemen in Belgrade. His colleagues told him that Milošević's anti-Otpor campaign and capitulation in Kosovo had generated widespread disillusionment. This information reassured Buha that his defection would not lead to his complete isolation and thereby enabled him to defect.
Thesis 3: presence of loyal units deters defection.	Yes	The Serbian police were traditionally staunch Milošević supporters, so Buha wanted to check whether this loyalty was still the status quo in October 2000. He also explicitly recognized the threat posed by the JSO, Milošević's praetorian guard, if it chose to remain loyal.
Thesis 4: poor past treatment of defectors deters defection.	Yes	Buha was aware that Milošević had recently transferred and demoted several individuals in the coercive apparatus for suspected disloyalty. He was concerned that he would befall a similar fate if detected and didn't announce the BPB's defection explicitly until late on 5th October, preferring to shirk his orders until then.
Thesis 5: repressive duties and antipathy for the incumbent incentivize defection.	Yes	The BPB's commanders felt that Milošević's defeat at the polls was sufficient reason to support the revolution. Buha himself expressed disquiet about Milošević's persistent willingness to use force and fraud to remain in office.

Table 7.1: Summary of the Belgrade Police Brigade's defection process.

Chapter 8

Empirics II: The Yugoslav Army

"To be a chief in Milošević's regime, it's not so much trouble if you're loyal."

Goran Matić
Federal Information Minister

Introduction

In this chapter, I chart the defection of the Yugoslav Army (*Vojska Jugoslavije*, VJ) in the Serbian revolution. In particular, I trace how the Chief of Staff, General Nebojša Pavković, and the General Staff arrived at their decision to defect. On 2nd October, Pavković invited his longstanding friend and political ally, Federal Information Minister Goran Matić, to the Supreme Command HQ and proposed to jointly defect from Milošević in a bid to avert the revolution. On 5th October, Milošević asked Pavković to intervene at several critical junctures: when protesters had taken the Serbian Parliament, when the regime's television building was under siege, and when the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) were about to announce their victory on national television and radio from a transmitter station in southwest Belgrade. Each time, the VJ declined to intervene. On October 6th, Pavković orchestrated the meeting between Koštunica and Milošević that culminated in Milošević's departure from power.

I begin with a brief contextual overview of the Yugoslav Army so that readers are familiar with the key events in its history that shaped the top brass' collective mentality and approach to the revolution on 5th October. Then, I explain how the proposed coalition between Pavković and Matić emerged and why the VJ originally decided to defect. Pervasive anti-Milošević sentiment within the VJ, revealed by the ballots for the presidential election collected in the barracks, and officers' reticence to compromise the VJ's apolitical ethos

were decisive factors in the General Staff's defection decision. Next, I provide an events analysis of the VJ's actions during the revolution. Milošević himself ordered Pavković to deploy forces when the protesters were close to taking the parliament and RTS buildings, but Pavković shirked the commands on logistical and pragmatic grounds.

I leave my main discussion of the VJ's role on 5th October until the end of the chapter. I find that the key mechanisms of my theory are confirmed by the way in which the VJ decided to defect. In particular, the entire top brass formed a defection network and attempted to induct an influential political figure in the hope that his defection would spark a defection cascade within the ruling coalition. Their effort to enlist Matić demonstrates their attempt to create an inter-organizational anti-incumbent coalition. In addition, the case confirms four of my five theses about the key drivers of defection decisions. All told, it vindicates the central empirical claims of this dissertation: security forces preempt revolutionary activity and, if key individuals want to topple the incumbent, attempt to organize and choreograph defection networks to trigger regime-killing defection cascades. I point out that the alternative theories, such as the positional account and pure coordination approach, do not adequately explain the way in which the VJ defected.

The chapter is underpinned by extensive interview evidence from conversations with Goran Matić and other senior politicians. One the chapter's protagonists, General Nebojša Pavković, is currently imprisoned for war crimes by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY). This imposed heavy limits on my ability to directly assess his contemporaneous perceptions and motivations. I sought to ameliorate this bias by triangulating the testimony of Pavković's close associates with interviews that he gave before he was surrendered to the ICTY in 2005. Crucially, the account of the revolution that he relayed to researchers Bujošević and Radovanović (2003) and transcripts of General Staff meetings from before the revolution corroborated key aspects of Goran Matić's interviews with me. For particularly hazy periods, such as the deployment of tanks late on 5th October, I drew on video and interview evidence from Pavković's colleague and friend General Aleksandar Vasiljević in *Konačni Obračun* ('The Final Encounter'), a Serbian-language documentary produced by Serbia's foremost political journal *Vreme*.

8.1 Institutional Overview: The Yugoslav Army

When Milošević took power in 1987, The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's (SFRY) military was known as the Yugoslav People's Army (*Jugoslovenska narodna armija*, JNA).

In May 1992, the unilateral secession of Bosnia, Croatia, and Slovenia from the SFRY prompted a change of name and structure. The new Yugoslav Army (*Vojska Jugoslavije*, VJ) was constructed from the remnants of the JNA and drew its manpower and funding from the nascent Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) - a union of the two remaining SFRY republics, Serbia and Montenegro. Thus, both the VJ and the JNA were constitutionally federal institutions which fostered a strong culture of 'Yugoslavism' in their officer corps: a commitment to serve the interests of the federation rather than the republics. It relied on universal conscription to fill its ranks, though there was also a career-oriented officer corps (Gow 2002). The VJ had five main branches: the Army, Navy, Air Force, Military Intelligence, and the Territorial Defence Forces.

Given its federal status, Milošević developed several mechanisms for coup-proofing and controlling the VJ. Before the inception of the FRY and the VJ in March 1992, the federal president of Yugoslavia had been the constitutional commander of the JNA. Milošević's new constitution for the FRY, however, put the VJ under the control of a Supreme Defence Council (SDC) comprising the federal, Serbian, and Montenegrin presidents (Koukordinos 2001). As the Serbian and subsequently federal president, the SDC gave Milošević a constitutional means of controlling the VJ. Milošević also orchestrated a thoroughgoing purge of non-Serbs and former JNA officers in 1992-93, which aimed to quash any vestiges of Yugoslavism and left only nine former JNA generals in the entire VJ (Gow 2002). Strong pressure on VJ personnel to conform to the institution's new Serb nationalist agenda culminated in the installation of Milošević loyalist Dragoljub Ojdanić as Chief of the General Staff in 1998.

The VJ's Department of Security, popularly known as the Counterintelligence Agency (*Kontraobaveštajna služba*, KOS), was crucial in delivering Milošević's changes. KOS was one of the three core constituent organizations within Military Intelligence and was responsible for the VJ's internal "political reliability" as well as countering other states' intelligence services (Edmunds 2008). KOS personnel operated at every rank of the military which effectively gave it a separate, semi-autonomous chain of command. This separation made KOS a ripe target for manipulation by the regime. By late-1992, KOS was deeply politicized and controlled by Milošević stalwarts who used its internal monitoring capabilities to identify and surveil suspected rebels across the whole military apparatus (Hadžić 2002).

The reorientation of the VJ from its Yugoslav ethos and historic professionalism to a semi-autonomous arm of the Serbian state meant that it was gradually sucked into fighting on Serbia's behalf in the Yugoslav wars (Edmunds 2005). In Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, the VJ fought alongside Serbian paramilitaries and, in some cases, committed horrific war

crimes and crimes against humanity in the course of war (Glenny 1996). In Croatia, the JNA/VJ was responsible for indiscriminately shelling Croatian cities including Dubrovnik, Vukovar, Zadar, and Sibenik, as well as other war crimes and "preparing the field" for crimes committed by Serb paramilitary units.[1] The ICTY has found multiple Serbs guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity in all three Yugoslav wars, including deportation, forcible transfer, murder, persecution, rape, and ethnic cleansing, including successive Chiefs of Staff Dragoljub Ojdanić and Nebojša Pavković.

Another coup-proofing strategy that Milošević deployed against the VJ was the creation of multiple functional rivals. Throughout the 1990s, he drastically increased the number of parallel security agencies such as the Special Operations Unit (*Jedinica za specijalne operacije*, JSO) and other paramilitary groups that did his gruesome bidding in the Yugoslav wars. These new units mostly sat within the RDB which, as a republic-level institution, Milošević had full control over as President of Serbia. By the time he became President of Yugoslavia in 1997, he had installed a loyal functionary, Jovica Stanišić, as head of the RDB. Stanišić was promptly sacked for suspected disloyalty in 1998 and replaced by Radomir Marković, another fervent acolyte of Milošević. In addition, Milošević successfully militarized the uniformed police by creating several elite units such as the special police units (*Posebne jedinice policije,* PSP). These alternative security organizations compelled the VJ to compete for funding and influence that historically had been guaranteed.

The only time that the military was mobilized against protesters during Milošević's tenure was in Belgrade on 9th March 1991. The Serbian Renewal Movement, an opposition party, had called for mass demonstrations to protest against the government's abuse of Radio Television Serbia, the broadcaster that the regime used to peddle pro-Milošević propaganda and a slurry of lies about the opposition. On the afternoon of 9th March, when the protesters looked likely to overwhelm the ordinary police, Milošević demanded that the President of Yugoslavia deploy JNA troops to suppress the protests. Later that evening, once the federal presidency had met and approved the decision, JNA tanks and armoured cars began to patrol the streets of Belgrade. Two people died and over 100 were injured in the clashes with the police and army. The 9th March events reportedly made a deep impression on JNA officers, who saw it as an inappropriate deployment of military power, and the events sullied the military's reputation.

In summary, Milošević made great efforts in the 1990s to politicize the JNA and VJ. To overturn officers' historic commitment to Yugoslavism and political autonomy, he installed

[1] Humanitarian Law Centre Report: "The JNA in the Wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina," June 2018.

loyalists in key positions. Moreover, to reduce his dependence on the unreliable military, he created parallel armed forces within the Ministry of the Interior (*Ministarstvo unutrašnjih poslova*, MUP) that he could personally control. In 1998, Milošević began to pivot back towards favouring the VJ over the MUP because he needed the military to fight in Kosovo. By 2000, the VJ's conduct in the Yugoslav wars had vitiated its reputation and few doubted the extent of Milošević's influence in the General Staff. Consequently, there was deep uncertainty amongst key actors in the lead-up to 5th October about whether the VJ would follow Milošević's orders to deploy against the people. Memories of the 9th March 1991 and the vicious crackdown were emblazoned in the opposition's minds as they prayed that the VJ retained enough political backbone to stand up to Milošević.

8.2 The Roots of Coalition: Pre-Existing Military-Political Alliance

On 2nd October at 11am, Goran Matić arrived at the Supreme Command Headquarters of the VJ on Neznanog Junaka street in southwest Belgrade. At the time, Matić was the Federal Information Minister, which put him in charge of creating pro-regime television and radio content for the government. His position put him at the centre of government and in daily contact with Milošević, who depended on Matić to broadcast a selective stream of government policy successes through the sprawling state media apparatus. The great deception was run primarily through state television channels such as Radio Television Serbia (RTS) and Tanjug, as well as the regime-friendly daily newspaper *Politika*, which by 2000 had become hated symbols of Milošević's rule.

Matić was a senior party official in the Yugoslav Left (*Jugoslovenska levica*, JUL), a political party founded and run by Milošević's wife, Mirjana Marković. He was one of only three JUL members to sit in the cabinet alongside Milošević's Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS). In the Serbian general election in 1997, the SPS had allied with JUL and the New Democracy (ND) party to form the Left Coalition (*Leva koalicija*, LK). The LK had won the parliamentary election with 34.3% of the vote, collecting 110 seats compared to 82 for its closest contender, the Serbian Radical Party led by Vojislav Šešelj. This put all three parties in the LK in government, led by Milošević and the SPS. According to the coalition agreement, JUL were allocated three positions in the cabinet - one of which was occupied by Matić.

Matić had been called to the VJ's Supreme Command Headquarters by the Chief of Staff General Nebojša Pavković. Matić and Pavković had first worked together in the Kosovo

War when Matić needed some footage of the VJ to broadcast. After that, they "became friends."[2] Since early 2000, they had been lunching together every week at the Supreme Command on Neznanog Junaka street. The main purpose of these lunches was to share intelligence: Matić told me that "they gave very important information to me and I gave them some part of my analytics about [the political] situation."[3] Pavković even visited Matić's house in his hometown of Sremska Mitrovica near Serbia's border with Croatia and Bosnia. A trusting friendship developed between them, which allowed them to speak candidly with each other: "Before spring and October, we developed very good and correct communication. And he [Pavković] knew that I would not sell him out."[4]

Matić revealed to me that he and Pavković remained in contact principally because they had a shared interest: deposing the director of the RDB, Radomir 'Rade' Marković. Marković had been hurriedly helicoptered into the top job at the RDB to replace Jovica Stanišić in 1998, when Milošević fired Stanišić for suspected contact with Western intelligence agencies.[5] From the beginning, Marković struggled to exert his influence in the RDB. Having risen through the ranks of the regular uniformed policing branch of the MUP, not the RDB, "people in the secret service took him as a 'foreign person'."[6] To make matters worse, Stanišić retained a parallel chain of command within the RDB after he was fired, especially with its most dangerous unit, the Special Operations Unit, which cut Marković out of many key decisions.[7] Since "most people felt him [Stanišić] as their boss" in the RDB and because Marković was an ineffectual leader, Matić considered him an inept replacement for Stanišić and wanted him sacked.

Matić also opposed Marković's appointment because he had received intelligence that he had criminal connections. Whilst it was relatively common for top politicians to be covertly involved in corruption rackets during Milošević's tenure, most tried to hide it. Marković, by contrast, was photographed playing tennis with Andrija Drašković, a known criminal, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in New Belgrade. More than once, Matić argued the case with Milošević and Mirjana Marković to sack Rade Marković but it never happened. As for why Marković remained head of the RDB despite Matić's objections, Matić emitted a wry laugh

[2]Elite Interview #38. Goran Matić.
[3]Ibid.
[4]Ibid.
[5]Elite Interview #14. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.
[6]Elite Interview #38. Goran Matić.
[7]Elite Interview #14. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.
Also: Elite Interview #31 and #38: Goran Matić.

during one of our interviews: "To be [a] chief in Milošević's regime, it's not so much trouble if you're loyal."[8]

As for Pavković, Matić informed me that his disdain for Rade Marković stretched back to the Kosovo War when Pavković was Commander of the Third Army of the VJ. During the war, Pavković had enlisted the help of General Aleksandar Vasiljević, a career military officer in the VJ, as an advisor.[9] In May 1999, however, Vasiljević was unexpectedly kidnapped and beaten by men from Milošević's praetorian guard, the Special Operations Unit (JSO), in the town of Trstenik about 40 miles north of Kosovo.[10] The attackers also ransacked a local military base. The JSO were a covert branch of Marković's RDB, and the incident immediately put Pavković and Marković at loggerheads.

Eight months later, this "internal scandal" was followed by another.[11] The director of KOS, Branko Gajić, and Vasiljević informed Pavković that he was being surveilled by two men from the JSO. Unaware that Pavković knew they were monitoring him, the two JSO men were promptly arrested by the military. Fuming, "Pavković went to Milošević and Rade Marković told him that he didn't know anything about it. It was a crazy situation that state security observed [i.e., surveilled] the supreme commander" but Milošević again decided not to sack Marković.[12]

The two incidents involving Pavković and the RDB made him and Matić "natural allies."[13] When Dragoljub Ojdanić was promoted to Defence Minister of Yugoslavia in February 2000, Pavković became Chief of the General Staff and Matić gained an even more powerful friend.[14] Together, they lobbied for Marković's dismissal:

> "When Pavković started to be dissatisfied with state security and their work and their connection with criminals, he told me and he appealed to Milošević. Once he asked me to go with him to Milošević because I also had a conflict with state security and everybody in the state knows it. We were natural allies because I had trouble with Minister of the Interior, [Vlajko] Stojiljković, and Chief of the Secret Service, Rade Marković. I was in conflict with them, he was in conflict with them. So, we went together to Milošević to speak with him about this type of behaviour."[15]

[8] Elite Interview #38. Goran Matić.
[9] See: ICTY Profile, Aleksandar Vasiljević. https://www.icty.org/en/content/aleksandar-vasiljević. Accessed: 15/04/2020.
[10] See: Blic Archive, "JSO hteo da ubije generala Vasiljevića." *Blic*, 20/01/2007.
[11] Elite Interview #38. Goran Matić.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Elite Interview #31. Goran Matić.
[14] See: Staff journalist, 'Dragoljub Ojdanić: Profile and Career.' *BBC World Service*.
[15] Elite Interview #38. Goran Matić.

Consequently, it was relatively normal for Pavković to have invited Matić to Supreme Command HQ on Neznanog Junaka street. Since 1998, they had been in regular professional and social contact. They trusted each other and it was commonplace for them to exchange and discuss sensitive political information. Indeed, trading classified military intelligence for political secrets was the bedrock of their relationship. Their joint crusade against Rade Marković had fortified this relationship. Whilst they wanted Marković to be dismissed for different reasons, they had strategized together about how best to unseat him. The quotation above shows that it was widely known in the government that they were a united front against Marković and had been unafraid to tell Milošević, a capricious figure at best when challenged, that his acolyte was under-performing.

8.3 Coalition Building and Strategic Framing: A Meeting in Supreme Command HQ, 2nd October

When Matić entered the Supreme Command building, he was taken to a conference room. Pavković and approximately twenty VJ generals from across the military apparatus were sitting around a long table. Matić was the only person in the room without a military position. The meeting lasted for forty five minutes and only Pavković and Matić spoke; the other officers "were sitting as confirmation of their readiness and their unity for this decision."[16] Matić recalled that the generals seemed "absolutely unified" and that, from the way Pavković was speaking for the room, they had clearly discussed the meeting's subject before.[17] He remembers being surprised that so much of the General Staff was represented in the conference room.

Indeed, the General Staff had formulated their view some days earlier. On 28th September, four days after the election results were announced, Pavković convened a full meeting of the top brass (Vlajković 2004). The general in charge of the VJ's intelligence unit, Branko Krga, was invited to share the most recent information gathered on the opposition's response to the fraudulent elections. According to the meeting notes, which I was able to obtain from the scribe attached to the General Staff at the time, Krga relayed the opposition's plan to stage "massive protests" on 5th October. Another general, Milan Djaković, told the attendees that "our intelligence suggests that they [i.e., the opposition] will not participate in the second round, so further destabilization and pressure on the MUP and army can be expected."[18] These intelligence updates strongly suggest that the General

[16] Elite Interview #31. Goran Matić.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Transcript, Meeting of the VJ General Staff, 28/09/2000.

Staff were collectively aware of the opposition's plans to stage a revolt on 5th October by 28th September at the latest.

Following the updates, Pavković set out his thinking. First, he asked General Svetozar Marjanović to devise "future plans for the army for the various scenarios."[19] Second, he told the generals that "no action will be taken unless the military and federal institutions are under attack."[20] These instructions indicate that Pavković wanted to pre-arrange how the VJ would respond to different eventualities that could transpire during the revolution. His stated policy of inaction, apart from if the demonstrators threatened to damage military or federal institutions, reveals that he had decided that the VJ would not rescue Milošević's political career following his election defeat. With this, the General Staff became a defection network.

In the meeting on 2nd October, Matić told me that Pavković explained the VJ's thinking at length. He told Matić: "Our estimation is that Milošević will not save his position."[21] To Matić, it seemed that the VJ had "very realistic estimations of the [political] situation and about the future and possible moves" and that their main task at that time was finding "some solution for helping the country to survive."[22] It had been eight days since Milošević had lost the first round of the presidential election to Koštunica and DOS had made no secret of their plan to transport hundreds of thousands of people to Belgrade on 5th October. Pavković knew that Milošević would need to ask the VJ for help to suppress the revolution, just as he had on 9th March 1991. This option, Pavković explained, was now off the table: the VJ had decided that "we are loyal to the people and the result of the election."[23] In other words, the VJ were "ready to stand behind Milošević until he [lost the] support of public opinion and voters."[24]

Throughout the meeting, Pavković referred repeatedly to the VJ's apolitical ethos and how it was shaping the top brass' approach to the situation. He reiterated several times that "the military is responsible to save [i.e., uphold] the constitution."[25] Matić recalled: "They made an oath after the military academy to protect and save this country. Not Milošević, not me, not my party. The country! Their responsibility is higher than to save Milošević."[26] He emphasized: "We cannot speak about treason in the army. We can only speak about saving the country," meaning that Pavković felt that his duty was to protect

[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Email correspondence with Goran Matić. 03/04/2020.
[25] Elite Interview #31. Goran Matić.
[26] Elite Interview #38. Goran Matić.

Serbian institutions rather than any of its transient domestic political actors, including Milošević.[27] The election showed the top brass that Milošević no longer had the support of the population, which meant that it was now incumbent on the VJ to recognize the opposition as Milošević's rightful successor.

Pavković went on to tell Matić that the military's obligation to uphold Serbia's constitution extended further than accepting Koštunica's victory. If the revolution threatened to turn violent, Pavković accentuated that he was only prepared to engage proportionate military force to facilitate the transition and restore domestic peace. He said: "We need to do it [i.e., intervene] in a legal way... We will stop protests, [so there is] no danger of a civil war. We want a peaceful transition of power."[28] The VJ, therefore, didn't rule out deploying their forces during the revolution; rather, they ruled out disproportionate force that could be labelled an outcome-altering political intervention. Pavković was clear: if Milošević vacated office and the protesters remained non-violent, then there would be no need whatsoever for the VJ to get involved.

However, the Chief of Staff doubted whether Milošević would simply concede to Koštunica. Milošević's decision to instruct the electoral commission to manipulate the result of the first round suggested that he meant to stay in power, even if that meant using force. Pavković needed a non-violent means of forcing Milošević's hand. As a member of Milošević's cabinet, he naturally looked to his friend Matić. After explaining the VJ's position, Pavković asked Matić to "publicly support Koštunica and then the military will stand with Koštunica and Milošević will go immediately."[29] Pavković perceived Matić as a powerful and well-known linchpin in the Milošević administration whose public defection would spark an unravelling of loyalty in JUL, the SPS, and the coercive apparatus that would compel Milošević to step down. The VJ would do its part by issuing "a statement [saying] that the military is responsible for upholding the constitution and they would protect [the] constitution with the support of Koštunica in power."[30]

The plan was well calculated: the defection of Milošević's propaganda minister, who had loyally served the regime from a key position in Milošević's wife's party, was calibrated to make others defect. Apart from his reputation and position, there were other important reasons why Pavković sought out Matić. Most importantly, Matić told me that he "was the only person in [the] federal government to whom he [Pavković] can speak in this way."[31] Their pre-existing relationship served to reassure Pavković that Matić "would not sell him

[27] Ibid.
[28] Elite Interview #31. Goran Matić.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Elite Interview #38. Goran Matić.

[out]" or "go to Milošević and tell him that Pavković wants to attack the state."[32] The two had trusted each other well enough to have been sharing political information for many months by October 2000, and that trust allowed Pavković to speak frankly with Matić. His proximity to Mirjana Marković was also useful: Pavković knew that Marković was "sensitive" to Matić's proposals and that he had "authority" with the power couple.[33]

Matić, however, didn't view Pavković's proposition as such a good deal. He explained to me that not only would he risk facing recriminations from the regime by signing up to Pavković's scheme, but it was also unclear exactly what he would gain by being the first mainstream Milošević supporter to defect. Understandably, he also didn't want to be associated with the fallout. The ICTY had already issued indictments for Milošević and several senior politicians and military officers for their role in a colossal range of nauseating crimes during the Yugoslav wars and they would lose their state-sponsored immunity if Milošević lost power. Matić put it to me: "In less than one second, I saw Milošević in the Hague, in a tribunal. I had seen a lot of stupid things happen, I didn't want to take the historical stamp for these things. In the end, it was a very simple reason [why I didn't agree]."[34]

Ultimately, Matić declined Pavković's plan. They agreed, however, to remain in touch every day until the political situation was resolved and to collaborate if possible. Even if its consequences were minimal, the meeting demonstrates that the most senior officers in the VJ correctly identified 5th October 2000 as an endgame scenario in which they would be called upon to mete out repression to save the regime. It also shows that they were exceptionally keen to avoid this possibility and tried to organize a defection network between the military and one of Milošević's closest political colleagues, with the explicit aim of sparking a defection cascade within the government and security forces. The trusting, long-standing bond between Pavković and Matić facilitated candid communication between the two and both Matić's and Pavković's leverage and reach were crucial in setting up the meeting.

8.4 The Strategic Backdrop: Anti-Milošević Sentiment in the Military

While Pavković was primarily concerned to not embroil the VJ in what he saw as a fundamentally political revolution, he had other motivations to steer clear of engaging his forces

[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.

on 5th October. A key problem was that he could not rely on rank-and-file soldiers in the VJ to follow orders that would involve repressing fellow Serbs. By the time he met Matić in the Supreme Command HQ on 2nd October, Pavković had seen information about how the whole VJ had voted in the presidential election on 24th September. Each barracks counted as its own polling station and the votes were counted separately from the general population, which gave Pavković and his advisers an excellent window into political attitudes across the entire VJ organization through their contacts in the electoral commission.[35] The VJ was a conscript military, so the majority of its manpower were between the age of 18 and 21 which, as one Otpor leader emphasized to me, was "the generation which regularly voted against Milošević."[36] Once the votes had been counted, the results showed a landslide for Koštunica. This indicated to Pavković the depth of anti-Milošević sentiment in the VJ and sowed serious doubts in his mind about whether soldiers would follow orders to intervene in the revolution.[37]

The VJ leadership paid close attention to the elections results from within the military. Institutional integrity is paramount within most militaries and Pavković didn't want to risk splitting the military horizontally between senior officers and junior officers who had to actually implement repression on the ground. As one Otpor leader put it to me: "Who are the people driving these tanks? For them [the top brass] it was really clear that they can say yes [to repressive orders] but when the drivers get in their tanks they don't know what direction they will drive them in."[38] Thus, for Pavković, the safest option was to hide the VJ's decision to defect until Milošević was ousted by sheer weight of numbers and no defence. As the section below shows, this is exactly the strategy that the VJ followed on the 5-6th October: Milošević repeatedly asked for military assistance from the VJ and Pavković either ignored the orders or pretended to comply.

The widespread disillusionment with Milošević within the VJ stemmed from two main sources. On the one hand, there was a disproportionate number of young people (mostly conscripts) in the VJ. These soldiers had grown up in a time of ferocious youth opposition to Milošević in Serbia. Otpor, the high-profile student resistance group operating in Serbia since 1998, had an enormous active membership first within universities and latterly in the senior years of high school. Independent radio and television channels also became more

[35]Elite Interview #12. Srdja Popović. One of twelve leaders and founders of Otpor student resistance group.
Also: private communication with Elite Interviewee #14. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.
[36]Elite Interview #12. Srdja Popović. One of twelve leaders and founders of Otpor student resistance group.
[37]Ibid.
[38]Ibid.

prevalent in Serbia over the course of the 1990s, offering viewers and listeners an alternative to the incessant slurry of pro-regime propaganda from RTS and *Politika*. The younger generation's only experience of politics had been the unrelenting carousel of government failures overseen by Milošević, including four egregious wars, two bouts of hyperinflation, international isolation, a NATO bombardment, and economic decimation. When they were forced by the government to join the VJ, an institution that many younger Serbs regarded with great suspicion for its complicity in the Yugoslav wars, their grievances only intensified.

On the other hand, even those who had willingly joined the VJ were concerned about the seemingly endless stream of wars that Milošević was prepared to unleash to shore up his domestic position with Serb nationalists both in the population and the government. Srdja Popović, one of those in charge of formulating military-friendly policy at Otpor, told me that the salient concern in the VJ at the time was that "Milošević was giving them basically one civil war every two years from 1990" and that "when somebody does it four times you can count [on it] that he will do it a fifth time."[39] By the time the war in Kosovo was over, there was "already significant fatigue ... about waging war indefinitely" and "appetite for war decreased."[40]

Despite the proclamations of the government's propaganda machine, "it was clear that he [Milošević] lost these wars" and that any Serbian gains had been won at pyrrhic costs. During the war in Bosnia, for instance, the UN imposed sanctions on Serbia for collaborating with the genocidal Bosnian Serb army and Serbian paramilitary forces. The sanctions caused privation on a mass and protracted scale, especially when most necessities became in short supply. The Dayton Agreement, however, which brought the war in Bosnia to a close in November 1995 brought no particular gains to show for Serbia, which was cut off from the new Republika Srpska in Bosnian territory and the Serb enclaves in Croatia, particularly the Krajina Serbs who had received assistance from the Serbian government. The political aim of the war, to unite all Serbs within one set of borders, fell by the wayside.

The outcome of the Kosovo war was particularly galling to committed VJ officers. Similar to the prevailing feeling in the police in late-1999 and 2000, many in the VJ felt betrayed by Milošević's capitulation just as the NATO aerial campaign against Serbia was running out of military targets. An interviewee who interacted with many high-ranking officers at the time told me that the VJ's internal narrative at the time was that the Kosovo war had been "won on the ground, [but] lost in the air" when Milošević's surrender undid all

[39]Elite Interview #12. Srdja Popović. One of twelve leaders and founders of Otpor student resistance group.

[40]Elite Interview #14. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.

of the army's territorial advances.[41] Whilst the Serbian government tried to maintain that Kosovo was "a victory because NATO didn't achieve all their wartime objectives," senior officers in the VJ perceived it as an "ultimate defeat" which fostered a "widespread sense of strategic defeat" in the VJ following the parade of disastrous Yugoslav wars. Ultimately, the combination of young, politically disillusioned conscripts and war fatigue within the VJ officer corps was demonstrated to Pavković and the top brass through the barracks' election results. This gave him little room for manoeuvre, regardless of the pressures on him to preserve the VJ's institutional integrity and political independence.

8.5 Defection Network Holds Strong: Revolution, 5-6th October

By 5th October, very few people in Serbia knew that Pavković planned to shirk the repressive orders that came his way. Zoran Djindjić, the first elected Prime Minister of Serbia after Milošević was toppled and prominent member of DOS, admitted in an interview shortly after the revolution that DOS tried but failed completely to make contact with senior members of the VJ: "It was a black box to us. No information at all."[42] Similarly, there had been very little communication between the VJ and the other branches of the coercive apparatus. Pavković's feud with Rade Marković precluded any high-level contact with the RDB and the police had adopted the VJ's policy of outer stony silence.

They were not standing idle, though. Aware that Milošević would call on the VJ on 5th October, and with their plan to unseat him through elite defection foiled by the reluctant Goran Matić, the VJ deliberately transferred many of its soldiers out of Belgrade to provincial barracks (Bujošević & Radovanović 2003). This tactical diminution of the VJ's deployable manpower in Belgrade was designed to limit the army's ability to intervene if push came to shove. Its main purpose, though, was to create an excuse if the government requested military intervention against the protesters: Pavković could truly say that many soldiers were out of Belgrade on a training exercise and that he needed to devote his remaining resources to protecting the multiple VJ facilities around Belgrade. One unit in particular, however, was transferred *to* Belgrade in the days before 5th October: the 63rd Paratroop Brigade from the southern city of Niš, which had publicly supported opposition protests in Belgrade in 1996-97. Men from the 63rd guarded the General Staff HQ on Neznanog Junaka street, where Matić had met Pavković three days earlier.

[41] Ibid.
[42] Interview with Zoran Djindjic conducted by Bujošević & Radovanović (2003).

On the morning of 5th October, Pavković and the Supreme Command Committee closely monitored what was happening in Belgrade and on the access roads to the capital. By 9am, it was clear to them that the number of protesters in Belgrade by the afternoon was going to be well over the critical mass needed to overwhelm the city's police forces (Bujošević & Radovanović 2003). The police barricades were not stopping the convoys as they had been ordered to and were instead standing by as hundreds of thousands of Serbs streamed towards Belgrade. As these protesters penetrated the porous membrane of police surrounding the capital, more and more people from Belgrade itself appeared throughout the morning.

The Serbian government was also in the dark on 5th October about the VJ's decision to defect, given their repeated requests to Pavković for military assistance to defend the capital over the course of the day. According to an interview Pavković gave before he was surrendered to the ICTY, the first time Milošević called the General Staff HQ was after the protesters had stormed the Serbian Parliament at approximately 4:10pm. The police units inside the Parliament had been overwhelmed and encircled and had been unable to flee when their supplies of teargas ran dry. Pavković recalled that Milošević framed his order that the military intervene as a constitutional rescue mission:

> "I spoke to Milošević only after the developments around the Parliament and RTS. He demanded that we separate the demonstrators and the police and seize the Parliament. I told him that the building had been abandoned by the police and the demonstrators were inside. He replied that the symbol of the state had been set on fire. 'It has been set on fire, but there are no casualties,' I told him."[43]

Thus, Milošević waited until protesters had taken the Serbian Parliament so that he could invoke the VJ's duty to safeguard Serbia's political institutions. Pavković, however, refused to deploy on the grounds that there were no serious casualties: the conflagration alone was not sufficient cause to mobilize the army. Throughout the day, the Supreme Command Committee had live access to the police radio channels so could easily refute the government's over-hyped claims about the scale of violence and devastation in central Belgrade (Bujošević & Radovanović 2003). Thus, the VJ was able to effectively mask its decision to defect by rejecting the government's orders on the grounds that they were based on objectively incorrect information, thereby skirting round the issue of whether the government could legitimately order military action at that time.

[43] Interview with Nebojša Pavković conducted by Bujošević & Radovanović (2003).

At 5:10pm, police radio records from the units stationed at the Radio Television Serbia (RTS) building show that the embattled police units still inside were laying down their weapons.[44] The protesters' battle to take the RTS building was reportedly the most ferocious confrontation during the entire revolution. Many policemen were badly beaten by protesters, as were some senior RTS staff who had been told to remain inside and wait for reinforcements to arrive. Again, Milošević called the General Staff HQ and ordered the military to intervene, on the grounds that the RTS building and the police forces there were appendages of the state and therefore eligible for military protection. However, Pavković again dodged the order by emphasizing that the building, rather than the state, was under attack:

> "Later, there were other calls in connections with RTS. At that time the police reported casualties on both sides, saying they couldn't hold out and that it was a matter of urgency for the army to step in. I replied that the state was not under threat, that the constitutional order was not endangered and neither was the army. The orders I was receiving could not influence me to engage, or rather misuse, the army..."[45]

However, just after 5pm, Goran Matić told me that he heard through his informants that ten VJ tanks had left their barracks in Bubanj Potok, 14 kilometers by road from the centre of Belgrade. Although he didn't know it at this stage, they were commanded by Božidar Delić - a one-star general in the motorized corps of the VJ. He called Pavković straight away and implored him: "Please, reverse the tanks. If your tanks came to Parliament, your troops will leave the tanks and become a part of the protest because their families are in downtown. Nobody will shoot on the protesters."[46] He needn't have been so concerned. Pavković replied: "I received this order but I'm not so stupid to order [i.e., follow] it."[47] In another interview, Pavković repeated the same sentiment: "Nobody in the army is insane enough to send tanks out against the people. That's not what they're there for. We wouldn't even think about anything like Tiananmen Square in Belgrade."[48] He told Matić to reassure his trusted colleagues that the VJ was "not so stupid to make any move which would provoke [pit] protesters against the army" and that the tanks were being moved so

[44] Police radio transcripts from Bujošević & Radovanović (2003) show that an officer at the RTS building reported "It's a very difficult situation here. They're advancing. The police are laying down their weapons" at 5:10pm. At 5:30pm, Belgrade Police HQ told the unit to hold its ground and wait for reinforcements but the policemen had already surrendered.

[45] Interview with Nebojša Pavković conducted by Bujošević & Radovanović (2003).

[46] Elite Interview #38. Goran Matić.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Interview with Nebojša Pavković conducted by Bujošević & Radovanović (2003).

that he could prove that they had left the base just in case the revolution failed and he needed to show that he had done something.

True to his word, the tanks arrived at another barracks in Voždovac that was positioned slightly closer to Belgrade.[49] The relocation to a barracks closer to the centre of Belgrade was deliberate: if military intervention was needed in the capital overnight to restore peace, Pavković planned to use this unit as his first-response force. Thus, moving the tanks killed two birds with one stone: it proved that Pavković had reacted to Milošević's orders and gave him the capability to quickly deploy a military presence in the capital:

> "[Pavković] made some scenario [i.e., compromise]: he received Milošević's order to do it and he started tanks but he didn't want to send them there [to Belgrade]. Just to show that he will be cooperative and correct but the situation will not be appropriate for such a move."[50]

Later on the night of 5th October, Milošević phoned Pavković again. At the time, Pavković was in General Aleksandar Vasiljević's office in the Supreme Command HQ. Milošević asked Pavković to use one of his units to prevent DOS from using the RTS station at Košutnjak in outer Belgrade to broadcast that they had won the election and seized control of the government. To avoid embroiling the VJ, Pavković replied that the VJ didn't have any barracks or men in Košutnjak. As a result, he would find it difficult to deploy in time to stop the broadcasts.[51] Getting desperate, Milošević phoned back within a few minutes and asked Pavković: "Let's talk man to man. Are you going to do this for me or not?" Trying to justify himself, Pavković stalled again and told Milošević that he was in the process of contacting unit commanders to organize the operation. Milošević, clearly unconvinced, hung up before Pavković finished speaking.[52]

From his communication with him throughout the day and afterwards, Matić corroborates that Pavković was trying to strike a careful balance between outright rejecting orders on explicit political grounds (i.e., that he thought Milošević should concede defeat) and complying wholeheartedly. Outright disobedience was too risky, just in case Milošević survived the uprising against the odds. Matić summarized the VJ's strategy:

> "Pavković did not directly deny any orders from them. He played a game. He didn't want to do it, but he didn't want to argue with them. He denied to do

[49] Video footage from Konačni Obračun ('The Final Encounter'), *Vreme* documentary, 2015.
[50] Elite Interview #31. Goran Matić.
[51] Konačni Obračun ('The Final Encounter'), *Vreme* documentary, 2015. Interview with Aleksandar Vasiljević.
[52] Ibid.

[the orders], but he [also] communicated in a pleasant way and he told them 'it is not time' and 'it is not the business of the army', but not 'f*** off.' "[53]

The VJ continued to lay low until Koštunica's office called Pavković at around 6pm on 6th October by which time it had become clear that DOS had triumphed. So far, though, Milošević still hadn't conceded to Koštunica and DOS, eager to start Serbia's new future on a legal footing, wanted to force his hand. Koštunica's office asked Pavković to set up a meeting with Milošević (Bujošević & Radovanović 2003). At 8pm, a military convoy picked up Koštunica from central Belgrade and took him to Užička Street in south Belgrade where he met Milošević at 9:30pm. At 10:39pm, Milošević conceded defeat to Koštunica on the YU Info television channel. Pavković was clearly willing to facilitate this meeting by dispatching a VJ convoy (the first VJ forces to enter central Belgrade in days) and riding with Koštunica to Užička Street where he was privy to the meeting between Serbia's former and new president. Days later, Mirjana Marković accused Pavković of treason.

8.6 Discussion

The story of General Pavković, the General Staff, and Goran Matić affords insight into the perceptions and actions of the very highest echelons of the Serbian military during the uprising on 5th October. As information about the budding revolution started to percolate through Serbian society in the days after the election on 24th September, the top brass naturally evaluated how the VJ might be implicated in a large-scale uprising. The clandestine meeting between Pavković and Matić at Neznanog Junaka street illustrates two key facts. First, that the General Staff foresaw the revolution and that Milošević would order them to engage VJ forces to shore up the government. Second, that the VJ tried to avoid carrying out repressive orders by trying to topple Milošević before the revolution had even started by persuading one his key votaries to publicly defect. The VJ's behaviour in the days before 5th October, therefore, confirms the axiom outlined in Chapter 3: some important individuals within the security forces foresee the possibility of revolution.

The theory predicts that members of the security forces who are minded to defect form 'defection networks' with their trusted colleagues. The top brass of the VJ was a pre-existing professional network that became a defection network in the days after the election on 24th September as they realised that the VJ's constitutional mandate did not extend to preserving Milošević's government after he had lost the election. Aware that the VJ's interests would be best served by obviating the revolution before it had even started,

[53] Elite Interview #31. Goran Matić.

Pavković sought to extend his defection network by bringing in a non-military figure from the ruling coalition - Goran Matić - to form an inter-organizational anti-incumbent coalition. Pavković calculated that Matić's defection would help to unspool other political elites' loyalty to Milošević, thereby forcing him to step aside and allow Koštunica to take power. To magnify the signalling power of Matić's defection, Pavković pledged to immediately declare support for Koštunica, pitting both the military and a senior political figure against the recalcitrant president.

The fact that Pavković identified Matić as a useful ally was not wholly down to their foregoing friendship. Matić was a 'big hitter' in Milošević's political cabal. Propaganda researchers, for instance, compare him to Joseph Goebbels in terms of both his importance to the regime and profession. Rightly or wrongly, Pavković perceived that if somebody as central to the Milošević administration as Matić defected, the political reverberations would be severe and other JUL and SPS politicians might follow suit. Thus, the logic of a defection cascade and strategic framing are clearly detectable in Pavković's analysis of the situation in the days before 5th October. He calculated that the news of a regime stalwart defecting would have been highly impactful for other regime insiders considering whether to defect, especially because Matić had worked closely with Milošević and Mirjana Marković for several years. Pavković needed quality as well as quantity in his defection network, and Matić (had he agreed) would have been a high-profile defector to add to the roster. Moreover, he tried to maximize the public impact of Matić's defection by pledging to side with him. This planned sequence of defections would have created a powerful multiparty coalition spanning political and military elites.

As in the last chapter, it is impossible to properly test theses using one case. However, as I move through the different branches of the security forces in successive chapters, these accounts should provide increasing inferential leverage as microcosmic sub-cases of defection. The first thesis predicted that senior members of the coercive apparatus are more likely to initiate defection attempts than the junior ranks. This is for three main reasons: ranking officers have greater reach and leverage than junior ones so are more successful networkers, are more likely to face punitive costs if they repress a successful revolution, and have a lower chance of being detected than those in junior ranks. In the VJ, the vast majority of defectors held the rank of general or above and most served on the General Staff, the committee responsible for organizing the entire armed forces. As Chapter 10 shows, the General Staff's intentions were not communicated to the rest of the VJ, which left most mid-ranking officers completely uncertain how to react to the events on 5th October.

In particular, Pavković's seniority meant that he was able to freely interact with high-profile and powerful politicians as part of his professional remit without arousing suspicion. In the months leading up to 5th October, he and Matić had been communicating relatively openly about the political situation under the guise of conducting official government and military business. Indeed, they had first come into contact with each other during the Kosovo War when Matić needed Pavković's permission to shoot footage of the VJ's advance in northern Kosovo. The top brass' plan to induct Matić into their defection network was predicated on his relationship with Pavković, which was underwritten by mutual trust and alignment of interest to depose Vlajko Stojiljković and Rade Marković. Thus, Pavković's reach outside the military was crucial to the VJ's plan to use political means to expel Milošević from the presidency.

Within the VJ itself, Pavković's seniority allowed him to convene ostensibly routine meetings with the top brass to discuss the military's role in the revolution. Before 2nd October, the General Staff were able to use their normal forums to deliberate away from prying eyes. They were assisted in this task by the entrenched introverted institutional culture of the VJ, which attempted to keep its internal affairs strictly private. Pavković's leverage was clearly sufficient to both convince the rest of the General Staff to defect and to prevent any of his subordinates from reporting his intentions to Milošević. All told, Pavković's position made it easier for him and the top brass to collectively diagnose the political situation and formulate the military's response. Specifically, his ability to convene closed meetings with influential actors both within and outside the military was crucial to the VJ's initial defection strategy and keeping its plans secret from both DOS and the government.

The VJ's upper echelons were also concerned about embroiling the military in partisan domestic politics because of its track record of intervention. Senior officers who had been in the JNA were extremely keen to avoid a repeat of the events on 9th March 1991, which had all but eviscerated the good reputation of the JNA and subsequently the VJ. Military commanders were not primarily concerned about future punishments for ordering repression but the opprobrium that would be brought on the VJ if it was seen as over-reaching its mandated role by interfering in political matters. As high-ranking commanders, they took their responsibility to uphold the VJ's reputation and standards very seriously and wanted to avoid sullying their institution's image. This indicates that rank might matter not only because military commanders are more likely to be targeted by democratic tribunals but also because many such actors are averse to bringing the military into disrepute. In the

Serbian case, this weighty personal responsibility combined with the VJ's apolitical ethos made the General Staff very wary of intervention.

The second thesis posits that first-movers are more likely to defect if they perceive widespread and acute grievances attributed to the incumbent in the coercive apparatus. The election results from 24th September offered the generals a reliable barometer of political attitudes within the VJ and clearly showed that the vast majority of VJ conscripts had voted for Koštunica. The General Staff's foremost concern was avoiding a situation where rank-and-file troops would reject orders to intervene in Belgrade and threaten the integrity of the chain of command. The top brass were also chary of propping up a ruler who had consistently deprioritized the military in favour of the police and engaged VJ forces in four calamitous conflicts in the space of a decade. Consequently, grievances against Milošević's government were evident at all levels of the VJ and the election results in particular demonstrated that there would be no clamour in the lower ranks of the VJ to save Milošević.

The VJ's behaviour before and during the Serbian revolution does not necessarily speak to the third thesis. I could find little evidence that the VJ would have altered its decision to defect if it had expected Milošević to receive the support of resolute loyalists within the coercive apparatus. While they were reportedly wary of the other branches of the coercive apparatus, especially the JSO and the state security service, the General Staff's decision to not engage the military seems to have been independent of how they expected historic loyalists to behave, possibly because the military's capacity meant it was very likely to win any physical confrontations with the other security forces. Instead, their reasoning was dominated by the perceived imperative to keep the military out of political matters and preserve the VJ's institutional integrity. I could find no evidence that the VJ would have been more likely to follow Milošević's orders if they gauged that others would remain loyal.

Pavković's strategy on 5th October, however, provides strong support for the fourth thesis: that he feared the consequences of being exposed as a defector if the revolution failed, and this made him less likely to defect outright. From mid-afternoon when Milošević first ordered the VJ to intervene to recapture the parliament and RTS building until late in the evening when he requested VJ assistance to guard the RTS station at Košutnjak, Pavković trod the thin line between compliance and non-compliance. He didn't reject Milošević's orders outright but tried to offer convincing rebuttals and justify why it wasn't appropriate for the VJ to deploy its forces. For instance, when Milošević requested military assistance at the parliament, Pavković replied that casualties were limited and that the VJ could only intervene to protect endangered political institutions. Pavković's strategy was

to maintain a strong cushion of plausible deniability just in case Milošević survived the uprising without the VJ's succour. After all, Milošević had a well-known record of firing security chiefs for suspected disloyalty, not least Momčilo Perišić, the VJ's Chief of Staff from 1993 to 1998.

Finally, the fifth thesis predicts that first movers are more likely to defect when they sense a disjuncture between repressive orders and their personal belief in keeping the incumbent in power. In the military's case, the disjuncture stemmed from the VJ's strict mandate to intervene in domestic affairs only in extreme cases where Serbia's political integrity was at stake. The top brass recognized that complying with Milošević's orders would likely enfeeble the revolution, especially since they were the only security organization with the capability to enforce a protracted lockdown in Belgrade. In his meeting with Matić, Pavković reasoned that this would amount to a political intervention since it would gift Milošević the time to ride out the revolution.

8.7 Alternative Explanations

Alternative theories do not provide as satisfying explanations of the VJ's defection as the strategic account of defection. The positional account correctly predicts that the VJ would defect, since the top brass were concerned to preserve the military's apolitical ethos which constitutes a positional interest. This impulse was facilitated, however, by the strong concentration of anti-Milošević sentiment within the wider military. Disaffection within the rank-and-file and officer corps provided cushioning for the top brass' desire to defect and ensured that there would be little risk of mutiny or fissures in the chain of command. The election data from the barracks provided the General Staff with an excellent gauge of political attitudes within the conscript ranks and, to a lesser extent, broader society which reassured them that defection would not be in vain. Thereafter, the emergence and success of the defection coalition within the top brass and its failure to coalesce with Matić were determined by Pavković's reach, leverage, and social capital - not by positional interests.

Similarly, the 'revolution as process' or coordination account does not fully reflect the defection process detailed in this chapter. Pavković's expressed decision to defect demonstrates that the premise of surprise does not hold for senior ranking officers within the VJ. The General Staff were collectively aware of the incipient revolt, mutually privy to the VJ's plan for evading repressive orders, and united on their course of action. Moreover, the General Staff meetings and their meeting with Pavković were not designed to 'make a fact' and push attendees into a particular course of action. On the contrary, they were discursive,

open-ended, and exploratory. The fact that Matić declined Pavković's offer demonstrates that he did not feel beholden to accept the proposal. One tentative conclusion we might draw from this is that informal ties of friendship and historic interaction (like between Matić and Pavković) give individuals the confidence to rebut attempts to marshal them into plans they have no interest in. Another possibility is that potential recruits to defection networks know that their collaborators will probably not occupy executive power in the near future (unlike a coup d'état) and therefore do not feel that refusing them will endanger their political and economic patronage.

On the other hand, both the coordination account and the strategic account correctly predict that Pavković would have tried to use strategic framing to bring about defection. Although it never came to pass, Pavković envisioned a sequentialized string of defections from Matić to the VJ to the rest of the ruling coalition and coercive apparatus. Matić was widely known to be an important ally of Milošević and was a member of Mirjana Marković's political party. His defection would have carried great shock value and meaning to those weighing up whether to defect.

As noted above, the General Staff also had access to communications infrastructure (such as police radio interceptors) which gave them real-time information about the revolution. Thus, arguably the most decisive stratum of actors within the VJ were not thrown into a state of collective ignorance during the revolution. Indeed, at many points, Pavković knew what was happening on the ground better than Milošević. As Chapter 10 shows, the rest of the army *was* plunged into collectively uncertainty and spent the 5th October working out whether to remain loyal or defect, but this was a deliberate policy by the General Staff to keep their defection secret until the last moment. The coordination problem was further attenuated by the united coalition of generals who collectively refused to pass on the regime's repressive orders. Therefore, the moment of "critical decision" and "dilemma" emphasized by the coordination approach, when agents have to decide whether to follow unexpected repressive orders or not, never came to pass in any meaningful sense since a sizeable coalition had pre-committed to defecting.

Results Table: The Yugoslav Army		
Theoretical Component	**Confirmation**	**Observation/CPO**
Axiom: first-movers foresee revolution and repression.	Yes	Pavković arranged to meet Matić on 2nd October, 3 days before the revolution by which time the top brass had already decided to defect.
Mechanism 1: coalition building.	Yes	Pavković transformed the Supreme Command into a defection network and sought to induct an influential political figure with political and personal ties to Milošević and his wife to create an anti-incumbent coalition.
Mechanism 2: strategic framing.	Yes	Pavković identified Matić as an influential, well-known, and historically loyal politician whose defection would persuade others to abandon Milošević. Pavković also planned to sequence Matić and the VJ's defections to create the appearance of a defection cascade.
Mechanism 3: coordination.	N/A	See Chapter 10 for evidence of coordination during the revolution.
Thesis 1: senior ranks likely to initiate defection.	Yes	The defectors in the VJ were almost all ranked general and served on the General Staff. Pavković's seniority also meant he was in regular contact with politicians in the cabinet and could arrange meetings with them and with the General Staff without arousing suspicion. The fact that Matić declined Pavković's offer reflects a leverage failure: despite his rank, Pavković could not impel Matić to abandon the government.

Thesis 2: widespread disloyalty incentivizes defection.	Yes	Election results from within the VJ showed the top brass that the majority of the rank-and-file had voted against Milošević and were likely to disobey repressive orders. The VJ's senior ranks also expressed their concerns about Milošević's record of waging catastrophic wars: four in the previous eight years.
Thesis 3: presence of loyal units deters defection.	Partial	The top brass were reluctant to engage against the police and special forces, but suspected that they would also abandon Milošević.
Thesis 4: poor past treatment of defectors deters defection.	Yes	Milošević had a well-known record of firing security chiefs for perceived disloyalty, including the VJ's chief of staff (Momčilo Perišić) and director of the secret service (Jovica Stanišić) in 1998. Secondly, Pavković avoided explicitly defecting from Milošević, opting to evade all of his orders on logistical grounds to maintain plausible deniability in the event Milošević survived.
Thesis 5: repressive duties and antipathy for the incumbent incentivize defection.	Yes	The VJ's leadership expressed unease about using the military to intervene on Milošević's behalf which was viewed as an improper use of the military's force and ran counter to its apolitical ethos. Moreover, the top brass' strong collective memory of the JNA/VJ's intervention in Belgrade protests in March 1991 fostered a strong aversion to involving themselves on 5th October 2000.

Table 8.1: Summary of the Yugoslav Army's defection process.

Chapter 9

Empirics III: The Special Operations Unit

> "We were familiar with their destructive power and we knew that if thousands of them charge into thousands of people in the streets, we could not be certain that ... yet another Tiananmen would not happen. It was important for us to know the mood in these units."
>
> Zoran Djindjić
> Democratic Opposition of Serbia

Introduction

This chapter charts the defection network that emerged between the future prime minister of Serbia, Zoran Djindjić, and Milorad 'Legija' Ulemek, the commander of Milošević's praetorian guard. On the evening of 4th October 2000, the day before the revolution, Djindjić and Legija met secretly in Belgrade and agreed that Legija's men, the Special Operations Unit (*Jedinica za specijàlne operacije*, JSO), would defect from Milošević. In return, Djindjić promised to use his office to protect Legija and the JSO from the Hague's war crimes trials and domestic investigations into their nefarious past. The meeting was brokered by Jovica Stanišić, a senior Socialist Party politician and the director of the Serbian state security service (*Resor državne bezbednosti*, RDB) until October 1998. Disillusioned from being fired from the RDB, Stanišić used his parallel lines to Legija and Djindjić to remove Milošević's last line of defence. He was successful: on 5th October, Legija and the JSO publicly defected in Belgrade and paraded their humvees around the Serbian Parliament and the hated Radio Television Serbia building.

The chapter begins with a brief account of the criminal and military history of the JSO. Its checkered history sheds light on why Legija, until then a Milošević stalwart, was willing

to defect to secure immunity. Next, I describe the meeting on 4th October and explain the terms that Legija and Djindjić agreed upon and how Stanišić was able to put them in contact. I complete the chronology by describing the JSO's public display of defection in the centre of Belgrade on 5th October. It is difficult to definitively establish credible information about the JSO, a heavily mythologized and secretive unit with a sordid past to hide, especially given that Legija and his top lieutenants are now in prison. Consequently, this chapter is undergirded by interview evidence from well-placed regime insiders who were privy to negotiations within the state security service, interviews that key actors gave to other researchers, and events histories compiled through newspaper articles and observers. To the best of my knowledge, this is the most detailed account of the conspiracy in the Serbian security service to overthrow Milošević.

The chapter closes with a detailed discussion of the case's probative power. On the one hand, Legija and Djindjić's agreement qualifies as an archetypal anti-incumbent coalition. Stanišić's role also illustrates how brokerage can effectively facilitate coalitions between disparate factions. Second, the highly public way in which the JSO defected was specifically calculated to persuade erstwhile loyalists in the coercive apparatus to defect, confirming that key actors engaged in strategic framing to mitigate the revolutionary coordination problem. Thus, Legija and Djindjić's interactions confirm two key mechanisms which are inadequately explained by alternative theories. However, this case of defection only partially confirms the five theses about the environmental and individual factors that drive defection. While Legija and Stanišić's seniority within their respective organizations were arguably crucial in their ability to organize defection, and pervasive disloyalty within the state security service assured Legija that he would not be defecting alone, this case does not confirm theses three, four, or five. I explain this divergence between theory and reality in the final section.

9.1 Institutional Overview: The Special Operations Unit

In 1996, a selection of obscure Serbian paramilitary groups were merged into the Special Operations Unit (*Jedinica za specijalne operacije*, JSO). The JSO's predecessors, such as the Serb Volunteer Guard (or 'Arkan's Tigers') and the Scorpions, had existed since the early 1990s and were responsible for some of the most gruesome war crimes perpetrated in the Croatia and Bosnia wars.[1] Effectively, they were armed franchises of the Serbian state: in return for doing Milošević's bidding on the battlefield, they were awarded lucrative

[1]For example, see: M. Stojanović, "Serbia Convicts 'Red Berets' Fighter of Wartime Rape." *Balkan Insight*, 19/09/2019.

jobs in illicit criminal enterprises (Pond 2006, Edmunds 2008). In particular, the Serbian government allowed the paramilitaries to cream off profits from cross-border smuggling whilst Serbia was under draconian UN sanctions for stoking the wars in Croatia and Bosnia (Bakić & Gajić 2006). From weapons to cigarettes to petrol, the paramilitaries facilitated the flow of illegal goods into Serbia for several years.

Like its parent organizations, the JSO was situated for organizational purposes within the state security service (*Resor državne bezbednosti*, RDB). The RDB was a republican institution which Milošević, as president of Serbia until 1997, had complete authority over. This made it an attractive institutional vessel for quasi-state paramilitary groups (Edmunds 2006). Milošević also perceived the head of the RDB, Jovica Stanišić, as fiercely loyal and trustworthy until he unceremoniously replaced him in October 1998. The JSO represented the culmination of Milošević and Stanišić's conspiracy to create paramilitary groups that stood outside the military's chain of command, which as a federal institution was more impervious to government pressure. The JSO was even separate to the RDB's main hierarchy so that it was directly subordinated to Milošević via Stanišić (Anastasijević 2008, Ejdus 2014).

From 1996 to 1998, the JSO was commanded by Franko Simatović, a long-standing personal friend of Stanišić and former paramilitary officer in the Croatian and Bosnian wars. In 1998, just as the Kosovo War was about to start, Milorad 'Legija' Ulemek took over as commander.[2] His nom de guerre, Legija ('Legion'), came from his years in the Foreign Legion in the 1980s and in time the JSO became synonymous with Legija's name. In Kosovo, the JSO were tasked with rooting out Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) fighters and sympathizers and were involved in the killing of KLA leader Adem Jashari in March 1998. They fought alongside other special units and regular police units and have been accused of multiple atrocities including rape, massacres, and desecration during the deadly Serb advance into the Kosovan countryside.[3]

From their formal inception in 1996, the JSO inherited the criminal tendencies of their predecessors. Long after the wars in Croatia and Bosnia were over, the JSO was involved in cross-border smuggling and increasingly drug trafficking and kidnappings. Indeed, the JSO's descent into a state-sponsored organized crime ring mirrored the steady criminalization of the RDB throughout the 1990s. By 2000, Milošević's regime stood atop a "crime pyramid": a clandestine lattice of corrupt politicians, oligarchs, the RDB, and organized crime (Bakić

[2]Ulemek's surname is a matter of uncertainty. His family name might be Luković, so most refer to him by his nickname - Legija.

[3]See: V. Loeb, "Yugoslav Military Is Formidable Foe." *The Washington Post*, 03/04/1999. Also see: F. Abrahams, "Drenica Region." *Under Orders: War Crimes in Kosovo*. HRW, 2001.

& Gajić 2006, Janković 2007). Rade Marković, for instance, was regularly seen playing tennis with known criminals at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in New Belgrade even after he replaced Stanišić as director of the RDB in 1998. And all the time that the JSO was running its criminal operations, the regime was awarding them handsomely with American Humvees, advanced weaponry, and even assault helicopters.

But the JSO was not the regime's favoured unit just for its military prowess. Simatović and Legija's willingness to deploy the Red Berets (as they became known) for sordid political tasks was crucial to the JSO becoming Milošević's praetorian guard. As one Otpor leader put it: the JSO were "real scum, they were doing the dirty jobs that nobody else wanted to do."[4] In particular, the Red Berets carried out several high-profile political assassinations in the late nineties. In August 2000, for instance, Rade Marković and Legija were instructed by Milošević to assassinate Ivan Stambolić, Milošević's former mentor within the Socialist Party and former president and prime minister of Serbia.[5] When rumours began to circulate that Stambolić was planning to stage a political comeback in the presidential election in September 2000, Milošević decided that the risk of running against a seasoned politician like Stambolić was too great. For ordering the assassination, Marković was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment; Legija was handed the maximum sentence of 40 years for leading the execution squad.

The Red Berets were also employed to assassinate popular opposition figure Vuk Drašković while he was in the Montenegrin resort of Budva in June 2000, but Drašković escaped with only a bullet wound to his ear. Previously, a JSO-led attempt to kill Drašković while he was driving along Serbia's Ibar Highway in October 1999 also failed, though four of Drašković's closest associates were killed. The assassination of Slavko Ćuruvija in April 1999, the founder of the independent *Dnevni Telegraf* newspaper, is also attributed to the RDB (and, by extension, to the JSO) but this has never been established in court. In March 2003, the JSO most famously assassinated Zoran Djindjić, the first democratically elected prime minister of Serbia after Milošević, for cooperating with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) by arresting and transferring Serbian indictees to the Hague including Milošević himself (Subotić 2010).

In summary, the JSO were a multipurpose unit. On the one hand, they acted as a praetorian-like "liquidation unit" that Milošević could use to dispose of inconvenient political rivals at arms length.[6] On the other hand, they also served broader, non-praetorian

[4]Elite Interview #17. Ivan Marović. One of twelve Otpor leaders and 'press secretary' for the organization.

[5]See: N. Wood, "Milosevic Aides Found Guilty of Yugoslav Political Assassination." *The New York Times*, 19/07/2005.

[6]Ibid.

functions. They were Milošević's personal special forces in the Kosovo War and were prepared, along with other special police units, to be the spearhead of the savage push through Drenica and other Kosovan Albanian strongholds. In return, the regime secured the Red Berets' loyalty with sophisticated military equipment and state immunity for the JSO's criminal activities. The Belgrade weekly *Vreme* summed up Legija's role: "He was a 'patriot' for the politicians; for the criminals he was a defender and a partner; and for the state security and its top (Milošević) he was an efficient executioner."[7] Their sequestered position within the RDB, ostensibly an intelligence agency, meant that Milošević could maintain plausible deniability about their operations whilst exercising personalistic control over them via Stanišić. This chapter describes how this chain of command collapsed on 5th October.

9.2 Coalition Building: A Meeting in a Jeep, 4th October

At 6pm on 4th October 2000, Zoran Djindjić walked alone down Admirala Geprata street in central Belgrade. Djindjić was one of the two key leaders of the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS): he was DOS's nominated prime minister, while Vojislav Koštunica was DOS's candidate for president. Known for his convoluted and abstruse speaking style, Djindjić had earned a doctorate in political philosophy from the University of Konstanz under Jürgen Habermas. While he was never as popular as Koštunica, he was Mayor of Belgrade for a brief spell in 1997 and when Vuk Drašković, the leader of the historically opposition Serbian Renewal Party, went into coalition with Milošević in early 1999, Djindjić became Serbia's preeminent opposition leader as head of the Democratic Party (*Demokratska stranka*, DS).

At 6pm, he was due to meet Milorad 'Legija' Ulemek - the commander of the JSO. A British intelligence officer stationed in Belgrade at the time told me that Legija had initiated the meeting and stipulated that Djindjić arrive alone. Later, Djindjić told the same intelligence officer that he was"absolutely f***ing terrified of Legija" and that his hands were shaking as they met on Admirala Geprata street.[8] He knew that Legija was "an animal who killed people with his bare hands", but he told himself that it was "worth the risk": "if there's anything I can do, it's here and now. Later the price will be higher."[9] Legija now stood waiting for him with some men from the JSO besides a jeep. Seeing them, Djindjić crossed the road and Legija motioned for him to get into the jeep. He and Legija

[7] M. Vasić, "Milorad Ulemek Legija: Prilog za Biografiju." *Vreme*, 25/05/2007.

[8] Elite Interview #36. Former Military Intelligence (MI6) officer in Belgrade; Head of Department for the Balkans.

[9] Ibid. Also see: interview with Djindjić conducted by Bujošević & Radovanović (2003).

both climbed into the car and the two unlikely travel companions began to drive around the city.

Although Djindjić had been aware of Legija and the JSO for many years, it was the first time that the two had met in person. This meeting, as the next section describes in more detail, was brokered by Jovica Stanišić, the director of the RDB until October 1998, and Milorad Vučelić, the former head of Radio Television Serbia and senior SPS official. Having both been long-time stalwarts of Milošević only to be fired from their respective positions, they had a vested interest in using their connections to Djindjić and Legija to overthrow Milošević. Thus, they had arranged an initial introduction between the two men by telephone after the election in late September. For Djindjić, this was the culmination of many efforts to co-opt the special forces: "we had been preparing for all that, to establish a contact with those who can apply extreme use of force because they ... were ready for urban warfare in the streets."[10]

A well-placed defector within the ruling coalition told me that the main purpose of the meeting on 4th October was to "mitigate any risk that could occur out of a misunderstanding": that is, to arrive at an agreement that would pre-commit the JSO to defecting.[11] Out of the plethora of special police units that existed in Serbia at the time, both Djindjić and Stanišić perceived the JSO as the single biggest obstacle to the revolution. In an interview with *Vreme* ('Time') after the revolution, Djindjić reaffirmed that "while we were drawing up a map of potential participants in these events, special forces units were prioritized."[12] He went on:

> "We were familiar with their destructive power and we knew that if thousands of them charge into thousands of people in the streets, we could not be certain that ... yet another Tiananmen would not happen. It was important for us to know the mood in these units. One day when the history of these events is being written ... some of those names truly have to gain a special emphasis."[13]

Historically, the JSO's loyalty to Milošević had stretched to fighting in the Kosovo War and many of its men had also served in state-sponsored paramilitaries in the Bosnian and Croatian wars. Regardless of whether this fealty would have actually stretched to

[10]Interview with Zoran Djindjić conducted by Nenad Stefanović. "Government Without Opposition: Interview with Zoran Djinjic," *Vreme*, Belgrade, 02/11/2000.

[11]Elite Interview #14. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.

[12]Interview with Zoran Djindjić conducted by Nenad Stefanović. "Government Without Opposition: Interview with Zoran Djinjic," *Vreme*, Belgrade, 02/11/2000.

[13]Ibid.

brutalizing their fellow Serbs on the streets of Belgrade, Djindjić clearly felt that the threat was sufficiently real to risk meeting Legija on the eve of the revolution. In his interview with researchers Dragan Bujošević and Ivan Radovanović, Djindjić told them: "When he [Legija] told me that, as far as they were concerned, there wouldn't be any intervention, it was a load off my mind."[14]

Others within the opposition movement were similarly concerned. Srdja Popović, for instance, admitted to me that he was most afraid about the special forces "because we knew they had killed in the past. We knew they killed Slavko Ćuruvija, we knew they killed Ivan Stambolić, we knew they tried to assassinate Vuk Drašković. So they were ready to kill. Very different to my local policeman who wasn't ready to kill."[15] Another Otpor leader told me: "Ordering to shoot, for normal police they would think twice. But for these guys [the special forces], they wouldn't."[16] Thus, concerns about what the JSO would do on 5th October were pervasive. Known as Milošević's praetorian guard, the opposition expected them to fight for the last to preserve his government, not least because they were so "badly compromised" by the assassinations and wartime atrocities they had carried out on Milošević's orders.[17]

In fact, it was the JSO's criminal record that drove Legija to the negotiating table. Multiple well-placed interviewees affirmed that the deal that Djindjić and Legija struck on 4th October was a simple quid pro quo: in return for defecting, Djindjić would arrange for Legija and Stanišić to receive state immunity for past war crimes and political assassinations, as well as protection for the JSO's criminal enterprises.[18] In particular, this agreement supposedly guaranteed that the JSO and Stanišić would not be arrested and transferred to the ICTY at the Hague if summoned, which was the salient concern amongst commanders and combatants in the Yugoslav wars at the time. Some of the men in the JSO had fought in all three wars - Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo - in Serbian paramilitaries and were thus prime targets for the ICTY. Stanišić, as the director of the RDB and the paramilitaries under its control, was also a prime candidate - as indicated by his multiple ICTY trials (but no convictions) since 2003.

[14] Interview with Zoran Djindjić conducted by Bujošević and Radovanović (2003).

[15] Elite Interview #12. Srdja Popović. One of twelve leaders and founders of Otpor student resistance group.

[16] Elite Interview #30. Milja Jovanović. One of twelve leaders and founders of Otpor student resistance group.

[17] Elite Interview #14. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.

[18] Elite Interviews #14 and #19. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.
Also see: Elite Interview #39. Goran Matić. Federal Minister for Information until October 2000 and senior JUL party official.

Other researchers have also arrived at the same view of the Legija-Djindjić pact. Filip Ejdus, for instance, the preeminent scholar of security sector reform and transitional justice in Serbia writes: "What is certain is that these informal deals at the top echelons of the security sector were strongly motivated to protect private and corporate interests and evade transitional justice."[19] Veteran journalists in Serbia corroborate the terms of the pact too: Elizabeth Pond, for example, writes that "[Legija] promised to disobey Milošević's orders to break up dissident marches on Belgrade and clearly understood that in return Djindjic would not crack down on the security-criminal nexus once he was in office."[20]

The JSO's behaviour since October 2000 also suggests that the agreement between Djindjić and Legija extended immunity to the JSO's members in return for their defection. In particular, a series of events in 2001 signalled to the JSO's commanders that Djindjić had misled them: "They started to think that Djindjić tricked them. That he didn't fulfil his promises and he wanted to send them to the Hague so he'd be the only power left in the state."[21] In May 2001, Djindjić fired Legija and a month later had Milošević arrested and sent to the Hague. In November, two brothers serving in the JSO, Nenad and Predrag Banović, were also transferred to the ICTY to stand trial for war crimes.[22] In response, the most prominent officers in the JSO mutinied in November 2001 and erected a week-long roadblock on one of the key access roads into Belgrade (Cohen 2005).[23] Legija demanded, ultimately unsuccessfully, for a termination of Serbian cooperation with the ICTY (Rangelov 2014).

On 12th March 2003, the JSO ran out of patience with Djindjić's compliance with the ICTY and a JSO sniper shot him dead in the centre of Belgrade. The investigation found that Legija organized the assassination and the person charged with pulling the trigger was JSO Deputy Commander Zvezdan Jovanović (Bakić & Gajić 2006). The trial also heard that the assassination plot was known as Operation "Stop the Hague" between the conspirators, strongly indicating that it was designed to prevent further arrests and deportations (Subotić 2010).

[19] See: Ejdus (2014).
[20] See: Pond (2006).
[21] Elite Interview #39. Goran Matić. Federal Minister for Information until October 2000 and senior JUL party official.
[22] Staff Journalist, "Twin brothers, charged with war crimes in Bosnia, transferred to UN tribunal." *UN News*, 09/11/2001.
[23] Also see: Staff Journalist, "Serbia Police Mutiny Ends." *The New York Times*, 18/11/2020.

9.3 Brokering the Coalition: Stanišić and Vučelić

Since Djindjić had no way of getting in touch with Legija personally, I was told that they had been put in contact by Jovica Stanišić, the director of the RDB until 1998 after which he was abruptly fired and replaced by Rade Marković.[24] For various reasons, "no other person was able to persuade them both to meet each other."[25] As one of the founders and immediate director of the JSO, Legija had "blind obedience" to Stanišić.[26] Indeed, even after he was jettisoned as director, Stanišić retained a parallel chain of command within the RDB to the JSO and other key units. Consequently, "most people in the RDB felt him [Stanišić] as their boss" even while Marković was the director, especially the JSO.[27] In short, Stanišić "absolutely ... had influence. He had a big influence."[28]

Stanišić had also been covertly interacting with Djindjić since at least 1994. In January 1994, Djindjić replaced Dragoljub Mićunović as president of the Democratic Party (DS) with Stanišić's assistance. Milošević and Stanišić calculated that it would be better for Milošević in the upcoming elections if Djindjić became the leader of the opposition, rather than the already popular Vuk Drašković. To ensure that Djindjić won the nomination, a state banker close to the events told me that Stanišić persuaded Milošević to authorize the transfer of "quite a significant" sum to Djindjić's campaign.[29] The plan worked and in the months after Djindjić took over the DS, Serbian newspapers ran multiple articles about a possible coalition between the DS and Milošević's SPS with Djindjić as prime minister.

Stanišić interacted with Djindjić on a semi-regular basis after he took over the DS. I was told that they would sometimes even meet in person: "Usually, a member of their inner circle was given a task to arrange a social event: kid's birthday, wedding anniversary, slava,[30] something like that. Both of them would be invited and then withdraw in an empty

[24] Elite Interview #14. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.
Also confirmed by Elite Interview #36. Former Military Intelligence (MI6) officer in Belgrade; Head of Department for the Balkans.
Also confirmed by Elite Interview #39. Goran Matić. Federal Minister for Information until October 2000 and senior JUL party official.

[25] Elite Interview #14. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Elite Interview #39. Goran Matić. Federal Minister for Information until October 2000 and senior JUL party official.

[29] Elite Interview #14. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.

[30] A slava is a Serbian Orthodox Christian tradition of glorifying the family's patron saint on the saint's feast day.

room for a while."[31] More often, though, they would communicate through an intermediary - Milorad Vučelić, an SPS stalwart and close associate of Stanišić and Milošević throughout the nineties.[32] In Milošević's first years as president of Serbia in 1987-90, some of his most powerful allies (including Stanišić and Vučelić) were from Bačka Palanka in Vojvodina, then a semi-autonomous province in northern Serbia with a strong independence movement. In his drive to concentrate power in Belgrade, Milošević quashed this regional independence movement with the support of SPS officials from the Bačka Palanka municipality in Vojvodina - Stanišić and Vučelić amongst them.[33]

For their loyalty, the Bačka Palanka cabal were handsomely rewarded. Stanišić was rewarded with the directorship of the RDB. For his part, Vučelić was given control of Radio Television Vojvodina (RTV), the regime's main broadcasting centre for Vojvodina. In 1992, he was promoted to director of Radio Television Serbia. Their common political roots meant that Stanišić and Vučelić were "very, very close."[34] Indeed, one of my interviewees informed me that "Stanišić was the key person behind his [Vučelić's] appointments" at the state media empire.[35] Crucially, Vučelić knew Djindjić personally from their days as undergraduate students in Belgrade and was the first person in the SPS to suggest trying to make Djindjić head of the opposition:

> "He was the first one to lobby for Djindjić, indeed, in the early nineties. Once Stanišić found this proposal plausible, they put together an influential lobby group which ... arranged the first meeting between Djindjić and Milošević's wife."[36]

As Djindjić's initial sponsor, Vučelić often acted as the conduit between Djindjić and Stanišić.[37] Meanwhile, Stanišić communicated with Legija regularly in his official capacity as director of the RDB and Vučelić "knew all [about the JSO], he was there from the beginning."[38] The JSO were based at Kula, a city in Vojvodina which also happened to be

[31] Private communication (11/06/2020) from interviewee #14. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.
[32] Elite Interview #39. Goran Matić. Federal Minister for Information until October 2000 and senior JUL party official.
[33] Private communication (11/06/2020) from interviewee #39. Goran Matić. Federal Minister for Information until October 2000 and senior JUL party official.
[34] Elite Interview #39. Goran Matić. Federal Minister for Information until October 2000 and senior JUL party official.
[35] Private communication (11/06/2020) from interviewee #14. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.
[36] Ibid. Mirja Marković later briefly referred to this meeting in her 2014 memoirs.
[37] Elite Interview #39. Goran Matić. Federal Minister for Information until October 2000 and senior JUL party official.
[38] Ibid.

Vučelić's stomping ground. Moreover, a video of a JSO awards ceremony in 1997 shown at Milošević's trial at the Hague clearly shows that Vučelić was in attendance (Tromp 2016). Vučelić was in frequent contact with Legija himself while he was commander of the JSO and considered him a close ally within the coercive apparatus.[39] Thus, both Stanišić and Vučelić were well positioned to broker a meeting between Legija and Djindjić.

As the nineties wore on, however, the Bačka Palanka politicians started to fall out of favour. After the Dayton Peace Agreement in November 1995 brought the Bosnian and Croatian wars to a close, Milošević summarily fired Vučelić from his directorship at RTS. Throughout the wars, Serbian state broadcasters had emitted a stream of nationalist pro-war propaganda. Milošević thought that by firing Vučelić and his counterpart at the regime daily newspaper *Politika*, he could give a "present to the West to show how he is honestly for peace."[40] To make his commitment to peace in the Balkans credible, Milošević decided to give up Vučelić. The termination of his directorship at RTS also meant that Vučelić lost his position in the SPS party leadership.

Within the government, several interviewees serving in the regime told me that Vučelić's "dismissal from that post (in 1995) was widely perceived as the start of Stanišić's downfall."[41] Stanišić lasted three more years as head of the RDB before Milošević decided to replace him in October 1998. Milošević gradually became aware that Stanišić was building a large power base within the Serbian state which meant that he was becoming a viable challenger. As the Federal Information Minister at the time put it to me: "People around me were afraid of Stanišić, not of Milošević."[42] Together with his colleagues from Bačka Palanka, Stanišić was at the epicenter of a new locus of power within the Serbian government: "He was the centre of a specific power in the state. With his friends like Mihalj Kertes who was Chief of Customs and the gang from Bačka Palanka, they had positions in the state in very important institutions."[43]

Milošević was also deeply suspicious that Stanišić was a double-agent for Western intelligence services. His distrust stemmed from a meeting in 1996 that Stanišić attended with the then-director of the CIA, John Deutsch, where the ostensible purpose was to agree on a protocol for intelligence sharing between the RDB and the CIA on the Balkan peace process. In most people's eyes, the meeting was "absolutely normal because it was from

[39] Private communication (11/06/2020) from interviewee #14. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Private communication (11/06/2020) from interviewee #14. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.

[42] Elite Interview #39. Goran Matić. Federal Minister for Information until October 2000 and senior JUL party official.

[43] Ibid.

[i.e., followed] the Dayton Peace Agreement but Milošević had doubts that it wasn't at all; Milošević had doubts about a hidden agenda."[44] Immediately after Stanišić was fired, Milošević ordered his replacement to launch a formal commission into Stanišić's dealings with the CIA.

Milošević's concerns were not completely unfounded. Good evidence has emerged since 2000 that Stanišić was in cahoots with Western intelligence agencies, specifically the CIA - not least a dossier sent from the CIA in support of his case to the judge overseeing his trial at the Hague.[45] The former British ambassador to Serbia, Sir Ivor Roberts, also confirmed to the Hague Tribunal in 2019 as an expert witness that Stanišić was "a secret agent of the Central Intelligence Agency of the United States."[46] Nevertheless, his dismissal caused Stanišić extreme rancour and, with that, he became a "formal opponent" of Milošević: "Stanišić, who was pissed off with Milošević just because he was fired ... eagerly helped the Americans to overthrow him."[47]

When he dismissed Stanišić and Vučelić, Milošević created two powerful enemies. By the end of the nineties, they both "became more and more focused on ousting Milošević."[48] This, and Stanišić's preexisting reservations about Milošević, pushed their decision to connect Djindjić and Legija on the eve of revolution. They both used their parallel lines "in an underground way" to align the biggest potential spoiler group with one of the most influential politicians in the future regime. Figure 8.1 illustrates the resultant defection network, where the dashed line indicates a new connection between Djindjić and Legija and 'AIC' refers to an anti-incumbent coalition. With Stanišić and Vučelić's help, these two disconnected actors, with entirely different loyalties and professions, would not have been able to negotiate or bring about a deal that would see the Red Berets defect on 5th October.

9.4 Defection and Strategic Framing: Revolution, 5th October

On 5th October at just after 5pm, almost exactly twenty four hours after Legija and Djindjić met on Admirala Geprata street, the JSO left their base in the Banjica suburb of Belgrade. Their Humvees (presents from their patron) tore towards central Belgrade. At 5:35pm, they

[44] Ibid.

[45] See: G. Miller, "Serbian spy's trial lifts cloak on his CIA alliance." *Los Angeles Times*, 01/03/2009.

[46] See: S. Bjelotomic, "Ivor Roberts: The former head of the Serbian security service Jovica Stanisic was a CIA agent." *Serbian Monitor*, 16/10/2019.

[47] Private communication (12/06/2020) from interviewee #14. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.

[48] Private communication (12/06/2020) from interviewee #14. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.

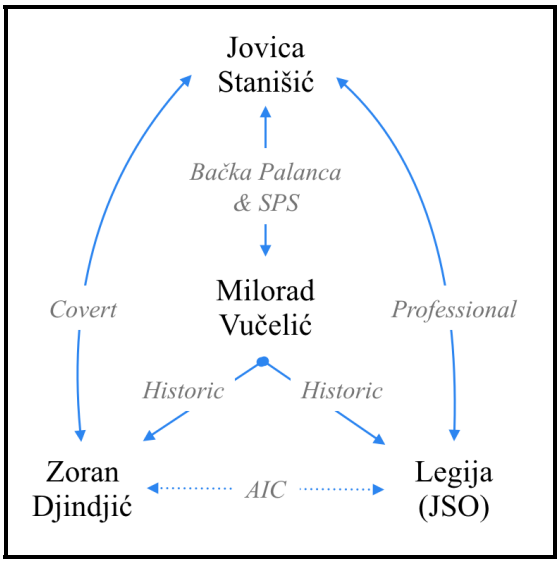


Figure 9.1: The JSO-Djindjić defection network

reached the Radio Television Serbia building which was still partially under siege from the protesters. Legija, who had been riding in the first vehicle, climbed out and stood atop his Humvee. He took off his mask and unmistakably made a three-fingered sign with his thumb, forefinger, and middle finger - the Serb salute. The ritual of peace-making between the protesters and the Red Berets was repeated on Belgrade's main boulevard and all the way back to the outskirts of the city.

At just after 6pm, Djindjić met Legija for a final time. This time, Djindjić was called to Legija's vehicle hiding on Dobrinjska Street - a tiny street with a carpark hidden behind some tall apartment buildings. By this point, Djindjić knew that the JSO had defected. He was now more concerned about the military - whose high command, as the previous chapter showed, had been completely silent all day. Legija reassured him by promising to speak to the top brass and try to convince them that the revolution was over and that Milošević was gone (Bujošević & Radovanović 2003). This conversation ended the JSO's role in the Serbian revolution and they returned to their base in Banjica.

Observers of the revolution are divided as to the effects of the Red Berets' defection on 5th October. On the one hand, some of my interviewees argue that Legija's very public defection in the centre of Belgrade had a very strong "multiplier effect."[49] On 5th October, Legija's defection was inescapable and unmistakeable: everybody saw that Milošević's most loyal unit had broken ties with him and declared its allegiance to the opposition. The message to the rest of the coercive apparatus was: "if these guys, professional murderers,

[49]Elite Interview #14. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.

don't want to fight for Milošević, why would you, who has never murdered anybody?"[50] On this account, Legija's three-fingered salute "actually facilitated the transition of the whole police force in the city" whose commanders were yet to surrender when the JSO arrived at the Radio Television Serbia building.[51] This portrayal of events chimes with what others have found: according to police command radio records accessed by Bujošević and Radovanović (2003), command radio went offline at just after 6pm once Legija had completed his tour of central Belgrade.

This multiplier effect was certainly what Djindjić and Stanišić hoped to achieve; indeed, a multiplier effect is simply strategic framing and cascades by another name. Another DOS leader, Žarko Korać, told me that the idea of Legija defecting in the epicenter of the revolution amidst politically symbolic sites was calculated to send an undeniable signal of disloyalty from a high-profile, historically loyal, and powerful branch of the coercive apparatus.[52] While the defection did send a message to demonstrators ("the deal is done, don't be scared"), the intended audience were those parts of the security apparatus who still remained loyal or who were undecided. The news and spectacle that Legija - of all people! - had driven to Radio Television Serbia and the Serbian Parliament and had stood astride his Humvee and motioned his support for the opposition was as powerful a signal of regime change as the opposition could have created.

On the other hand, others rightly caution that Legija's defection came late in the day. The sheer number of protesters in Belgrade on 5th October overwhelmed the massively short-staffed police forces deployed at key sites like the parliament. As Ivan Marović, one of the twelve leaders of Otpor, noted in one of our interviews: "If we, eight hundred thousand people, tied our hands and just used our teeth we'd eat them [the JSO] alive, they'd run out of ammunition! They stood no chance."[53] He added: "Legija would have been crushed [if he had started shooting]. They'd just be spoilers."[54] His Otpor colleague, Srdja Popović, reiterated to me: "there are only several hundred of them and there were hundreds of thousands of people and you can't really disperse such a large demonstration with such a small unit. It would be bloody, it would be bloody as hell."[55]

[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Elite Interview #28. Žarko Korać. One of DOS's leaders and Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia between 2001 and 2004.
[53] Elite Interview #17. Ivan Marović. One of twelve Otpor leaders and 'press secretary' for the organization.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Elite Interview #12. Srdja Popović. One of twelve leaders and founders of Otpor student resistance group.

There is little doubt that the revolution would have succeeded without the defection of Legija and the JSO. The military had committed itself to remaining neutral, the police forces in Belgrade that day were woefully under-staffed and poorly prepared, and some of the police commanders are also thought to have defected. Combined with the sheer number of protesters in Belgrade that day, the revolution was very likely to be a success regardless of what the JSO decided to do. Yet, the important fact is that Legija's arrival in Belgrade was *calculated* to resolve a coordination problem. The location and crucially the individual unit was chosen to signal to loyalists and undecided security agents that even Milošević's crack unit was deserting him on this particular occasion. Thus, although this defection has been incorrectly marketed as a critical juncture in the revolution, the coalition-building that preceded it and the intention to use Legija to bring recalcitrant loyalists onside are certainly illustrative of the theory.

9.5 Discussion

The case of Djindjić, Stanišić, and Legija's interactions on the 4th October and during the revolution affords a rare insight into how praetorian-like units defect. The axiom outlined in Chapter 3 states that some security agents foresee the possibility of revolutions and repressive orders before the onset of revolution. Legija's meeting with Djindjić clearly confirms this expectation, as do Stanišić and Vučelić's maneuvers to make it happen. The fact that the commander of the JSO and the future prime minister negotiated the terms of the JSO's defection and that the benefits transferred to the JSO under the defection pact were conditional on Djindjić holding high political office are indubitable evidence that all parties involved foresaw the revolution. Moreover, during the meeting Legija told Djindjić that the orders the government had issued to the police were "extreme", indicating that he was aware of repressive orders the day before the revolution at the latest.[56]

Seeing that Milošević's days were numbered, Stanišić persuaded Legija to seek a defection pact with Djindjić. The resultant agreement between Legija and Djindjić constituted an anti-incumbent coalition between the political opposition and a small but critical faction within the coercive apparatus. It differs from the coalition that Pavković attempted to form with Goran Matić in that it was brokered by Stanišić and Vučelić - Legija and Djindjić did not personally know each other beforehand. Hence, the meeting in the jeep was partly about "building up their link, because they had not physically met before."[57] Crucially, there was

[56]Interview with Zoran Djindjić conducted by Bujošević and Radovanović (2003).

[57]Elite Interview #14. Senior JUL politician and state banker; close associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković in the 1990s and 2000.

"enough trust between Stanišić and Djindjić to get the deal with Legija over the line" and Legija and Stanišić had a longstanding professional relationship that Stanišić could draw on using his parallel lines within the RDB.[58]

As for the terms of the coalition, Legija and the JSO would receive immunity for historic crimes and Djindjić received confirmation that Milošević's most loyal spoiler group would not intervene. The theory predicts that defectors in the security forces seek to opportunistically ally with individuals likely to hold important political positions in the future. Stanišić and Legija clearly saw the opportunity to secure state protection for themselves and, in return, they offered Djindjić the certainty that the JSO would support the opposition. Djindjić's longtime underground contacts, Stanišić and Vučelić, "had to provide [him] guarantees" in order to take Legija at his word.[59] In turn, Djindjić could exclude the possibility of counter-revolutionary repression doled out by one of the security forces that most concerned the opposition. Thus, brokerage and coalition-building are central to the story of how the JSO came to defect.

The second mechanism suggested that dissidents within the coercive apparatus and societal opposition engage in strategic framing to persuade erstwhile loyalists to join the defection attempt. Djindjić and Stanišić knew the impact that Legija's defection would have on both the rest of the coercive apparatus and the protesters on 5th October. The JSO was notorious for coldblooded atrocities and "cleaning up the messes nobody else would" (Bujošević & Radovanović 2003). Their track record of unquestioningly doing the regime's dirty work promised to create enormous shock value if they publicly defected: faced with the spectacle of Milošević's most elite unit defying its former master's orders, erstwhile loyalists would be highly likely to also defect.

Djindjić and Legija jointly decided in the jeep on October 4th that the JSO would drive into central Belgrade on 5th October and publicly defect. Indeed, Legija did not receive any orders on 5th October to enter Belgrade, either from Milošević or from the director of the RDB, Rade Marković. The plan was to enter Belgrade in full military gear, including the JSO's humvees, so that the protesters understood that the defectors were a serious part of the security forces. The way that they would defect (i.e., Legija's three-fingered Serbian salute) was not discussed, but Djindjić did suggest that the spectacle would be aided by defecting in front of one of several key sites - the Radio Television Serbia building, the Serbian parliament, or the Socialist Party of Serbia headquarters. As it happens, the

[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.

JSO's defection was more of a procession: the humvees circulated in Belgrade, adorned with protesters, for upwards of an hour before returning to the barracks in Banjica.

Turning to the theses, thesis 1 predicted that senior ranking members of the coercive apparatus are more likely to initiate defection attempts than junior ranks. Senior members of the security forces have greater leverage and reach than their junior counterparts, which makes them better able to organize defection attempts. As the commander of the JSO, Legija was in frequent and direct contact with Stanišić, who was his immediate superior in the RDB, and Milorad Vučelić. Over a period of several years, the three developed a robust and trusting relationship which facilitated the meeting on 4th October. Even junior commanders in the JSO were not privy to these interactions, but instead fitted in lower down the chain of command and were "loyal to their own officer."[60] Legija's position, therefore, gave him a high degree of reach and thus afforded him frequent opportunities to interact with the most senior figure in the state security sector.

The broker of the meeting and former director of the RDB, Jovica Stanišić, was also able to play such a crucial role because of his historic seniority. As mentioned above, his connection to Legija was borne of their professional relationship within the RDB. As for his link to Djindjić, Stanišić was one of the few individuals in the Serbian state with the authority to disburse funds to assist Djindjić with his campaign to become the new leader of the Democratic Party. His position also gave him the freedom and ability to consort with individuals outside the government such as Djindjić, especially since their early interactions were on Milošević's direct orders which allayed suspicions. Moreover, his link to Vučelić via the Bačka Palanka faction of the SPS allowed him to interact indirectly with Djindjić as the nineties drew on and his position as director of the RDB became more tenuous. Thus, Stanišić's unrivaled seniority within the SPS and the RDB offered him a great deal of reach that he could leverage to organize the meeting on 4th October.

Stanišić also still wielded a lot of leverage by October 2000, despite having been fired. Legija owed his promotion and command of the JSO to Stanišić, who had advocated for him initially with Milošević. Consequently, Legija was indebted to and loyal to Stanišić. Stanišić and Vučelić were thus the only individuals who could persuade Legija to meet with Djindjić and impress on him the importance of reaching a deal. This demonstrates the importance of brokerage in the creation of anti-incumbent coalitions: without Stanišić's willingness to expend political capital, Legija and Djindjić would have failed to connect beforehand.

[60]Elite Interview #23. Filip Svarm. Documentarian, director of 'The Unit', an acclaimed documentary about Legija and the JSO.

Individuals holding senior ranks are also more likely than junior ranks to incur punishment if they repress a successful revolution. By 4th October, news about the size of the upcoming revolution was circulating widely in the Serbian coercive apparatus. Legija realized that "the guy [Milošević] was outgoing, not in a position to control anything any longer."[61] In their meeting, Djindjić "drew him a picture of what was going to happen" and Legija was "clever enough not to oppose it."[62] The JSO's three hundred men would not have been able to stem the revolution, so Legija took the opportunity to extract some concessions from Djindjić while he still had leverage and limited ability to cause problems on 5th October.

The second thesis predicted that first-movers will be more likely to organize defection attempts when there are deep wells of disloyal individuals within the coercive apparatus. In this case, both of Legija's immediate superiors (both directors of the entire RDB) between 1996 and October 2000 grew disillusioned with Milošević and were ultimately involved in orchestrating his removal. After Stanišić was fired for suspected disloyalty, his successor, Rade Marković, visited Stanišić at his home in Belgrade in January 2000. Marković had detected Milošević's growing vulnerability and wanted to "have another door open" when the time came to unseat him.[63] In other words, Milošević's secret police "changed side and he didn't know this."[64] Privy to the loose alliance between Marković and Stanišić, Legija was aware that the de facto and de jure leaders of the RDB were both disloyal to Milošević which offered great assurance that he was not acting alone.

The third thesis suggested that first-movers will be less likely to initiate defection attempts when they perceive large numbers of loyalists within the coercive apparatus. It has already been mentioned that the RDB and JSO had concluded that Milošević's days were numbered. Since they assessed that this was a widespread perception in the rest of the coercive apparatus, I could uncover no evidence that Legija expressed concern about isolated defection or facing the wrath of loyal units. Indeed, for highly loyal units such as praetorian guards it is unlikely that large numbers of loyalists deter defection. As the next section explains in more detail, such units are likely to be last movers in the defection process. In turn, this means that they have observed the defection cascade and realize that the threat of repression by loyal units is low. As the most loyal units in the coercive apparatus, we should expect them to be less concerned by isolated defection and more interested in avoiding post-revolutionary sanctions.

[61] Elite Interview #20. Aleksandar Vasović: Radio B-92 and Reuters journalist.
[62] Ibid.
[63] Elite Interview #31. Goran Matić. Federal Minister for Information until October 2000 and senior JUL party official.
[64] Ibid.

A similar argument applies to the fourth thesis, which predicted that first-movers will be less likely to initiate defection attempts when the incumbent has dealt harshly with defectors in the past. Often, the very units that are used to brutalize rebels are praetorian guards and the secret police. In Serbia, for instance, the JSO was used multiple times to target opposition leaders and the government used the RDB to monitor and punish disloyalty in the military, regular police forces, and mass public. Again, therefore, we see that the defection calculus is different for 'last-stand' groups within authoritarian security forces since they are usually the regime's instrument for detecting and punishing disloyalty and are capable of self-defence if the government finds another means of repressing them. Rather than avoiding sanctions for rebelling, the primary motivation of these groups should be to ensure their safe extrication from their past positions.

Finally, the fifth thesis states that first-movers will be more likely to defect when they sense a disjunction between their professional duties and their personal belief in keeping the incumbent in power. In the meeting, Legija told Djindjić that the JSO would not massacre their fellow Serbs but the JSO's checkered history suggests that protest suppression was not beneath them. Once again, the logic of defection for highly loyal units seems to diverge from that of other units whose members are likely to be strongly averse to wanton killing. Legija was, by all accounts, a monster: "an animal who killed people with his bare hands" who fraternized with criminals, ran criminal enterprises of his own, and oversaw atrocities against civilians in the course of war.[65] The dominant incentive for last-stand groups to defect comes from fear of isolation and the need to secure their post-revolution future against dissolution, criminal proceedings, and curtailment of privileges - not aversion to brutality.

9.6 Alternative Explanations

As with the previous two chapters, the present theory adds a good degree of explanatory power beyond the pure positional and coordination accounts. While the positional account would accurately predict that Milošević's imminent downfall would incentivize the JSO to protect its access to patronage and immunity, it would be unable to ascertain the conditions under which this impulse manifested as increased loyalty or defection. The present theory, with its emphasis on the circumstances in which anti-incumbent coalitions emerge, was able to show that Legija's unique combination of reach (to Stanišić and Vučelić) and leverage (in commanding the most feared unit at Milošević's disposal) facilitated his agreement with Djindjić. Moreover, the trust between Legija and Stanišić and between Stanišić and Djindjić

[65] Elite Interview #36. Former Military Intelligence (MI6) officer in Belgrade; Head of Department for the Balkans.

was a key mobilizational resource in both organizing and concluding the pact. The density of anti-Milošević sentiment in Legija's immediate professional network was also a decisive factor in his defection decision. In the positional account, by contrast, this would not have been a key causal driver.

Similarly, the 'revolution as process' or coordination account does not satisfactorily reflect the JSO's defection process. They didn't cascade towards defection having observed other security forces defect; indeed, at 5:35pm no other units had explicitly defected. Rather, their defection was preordained by the deal Legija struck with Djindjić. Furthermore, the deal was reached through negotiation and persuasion before the revolution rather than by either side 'making a fact' to force the other to go along with its plans. The emergence of the pact shows that the premise of surprise was not credible as far as the JSO is concerned: Legija knew that the regime's plans to counter the protesters involved brutal repression by the time he met Djindjić on 4th October. The pact also allowed the JSO to evade the moment of "critical decision" when security agents have to decide whether to follow repressive orders or defect. Their efforts to strategically frame the JSO's defection demonstrate that key actors in the security apparatus and the opposition preempted the revolutionary coordination problem and sought to tip the cascade in their favour by planning how to present the defection attempt to onlookers.

Results Table: The Special Operations Unit		
Theoretical Component	**Confirmation**	**Observation/CPO**
Axiom: first-movers foresee revolution and repression.	Yes	By 4th October, the day before the revolution, Legija was aware of the regime's "extreme" orders to use the security forces to repress the revolution.
Mechanism 1: coalition building.	Yes	Stanišić and Vučelić impressed on Legija the importance of negotiating a settlement with the DOS leadership. This resulted in a meeting between Zoran Djindjić and Legija on 4th October, brokered by Stanišić and Vučelić who were trusted associates of both Djindjić and Legija. An anti-incumbent coalition emerged, underwritten by Legija's promise to defect and Djindjić's guarantee to extend amnesty to the JSO in the new regime.
Mechanism 2: strategic framing.	Yes	Djindjić and Legija agreed that the JSO would publicly defect in the centre of Belgrade. Djindjić realized the value of parading the defection of a highly loyal unit like the JSO in front of recognizable symbols of Milošević's rule such as the Serbian parliament and the RTS building.
Mechanism 3: coordination.	N/A	See Chapter 10 for evidence of coordination during the revolution.

Thesis 1: senior ranks likely to initiate defection.	Yes	Legija and Stanišić were two of the most senior officers within the RDB who had worked together for upwards of five years. Stanišić's position, in particular, had allowed him to network with Djindjić, often through Vučelić. Thus, his reach was crucial in making the meeting happen. The fact that Djindjić and Legija both trusted him, a form of social capital or leverage, was also necessary for the coalition agreement to take place.
Thesis 2: widespread disloyalty incentivizes defection.	Yes	Legija was aware that both Stanišić and Rade Marković were disillusioned with Milošević's government. With the former and present directors of the RDB united against Milošević, and Stanišić actively encouraging him to join forces with Djindjić, Legija was reassured that his defection would not be an isolated act of disloyalty.
Thesis 3: presence of loyal units deters defection.	No	The JSO's commanders perceived that disloyalty was widespread across the coercive apparatus and recognized that they were seen as ultra-loyal. Thus, they exhibited no concern about facing the wrath of loyal units.
Thesis 4: poor past treatment of defectors deters defection.	No	The JSO itself was often used to mete out the most brutal repression for Milošević (including assassinations) and were capable of self-defence. Legija's realization that other security forces were planning to defect also reduced the perceived threat of recriminations.
Thesis 5: repressive duties and antipathy for the incumbent incentivize defection.	Partial	While Legija told Djindjić that the JSO would not massacre fellow Serbs, his record of criminal and homicidal activity indicates otherwise.

Table 9.1: Summary of the Special Operation Unit's defection process.

9.7 Highly Loyal Units and Defection: A Broader Perspective

Given the array of mortal and political threats to dictators, praetorian guards and other types of highly loyal security forces are relatively common features of authoritarian regimes. Yet, there is no work in political science that systematically explores the conceptual or empirical facets of these units. In fact, the most cohesive body of work on these units is the literature on praetorian guards in the Julio-Claudian period of Roman history (e.g., Durry 1938, Bingham 2013). In this section, therefore, I use the case study of the JSO's defection in combination with a broader portfolio of academic and journalistic accounts of praetorian units to apprehend their key characteristics and behaviour.

Praetorian guards have four necessary characteristics. First, they are coercive units: armed or unarmed, they are ordinarily situated within the security apparatus. Second, their primary responsibility is to ensure the incumbent's physical survival (by guarding official residences, arranging safe transport, and managing public events) and political survival (by detecting and quashing coup attempts). Third, they are under the incumbent's direct command or that of a trusted member of the ruling coalition, usually one of the incumbent's relatives or close associates. Fourth, they are presumed to be highly loyal to the incumbent's regime due to indoctrination, patronage, ascriptive selection, or a mixture of all three.[66] The eponymous praetorian guards in Julio-Claudian Rome, for instance, were directly subordinated to the emperor and heavily armed. Their primary duties included guarding the imperial palaces, political espionage, assassinating suspected dissidents, and occasionally stamping out protests (Bingham 2013). Whilst their episodic disloyalty to emperors became legendary, they were generally loyal and their salaries and working conditions made them the most privileged group in the entire Roman security apparatus.

Outside of these four regular features, however, praetorian guards exhibit a variety of organizational and functional forms. A key point of difference cross-nationally is the size of such units: Saddam Hussein's Special Republican Guards, for example, was roughly 25,000-strong but Nicolás Maduro's personal security protectorate is only 200-strong (Baram 2003, Fonseca & Polga-Hecimovich 2020). Another difference is the degree of militarization within praetorian guards. For example, Maduro's coterie of Cuban and Iranian 'political advisors' help the indigenous Venezuelan intelligence services to identify coup plots but these

[66] Their very privilege and power, however, sometimes gives praetorian units unparalleled opportunities to seize the state. In 1960, for instance, Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie's own Imperial Guard launched a putsch against him (Barany 2016).

hold strictly non-military positions.[67] By contrast, Hussein's Special Security Organization (SSO) was directly responsible for military procurement and Iraq's WMD and non-conventional warhead programs (al-Marashi 2002). Praetorian guards also display varying degrees of social embeddedness: Iran's Revolutionary Guard, for instance, is an active political force in Iranian elections and holds an expansive economic portfolio with holdings from laser eye surgery clinics to infrastructure projects (Wehrey *et al.* 2009, Safshekan & Sabet 2010). The men in Hussein's Presidential Guard, by contrast, were plucked from villages around Saddam's hometown Tikrit at a young age and whisked away to Baghdad to receive schooling and indoctrination in isolation.

Praetorian units are distinguished from the rest of the coercive apparatus by their proximity to the incumbent and their heightened loyalty. Dictators go to great efforts to latch praetorian units to their fate by heaping patronage on them, filling key positions with stalwarts, and indoctrinating recruits in a cult of personality. Saddam Hussein's Special Security Organization (SSO) is a prime example of manufactured fealty within praetorian guards. The SSO was run by his son, Qusay Hussein, and was stacked with hand-picked officers from Tikrit and Iraq's elite military force, the Republican Guards (Barany 2016). Qusay also oversaw the Presidential Guard which was packed with uneducated men from Saddam's home region which meant "they do not have much hope to succeed anywhere else" (Baram 2003). Moreover, "some of them have performed crimes in his service and so have enemies waiting to avenge the blood of relatives," which increased their incentives to protect their patron. Qusay's Special Republican Guards were also highly loyal. Indeed, until their dissolution in 2003 there were "no reports of coup attempts hatched within the SRG, a distinction that sets it apart from the regular army, air force, and guard."[68] Thus, on the eve of the US ground assault on Baghdad, one commentator noted: "While there is some chance that Republican Guard units might turn on Saddam, there is little reason to expect that SRG units would do so" (Baram 2003).

The staunch loyalty of praetorian units is also demonstrated by dictators' tendency to use them as 'feeder units' to fill important jobs elsewhere in the coercive apparatus. In the New Order regime in Indonesia, for instance, President Suharto increasingly packed the military high command with former senior officers from the Presidential Security Guards and his personal adjutants. By the beginning of 1998, the year Suharto was finally ousted, the commander of the armed forces, the commander and deputy commander of the army,

[67] See: E. Bronner *et al.*, 'How Has Maduro Survived? With Lots of Help from Cuban Operatives.' *Bloomberg,* 01/04/2019.
Also see: S. Martin, 'Madura Distrusts Cuba, Appoints Iranian Personal Guard.' *PanAm Post,* 08/05/2020.

[68] See: A. Baram, 'The Republican Guard: outgunned and outnumbered, but they never surrender.' *The Guardian,* 25/03/2003.

the commander of the Jakarta-based military unit, and the chief of police were all former bodyguards of Suharto (Lee 2014). Despite their lack of experience in running large organizations like police forces and the army, their long and close relationship to Suharto made them fiercely loyal until their defection in late May 1998.

This brief overview of praetorian guards indicates that the JSO shared some crucial characteristics with praetorian units. It was a highly militarized coercive unit under Milošević's direct command that carried out assassination attempts on his political rivals. Legija and his men were generously rewarded for their resolute loyalty with top-of-the-line equipment and immunity for their lucrative criminal enterprises. Both the patronage they received and their criminal record bound them squarely to the Milošević administration. Figure 8.2 shows an overall loyalty distribution (L_1) and its constituents (L_{2-6}) which can be thought of as different security forces - the police, army, intelligence services, and so on. Until 2000, the JSO would have been perceived as L_6: almost unconditionally loyal and fused irrevocably to the Milošević regime.

The heightened loyalty exhibited by praetorian guards means that the way in which they defect is different to other units. For one, the loyalty of other units is likely to play a less important role in their defection decision. For non-praetorian units, the primary risk of defecting is being repressed by loyal security forces so the presence of strong loyalists exist makes defection less likely. However, praetorian units know that they are a dictator's last line of defence so the threat of repression (for them) is hardly credible. In other words, the security force represented by L_6 is likely to know that units L_{2-5} are less loyal, which means that the expected costs of defection are reduced. Just as the risk of scratching your car is minimal if you are the last to leave the carpark, repression is not an acute risk for the most loyal units.

Indeed, highly loyal units face a different dilemma to disloyal defectors altogether. While the latter are motivated to oust the incumbent to improve their position in the new regime, highly loyal units are most concerned to mitigate downside risk. The JSO, for instance, stood to lose patronage and protection if Milošević fell. Similarly, when the Arab Spring spread to Libya, Colonel Gaddafi's sons in charge of the military's crack units risked losing their unrivalled positions of political and economic power too. Thus, in cases like the Serbian revolution where the incumbent's survival appears to hang in the balance, loyalists seek out defection networks that allow them to evade transitional justice, hold on to some of their economic privileges. These pacts function as primitive insurance policies to indemnify the praetorians against total loss if the incumbent is overthrown, whereas the defection

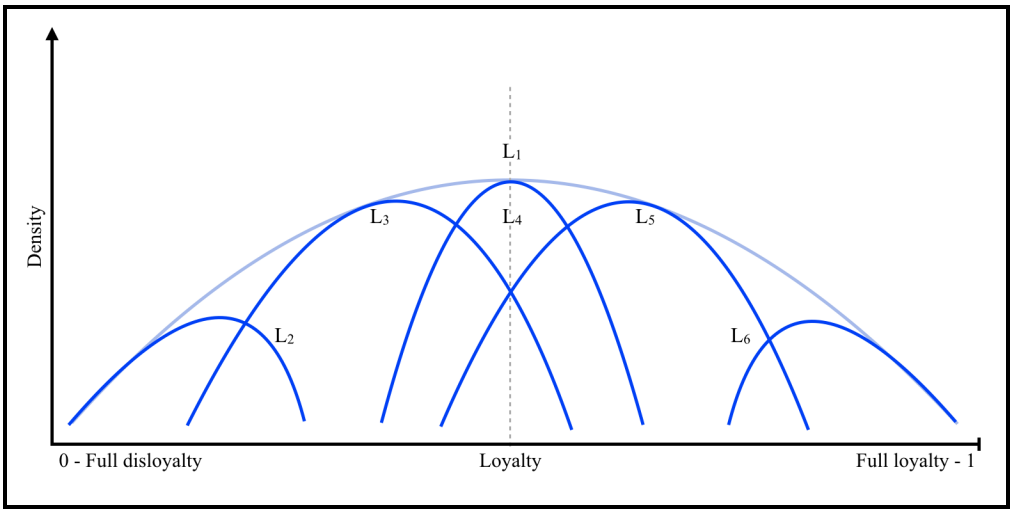


Figure 9.2: Disaggregated loyalty distribution

networks constructed by genuinely disloyal first-movers serve to provide physical security and kickstart defection cascades.

This interpretation of the loyalists' defection decision is borne out by how some resistance and opposition movements try to elicit security force defections. For instance, the opposition to Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela offered official amnesty to senior defectors from the security forces in 2019, precisely to allay their concerns about recriminations in the new regime.[69] Morency-Laflamme (2019) also found that opposition movements in Africa were more likely to successfully secure defections if they guaranteed loyalist groups a voice in the transition process to serve as a check on reformers' ability to dissolve and dispossess units wholesale.

Clearly, this discussion rests on the assumption stipulated in the introduction: that loyalty is conditional rather than blind. There are praetorian guards whose loyalty may well be unquestionable and unwavering, such as those commanded by the incumbent's close relatives like the "Khamis" 32nd Brigade in Gaddafi's Libya which fought until the bitter end. For all intents and purposes, these units are inseparable from the incumbent. Extreme fealty generated through indelible relational ties, indoctrination, and reverence foreclose the option of defection by erecting colossal psychological costs to disloyalty.

[69] See: J. Daniels, 'Venezuelan security forces offered amnesty if they defect to opposition.' *The Guardian,* 28/01/2019.

Chapter 10

Empirics IV: Broader Loyalty Dynamics in the Serbian Revolution

"The situation became almost absurd. By the time elections were held on September 24th members of the Serbian police, except high-ranking officers, knew more about Otpor, its goals, and methods than ordinary citizens. And Otpor was getting information about the mood in the police after each arrest and detention."

Ivan Marović
Founder and leader of Otpor

Introduction

In this final empirical chapter, I delve into the other side of loyalty contestation. First, I show how the student resistance group Otpor and the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) developed sub-coalitional arrangements with the regime and coercive apparatus. The origins of these informal institutions lay in coalition failure: DOS and particularly Otpor did not have the requisite mobilizational resources to initiate relations with the coercive apparatus. Instead, they relied on tacit and public devices to gain information about loyalties across the coercive apparatus and contest them including fraternization, facilitation, other nonviolent strategies, and targeted policy appeals.

Second, I provide indicative evidence that the rest of the coercive apparatus was thrown into a coordination problem during the revolution. For instance, testimonies from an army barracks near Belgrade suggest that junior officers spent the 5th October in a state of uncertainty about how their colleagues in other barracks would act. All day, they phoned their colleagues trying to find out which way the coercive apparatus was tipping. More-

over, individual-level strategies to manage uncertainty and defer the defection decision were evident across the entire coercive apparatus. Accounts of police behaviour at provincial barricades across Serbia, for example, suggest that police were selectively compliant: they were willing to build barricades but not to defend them when they encountered convoys of protesters. When they radioed their superiors, however, they claimed that they had been overwhelmed to preserve a sense of plausible deniability in case the revolution failed.

Third, I examine the woeful attempts by the regime to erect physical and informational barriers to the revolution. Increasingly personalized and cronyistic appointments in the upper echelons of Milošević's government fostered inexperience in the Ministry of the Interior which led to poor coordination and planning for 5th October. This manifested as a manpower shortfall in Belgrade and tactical incompetence during the revolution. Moreover, the government failed to project a coherent, united image of itself throughout the revolution because of severed communication lines between government departments and its failure to secure government media outlets against the opposition.

10.1 Resistance in Serbia: Otpor ('Resistance') and DOS

The origins of Otpor, Serbia's celebrated student-led resistance group, lie in the miserable failure of the country's mainstream opposition parties for much of the 1990s. While the Milošević regime erected serious impediments to hinder the opposition's task, including consistent repression and media bias, these were ironically not the main cause of the formal opposition's dismal performance (Roberts 2016). Rather, several features of the Serbian party system itself militated against successful electoral challenges to the Milošević regime. For one, the challenger parties were highly fragmented: at any one time, there were over twenty parties all with minimal infrastructure and small memberships, many of them catering to niche ideological or regional constituencies (Bieber 2003). The parties also had disparate policy priorities. Some were built around Serb nationalism, such as the Serbian Renewal Movement and the Serbian Radical Party, while others like the Democratic Party and its offshoots had a more democratic bent. Others still, such as the Civil Alliance of Serbia, sought reform within narrower policy areas such as corruption, ending the Yugoslav wars, and economic development.

Moreover, the parties diverged on exactly how to unseat the regime - if, indeed, they agreed on that preliminary aim at all. Milošević's party, the Socialist Party of Serbia, could



not govern without coalition partners after 1992. Some parties, such as Vuk Drašković's nationalist Serbian Renewal Movement, saw this as an opportunity to advance their cause from within the corridors of power and joined the coalition government in 1999. More broadly, programmatic and strategic disagreements within the opposition prevented the emergence of enduring coalitions. The most promising alliance, *Zajedno* ('Together'), brought together three of the main opposition parties but collapsed after only a year following the defection of the Democratic Party. Even the internal politics of the opposition parties were an electoral turn-off: incessant infighting, factionalism, and leadership contests projected a bewildering vista of incompetence and perverse priorities.

Thus, while the regime worked to inculcate "feelings of defeat, exhaustion, and hopelessness among its potential opponents," Serbia's thicket of mainstream opposition parties prevaricated for years on electoral strategy and ideology (Gordy 1999). In 1998, however, a new player entered the political fray: a student-led resistance group that called itself Otpor, meaning 'resistance' in Serbian. Baptized in the protests surrounding the government's attempts to abolish the autonomy of Serbian universities, Otpor's twelve original leaders acted quickly to differentiate their movement from the mainstream opposition. First, they adopted a flat hierarchy to prevent leadership decapitation attempts: the idea was for the twelve leaders to be "indivisible" and mostly incognito.[1] Second, they were explicitly non-partisan to separate Otpor from the internecine bickering in the conventional political opposition. Their iconography went even further and Otpor soon became synonymous with its symbol: a raised clenched fist to signal unity, determination, and danger.[2]

[1] Elite Interview #17. Ivan Marović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor.
[2] Elite Interview #30. Milja Jovanović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor.

Otpor's leaders also recognized that the opposition's favoured mode of protest - rallies and marches - were hackneyed and ineffective. Instead, they tried to target what they perceived as the true cause of Milošević's continued hold on power: despondency and apathy in the wider population. The Otpor playbook was a repertoire of refreshing new tactics: political satire, humour, performative spectacles, and disciplined non-violence.[3] On one occasion, for example, Otpor put around word that they were due to receive a shipment of t-shirts. On the alloted day, Otpor activists carrying cardboard boxes and staggering down Kneza Mihaila (Belgrade's main pedestrian street) were accosted by the police who made a big show of confiscating the boxes. The hitch: the boxes were empty and the whole thing had been an act.[4] On another occasion, Otpor aired a television advert for washing detergent - apart from the 'stains' on the clothes were pictures of Milošević and the start button on the washing machine was marked with the Otpor symbol.[5] The actress stares down the camera lens and says: "I've been trying to clean this stain for ten years. Believe me, I've tried everything."

As time went on, Otpor's ranks burgeoned with new recruits from Serbia's four university towns and secondary schools nationwide. Their soldiers also became younger and younger. "Our natural allies were young people," Milja Jovanović told me, "they were cynical enough that nothing the parties said made them vote for them."[6] By July 2000, Otpor could count on some 30-40,000 activists, 120 local branches, and seven core regional detachments.[7] The core leadership group, however, remained approximately constant over time. The twelve renegades were all in the perfect "sweet spot" of life to conduct a full-time civil resistance campaign: fresh out of university and issuing from middle-class families, they had few financial, familial, or professional pressures to balance alongside activism.[8]

In addition to its flat hierarchy, Otpor was highly compartmentalized. Mainly, this was to limit any one individual's knowledge of how the rest of the organization operated so they could not give the game away in interrogations.[9] The idea was that even if activists were arrested and "beaten to hell" they wouldn't be able to endanger the rest of the organization.[10] The most impermeable Chinese wall was between those who obtained Otpor's financing and those who spent it. The problem was that Otpor's funding mainly came

[3]Srdja Popović, "The Power of Laughtivism." YouTube Video. One of twelve leaders of Otpor.
[4]Elite Interview #30. Milja Jovanović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor.
[5]Reported in *Bringing Down a Dictator* (WETA-TV, 2001).
[6]Elite Interview #30. Milja Jovanović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor.
[7]Interview with Otpor financial officer, Slobodan Homen (July 21 2000), conducted by Florian Bieber.
[8]Elite Interview #30. Milja Jovanović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor.
[9]Pearlman (2020) reports that the Syrian opposition movement after the Arab Spring used compartmentalized group structures to protect their activists.
[10]Elite Interview #30. Milja Jovanović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor.

from Western governments and non-governmental organizations such as Freedom House, the International Republican Institute, and the National Democratic Institute. The British Treasury, for instance, created a £6 million "slush fund" to be used on democracy-building efforts in Serbia, much of which went on Otpor.[11] The US was also "throwing money at" the anti-Milošević campaign, some of which was funnelled to Otpor.[12]

From the start, Otpor had several core strategic goals which were enshrined in its Declaration on the Future of Serbia adopted on July 30th 1999 (Marović 2007). The first was to get the opposition to overcome its history of discord by working together to overthrow Milošević in democratic elections.[13] In January 2000, as a result of constant pressure from Otpor and Western governments, nineteen mainstream opposition parties formed the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) coalition with Vojislav Koštunica as its presidential candidate. Koštunica was chosen on a purely strategic basis as the most likely leader to successfully challenge Milošević. Several things ran in his favour: crucially, he was not tainted by having served in government with Milošević and polling showed that his responsible nationalism played well with voters.[14] Second, Otpor and DOS knew they had to construct an independent means of counting votes across Serbia to prevent fraud. In the event, the opposition managed to muster 30,000 monitors for the September 2000 elections and Koštunica was able to announce victory before the official electoral commission had finalized the numbers.[15]

Otpor also formulated more specific policy milestones. Its "Building A Vision of Tomorrow" programme focused on three fields of grievances: restrictions on political freedoms, Serbia's sluggish accession to the European Union, and continual conflict with its regional neighbours.[16] The manifesto was designed to appeal to a broad cross-section of Serbian society, from the refugees created by the Yugoslav wars to impoverished rural Serbs to the coercive apparatus. With these all-encompassing campaigns, Otpor continuously sought to evoke the multidimensional misery of the 1990s: standing in line for basic foodstuffs, contending with hyperinflation, the NATO bombings, and the series of pyrrhic defeats. The

[11]Elite Interview #2. Charles Crawford. UK Ambassador to Sarajevo (1996-98); Director of Balkan Affairs, London; UK Ambassador to Belgrade, 2001-2003.

[12]Elite Interview #1. William Montgomery. US Ambassador to Croatia (1998-September 2000), Ambassador to Yugoslavia (January 2002-February 2002), Ambassador to Serbia and Montenegro (February 2003-February 2004).

[13]Centre for Applied Non-Violent Action and Strategy (CANVAS), CANVAS Documents, 'Handbook for Working with Activists.'

[14]Interview with Diane Cromer, Political Consultant, National Democratic Institute. Featured in *Bringing Down a Dictator* (WETA-TV, 2001).

[15]Interview with Brian Serwer, Director of the Balkans Initiative, US Institute of Peace. Featured in *Bringing Down a Dictator* (WETA-TV, 2001).

[16]Elite Interview #12. Srdja Popović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor and Head of Activist Training.

message was clear: "everybody needed to be protected from this regime."[17]

10.1.1 Coalition Failure: Reach and Leverage Deficits

In the third theory chapter, I hypothesized that limited reach, leverage, and social capital between the coercive apparatus and other dissident factions can lead to the emergence of 'sub-coalitional' arrangements between them. Even if neither side possesses the requisite mobilizational resources to instigate a fully-fledged coalition, factions can strike up interactive practices that increase communication and reduce asymmetric information while requiring less commitment and trust from both sides. For opposition groups, these relationships also provide opportunities to assess loyalties within the security forces (usually with a degree of error) and generate policy stances that reflect the particular constellation of concerns that security agents harbour.

Otpor and, to a lesser extent, DOS were unable to construct anti-incumbent coalitions with the coercive apparatus. On the one hand, this was because they didn't have access to important decision-makers or senior officers within the respective security forces (i.e., a failure of reach). Ivan Andrić, for instance, told me that Otpor had "several kinds of connections but I'm not sure about the police - nothing significant. We knew people from the police but not on high levels."[18] He went on to elaborate: "We were a *political* organization... From the political parts of the regime, we had contacts."[19] Another Otpor leader, Milja Jovanović, emphasized their disconnect from senior police officers: "We never thought we could change their minds because the police is a hierarchical organization. We were just hoping that when the time comes they would choose not to shoot at us."[20] After all, the Otpor leaders were "between twenty five and twenty seven years old": savvy but not necessarily well-connected political activists.[21]

One of Andrić's contemporaries in the Otpor leadership, Ivan Marović, corroborated this view. Marović emphasizes that the army and special forces were particularly insular and therefore difficult for the opposition to communicate with if the military didn't initiate contact first. He writes that "despite the fact that General Perišić was one of its leaders, the opposition [i.e., DOS] never established communication with the Army generals and never got any guarantees that the Yugoslav Army would not intervene in the case of a mass

[17] Elite Interview #30. Milja Jovanović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor.
[18] Elite Interview #40. Ivan Andrić. One of twelve leaders of Otpor and Otpor's Head of Marketing.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Elite Interview #30. Milja Jovanović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor.
[21] Ibid.

protest" (Marović 2007). Zoran Djindjić, DOS's candidate for prime minister, later said: "Although Generals Perišić and Obradović have tried, we haven't managed to find out what was the real mood in the Army, not even a few days before October 5th."[22] The same went for highly loyal units such as the Special Operations Unit: "until the very end the mood in these special units was unknown" to the opposition (Marović 2007).

Otpor also encountered serious constraints on its leverage when dealing with the coercive apparatus. Milja Jovanović told me that they simply couldn't offer security agents anything in return for collaborating: "there is nothing you can promise. You have no aces to play."[23] Unlike Djindjić, who could credibly extend immunity to Legija since he would be Serbia's prime minister if Milošević fell, Otpor could not "guarantee safety, amnesty, or anything" to potential coalition partners.[24] This introduced pragmatic and moral concerns about whether Otpor would be able to ensure the safety of its informants and collaborators if it were to strike up informal arrangements with the coercive apparatus. The result was that Otpor ceased to "try anything like that, that would just put them [i.e., their collaborators] in a very awkward position."[25]

Even when individuals either inside or connected to the coercive apparatus made contact with Otpor, the lack of foregoing trust between the two sides frequently meant that the students unilaterally cut off communications. To protect the organization, their default reaction to advances was that they were "provocation or a test" hatched by the regime.[26] If they received a tip-off, for instance, they were forced out of prudence to regard it with extreme scepticism: "we never made any decision according to some 'secret information' from the police."[27] Indeed, in one of our later interviews, Milja informed me that Otpor "said no to any kind of approach that was made to us from any kind of coercive apparatus including people that were emissaries because we were highly distrustful of getting involved in anything we couldn't trust."[28] She went on: "Any kind of approach from outside which was not from a political, Western, marked political organization, we just said no to by default."[29]

Therefore, Otpor was forced to actually turn down many attempted coalition-building efforts because of social capital deficits between willing coalition partners. Otpor, however,

[22]Interview with Zoran Djindjić conducted by Nenad Stefanović. "Government Without Opposition: Interview with Zoran Djinjic," *Vreme*, Belgrade, 02/11/2000.
[23]Elite Interview #43. Milja Jovanović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor.
[24]Ibid.
[25]Elite Interview #41. Milja Jovanović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor.
[26]Elite Interview #43. Milja Jovanović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor.
[27]Elite Interview #40. Ivan Andrić. One of twelve leaders of Otpor and Otpor's Head of Marketing.
[28]Elite Interview #43. Milja Jovanović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor.
[29]Ibid.

found various ways of compensating for their limited reach and leverage within the coercive apparatus. On some occasions, they were able to overcome trust barriers by striking up primitive relationships with useful individuals so that they could access strategic information about the regime and coercive apparatus. For instance, the leaders were contacted out of the blue by a "very high level politician from JUL [the Yugloslav Left party]" on their email server.[30] The politician didn't immediately reveal his identity, but he started to feed them information which the leaders were able to verify:

> "We were not blindly believing him. You [would] see that some things are happening because he'd announce something and then it would happen, but you never knew if he was manipulating you in some way. You didn't take it for granted."[31]

Before the revolution, the politician passed Otpor useful analytics about "how the regime thinks, what it wants" and was "very informed about the police and army."[32] This served to mitigate the Otpor leaders' uncertainty about the state of loyalty within the coercive apparatus: they were able to "ask him what the feeling was towards us: do they think we are endangering them and that kind of thing."[33] Crucially, he was also able to provide them with insider intelligence about the passage of the Anti-Terrorism Law in the Serbian parliament. The law, which applied a very flexible definition of 'terrorism' and established lengthy prison sentences for those who conducted sedition "with help from abroad", was Milošević's legislative pretext for extirpating Otpor and was the cause of much consternation among the Otpor leaders.[34] The regime insider kept them appraised of the bill's progress and parliamentary support until it was withdrawn due to significant domestic and international pressure.

Otpor's other option to get a better read on loyalties in the coercive apparatus was to leverage its connections to DOS. Ivan Andrić told me that DOS's network of contacts within the police especially was much more developed than Otpor's: "those leaders have much more information from the police, from the political part of the regime, and they were sharing that with us."[35] Even DOS, however, failed to extract concrete commitments of support from police commanders: "they pretty much got a sense of the mood in the

[30] Elite Interview #17. Ivan Marović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor.
[31] Elite Interview #40. Ivan Andrić. One of twelve leaders of Otpor and Otpor's Head of Marketing.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] S. Vucetić, "Anti-terrorism Law Poses 'Monstrous Threat'." *Institute for War and Peace Reporting,* 20/06/2000.
Also: Staff Journalist, "Serbian terrorism bill withdrawn." *BBC News,* 30/06/2000.
[35] Elite Interview #40. Ivan Andrić. One of twelve leaders of Otpor and Otpor's Head of Marketing.

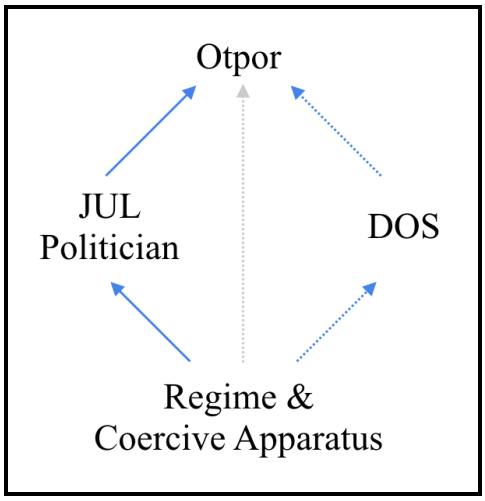


Figure 10.2: Sub-Coalitional Arrangements: Otpor

police but they didn't get any guarantees because the police commanders didn't want to openly commit to one side or the other."[36] As late as 4th October, some of the police commanders that DOS was in touch with refused to reveal their stance but the "fact they opened channels of communication was already a big step in the direction" and further than Otpor was able to get.[37]

Senior figures in DOS confirm that their insight into the coercive apparatus was partial. On the night of 4/5th October, Zoran Djindjić reported that DOS "didn't know how police would react. We knew that some part of police will not react against the people but we didn't know about all parts of the police. The police were very confused."[38] In a later interview, he emphasized that while DOS accessed more and more information closer to 5th October, they were still unable to fully trust their sources:

> "At midnight we found out that four to five commanders of police brigades, people who had thousands of policemen under control, were informed by Vlajko Stojiljković [Minister of the Interior] that the next day [October 5th] force would be used. Not just firearms, but explosives too, in order to prevent convoys from coming to Belgrade. And that Milošević had given the order to defend the government at any cost. This was all stopped at the very top of the chain of command by some generals, and we were in contact with them that night. We didn't believe them fully, but we made the strategy based on this information,

[36] Elite Interview #17. Ivan Marović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Reported in *Bringing Down a Dictator* (WETA-TV, 2001).

nevertheless."[39]

Figure 10.2 summarizes the information in this section. Otpor faced severe limitations on its ability to ally directly with the coercive apparatus, as indicated by the grey dashed line. Very little concrete information was learned through direct channels. Instead, it relied on DOS's connections and greater leverage, as politicians who would actually occupy political office after the revolution. Despite these advantages, even DOS had imperfect insight and access to the coercive apparatus and was unsure on the eve of the revolution about the loyalty of both the military and the police. These informational transfers are denoted by the blue dashed lines. The most reliable information that Otpor was able to gain came from the senior JUL politician who had seamless access to the coercive apparatus and regime insiders. This relationship is indicated by the solid blue line.

10.1.2 Sub-Coalitional Arrangements I: Fraternization

In addition to utilizing their direct and indirect connections to the coercive apparatus, Otpor also used other strategies to find out more information about the security forces and to change how they were perceived by security agents. In particular, the anti-Otpor campaign unleashed by Milošević in mid-2000 actually increased the scope for fraternization between Otpor and the police by providing a forum (i.e., police stations and holding cells) for repeated interaction and communication between the activists and police officers. As Marović (2007) writes, the campaign "only intensified communication between Otpor and the police." The result was a dual backlash against the regime, which incensed much of the wider population (not least the activists' families, particularly mothers) and disillusioning the very individuals in the police tasked with meting out the repression.[40] Indeed, Otpor's explicit objective throughout the repression was to use the arrests as a chance to inform policemen about Otpor's mission and counteract the regime's propaganda. According to Ivan Marović, the result was impressive:

> "The situation became almost absurd. By the time elections were held on September 24th members of the Serbian police, except high-ranking officers, knew more about Otpor, its goals, and methods than ordinary citizens. And

[39] Interview with Zoran Djindjić conducted by Nenad Stefanović. "Government Without Opposition: Interview with Zoran Djinjic," *Vreme*, Belgrade, 02/11/2000.

[40] Hess & Martin (2006) and others posit that disproportionate and unwarranted repression can sometimes 'backfire' on the repressor by igniting wider grievances that increase anti-regime mobilization. In this case, the repression both increased anti-regime sentiment *and* decreased repressors' appetite for repression.

> Otpor was getting information about the mood in the police after each arrest and detention."

The last sentence points to another counterproductive consequence of Milošević's assault on Otpor. The arrests created space for a two-way diffusion of information between the police and Otpor. While Otpor specifically sought to communicate certain information to the police, informal observations of police behaviour during detentions were fed back to the Otpor leadership. Through their actions, inactions, and speech, the police conveyed to Otpor that they were disaffected with what the regime was asking them to do. As Srdja Popović emphasized to me: "In so many different cities they were doing this so reluctantly... They would arrest half-heartedly, they would take you to the police station, they would say they were sorry, they would give you decent treatment and they would let you go as soon as possible."[41] Marović (2007) confirms that the police quickly grew tired with their new role of child-minder for teenage activists: "it was obvious from the accounts of the arrested Otpor activists that the police was in a state of apathy by the end of August." A Humanitarian Law Fund report on the police crackdown also suggests that police morale was much diminished by the Otpor campaign: "in some cases, during interrogation of Otpor activists, police inspectors explained that they [junior policemen] needed to be more vigorous, because their superiors complained about their poor performance."[42]

Thus, fraternization needn't take the public form that was widely seen during the Arab Spring in Egypt: military tanks adorned with protesters, laughing and in earnest discussion with soldiers. In Otpor's case, tacit fraternization was ironically facilitated by repression and furnished Otpor with partial insights into loyalties within the police. Their lack of professional zeal, perfunctory approach to the Otpor arrests, and broadly conciliatory and apologetic manner conveyed information that Otpor could use strategically to gauge the situation. Sometimes, public fraternization on the streets did take place between the police and the opposition, but this was of limited importance compared to the numerous interactions that took place within police stations in mid-2000.

10.1.3 Sub-Coalitional Arrangements II: Facilitation

Another key way in which the opposition can compensate for the absence of formal coalitions with the coercive apparatus are 'facilitation' strategies. These entail proactively liaising with

[41] Elite Interview #12. Srdja Popović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor and Head of Activist Training.
[42] "Police Crackdown on Otpor - Serbia, 2nd May to 24th September 2000." *Humanitarian Law Fund Report,* Belgrade.

the coercive apparatus to produce mutually advantageous solutions to shared problems (e.g., protest policing) and pragmatic measures to increase trust and social capital between the two sides. In Otpor's case, facilitation formed a large part of their public strategy for engaging with the police. As Ivan Andrić told me: "We knew all of them. We were having rallies since 1995. Later they approached us, they saw who was the leader, and asked "where will you go?" so they could organize traffic."[43] Thus, Otpor deliberately cooperated with the police during protests so that both sides - protesters and protest controllers - could fulfil their roles. Andrić went on to underline that this was a *practical* and mutually advantageous arrangement: "they would call the traffic police and say that the rally will go on this route so they can stop the traffic on the route - it's not a political thing, it's making their job easier and our job easier."[44]

Over time, this tactic of engaging the police started to pay dividends. Senior policemen began to advise protest leaders on which streets to avoid if they didn't want to run into the riot police. Many times, protest organizers were invited to police stations to discuss how to reduce the security risks of the main events.[45] For instance, the government usually transferred police units to Belgrade from areas where support for Milošević was strongest in advance of large rallies and the local police would often forewarn Otpor leaders that these violent extra-regional police forces were in town.[46] In return, Otpor always sought to be completely transparent with the police about their plans for public demonstrations: the only thing they ever actively hid from them was how they obtained their funding.[47] As levels of trust rose on both sides, the police would allocate fewer stewards and erect fewer cordons when Otpor marches took place. By mid-2000, the police had only one concern when the opposition ran protests:

> "They just didn't want us to go to Dedinje [where Milošević lived], that was always the first thing out of their mouth. It was not just his domicile but a symbolic barrier that protesters just didn't go there because I guess that would be understood just as a push to physically kill him which is something we would never even think about doing."[48]

[43] Elite Interview #40. Ivan Andrić. One of twelve leaders of Otpor and Otpor's Head of Marketing.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Elite Interview #12. Srdja Popović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor and Head of Activist Training.
[46] The series of large protests in Hong Kong in 2019 until present day elicited a similar response from the government in mainland China. Special units of China's elite internal security force, the People's Armed Police or PAP, were transferred to Hong Kong along with extra detachments of the People's Liberation Army to help suppress demonstrations if the regular Hong Kong police were overwhelmed.
See: G. Torode, "Exclusive: China's internal security force on frontlines of Hong Kong protests." *Reuters,* 18/03/2020.
[47] Elite Interview #43. Milja Jovanović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor.
[48] Elite Interview #41. Milja Jovanović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor.

On other occasions, Otpor and other opposition groups actively tried to protect the police. My interviewees were careful to specify that this was not out of compassion for the policemen; it was a strategic act that they hoped would be reciprocated. Srdja Popović recalled when Otpor activists physically arranged themselves in a human chain to separate belligerent soccer hooligans from the police: "the police didn't forget that, and that's why they understood we were not the enemy."[49] While facilitation involves some degree of fraternization, therefore, the way in which it seeks to unwind loyalties in the police and advance the protesters' cause is different. Facilitation works by reaching mutually advantageous, constructive, routinized, and reliable arrangements with the coercive apparatus that emphasize the opposition's reasonable and human qualities. If facilitation also provides scope for fraternization, which aims to demobilize the security forces by fostering personal (though often transient) relationships between security agents, then all the better.

10.1.4 Sub-Coalitional Strategies: Nonviolence

Otpor's efforts to fraternize with the police and facilitate their jobs were component parts of its broader, fundamental strategy of nonviolent civil resistance. This represented a stark contrast to how Serbian protesters had typically approached interactions with the police. Srdja Popović told me that demonstrators in the early 1990s chanted "Av, av, av!" at policemen, which he translated as "You're no better than dogs."[50] Thus, the police were "perceived as an enemy" who were worthy objects of citizens' aggression. In return, they beat protesters "with appetite" and seemingly benign acts of resistance would spiral uncontrollably into violence, arrests, and detentions. If the opposition was going to persuade the police and wider coercive apparatus to join its cause, it would have to de-escalate these encounters on the street.

Both Otpor and DOS realized this. The head of the Democratic Part, Zoran Djindjić, underlined that policemen were "just men in police uniform; not an amorphous mass which you call 'police' but a bunch of individuals that have their own grievances."[51] His intention was to emphasize what the police and protesters had in common: "we together are the victims of the system and there is no reason to have war between victims and victims. One [set of] victims are in blue uniforms, the other victims are in blue jeans, but there is no reason for blood."[52] In turn, recognizing the various ways in which the police were abused

[49] Elite Interview #12. Srdja Popović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor and Head of Activist Training.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Interview with Zoran Djindjić conducted by Nenad Stefanović. "Government Without Opposition: Interview with Zoran Djinjic," *Vreme*, Belgrade, 02/11/2000.
[52] Interview with Srdja Popović, reported in *Bringing Down A Dictator*, WETA-TV (2001)

by the Milošević regime gave Otpor and DOS the chance to formulate policies that would speak to their concerns.

In particular, the opposition rightly suspected that the majority of normal police officers did not enjoy meting out violence on unruly protesters. Srdja Popović affirmed this to me: "When you take a look in the head of the average police force member, they don't like violence. They don't perceive as the best day of their lives if they need to go out and beat a bunch of students. They would rather be chasing criminals."[53] Thus, even at the recruitment stage, Otpor began to select new recruits on the basis of nonviolence by requiring them to sign a 'nonviolent contract' with the organization. Thereafter, much of Otpor's training regimen focused on nonviolent strategy:

> "Everybody who came and signed the Otpor recruitment papers, especially if they wanted to be active, had to understand this [nonviolent strategy]. A huge amount of the training was that they understand what nonviolent protest and resistance means: that means you don't get confrontational with the police."[54]

Otpor also sought to enforce nonviolent discipline through organizational sanctions. For example, Milja Jovanović told me that in Otpor's nascent stages there was "a guy who spat in the fact of a minister for education. And we were disgusted by that and we almost kicked him out because of that. That was something we very methodically controlled."[55] Conscious that it was a severe reputational risk to have their activists getting into confrontations with law enforcement agents, there was a strong system of formal and informal pressures to enforce nonviolent discipline. For instance, protest organizers would arrange for Otpor 'stewards' to accompany processions to defuse potentially violent situations. Indeed, Milja Jovanović told me that the leaders' most pressing concern was ensuring that Otpor's reputation remained clean. There was a double imperative for this: to combat the regime's propaganda that Otpor was a terrorist organization[56] and to demarcate itself from previous, violent protest movements in the police's eyes:

> "For us, one of the biggest fears was that somebody in an Otpor T-shirt would shoot a policeman. That was a real fear and a lot of the things that we did

[53] Elite Interview #12. Srdja Popović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor and Head of Activist Training.
[54] Elite Interview #41. Milja Jovanović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor.
[55] Ibid.
[56] On May 14th 2000, Federal Information Minister Goran Matić suddenly escalated the campaign against Otpor in a nationally televised press conference, saying that: "Anyone who tries to present Otpor as a student organization and a political party is mistaken. Otpor is a neo-fascistic organization, in the tradition of the Red Brigades, and this state will use the same means used by other states when presented with terrorism of such proportions." (Original video from *Bringing Down a Dictator* (2001).

> especially when we had a massive protest ... was to make absolutely sure that we minimized the risk of that happening."[57]

Otpor's repertoire of nonviolent tactics was both broad and inventive, ranging from sending flowers to police stations to putting elderly people, women, and children at the front of protests.[58] Even the most quotidian interactions were deemed important to pulling the police over to the opposition's side: "we never dehumanized them. Our strategy from the beginning was that they're just ordinary guys taking orders."[59] The activists even used humour and satire to show the coercive apparatus "how the state television propaganda was actually ridiculous" and that they were truly nonviolent.[60] One such instance was a performance in front of the main police station in Niš, one of Serbia's largest cities. Two Otpor activists stood on a raised platform, one examining the other (a gawky and bespectacled teenager) with a pointer saying:

> "Here is an example of a terrorist! The terrorist is about six feet tall and is wearing a t-shirt from the terroristic organization, Otpor. He is wearing eye glasses which means he reads a lot. It's dangerous to read a lot in this country, so beware! [Crowd laughs]"[61]

In turn, the police "appreciated this" and Otpor gradually began to make an impression on loyalties: "throughout the late 90s, we knew some parts of the police wouldn't react; we didn't know for all parts of the police but we'd been talking to these people extensively for years, we'd been on the streets together, we knew that some were secretly supporting our cause."[62] Milja Jovanović corroborated this portrayal of events. She told me that nonviolent resistance was "the kind of thing that goes back and forth implicitly. It's a reciprocity that was established informally. As soon as we showed them [i.e., the police] that we are non-violent, they probably became slightly less inclined to be violent against us - in general."[63]

[57] Elite Interview #41. Milja Jovanović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor.
[58] Elite Interview #12. Srdja Popović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor and Head of Activist Training.
[59] Elite Interview #41. Milja Jovanović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor.
[60] Interview with Ivan Marović, one of twelve Otpor leaders. Shown in *Bringing Down A Dictator,* WETA-TV (2001).
[61] Shown in *Bringing Down A Dictator,* WETA-TV (2001).
[62] Elite Interview #12. Srdja Popović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor and Head of Activist Training.
[63] Elite Interview #41. Milja Jovanović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor.

10.1.5 Contesting Loyalties: Policy Appeals to the Military

Many of these strategies rested on a degree of social or physical proximity between opposition forces and security agents. Fraternization and facilitation, therefore, were most effective on the security forces that were regularly deployed as protest police in Serbia's towns and cities: that is, the municipal police forces. DOS and Otpor sought to reach the more insular parts of the coercive apparatus, particularly the military, partly through their public policy pledges but also by diffusion. In other words, they hoped that their peaceful engagement with the police would demonstrate to the military that they were committed to preserving Serbia's institutions and ensuring a nonviolent democratic transition. More generally, Zoran Djindjić affirmed that the opposition's aim was to signal a crushing mass of support behind removing Milošević from power and market this to the coercive apparatus:

> "We knew that Milosevic can resist only with support from the police and army. We knew if we can affect police and army around him and bring them to think 'should they support Milosevic or the people?' then he could not survive. It was very important for us to find symbols of this very wide national resistance and to show the police and army that it was not just opposition against government but the people against Milošević."[64]

Ivan Marović (2007) confirms that the opposition's strategy for turning the coercive apparatus had to adapt for engaging the military: "making sure that the armed forces didn't crush the protest was much harder, and it took more time to persuade them not to shoot. The strategy designed for the army was different from the strategy targeting the police." As already mentioned, Milošević systematically deprioritized the military during his time in office because it was a federal institution and therefore not completely under his control as president of Serbia - unlike the police and intelligence services (Edmunds 2008). DOS and Otpor, therefore, consistently advocated for restoring the military's former high status that it had enjoyed under Tito in an explicit bid to persuade officers to favour the opposition.

Otpor also ran several campaigns with the military in mind. For instance, to commemorate the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia, Otpor ran a campaign called "Resistance to NATO Aggression" which featured millions of posters and speeches at rallies from army reservists who had fought in the war who condemned Milošević for "betraying Kosovo"

[64] Interview with Zoran Djindjić in *Bringing Down A Dictator,* WETA-TV (2001).

(Marović 2007). Otpor was explicitly trying to unspool the army's perception of Milošević as a nationalist and replace it with one of an opportunistic and failed warmonger. As Srdja Popović put it to me: "Milošević was giving them basically once civil war every two years from 1990... When somebody does it four times you can count [on it] that he will do it a fifth time. Military people didn't want to die in another war."[65] Otpor activist Srdjan Milivojević had some choice words for the *Blic* journal on 3rd May 2000, saying that Milošević "waded knee-deep in blood and brought the bombers to the skies over his own country by his senseless policy, only to hide under his wife's skirt."[66]

Thus, Otpor and DOS expended great efforts to debunk the perception that the military would be better off under Milošević than under democratic government. They were equally concerned to obviate the military's widely perceived concern that opposition forces would inevitably comply wholeheartedly with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), which would see many former security chiefs deported to the Hague for war crime trials. For that reason, it was important for both DOS and Otpor to "emphasize that the opposition was not a fifth column" by engaging positively with the question of Serb nationalism (Marović 2007). For DOS, this quandary was solved by appointing moderate nationalist Vojislav Koštunica as their presidential candidate. Koštunica himself noted the importance of nationalism and the Kosovo war to the opposition's success:

> "In Serbia ... the national question will have a significant impact because of the situation Serbia is in because of the bombing, because of the propaganda of Milošević. One cannot put it aside. We must have an answer to that."[67]

For this reason, Koštunica also excoriated the NATO air strikes which ironically led to him featuring more frequently in the regime media. This put his nationalist credentials beyond doubt and made it very difficult for the government to attack his political record during the presidential campaign (Bieber 2003). Likewise, Otpor knew that it could not be silent on the thorny question of war and peace in the Balkans. In 1998, they issued a manifesto called 'Vision of Tomorrow' which called for, amongst other political goals, peace with Serbia's neighbours.[68] Moreover, the massive Otpor 'Resistance Because I Love Serbia' campaign in 1999 emphasized that the opposition "were the true patriots: that we wanted the army and the police to just do their jobs."[69] This messaging was meant to "resonate

[65] Elite Interview #12. Srdja Popović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor and Head of Activist Training.
[66] Quoted in Editorial, *Blic* journal, 03/05/2000.
[67] Interview with Vojislav Koštunica conducted by Florian Bieber on 20/07/2000. Reported in Bieber (2003).
[68] Otpor, *Vision of Tomorrow,* 1998.
[69] Elite Interview #44. Milja Jovanović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor.

with them [the army] quite clearly" and counteract the regime's repeated claims that Otpor stood for violence and foreign interests. As Milja Jovanović told me:

> "We were worried they [the army] would be manipulated and misinformed so we thought we had to strategically reinforce our messages over and over again. These are the things you have to say whenever you have the opportunity... Every TV, every radio appearance, any time we were in public meetings we would reinforce those messages that we were not the enemy."[70]

Thus, the opposition relied on multiple strategies for both contradicting the regime's propaganda about them and promulgating their own narrative of peaceful democratic transition. Owing to deficits of reach, leverage, and social capital between the opposition and the coercive apparatus, fully-fledged anti-incumbent coalitions failed to materialize in the final years of the Milošević regime. In their place, sub-coalition arrangements sprang up: less formal relationships were conceived through fraternization and facilitation and 'imagined partnerships' were sought through targeted policy appeals to the army. There was also variation in the arrangements that different opposition actors managed to strike up with the coercive apparatus: as parties who aspired to seize political power, certain senior figures in DOS (such as Zoran Djindjić) were able to cultivate useful connections with the coercive apparatus. Otpor, on the other hand, did not have such leverage so relied on informational handouts from regime insiders and DOS.

10.2 Coordination

The final mechanism in the theory is that coordination problems afflict the parts of the security apparatus that are not enlisted in defection networks before the revolution. In practice, this means that security agents encounter difficulty forecasting their colleagues' behaviour, perceive the revolution as open-ended, and attempt to align with the perceived majority of security agents regardless of their positional preferences (Ermakoff 2008, Gallopin 2019). Another behavioural manifestation of coordination problems is shirking and selective compliance, where security agents deliberately evade repressive orders or perform only their unobjectionable components. Compared to defection, these less decisive forms of disloyalty are optimal responses to collective uncertainty since they buy the agent time whilst others' actions shed progressively more light on who will win the revolutionary contest.

[70] Ibid.

10.2.1 Coordination Problems: Indicative Evidence from the Yugoslav Army

Junior officers in the police and army were most likely to be out of the loop on 5th October. These individuals occupied an unenviable position: not senior enough to effectively organize defection unilaterally but not junior enough to enjoy the strengths in number of the rank-and-file. Ivan Marović, one of the leaders of Otpor, was drafted into the army on September 9th 2000. He told me that the officers in his unit spent October 5th "gathering information".[71] He continued: "...they were on the phone talking to their colleagues in other units and this was what they were doing all day; we hardly saw them!"[72] When asked what they were doing on the phone, Ivan replied: "Just figuring out what other parts of the military are doing. This was their focus. It wasn't what the government is doing, what the opposition are doing; it was what other parts of the army are doing, what are they going to do?"[73] In other words, the officers were in the midst of an intense coordination problem and were trying to solve it by covertly figuring out what the other parts of the military were planning to do.

In the meantime, he reported that his entire army base near Belgrade was in a state of collective hiatus and stasis. "They left us without orders, just sitting there," he told me. "Nobody talked to me, everybody behaved as though we didn't exist. We were supposed to defend the government from the insurrection and these guys were just sitting idly on the phone!"[74] When the officers were phoned by other units on fact-finding missions, they became coy and tried to avoid making "any moves that would reveal they were tilting to this side or that side."[75] Indeed, the junior officers in the military were ultimately never forced to pick a side: the revolution was so decisive in jettisoning Milošević from power that the Supreme Command had decided to support DOS and Koštunica by 6th October. This parochial evidence, however, indicates that junior officers in a large military base were reluctant to declare their stance, sought information about their colleagues' decision-making, and were reluctant to mobilize their units until they knew more about how the revolution was unfolding.

[71] Elite Interview #17.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.

10.2.2 Shirking and Selective Compliance Police Barricades and Military Disobedience

On 5th October, DOS and Otpor knew that the key to overthrowing Milošević would be bringing a critical mass of people to Belgrade. To facilitate this, they arranged for five massive convoys to descend on Belgrade from different regions of Serbia and assemble in front of the Serbian Parliament in Nikola Pašića square (Bujošević & Radovanović 2003). The cavalcades started early on the morning of the 5th October from six large towns and cities: Kraljevo, Niš, Čačak, and Užice in the south, Novi Sad in the north, and Šabac in the west. To stem the flow of protesters from the provinces to the capital, the regime ordered for police barricades to be erected along the arterial routes to Belgrade.

Fortunately for the opposition, the barricades were undermanned and the police officers who were stationed there proved completely unwilling to defend them. The convoy from Čačak, for instance, left at 7:15am and hit its first police roadblock near Majdan at around 8am. They were faced with a small detachment of local police officers who had parked some decrepit local lorries across the road. The interaction between the convoy leaders and the police commander was captured by a film crew and is shown in the film *Bringing Down A Dictator* (WETA-TV, 2001):

Convoy 1: *Good day. Is this a free country?*

Police: *Yes it is.*

C1: *Then what is this?*

P: *What do you mean?*

C1: *We are trying to be on our way.*

P: *We can't let you pass.*

C1: *The convoy stretches all the way back to Čačak. Move away your trucks.*

P: *You all be calm. We are calm. These are my orders. I can tell you very little. Try to understand me.*

C1: *Good, how about we continue and you don't get involved? You did you duty, and we are going to do ours.*

C2: *This is your chance to join us.*

[The protesters try to remove the police trucks from the road. The police don't move.]

P: *They'll destroy the trucks. Tell them not to do that. My superiors will be here soon and you can talk to them. Are we agreed?*

[The protesters push the lorries off the road and into a ditch. The footage cuts to the police standing by as the convoy proceeds unimpeded.]

At all the other roadblocks, this sequence of events was repeated: when the Kraljevo convoy hit the roadblock at Milocaj, when the Užice convoy was stopped at Lucani, when the Novi Sad procession encountered police at Batajnica, and when the Niš contingent hit the Bubanj Potok police cordon. At Lucani, police stood by as the Užice protesters used a bulldozer to move a heap of sand that had been piled at the entrance to a tunnel to prevent their passage. An anonymous Belgrade police colonel reported in an interview that "no roadblock can work if you don't have men who will defend it, men who are prepared to fire. We knew that they'd all get to Belgrade."[76]

When I spoke to a senior police officer who was on the barricade at Arandjelovac, around 40 kilometres south of Belgrade, he gave a similar account of what happened at the roadblocks. Not wanting to fully commit by defending the barricades or siding with protesters, he decided to tell his superiors that he had been overpowered by the sheer number of protesters passing along the road. In reality, he "knew the majority of them" and they gave him food and drink as they drove past.[77] His colleague also told me that he shirked his orders from Belgrade "to stop them" by claiming that his unit had been overwhelmed when his seniors asked for a status update.[78] He went on: "You didn't know whether Milošević would still be in Belgrade the day after, and I needed my job!"[79]

The police barricades are a good example of how security agents use shirking and selective compliance to delay the defection decision. However, this was only possible because there was sufficient information asymmetry between the agents and their supervisors in Belgrade: the policemen in the provinces could create any credible narrative and there was no way that their superiors could have contemporaneously verified it. As Ivan Marović observed in one of our interviews: "it is very difficult to prove you *didn't* defend the barricades. It's easier to prove you refused to build them, but once you've built them who can prove [that you didn't defend them]?"[80] The provincial police officers' strategy on 5th October was to create a sense of "plausible deniability": "you can say we did our best but we were overpowered." Ivan continued:

[76]Interview conducted by Bujošević and Radovanović (2003); interviewee was a senior police colonel stationed in Belgrade who wished to remain anonymous.

[77]Rank and File Interview #2. Policeman in Kosovo until 1999; commander in Arandjelovac 1999-2003; police officer in Belgrade 2003-2009.

[78]Rank and File Interview #3. Special forces police officer in Kosovo until 1999; police officer in Arandjelovac thereafter.

[79]Ibid.

[80]Elite Interview #17. Ivan Marović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor.

> ""When you are not sure which side is going to win, the best thing for you is not to defect ... but to stall, just kind of lay low and wait for events to unfold and then accompanying that when you are asked to do something you are not going to refuse orders but you are just going to kind of play the role of an incompetent amateur."[81]

As mentioned, senior officers are more likely to form and be inducted into defection networks than their junior counterparts for a number of reasons. The latter group, on the other hand, must find 'coping mechanisms' to reduce the probability of backing the wrong side and getting through the period of collective uncertainty. Selective compliance keeps options open: if the incumbent survives and calls for people's heads, it is better to have been overpowered than to have aided and abetted protesters. Paradoxically, security agents outside of defection networks manage collective uncertainty by creating local confusion surrounding their intentions and actions during the course of revolution.

These displays of disobedience also had important second-order effects. As Srdja Popović observed during our interview, he and other Otpor leaders were encouraged by the reports they heard on the morning of 5th October about how easily the convoys had swept through the barricades. On the one hand, it showed that the regime was ill-prepared for the revolution. More importantly, though, it revealed that loyalty to Milošević was waning amongst the historically loyal provincial police forces: "So everything was done half-heartedly and when you see police doing this you know they're not going to shoot at you."[82] The policemen stationed in Belgrade were made aware of exactly the same point, in the same way that Boško Buha's shirking at the Kolubara mine anchored expectations on widespread disloyalty within the police.

There was also an impactful instance of selective compliance in the military on 5th October. During the mid-afternoon, Milošević ordered the air force to drop teargas canisters on the crowd in front of the parliament and RTS building (Bujošević & Radovanović 2003). The order was passed down from Milošević to General Vlastimir Djordjević who instructed the air force at Belgrade's Batajnica Airport to "try to disperse the crowd using whatever means necessary which stood in front of the parliament."[83] However, when the helicopter pilots were airborne they radioed their superiors to tell them that the visibility above the parliament was too poor to conduct the operation. In fact, conditions were clear but, as

[81] Ibid.

[82] Elite Interview #12. Srdja Popović. One of twelve leaders of Otpor and Head of Activist Training.

[83] Konačni Obračun ('The Final Encounter'), *Vreme* documentary, 2015. Interview with Colonel Goran Radosavljević.

with the provincial police forces, there was no way for their superiors back at headquarters to know that.

Although shirking represents a safe option for the security forces, it is not a neutral act in the course of a revolution. The decision to abstain from repression (even temporarily) affords time, confidence, and hope to the incumbent's opponents. The suspension of repression removes a crucial barrier to collective action. As Marović (2007) comments, most protesters "are not interested in the conversion of the soldiers from regime supporters to opposition supporters, they are just interested to see these ... soldiers out of the contest." Similarly, "...there is no need for the soldiers to dissent in an active way, it is enough that they consent [to the opposition's cause] in a passive way." In other words, shirking might seem like a convenient deferral device for policemen and soldiers in the lurch but also opens opportunity space for dissidents.

10.3 The Regime's Response

To complete the wider picture of loyalty contestation before and during the Serbian revolution, we finally need to examine the regime's response to the revolt. Milošević's government, particularly the Minister of the Interior, were ill-prepared for the magnitude of the revolution and dealt poorly with the events once they were underway by ceding control of vital communications infrastructure to the opposition and failing to project a strong sense of government unity and coordination. Milošević's hubris in the run-up to both the election on 24th September and the revolution itself led to inadequate planning and a serious shortfall in the number of law enforcement agents present in Belgrade and on the police roadblocks in the provinces.

On July 27th 2000, Milošević called a presidential election almost a year earlier than the constitutional term limit. His closest colleagues report that he was overwhelmingly confident of victory. For instance, he told Chief of Staff General Pavković that he would win with 70% of the vote and "boasted" that he would treat Koštunica to 100,000 'phantom votes' from Kosovo (Bujošević & Radovanović 2003). When he phoned Goran Matić to tell him to announce the elections on state media that evening, Matić remonstrated with him: "How can you make a new future with the Hague prosecution? You are a war criminal and the Balkan Butcher to the rest of the world."[84] Milošević reportedly answered: "Don't worry, look at Yasser Arafat. He was the world's terrorist but this year he is in the White House

[84] Elite Interview #31. Goran Matić. Federal Minister for Information until October 2000 and senior JUL party official.

more times than Hilary Clinton."[85] When his subordinates presented him with opinion polls showing the growing support for Koštunica, he disregarded them and pointed to his consistent (but ever shrinking) support base in eastern and southern Serbia.[86]

Milošević's equanimity towards the election was reflected in his lacklustre campaign. His first campaign speech was just two weeks before the election and fell flat - even though the supporters gathered to hear the premier's speech were paid to be there.[87] Amidst the opposition's herculean efforts, this was too little too late: Milošević was routed in the first round of voting. When he refused to concede, DOS immediately called for nationwide strikes and a series of increasingly large demonstrations culminating in the descent on Belgrade on 5th October. In those ten days, Milošević drastically increased his media presence to demonstrate that he still occupied the presidency and was performing his presidential duties. Usually camera-shy, he addressed Serbia twice in three days and on 2nd October made a last-ditch attempt to tarnish DOS with the treasonous brush: "I consider it my duty to warn of the consequences of activities supported and financed by NATO governments. It should be evident to all that they are not attacking Serbia to get at Milošević, but attacking Milošević to get at Serbia."[88]

This was part of a broader rhetorical campaign that Milošević conducted in the lead-up to the revolution to try to sway both the wider population and the upper echelons of the coercive apparatus to lend him their support. With the NATO bombings still emblazoned in Serbia's collective memory, Milošević played heavily on DOS's opposition to the Kosovo War as a signal that they would surrender indicted war criminals to the Hague. In the 2nd October speech, he accused Zoran Djindjić of "collaborating with the military alliance that attacked our country. He could not even hide his collaboration. In fact, our entire public knows that he appealed to NATO to bomb Serbia for as many weeks as necessary to break its resistance."[89] He conjured images of the war criminals' worst fear: "the territory that would be left to bear the name Serbia would be occupied by international forces, US or some other [if DOS takes power]."[90] For those in the coercive apparatus who felt safe from war crimes indictments, Milošević also used his speeches to peddle widespread fears of "foreign occupation" and "invasion" - two clearly antithetical outcomes for the military.

The government also arranged some visual cues. On September 30th, state television

[85] Ibid.
[86] Interview with anonymous government pollster shown in *Konačni Obračun* ('The Final Encounter'), *Vreme* documentary, 2015.
[87] Recounted in *Bringing Down A Dictator,* WETA-TV (2001).
[88] Slobodan Milošević: Address to the Nation, 02/10/2000. Belgrade.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Ibid.

produced edited footage of Milošević visiting the Yugoslav Army Military Academy in Belgrade to show family and friends of the graduating officers applauding him (Bujošević & Radovanović 2003). The subliminal messaging was clear: Milošević was the military's man and enjoyed its support. However, while Milošević focused on shoring up loyalties through speeches and television appearances, his administration failed to plan for the practicalities of suppressing hundreds of thousands of protesters in Belgrade and the surrounding provinces. Apart from a few isolated and high-profile cases, for instance, the regime failed to identify and relocate or purge disloyal individuals in key positions. One exception was noted by the *Glas Javnosti* ('Voice of the Public') daily newspaper: "The commander of the Special Antiterrorist Unit, Colonel Zivko Trajković, was dismissed ... last Thursday [September 28th 2000] and without explanation reassigned to Kuršumlija [250km south of Belgrade]."[91] Trajković's crime was to openly state that he would refuse to fire on the protesters and his attempt to reach out to DOS.[92]

However, the multiple links between the coercive apparatus and the opposition that have been uncovered since 5th October indicate that the regime was mostly unable to identify and punish dissidents in the lead-up to the revolution. This reflected a broader ineptitude in the Milošević administration for controlling the levers of government. As the regime wore on throughout the 1990s, appointments to the government became increasingly personalized as Milošević began to rely on close friends and old associates from his hometown Požarevac to fill key positions (Thomas 1999). While this stacking tactic materially increased loyalty to Milošević in the top rungs on Serbian politics, it also resulted in a diminution of the average competency of those promoted to these positions. Before and during 5th October, this trend was exemplified by Milošević's Minister of the Interior, Vlajko Stojilković, who had known the president and his wife since they were teenagers and he was their Communist Party chief in Požarevac.[93]

Unfortunately, Stojilković was not an accomplished civil servant or experienced in internal policing. Before becoming Minister of the Interior, he had been the president of Serbia's Chamber of Commerce and his promotion to head of internal affairs was arguably not based on acumen but his longstanding friendship with Milošević and Mirja Marković. By all accounts, Stojilković underestimated the number of protesters that DOS would manage to assemble in Belgrade on 5th October despite its leaders being completely transparent about drawing people in from the provinces in convoys. Reassured by the Head of Police's

[91] *Glas Javnosti,* 02/10/2000.
[92] See: "How the Police Gave Up Slobodan Milošević." *Vreme*, 19/10/2020.
[93] Elite Interview #38. Goran Matić. Federal Minister for Information until October 2000 and senior JUL party official.

confidence in the city's defences, Milošević also downplayed the risk of overthrow as late as 4th October when the VJ presented him with evidence of DOS's plans at an emergency meeting at the presidential palace (Vlajković 2004). This led to a serious shortfall of policemen stationed in key sites in Belgrade and on the roadblocks themselves, most of which were manned by only ten local police officers.[94] In total, less than 500 police officers were assigned to the key buildings in the capital, with particular deficits at the parliament and the RTS building (Bujošević & Radovanović 2003).

Moreover, one of the Milošević government's standard moves for protest policing was to dragoon in policemen from the Milošević heartlands to Belgrade to ensure that loyal units would be in place to defend critical sites. For 5th October, the biggest protests by far in Serbia's history, Stojilković managed to rustle up only 600 extra policemen - only 300 of which arrived from Leskovac, Pirot, and Vranje (Bujošević & Radovanović 2003). The head of the State Security Service, Rade Marković, also told a *Vreme* interviewer in the aftermath of the revolution that "the units manning the roadblocks should have been rounded up and brought to Belgrade on the back roads. That didn't happen."[95] Indeed, one of the regime's main problems on 5th October was that its available police units were so dispersed by Stojilković's plan to form three rings of police cordons around Belgrade that monitoring the situation on each route into Belgrade became impossible. Yet, Milošević had been informed by army intelligence on 4th October that DOS was anticipating the first large clashes with police along the Ibar Highway, not in Belgrade itself (Vlajković 2004). All told, the regime was under-prepared for the sheer number of protesters in Belgrade and therefore could not prevent them from seizing important sites like the parliament, police stations, and the headquarters of Milošević's political party.

Stojilković's incompetence manifested in other ways. Government ministers, for instance, report that little to no information about the regime's plan for repelling the revolution was circulated. Branislav Ivković, the government's minister for culture, heard about the convoys arriving in Belgrade on CNN and Serbian Radio Indeks. Goran Matić told me that he received no information from Stojilković's ministry about the protests: "I didn't know what he was doing, it was crazy."[96] As the controller of the state media apparatus, this meant that Matić was stymied in reporting even pro-regime news about how the revolution was unfolding. When they did come, the orders were so late that they made little sense given the situation on the ground. General Bozidar Delić, for instance, told *Vreme*

[94]Konačni Obračun ('The Final Encounter'), *Vreme* documentary, 2015. Interview with Colonel Goran Radosavljević.

[95]Interview with Rade Marković, *Vreme,* 24/11/2000.

[96]Elite Interview #31. Goran Matić. Federal Minister for Information until October 2000 and senior JUL party official.

interviewers that he had received an order from Stojilković to use army tanks to prevent the convoys from reaching Belgrade:

> "All these orders I received too late. When all the units had arrived to these spots [i.e., the checkpoints] to report to members of MUP who were located in these spots, there was no need to set up barricades because columns of people had already gone through."[97]

The regime's physical response to the protesters, therefore, was woeful. It was clear in advance that colossal numbers of protesters would converge on Belgrade on 5th October and that a large number of policemen would be necessary to defend Milošević's regime. Yet, meetings to plan how to defend Belgrade were convened as late as the afternoon of 4th October by Belgrade police colonel Miloš Vojinović who discovered only at that point the dearth of policemen available.[98] For context, the Gulf Cooperation Council mobilized 5,000 troops almost instantly to protect the tiny kingdom of Bahrain from Arab Spring demonstrators in 2011 (Tansey 2016). This eleventh-hour approach to planning had predictable injurious consequences for the Milošević regime. As Bill Montgomery, the US Ambassador to Yugoslavia, put it to me:

> "My basic belief is that Milošević had seen ten years or so of peaceful demonstrations. I think he was caught off-guard at the sudden violent outbreaks that occurred at the Parliament building and at RTS. I think the police present were not given the specific instructions and did not have the sufficient number of personnel to handle the situation and were overwhelmed. Of course, they should not have been surprised. That morning, for example, the Čačak convoy was stopped on the highway by police vehicles as they were leaving the city to come to Belgrade. They used a bulldozer to move the police vehicles - and the police did not react. One would have thought that word of this would have led to the police in Belgrade being better prepared."[99]

Equally important, however, was the regime's failure to secure broadcasting stations against the opposition. This meant that Otpor and DOS were able to begin declaring victory on the night of 5/6th October from the Košutnjak transmitter station in the outskirts of

[97] Konačni Obračun ('The Final Encounter'), *Vreme* documentary, 2015. Interview with General Bozidar Delić.

[98] Konačni Obračun ('The Final Encounter'), *Vreme* documentary, 2015. Interview with Colonel Miloš Vojinović.

[99] Private communication from William Montgomery to author, 12/04/2019.

Belgrade. When activists arrived at the installation, they found that government technicians had unplugged the machines, but it took them only two hours to begin broadcasting.[100] As well as this half-hearted attempt at sabotage, the facility could have been guarded from the beginning as were similar installations during the Arab Spring in Egypt and Syria to prevent activists from dismantling the regimes' monopoly on telecommunications (Nepstad 2013). Moreover, with the opposition takeover of the RTS building, RTS was no longer in the position to disseminate the pro-regime narrative.

Over the next twelve hours, the regime lost control of all its media outlets. One of DOS's leaders, Žarko Korać, was the first guest on the new *TV Politika* at 7:30pm on 5th October, traditionally one of the regime's reliable media allies. The news anchor wore a badge saying "I'm Koštunica, too" and the program began with some text across the screen: "Politika is a liberated national company."[101] One by one, the other state media companies - Radio Belgrade, Tanjug, Borba, and TV Pink - succumbed to the opposition. The regime's last vestige of control over broadcasting disappeared when Koštunica appeared as a guest on the first program produced by the 'New RTS':

> "Some of them [other DOS leaders] suggested I go to TV Politika, some to Studio B because they had been the first to defect to the people. But as soon as I saw that New RTS had begun broadcasting I decided to go to them. This was a symbolic act for me: the new president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the new head of state addressing the nation on the state television network. Then it really became the state television: until then it had only been party television."[102]

[100] Konačni Obračun ('The Final Encounter'), *Vreme* documentary, 2015. Interview with General Aleksandar Vasiljević.
[101] Elite Interview #28. Žarko Korać. DOS leader, founder of the Social Democratic Union political party, and deputy prime minister of Serbia 2001-2004.
[102] Interview conducted by Bujošević and Radovanović (2003) with Vojislav Koštunica.

Final Remarks and Future Research

Chapter 11

Conclusion

"Transitions are full of opportunists, charlatans, and erstwhile autocrats."

Larry Diamond, *The Washington Post*

"Tyranny can also change into tyranny."

Aristotle, *The Politics*

11.1 Reviewing the Argument

This thesis had several aims. Primary amongst these was to generate a processual theory of defection: who initiates defection, under what conditions, and how do their efforts play out? The framework I developed fused the positional and coordination accounts of defection but drew starkly different learning points from both. On the one hand, I interpreted positional factors as an important dimension of the opportunity structure that potential defectors face; not, as is normally held, merely an important individual-level motive for action. On the other hand, I built on work by Singh (2014) in viewing coordination problems as subvertible and manipulable: first-mover defectors and the incumbent regime seek to mould the perceived outcome of revolutions before protesters even step foot on the streets. Coordination difficulties are a matter of scope and degree: not everybody experiences uncertainty and not everybody experiences uncertainty to the same extent. I hope the result is a less procrustean account of the defection process that does justice to both revolutionary contingency and various actors' attempts to mitigate uncertainty.

Along the way, I leveraged various literatures to develop my theory. First, the large corpus of work on authoritarian politics suffuses my reading of defection. Autocrats are

hegemonic when expectations converge around authoritarian survival in their ruling coalition. The key to successful defection is not winning the physical battle against autocrats but undermining this self-fulfilling prophecy by constructing defection networks and promulgating strategic frames that highlight the regime's fragility. Second, I drew on the clandestine and social mobilization literatures. The concepts of mobilizational resources, strategic framing, and cascades were appropriated from studies of how *mass publics* pursue contention against autocratic foes. Yet, like dissidents within the mass public, defectors aim to mobilize others against the incumbent regime under conditions of secrecy or semi-secrecy. While their situations are different in a number of ways, not least that security personnel are usually part of common institutions which bestow certain mobilizational resources, their central problems and objectives mirror each other.

The thesis also emphasized that loyalty is contestable from a number of different angles. Like a sharing platter at a dinner party, everybody wants a piece of the coercive apparatus in the run-up to revolutions. Sometimes, it will be the other way around as security agents seek partnerships with politicians, the opposition, and foreign governments. The diversity of actors involved in loyalty contestation is manifested in the case studies: Buha (police) and Radosavljević (police), Pavković (military) and Matić (politician), Legija (special forces) and Djindjić (politician), and Otpor (civil resistance) and its indirect relations with the security forces. The case studies also demonstrate the different ways in which defectors actualize their disloyalty. While Pavković and Buha adopted clandestine and deniable means of supporting the opposition, Legija's declaration of disloyalty in the centre of Belgrade was explicit and undeniable.

11.2 New Directions for Research

11.2.1 Defection in Closed Authoritarian Regimes

Serbia was a hybrid authoritarian regime in which both citizens and members of the security apparatus enjoyed limited opportunity space in which to mobilize sedition. A natural extension to this thesis is to ask whether defection follows the same course in closed authoritarian regimes where dissent in all arenas is effectively foreclosed by formidable coercion and brutality. What form does defection take when security forces are continuously surveilled by parallel intelligence units, when disloyalty is punishable by torture and death, and when popular revolts are unlikely to reach revolutionary proportions? In such regimes, opposition is not channelled or coopted but preemptively flattened, ensuring that would-be dissidents (and countless others) are subject to an ongoing campaign of *damnatio memoriae*. As

Solzhenitsyn writes in *The Gulag Archipelago*: "Every act of resistance to the government required heroism quite out of proportion to the magnitude of the act. It was safer to keep dynamite during the rule of Alexander II than it was to shelter the orphan of an enemy of the people under Stalin."

There are two possible answers here. The first posits that the defection process is attenuated by closed authoritarianism but still retains its core logics of coalition-building, strategic framing, and coordination. The second posits that defection is one of several technologies of elite rebellion which can be substituted for one another depending on the political context. As for the first answer, even closed authoritarian regimes cannot monitor all security forces all of the time. Surveillance blind spots within the coercive apparatus create havens of opportunity space in which defection can be organized, such as the elite Tunisian special forces who were the first to rebel in the Tunisian Arab Spring and the Special Operations Unit in Serbia (Gallopin 2019). Moreover, Ethiopian emperor Haile Selassie's own Imperial Guard launched a putsch against him in 1960 (Barany 2016). The question of 'who guards the guardians' causes extreme worry to autocrats for precisely this reason: secretive and autonomous units are potential sites of game-changing disloyalty because their inner workings are invisible to outsiders.

Neither of these possibilities alter the fundamental process of defection: it is still advantageous to enlist supporters and engage in strategic framing. Like social mobilization in highly repressive settings, however, defectors may have to take additional precautions such as adopting compartmentalized networks, using aliases, and applying more stringent induction criteria (Lewis 2012, Pearlman 2020). Paradoxically, pervasive internal monitoring of the coercive apparatus might force defectors to organize in the open: in cafes, social clubs, bars, family gatherings, and community events. Just like citizen dissidents, defectors can make use of these permitted forms of social interaction to organize rebellion. Zoran Djindjić and Jovica Stanišić, for instance, would sometimes use social gatherings as cover for their meetings and Boško Buha made sure to organize defection in his civilian clothes in a McDonalds, away from vigilant eyes and ears. Like citizen mobilization in closed authoritarian regimes, organizing defection in these states requires strong resolve, risk tolerance, and prudence to remain undiscovered and succeed.

The second answer states that rebels within the coercive apparatus have a menu of possible options for removing an incumbent. In the introduction, I called this menu 'elite rebellion' and suggested four key technologies of overthrow: defection, coups d'état, assassination, and civil war. While some authoritative work unpacks the relationship between civil wars and coup d'états (e.g., Roessler 2011, de Bruin 2020a), very little explores how

defection relates to other technologies of overthrow. One possibility is that the mode of authoritarianism shapes the benefits of defection vis-à-vis its alternatives. For instance, thoroughly coup-proofed states might be more susceptible to defection since uprisings provide a rare opportunity for disillusioned security agents to remove the incumbent. This characterizes defection and coups d'états as substitutes: defection is simply a "coup in the shadow of revolution" (Kalyvas *forthcoming*). Another possibility is that civil wars substitute for defection in weakly militarized states where dissidents commanding war-ready units plan to use conventional military means to overthrow the incumbent.

In the interests of unpacking the relationship between different kinds of elite rebellion, the substitution effect argument should be tested. In addition, different forms of elite rebellion might have different downstream consequences. It has been suggested, for instance, that coups d'états have catalyzed democratization since the end of the Cold War (Marinov & Goemans 2014, Powell 2014).[1] Quantitatively, is defection more likely in coup-proofed and militarized states? Can qualitative methods reveal that dissidents in the coercive apparatus actively weigh technologies of rebellion as alternatives? Is there evidence that dissidents plan one kind of elite rebellion in certain political conditions, but switch tactics when those conditions are unexpectedly altered? We see this reactive ability elsewhere in contentious politics. Sendero Luminoso, the Peruvian rebel group, used terrorist tactics in Lima where they were weak and waged full-scale civil war in the Andes where they were strong. In response to battlefield defeats, the Lord's Resistance Army increasingly victimized civilians to replenish its depleted manpower and resources (Wood 2014). Throughout the political world, actors readjust their tactics based on the evolving reality they confront.

However, there are reasons to doubt the substitution effect. While removing the incumbent might be the common denominator in coups d'états, defection, civil war, and assassinations, they diverge on other important dimensions. Coups d'état, for instance, require plotters to seize executive power. Defection, by contrast, does not. In turn, the significant corporate and personal returns of assuming executive power may also be decisive in first-movers' calculations. Moreover, defection is not a single, unalterable mode of behaviour. Rather, defectors manifest their loyalty shift differently depending on the opportunity structures they face. In closed environments, strategies such as shirking, selective compliance, and desertion dominate more overt modes of endorsement like outright disobedience and actively aiding the opposition. In more open settings, however, defectors

[1] Tansey (2017), however, cautions that post-coup elections are frequently uncompetitive and marred by fraud, echoing Levitsky and Way's (2010) observation that competitive authoritarianism was many dictators' optimal response to the end of ideology-assured overseas aid and the inception of the conditionality era.

may wish to put the nails in the dictator's coffin by publicly assisting and aligning with the opposition.

11.2.2 When Defection Fails

A related question is how defection fails. In Serbia, three core branches of the coercive apparatus defected. While this allowed me to explore the conditions under which *successful* defection takes place, it meant that I could not explore the equally important instances of failure. In the last two years, we have seen persistent, concerted, and large-scale uprisings which have been met with equally committed repression by loyal security forces. In Venezuela, Nicolás Maduro still controls an almost completely loyal security apparatus; likewise, Hong Kong's government and Belarusian dictator Alexander Lukashenko each faced down revolutions and lost few soldiers in the process. Studying these instances of defection failure is difficult, not least because these regimes are still authoritarian and on-the-ground research is dangerous. Indeed, revolutions and elite rebellion can elicit counter-displays of violence from the regime which makes them even less hospitable research sites (Lawson 2019).[2]

Yet, my theory offers some points of insight. In the first instance, first-movers may simply perceive defection as futile given the array of strong loyalists across the coercive apparatus. In Venezuela, for instance, the top brass has been remarkably loyal to Maduro and it is widely known that they rely on Maduro for continued control over economic enterprises related to food, raw materials, the Venezuelan state oil company, and drug trafficking.[3] Under Maduro, the top brass has also swelled to well over 2,000 officers since 2013 - twice the number in the US military, which is seven times larger than Venezuela's armed forces - and military figures hold up to half of his cabinet posts.[4] At critical junctures, it is common for the most senior officers to make back-to-back declarations of loyalty to Maduro on national television.[5] To make matters worse, Maduro has embedded Cuban and Iranian 'praetorian monitors' throughout his coercive apparatus to identify, deter, and punish disloyalty.[6]

[2]Recip Erdogan's counter-coup crusade after a military faction tried to overthrow him in 2016 is a good example.

[3]See: B. Ellsworth & M. Armas, "The Maduro mystery: Why the armed forces still stand by Venezuela's beleaguered president." *Reuters Investigates,* 28/07/2009.
Also: E. Bronner & A. Rosati, "With Cocaine Flowing, Push to Pry Generals From Maduro Hits Snag." *Bloomberg*, 12/02/2019.

[4]Ibid.

[5]See: C. Armario & M. Rueda, "Why Venezuela military leaders are standing behind Maduro." *Associated Press,* 25/01/2019.

[6]See: E. Bronner *et al.*, 'How Has Maduro Survived? With Lots of Help from Cuban Operatives.' *Bloomberg,* 01/04/2019.

Faced with clear unity amongst the top brass and known sources of loyalty such as patronage and political prerogatives, the fact that defections from Maduro's regime have been isolated and inconsequential is unsurprising. In these situations, defection never really gets off the ground: either deterred completely or extinguished before it can blossom, the positional reminders of loyalty are undeniable in Venezuela. We have no idea how many nascent defection attempts are stamped out by Maduro's monitors within the security forces, but hundreds of soldiers have been jailed for disloyalty since the aborted revolution in the first half of 2019.[7] The result is that most instances of defection have manifested as low-level desertions: poorly paid junior soldiers escaping to neighbouring countries like Colombia or going into hiding within Venezuela.[8]

The two high-profile defectors, Air Force General Francisco Yanez and Director of the National Intelligence Service Manuel Figuera, failed to make a splash.[9] Figuera defected quietly by releasing an open letter in which he wrote that "the time has come to seek new ways of doing politics" and to "rebuild the country."[10] Hardly a damning indictment of the Maduro dictatorship, the regime lost no time in announcing Fuguera's successor. Yanez, by contrast, released a vehement YouTube video urging others to defect and claiming that 90% of the armed forces were against Maduro's government. With no named allies and filmed in Washington, however, Yanez's video had no impact on cohesion in the ruling coalition.

Defection, therefore, can fail in three ways. It can fail fundamentally if potential defectors simply decide that their chances of sparking a defection cascade are negligible. Or, defection attempts can stumble at the coalition-building or strategic framing stages. Despite the methodological issues with working in authoritarian regimes, future work could productively focus on how defection fails. Janet Lewis' research into rebel group formation in Uganda is instructive. By focusing on a post-conflict state where tensions had subsided, she was able to collect voluminous interview evidence about the very early stages of insurgent group survival and failure. For the Venezuelan case, this research could potentially start by interviewing security forces exiled in neighbouring countries and the United States. Another viable starting point could be Hong Kong: more accepting of researchers than mainland China, journalists have already found ways to talk to defectors in the Hong Kong police since the beginning of the anti-Security Law riots in mid-2019.[11]

[7] See: B. Ellsworth & M. Armas, "The Maduro mystery: Why the armed forces still stand by Venezuela's beleaguered president." *Reuters Investigates,* 28/07/2009.

[8] See: C. Armario & M. Rueda, "Why Venezuela military leaders are standing behind Maduro." *Associated Press,* 25/01/2019.

[9] See: S. O'Grady. "Francisco Yanez: Venezuelan Air Force General Defects from Maduro's Side." *Washington Post*, 02/02/2019.

[10] See: S. Chamberlain, "Head of Venezuela's secret police breaks with Maduro." *Fox News,* 30/04/2019.

[11] See: V. Yu, "Hong Kong's reluctant police officer: It's not for us to deliver punishment." *The Guardian,*

11.2.3 Defection in the Lower Ranks

In the Serbian revolution, defection was mainly carried off by senior officers and unit commanders. This is no accident: ranking officers have various hard and soft powers that allow them to organize rebellion more effectively than enlisted men and junior officers. Singh (2014), for instance, finds that 'coups from the top' are both more frequent and more likely to succeed than 'coups from the middle' and 'coups from the bottom'. 'Defection from the bottom' is also an incredibly rare phenomenon - and much rarer than 'coups from the bottom'. There are several possible reasons for this. First, non-commissioned officers and enlisted men arguably have a better chance of staging a successful coup than a successful defection attempt. This is because coups involve the *application* (or threat) of force whereas defection involve the *withdrawal* of force. Low-level officers and the rank-and-file inherently have coercive means at their disposal through their personal firearms and training, even if they cannot open armouries, commandeer transport, or enlist tanks and other heavy weapons.

By contrast, they have no natural advantage or capabilities when it comes to withdrawing force. Non-commissioned officers typically command small units of soldiers, are not skilled military tacticians, and are perceived (even within their units) to have limited authority. The limited size and inferiority of 'defections from the bottom' is their undoing since they militate against creating an auspicious-looking rebellion. In addition, the cost-benefit returns of waging a successful coup d'état versus launching a successful defection attempt are different. Seizing the state grants enormous benefits to coup plotters, not least policy control and economic spoils. Defectors, however, are not rewarded as handsomely. High-ranking defectors might receive promotions, like Boško Buha, or be allowed to retain their rank, like Legija and Nebojša Pavković. New authorities might also throw them institutional kickbacks like extra funding, veto powers, political prerogatives, and the elimination of functional rivals. Junior defectors, by contrast, cannot expect such rewards. Their defection is more commonly assured by the chain of command and the small positive of getting to avoid repressive duties.

The final reason why 'defection from the bottom' is so rare is because junior figures can opt into less decisive acts of disloyalty to evade repressive orders (Nepstad 2015). Coups, on the other hand, are binary: one either stages a coup or refrains from doing so. These different manifestations of disloyalty deserve our attention since they represent the buds of opposition within the coercive apparatus. The Venezuelan national guardsman escaping to Colombia, for instance, are presumably exceptional amongst their colleagues in their

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ability to successfully execute desertion and their supreme risk tolerance and desperation. However, it is safe to assume that opposition to the Maduro government is rife within the Venezuelan rank-and-file. Thus, small acts of disloyalty can act as barometers for sentiments held more broadly within institutions that are rife with preference falsification, both before and during revolutions.

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Appendix

A.1 Abbreviations and Translations

DOS = Democratic Opposition of Serbia

DS: Demokratska Stranka = Democratic Party

FRY = Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

ICTY = International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia

JNA: Jugoslovenska narodna armija = Yugoslav People's Army (replaced by VJ, 1992)

JSO: Jedinica Za Specijàlne Operacije = Special Operations Unit

JUL: Jugoslovenska Levica = Yugoslav Left

KLA: Kosovo Liberation Army

KOS: Kontraobaveštajna služba = Counterintelligence Agency

LK: Leva Koalicija = Left Coalition

MUP: Ministarstvo Unutrašnjih Poslova = Ministry of the Interior

OGP: Operativna Grupa = Operational Groups

PSP: Posebne jedinice policije = Special Police Units

RDB: Resor državne bezbednosti = State Security Service

RTS = Radio Television Serbia

RTV = Radio Television Vojvodina

SAJ: Specijalne Antiterorističke Jedinica = Special Anti-terrorist Units

SDC = Supreme Defence Council

SFRY: Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (replaced by FRY, 1992)

SPS: Socijalistička partija Srbije = Socialist Party of Serbia

UDBA: Uprava državne bezbednosti = State Security Directorate (replaced by RDB, 1991)

VJ: Vojska Jugoslavije = Yugoslav Army

A.2 List of Interviewees

Name	Position	Date
William Montgomery	Former ambassador to Croatia (1998-2000) and Yugoslavia (2002-2004).	12th April 2019
Charles Crawford	UK Ambassador to Sarajevo, 1996-98; director of Balkan affairs, London; UK Ambassador to Belgrade, 2001-2003.	25th April 2019
Jim Swigert	US State Department official; Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Balkans.	3rd May 2019
Sir Ivor Roberts	UK Ambassador to Serbia, 1993-1997; Emissary to Milosevic from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 1998-1999.	6th May 2019
Jim O'Brien	Twice Special Presidential Envoy for the Balkans; senior advisor to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.	6th May 2019
Tim Marshall	Sky News lead reporter for Serbia, 1993-2000.	9th May 2019
James Dobbins	Special Advisor to the President for the Balkans, 1999; advisor to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.	17th May 2019
Aleksandar Vasović	B92 radio journalist throughout 1990s; now Reuters.	23rd May 2019
		29th July 2019
Jakša Scekić	Sky News lead journalist for Serbia throughout the 1990s and 2000s.	24th May 2019
		25th July 2019
Zoran Kusovac	Lead RTB and Sky journalist for Serbia throughout the 1990s and 2000s.	20th June 2019
		7th July 2019
		13th July 2019
		4th August 2019

Name	Position	Date
Srdja Popović	Founding member and leader of Otpor student resistance group.	9th July 2019
Anonymous	Party leader in the JUL; state banker; personal associate of Milošević and Mirjana Marković.	19th July 2019
		25th July 2019
Miloš Vasić	Founder and owner of Vreme ('Time') Magazine in Serbia.	19th July 2019
Anonymous	Policeman in Belgrade 1991-2003; Chief of Internal Control in Ministry of Interior 2003-2007; 2010-present professor in Belgrade Police Academy.	23rd July 2019
		13th August 2019
Anonymous	Officer in the Belgrade Police Brigade.	20th August 2019
Ivan Marović	Founding member and leader of Otpor student resistance group.	24th July 2019
Anonymous	Reuters journalist 1992-1998.	8th Aug 2019
Filip Švarm	Chief editor of 'Vreme' political weekly since 1998; war correspondent.	9th Aug 2019
Srdjan Ilić	AP veteran photographer; on the police barricades on 4-5th October.	10th Aug 2019
Nataša Kandić	Founder of the Humanitarian Law Centre in Belgrade.	12th August 2019
Sonja Stojanović Gajić	Head of the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy.	14th August 2019
Žarko Korać	Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia 2001-2004; founder and president of Social Democratic Union party.	15th August 2019
Ljubiša Stojadinović	Colonel in the Yugoslav Army.	16th August 2019
Milja Jovanović	Founding member and leader of Otpor student resistance group.	17th August 2019
		16th October 2020

Name	Position	Date
Goran Matić	Former Federal Minister of Information until October 2000 and JUL party member.	30th October 2020 6th Nov 2020 20th August 2019 2nd April 2020 10th June 2020
Vesna Pešić	Former founder and president of the Civic Alliance of Serbia party (1992-1999).	20th August 2019
Ljubiša Ristić	President of JUL 1995-2002; member of parliament too.	22nd August 2019
Zoran Kusovac & Ivan Marović	See above; historic friends.	30th August 2019
Anonymous	Former MI6 agent in Belgrade; Head of Department for the Balkans.	27th Nov 2019
Anonymous	Former MI6 agent in Belgrade whilst Milošević was overthrown.	19th Dec 2019
Ivan Andrić	Founding member and leader of Otpor student resistance group.	15th October 2020
Rank-and-File A	Policeman serving in Belgrade until 2003.	9th April 2019
Rank-and-File B	Policeman in Kosovo until 1999; commander in Arandjelovac 1999-2003; Belgrade 2003-2009.	11th August 2019
Rank-and-File C	Special unit policeman in Kosovo; serving in Arandjelovac on Oct 5th.	17th August 2019
TOTAL		**46**