SREBRENICA

30 GODINA POSLIJE GENOCIDA

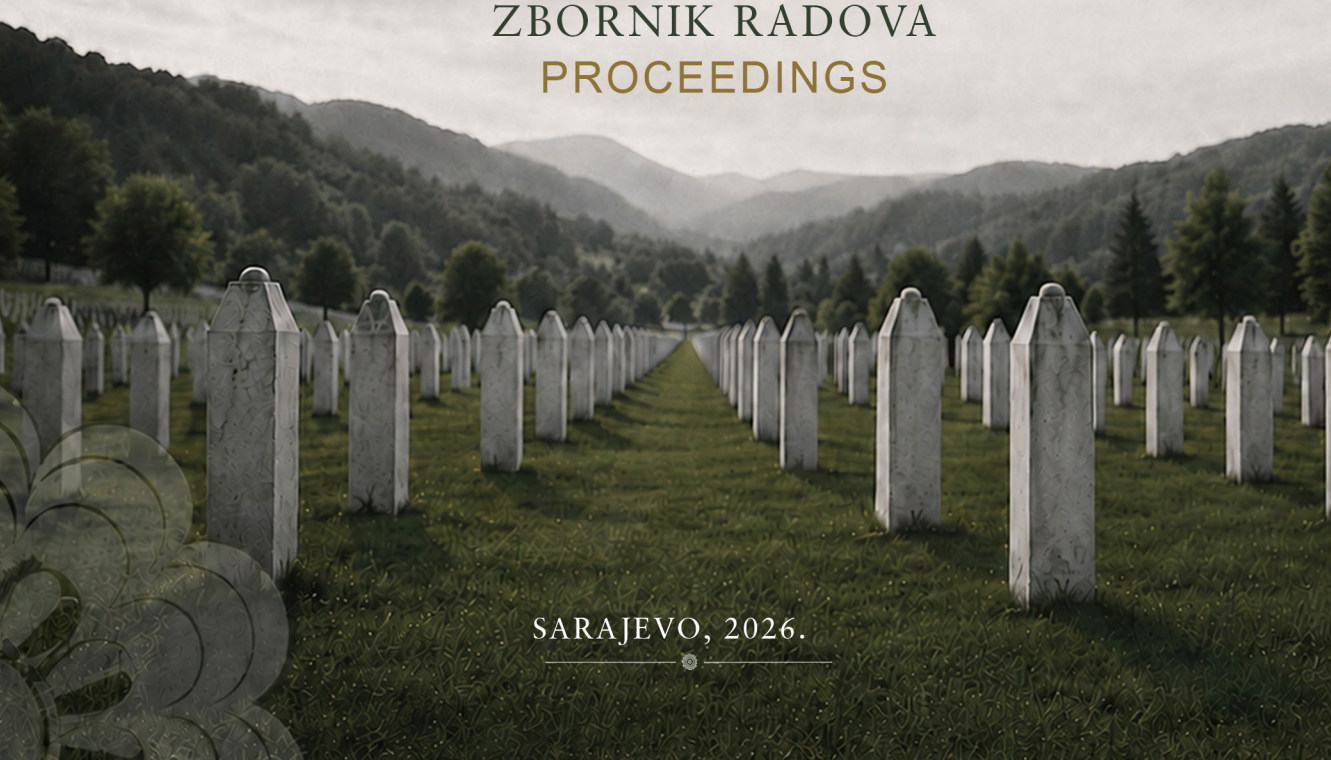
30 YEARS AFTER THE GENOCIDE

Sjećanje, odgovornost i izazovi negiranja

Memory, Responsibility, and the Challenges of Denial

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Sarajevo, 2026.

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PREDGOVOR

Obilježavanje tridesete godišnjice genocida nad Bošnjacima u Srebrenici i oko nje jula 1995. godine predstavlja jedan od najvažnijih trenutaka institucionalnog, naučnog i društvenog suočavanja s prošlošću u savremenoj Bosni i Hercegovini. Tri decenije nakon jula 1995. godine, Srebrenica ostaje trajna opomena čovječanstvu, simbol najtežeg zločina počinjenog na tlu Evrope nakon Drugog svjetskog rata, ali i mjesto koje nas obavezuje da istinu, pravdu i dostojanstvo žrtava čuvamo od zaborava, negiranja i relativizacije.

Univerzitet u Sarajevu, kao najstarija i najveća visokoobrazovna i naučna institucija u Bosni i Hercegovini, ima posebnu odgovornost da kroz naučnoistraživački rad, obrazovanje, javni dijalog i institucionalno djelovanje doprinosi očuvanju sudski utvrđenih činjenica o genocidu, razvoju kulture pamćenja i jačanju društvene otpornosti na govor mržnje, historijski revizionizam i negiranje počinjenih zločina. Ta odgovornost ne proizlazi samo iz akademske misije Univerziteta, nego i iz moralne obaveze prema žrtvama, preživjelima, porodicama ubijenih i budućim generacijama.

Istovremeno, trideseta godišnjica genocida u Srebrenici i trideseta godišnjica potpisivanja Općeg okvirnog sporazuma za mir u Bosni i Hercegovini predstavljaju dva temeljna događaja recentne historije Bosne i Hercegovine. Njihovo historijsko, političko, pravno i društveno značenje nije se moglo posmatrati izolirano niti smjelo biti zanemareno ili marginalizirano. Riječ je o događajima koji su duboko oblikovali savremenu bosanskohercegovačku stvarnost, unutrašnju političku dinamiku, regionalne odnose, međunarodni položaj Bosne i Hercegovine, kao i ukupne procese suočavanja s prošlošću, izgradnje mira i očuvanja društvene kohezije.

Upravo iz takvog razumijevanja akademske i društvene odgovornosti proizašao je širi programski okvir Univerziteta u Sarajevu za obilježavanje 30. godišnjice genocida u Srebrenici i 30. godišnjice potpisivanja Dejtonskog mirovnog sporazuma. U okviru tog programa, Univerzitet u Sarajevu pristupio je organiziranju niza aktivnosti usmjerenih na očuvanje historijske istine, poticanje naučnog istraživanja, jačanje

interdisciplinarnog pristupa i otvaranje prostora za ozbiljan javni i akademski dijalog. Time je potvrđeno da Univerzitet ne posmatra obilježavanje ovih godišnjica samo kao prigodnu komemorativnu obavezu, nego kao dio svoje trajne institucionalne misije.

U okviru realizacije projekta Univerziteta u Sarajevu pod nazivom "Programski okvir za obilježavanje 30. godišnjice genocida u Srebrenici i 30. godišnjice potpisivanja Dejtonskog mirovnog sporazuma", rektor Univerziteta u Sarajevu donio je Odluku o imenovanju Koordinacionog odbora za obilježavanje 30. godišnjice genocida u Srebrenici i oko nje jula 1995. i 30. godišnjice potpisivanja Dejtonskog mirovnog sporazuma. Koordinacioni odbor imenovan je u sastavu: prof. dr. Tarik Zaimović, predsjedavajući, rektor Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Sead Turčalo, član, dekan Fakulteta političkih nauka Univerziteta u Sarajevu; dr. sc. Muamer Džananović, član, direktor Instituta za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Zinka Grbo, članica, dekanica Pravnog fakulteta Univerziteta u Sarajevu; dr. sc. Sedad Bešlija, član, direktor Instituta za historiju Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Jasmin Ahić, član, dekan Fakulteta za kriminalistiku, kriminologiju i sigurnosne studije Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Adnan Busuladžić, član, dekan Filozofskog fakulteta Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Faruk Lončarević, član, dekan Akademije scenskih umjetnosti Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Dubravka Pozderac-Lejlić, članica, dekanica Akademije likovnih umjetnosti Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Arma Tanović-Branković, članica, prorektorica za umjetnost, kulturu i sport Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Naris Pojskić, član, prorektor za naučnoistraživački rad Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Kemal Durić, član, prorektor za međunarodnu saradnju Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Benina Veledar, članica, prorektorica za finansije Univerziteta u Sarajevu; dr. sc. Gaj Trifković, član, direktor Centra za ljudska prava Univerziteta u Sarajevu; i mr. Miroslav Živanović, član, šef Kabineta rektora Univerziteta u Sarajevu.

Na sjednici održanoj 4. februara 2025. godine Koordinacioni odbor donio je odluku o imenovanju predsjednika i članova

Organizacionog i Naučnog odbora međunarodne naučne konferencije "Srebrenica 30 godina poslije genocida: Sjećanje, odgovornost i izazovi negiranja". Time je Univerzitet u Sarajevu, u saradnji sa svojim članicama, prije svih Institutom za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava, ali i drugim univerzitetskim, naučnim i institucionalnim kapacitetima, uspostavio ozbiljan organizacijski i naučni okvir za realizaciju konferencije koja je po svom značaju, temama i učesnicima nadilazila lokalne i nacionalne okvire.

Organizacioni odbor konferencije "Srebrenica 30 godina poslije genocida: Sjećanje, odgovornost i izazovi negiranja" činili su: prof. dr. Sead Turčalo, predsjedavajući, dekan Fakulteta političkih nauka Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Kemal Durić, član, prorektor za međunarodnu saradnju Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Benina Veledar, članica, prorektorica za finansije Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Naris Pojskić, član, prorektor za naučnoistraživački rad Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Zinka Grbo, članica, dekanica Pravnog fakulteta Univerziteta u Sarajevu; dr. sc. Muamer Džananović, član, direktor Instituta za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Jasmin Ahić, član, dekan Fakulteta za kriminalistiku, kriminologiju i sigurnosne studije Univerziteta u Sarajevu; dr. sc. Sedad Bešlija, član, direktor Instituta za historiju Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Fikret Čaušević, član, Akademija nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine; prof. dr. Asim Mujkić, član, Akademija nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine; prof. dr. Mile Stojić, član, Akademija nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine; dr. sc. Hasan Nuhanović, član, Memorijalni centar Srebrenica – Potočari; dr. sc. Adaleta Durmić Pašić, članica, direktorica Instituta za genetičko inženjerstvo i biotehnologiju; dr. sc. Sanjin Haverić, član, Institut za genetičko inženjerstvo i biotehnologiju; dr. sc. Melika Arifhodžić, članica; i prof. dr. Lejla Turčilo, članica, Fakultet političkih nauka Univerziteta u Sarajevu.

Naučni odbor konferencije "Srebrenica 30 godina poslije genocida: Sjećanje, odgovornost i izazovi negiranja" činili su: dr. sc. Muamer Džananović, predsjedavajući, direktor Instituta za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava Univerziteta u

Sarajevu; prof. dr. Naris Pojskić, član, prorektor za naučnoistraživački rad Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Zinka Grbo, članica, dekanica Pravnog fakulteta Univerziteta u Sarajevu; dr. sc. Emir Suljagić, član, direktor Memorijalnog centra Srebrenica – Potočari; prof. dr. Sead Turčalo, član, dekan Fakulteta političkih nauka Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Miloš Trifković, član, Akademija nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine; prof. dr. Mile Babić, član, Akademija nauka i umjetnosti Bosne i Hercegovine; prof. dr. Edina Bećirević, članica, Fakultet za kriminalistiku, kriminologiju i sigurnosne studije Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Amir Duranović, član, Filozofski fakultet Univerziteta u Sarajevu; dr. sc. Hikmet Karčić, član, Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Ermin Kuka, član, Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava Univerziteta u Sarajevu; dr. sc. Merisa Karović-Babić, članica, Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Lada Sadiković, članica, Fakultet za kriminalistiku, kriminologiju i sigurnosne studije Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Ehlimana Memišević, članica, Pravni fakultet Univerziteta u Sarajevu; dr. sc. Jasmin Medić, član, Institut za historiju Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Hariz Halilovich, član, RMIT University Melbourne; dr. sc. Edin Omerčić, član, Institut za historiju Univerziteta u Sarajevu; dr. sc. Sabina Subašić Galijatović, članica, Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Sanela Bašić, članica, Fakultet političkih nauka Univerziteta u Sarajevu; prof. dr. Sarina Bakić, članica, Fakultet političkih nauka Univerziteta u Sarajevu; i dr. sc. Nirha Efendić, članica, Zemaljski muzej Bosne i Hercegovine. Tehnički sekretar konferencije bila je mr. sc. Ilvana Čengić, Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava Univerziteta u Sarajevu.

Međunarodna naučna konferencija "Srebrenica 30 godina poslije genocida: Sjećanje, odgovornost i izazovi negiranja" održana je od 1. do 3. jula 2025. godine u Sarajevu i Srebrenici. Organizirana je s namjerom da se trideseta godišnjica genocida obilježi na način koji nadilazi komemorativni okvir i otvara prostor za ozbiljno naučno, interdisciplinarno i javno promišljanje. Konferencija je okupila istaknute

domaće i međunarodne naučnike, istraživače, stručnjake, svjedoke i predstavnike institucija koji su iz različitih perspektiva razmatrali pitanja genocida, pravde, odgovornosti, sjećanja, obrazovanja, memorijalizacije i savremenih oblika negiranja.

Posebna vrijednost ove konferencije ogleda se u činjenici da je pokazano da Srebrenica nije samo predmet historijskog istraživanja, nego i mjesto savremene odgovornosti. Ona je istovremeno bosanskohercegovačka, ali i evropska i svjetska rana, trauma, opomena i pitanje odnosa prema genocidu, pravdi, istini i ljudskom dostojanstvu.

Trideset godina nakon genocida u Srebrenici, Bosna i Hercegovina, ali i međunarodna zajednica, i dalje se suočavaju s ključnim izazovima u pogledu očuvanja sjećanja, osiguravanja pravde i izgradnje trajnog mira. Srebrenica nije samo simbol najtežeg zločina počinjenog na tlu Evrope nakon Drugog svjetskog rata, već i mjesto koje nas trajno podsjeća na posljedice institucionalnog i moralnog sloma međunarodne zajednice, kao i na odgovornost društava da spriječe ponavljanje takvih zločina kakve svijet posljednjih godina opet gleda u Ukrajini, Gazi i drugim dijelovima svijeta.

Odgovornost za budućnost ne podrazumijeva samo njegovanje kulture pamćenja i dostojanstveno obilježavanje godišnjica. Ona podrazumijeva kontinuirano djelovanje u pravcu obrazovanja novih generacija, razvijanja mehanizama suočavanja s prošlošću, jačanja demokratskih kapaciteta društva i stvaranja otpornosti prema ideologijama koje su dovele do genocida. Akademska zajednica, a posebno Univerzitet u Sarajevu, ima obavezu da kroz naučno istraživanje, interdisciplinarni pristup, nastavne procese i javno djelovanje doprinosi razumijevanju uzroka, toka i posljedica genocida, ali i prepoznavanju savremenih oblika negiranja, relativizacije i revizionizma.

U tom smislu, odgovornost prema Srebrenici ne može se iscrpiti u obilježavanju 11. jula niti u povremenom institucionalnom sjećanju. Ona mora biti trajna i sistemska. Mora biti prisutna u nauci, obrazovanju, kulturi, javnom prostoru, međunarodnoj saradnji, arhivima i nastavnim programima. Samo se tako može izgraditi društvo koje razumije prošlost, prepoznaje opasnosti mržnje i dehumanizacije, te razvija sposobnost da

se suprotstavi ideologijama zla prije nego što one prerastu u nove oblike zločina.

Poseban značaj ove konferencije i zbornika koji je pred čitaocima ogleda se u činjenici da nastaju u vremenu kada se, uprkos presudama međunarodnih i domaćih sudova, institucionalnim nalazima, forenzičkim dokazima, masovnim grobnicama i svjedočenjima preživjelih, genocid u Srebrenici i dalje pokušava osporiti, relativizirati ili politički instrumentalizirati. Negiranje genocida nije samo pogrešno tumačenje prošlosti. Ono predstavlja nastavak nasilja nad istinom, dodatno poniženje žrtava i opasnost za zdravu budućnost bosanskohercegovačkog društva.

Šutnja pred negiranjem nije neutralna pozicija. Ona ostavlja prostor za nove oblike nepravde, za normalizaciju revizionizma i za ponavljanje obrazaca koji su u prošlosti doveli do sistematskih zločina. Suprotstavljanje negiranju genocida ne znači zatvaranje prostora za naučnu raspravu, nego upravo suprotno: ono znači insistiranje na odgovornoj, argumentiranoj i činjenicama utemeljenoj raspravi. Sudski utvrđene činjenice, naučna istraživanja, dokumentacija, svjedočenja preživjelih i forenzički dokazi predstavljaju temelje na kojima se mora graditi svako ozbiljno razumijevanje Srebrenice.

Zbornik radova koji je pred čitaocima rezultat je rada navedene konferencije i predstavlja važan doprinos institucionalnom i naučnom pamćenju genocida u Srebrenici. Objavljivanjem ovog zbornika Univerzitet u Sarajevu i Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava nastavljaju svoju misiju dokumentiranja, istraživanja i javnog predstavljanja činjenica o zločinima počinjenim u Bosni i Hercegovini, s posebnim naglaskom na genocid nad Bošnjacima u Srebrenici i oko nje. Ovaj zbornik treba razumjeti i kao dio šireg nastojanja Univerziteta u Sarajevu da svojim naučnim, obrazovnim i društvenim kapacitetima doprinese izgradnji odgovornijeg odnosa prema prošlosti i budućnosti. Univerzitet u Sarajevu i njegov Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava time potvrđuju da pitanje genocida u Srebrenici nije samo predmet historijske distance, nego i jedno od ključnih pitanja savremene akademske, etičke i društvene odgovornosti.

Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava Univerziteta u Sarajevu, kao izdavač ovog zbornika, decenijama razvija naučnoistraživački, dokumentacijski i javni rad usmjeren na naučno istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava, genocida i drugih teških povreda humanitarnog prava. U tom smislu, ovaj zbornik nastavak je dugogodišnjeg institucionalnog rada na očuvanju istine, dokumentiranju zločina, afirmaciji naučnog pristupa i podršci kulturi pamćenja.

Zahvaljujemo autorima radova, urednici zbornika, članovima Koordinacionog, Organizacionog i Naučnog odbora konferencije, učesnicima konferencije, moderatorima, saradnicima, tehničkom sekretaru i svima koji su doprinijeli realizaciji ovog važnog akademskog i institucionalnog projekta. Njihov doprinos potvrđuje da je Srebrenica, trideset godina poslije genocida, ne samo bosanskohercegovačko nego i evropsko i svjetsko pitanje pravde, sjećanja i odgovornosti.

Vjerujemo da će ovaj zbornik biti koristan naučnicima, istraživačima, nastavnicima, studentima, institucijama, organizacijama civilnog društva i svima koji se odgovorno bave razumijevanjem genocida, njegovih posljedica i savremenih izazova negiranja. Njegova svrha nije samo da dokumentira jedan naučni skup, nego da ostane trajni doprinos borbi za istinu, pravdu i ljudsko dostojanstvo.

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FOREWORD

The thirtieth anniversary of the genocide against the Bosniaks in and around Srebrenica in July 1995 marks one of the most significant moments of institutional, scholarly, and societal confrontation with the past in contemporary Bosnia and Herzegovina. Three decades on, Srebrenica remains an enduring warning to humanity, the symbol of the gravest crime committed on European soil since the Second World War, and a place that binds us to protect the truth, justice, and the dignity of the victims from oblivion, denial, and relativization.

As the oldest and largest institution of higher education and research in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the University of Sarajevo bears a particular responsibility to preserve the judicially established facts of the genocide, foster a culture of remembrance, and strengthen society's resilience to hate speech, historical revisionism, and the denial of the crimes committed. It pursues this responsibility through research, education, public dialogue, and institutional action. That responsibility flows not only from the University's academic mission, but also from a moral obligation to the victims, the survivors, the families of those killed, and the generations to come.

At the same time, the thirtieth anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide and the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina stand as two foundational events in the country's recent history. Their historical, political, legal, and social significance could not be considered in isolation, nor could it be overlooked or marginalized. These are events that have profoundly shaped contemporary Bosnian-Herzegovinian reality: the country's internal political dynamics, its regional relations and international standing, as well as the broader processes of confronting the past, building peace, and preserving social cohesion.

It was precisely this understanding of academic and social responsibility that gave rise to the University of Sarajevo's broader programmatic framework for marking the 30th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide

and the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement. Within that framework, the University undertook a series of activities aimed at preserving historical truth, encouraging scholarly research, strengthening interdisciplinary approaches, and opening space for serious public and academic dialogue. In doing so, it affirmed that it regards the commemoration of these anniversaries not merely as a ceremonial obligation, but as part of its enduring institutional mission.

As part of the University of Sarajevo project entitled Programmatic Framework for Marking the 30th Anniversary of the Srebrenica Genocide and the 30th Anniversary of the Signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, the Rector of the University of Sarajevo issued a Decision appointing the Coordination Committee for Marking the 30th Anniversary of the Genocide in and around Srebrenica of July 1995 and the 30th Anniversary of the Signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement. The Coordination Committee was appointed in the following composition: Prof. Dr. Tarik Zaimović, Chair, Rector of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Sead Turčalo, member, Dean of the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Sarajevo; Dr. Muamer Džananović, member, Director of the Institute for Research of Crimes against Humanity and International Law of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Zinka Grbo, member, Dean of the Faculty of Law of the University of Sarajevo; Dr. Sedad Bešlija, member, Director of the Institute of History of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Jasmin Ahić, member, Dean of the Faculty of Criminalistics, Criminology and Security Studies of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Adnan Busuladžić, member, Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Faruk Lončarević, member, Dean of the Academy of Performing Arts of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Dubravka Pozderac-Lejlić, member, Dean of the Academy of Fine Arts of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Arma Tanović-Branković, member, Vice-Rector for Arts, Culture and Sport of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Naris Pojskić, member, Vice-Rector for Research of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Kemal Durić, member, Vice-Rector for International Cooperation of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Benina

Veledar, member, Vice-Rector for Finance of the University of Sarajevo; Dr. Gaj Trifković, member, Director of the Human Rights Centre of the University of Sarajevo; and Miroslav Živanović, MA, member, Head of the Office of the Rector of the University of Sarajevo.

At its session held on 4 February 2025, the Coordination Committee adopted a decision appointing the chairs and members of the Organizing Committee and the Scientific Committee of the international scientific conference Srebrenica 30 Years After the Genocide: Memory, Responsibility and the Challenges of Denial. The University of Sarajevo, working with its member institutions, above all the Institute for Research of Crimes against Humanity and International Law, and drawing on its wider university, scientific, and institutional capacities, thereby established a robust organizational and scholarly framework for a conference whose significance, themes, and participants reached well beyond local and national confines.

The Organizing Committee of the conference Srebrenica 30 Years After the Genocide: Memory, Responsibility and the Challenges of Denial was composed of: Prof. Dr. Sead Turčalo, Chair, Dean of the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Kemal Durić, member, Vice-Rector for International Cooperation of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Benina Veledar, member, Vice-Rector for Finance of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Naris Pojskić, member, Vice-Rector for Research of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Zinka Grbo, member, Dean of the Faculty of Law of the University of Sarajevo; Dr. Muamer Džananović, member, Director of the Institute for Research of Crimes against Humanity and International Law of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Jasmin Ahić, member, Dean of the Faculty of Criminalistics, Criminology and Security Studies of the University of Sarajevo; Dr. Sedad Bešlija, member, Director of the Institute of History of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Fikret Čaušević, member, Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Prof. Dr. Asim Mujkić, member, Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Prof. Dr. Mile Stojić, member, Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Dr. Hasan Nuhanović, member, Srebrenica Memorial

Center – Potočari; Dr. Adaleta Durmić Pašić, member, Director of the Institute for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology; Dr. Sanjin Haverić, member, Institute for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology; Dr. Melika Arifhodžić, member; and Prof. Dr. Lejla Turčilo, member, Faculty of Political Science of the University of Sarajevo.

The Scientific Committee of the conference Srebrenica 30 Years After the Genocide: Memory, Responsibility and the Challenges of Denial was composed of: Dr. Muamer Džananović, Chair, Director of the Institute for Research of Crimes against Humanity and International Law of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Naris Pojskić, member, Vice-Rector for Research of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Zinka Grbo, member, Dean of the Faculty of Law of the University of Sarajevo; Dr. Emir Suljagić, member, Director of the Srebrenica Memorial Center – Potočari; Prof. Dr. Sead Turčalo, member, Dean of the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Miloš Trifković, member, Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Prof. Dr. Mile Babić, member, Academy of Sciences and Arts of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Prof. Dr. Edina Bećirević, member, Faculty of Criminalistics, Criminology and Security Studies of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Amir Duranović, member, Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Sarajevo; Dr. Hikmet Karčić, member, Institute for Research of Crimes against Humanity and International Law of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Ermin Kuka, member, Institute for Research of Crimes against Humanity and International Law of the University of Sarajevo; Dr. Merisa Karović-Babić, member, Institute for Research of Crimes against Humanity and International Law of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Lada Sadiković, member, Faculty of Criminalistics, Criminology and Security Studies of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Ehlimana Memišević, member, Faculty of Law of the University of Sarajevo; Dr. Jasmin Medić, member, Institute of History of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Hariz Halilovich, member, RMIT University, Melbourne; Dr. Edin Omerčić, member, Institute of History of the University of Sarajevo; Dr. Sabina Subašić Galijatović, member, Institute for Research of Crimes against Humanity and International

Law of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Sanela Bašić, member, Faculty of Political Science of the University of Sarajevo; Prof. Dr. Sarina Bakić, member, Faculty of Political Science of the University of Sarajevo; and Dr. Nirha Efendić, member, National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Technical Secretary of the conference was Ilvana Čengić, MA, of the Institute for Research of Crimes against Humanity and International Law of the University of Sarajevo.

The international scientific conference *Srebrenica 30 Years After the Genocide: Memory, Responsibility and the Challenges of Denial* was held from 1 to 3 July 2025 in Sarajevo and Srebrenica. It was conceived to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the genocide in a manner that transcends the commemorative frame and opens space for serious scholarly, interdisciplinary, and public reflection. The conference brought together distinguished scholars, researchers, experts, witnesses, and representatives of institutions from Bosnia and Herzegovina and abroad, who examined questions of genocide, justice, responsibility, memory, education, memorialization, and contemporary forms of denial from a range of perspectives.

The particular value of this conference lies in its demonstration that Srebrenica is not merely a subject of historical inquiry, but a site of present-day responsibility. It is at once a Bosnian-Herzegovinian, a European, and a global wound: a trauma, a warning, and a standing question of how we relate to genocide, justice, truth, and human dignity.

Thirty years after the genocide in Srebrenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the international community with it, continues to face fundamental challenges in preserving memory, securing justice, and building lasting peace. Srebrenica is not only the symbol of the gravest crime committed on European soil since the Second World War; it is also a place that permanently reminds us of the consequences of the institutional and moral failure of the international community, and of the responsibility of societies to prevent the recurrence of such crimes, of the kind the world has in recent years watched unfold once again in Ukraine, Gaza, and elsewhere.

Responsibility for the future entails more than nurturing a culture of remembrance and marking anniversaries with dignity. It calls for sustained effort to educate new generations, to develop mechanisms for confronting the past, to strengthen society's democratic capacities, and to build resistance to the ideologies that led to genocide. The academic community, and the University of Sarajevo in particular, has a duty to contribute, through research, interdisciplinary work, teaching, and public engagement, to understanding the causes, course, and consequences of the genocide, and to recognizing contemporary forms of denial, relativization, and revisionism.

In this sense, responsibility toward Srebrenica cannot be exhausted in the observance of 11 July or in occasional institutional remembrance. It must be permanent and systemic, present in scholarship, education, culture, the public sphere, international cooperation, archives, and curricula. Only in this way can we build a society that understands its past, recognizes the dangers of hatred and dehumanization, and develops the capacity to confront ideologies of evil before they grow into new forms of crime.

The particular significance of this conference, and of the volume now before the reader, lies in the fact that both have come into being at a time when, despite the judgments of international and domestic courts, institutional findings, forensic evidence, mass graves, and the testimony of survivors, attempts persist to dispute, relativize, or politically instrumentalize the Srebrenica genocide. Genocide denial is not merely a misreading of the past. It is a continuation of violence against the truth, a further humiliation of the victims, and a threat to the healthy future of Bosnian-Herzegovinian society.

Silence in the face of denial is not a neutral position. It leaves room for new forms of injustice, for the normalization of revisionism, and for the repetition of the very patterns that once led to systematic crimes. Countering genocide denial does not mean closing the space for scholarly debate; quite the opposite, it means insisting on responsible, reasoned debate grounded in fact. Judicially established facts, scholarly research, documentation, survivors' testimony, and forensic evidence are the foundations on which any serious understanding of Srebrenica must rest.

The volume before the reader is the fruit of that conference and an important contribution to the institutional and scholarly memory of the Srebrenica genocide. With its publication, the University of Sarajevo and the Institute for Research of Crimes against Humanity and International Law continue their mission of documenting, researching, and publicly presenting the facts of the crimes committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with particular emphasis on the genocide against the Bosniaks in and around Srebrenica. The volume should also be understood as part of the University of Sarajevo's broader endeavor to bring its scholarly, educational, and societal capacities to bear on building a more responsible relationship to both the past and the future. The University of Sarajevo and its Institute for Research of Crimes against Humanity and International Law thereby affirm that the question of the Srebrenica genocide is not merely a matter of historical distance, but one of the central questions of contemporary academic, ethical, and social responsibility.

The Institute for Research of Crimes against Humanity and International Law of the University of Sarajevo, the publisher of this volume, has for decades been developing research, documentation, and public engagement devoted to the scholarly study of crimes against humanity and international law, genocide, and other grave breaches of humanitarian law. In that sense, this volume continues a long-standing institutional commitment to preserving the truth, documenting crimes, affirming the scientific approach, and supporting the culture of remembrance.

Our thanks go to the authors of the papers, the editor of the volume, the members of the Coordination, Organizing, and Scientific Committees, the conference participants, moderators, and collaborators, the Technical Secretary, and all those who contributed to the realization of this important academic and institutional project. Their contribution confirms that Srebrenica, thirty years after the genocide, is not only a Bosnian-Herzegovinian question, but a European and global question of justice, memory, and responsibility.

We trust that this volume will prove valuable to scholars, researchers, teachers, students, institutions, civil society organizations, and all those

who engage responsibly with understanding genocide, its consequences, and the contemporary challenges of denial. Its purpose is not merely to document a scholarly gathering, but to endure as a lasting contribution to the struggle for truth, justice, and human dignity.

Prof. Dr. Tarik Zaimović
Rector of the University of Sarajevo

Dr. Muamer Džananović
Director of the University of Sarajevo - Institute for Research of Crimes against Humanity and International Law

RIJEČ UREDNICE

Zbornik radova pod nazivom *Srebrenica 30 godina nakon genocida: Sjećanje, odgovornost i izazovi negiranja* predstavlja interdisciplinarnu publikaciju posvećenu istraživanju genocida u Bosni i Hercegovini, s posebnim fokusom na genocid u Srebrenici te na njegove historijske, pravne, političke, memorijske i obrazovne dimenzije. Publikacija okuplja domaće i međunarodne autore iz oblasti historije, prava, sociologije, politologije, antropologije, studija genocida i kulture sjećanja.

Ova publikacija nije isključivo zbirka izvornih naučnih istraživanja, nego interdisciplinarna publikacija koja okuplja različite vrste radova usmjerenih na razumijevanje genocida u Bosni i Hercegovini i njegovih dugoročnih historijskih, pravnih, političkih, društvenih i memorijskih posljedica. Publikacija obuhvata naučne i stručne radove, eseje, analitičke osvrte i svjedočenja, čime se nastoji objediniti širok spektar pristupa – od historijski utemeljenih istraživanja i historiografskih analiza, preko pravnih i dokaznih razmatranja, do radova posvećenih kulturi sjećanja, obrazovanju i iskustvima preživjelih. Takva koncepcija predstavlja vrijednost ove publikacije jer omogućava sagledavanje genocida u Bosni i Hercegovini kroz različite naučne discipline i metodološke perspektive, povezujući istraživanje prošlosti sa savremenim pitanjima odgovornosti, memorijalizacije i suočavanja s negiranjem. Radovi nisu razvrstani prema vrsti ili formalnom akademskom karakteru, nego prema tematskoj povezanosti i unutrašnjoj logici zbornika. U skladu s tim, zbornik je organiziran u četiri cjeline koje čitaoca vode od konceptualnih i historijskih osnova genocida, preko pravnih pitanja, dokaznog materijala i sudski utvrđenih činjenica, do savremenih politika negiranja, procesa memorijalizacije, svjedočenja i obrazovanja o genocidu. Ovakav urednički pristup omogućava da različiti glasovi, istraživački pristupi i vrste izvora budu sagledani u okviru jedinstvene naučne cjeline, čime se doprinosi sveobuhvatnijem razumijevanju genocida u Bosni i Hercegovini i njegovog značaja u savremenim studijama genocida, ljudskih prava i kulture sjećanja.

Prvi dio, *Konceptualni, historijski i historiografski temelji genocida u Bosni i Hercegovini*, okuplja radove koji razmatraju teorijske, historijske i historiografske aspekte genocida u Bosni i Hercegovini. Ben Kiernan u radu *Genocid u Bosni i Hercegovini u historijskom i ideološkom kontekstu* analizira historijski i ideološki kontekst genocida, Marko Attila Hoare u radu *Masakr u Srebrenici kao kulminacija genocida u Bosni i Hercegovini* razmatra genocid u Srebrenici u okviru šire genocidne politike u Bosni i Hercegovini, Norman M. Naimark u radu *Promjene u historiografskim pogledima na genocid u Srebrenici* tematizira promjene u historiografskim interpretacijama genocida u Srebrenici. Zilha Mastalić Košuta u radu *Put prema genocidu u Srebrenici: Mehanizmi genocidnog procesa u istočnoj Bosni, 1992–1995* analizira političke, vojne, humanitarne i institucionalne mehanizme koji su prethodili genocidu u Srebrenici. Ovi radovi tematiziraju različite historiografske i teorijske pristupe proučavanju geneze, karaktera i interpretacija genocida u Bosni i Hercegovini.

Drugi dio, *Pravo, dokazi i oblikovanje sudske istine*, posvećen je pravnim, forenzičkim i dokaznim aspektima utvrđivanja i dokumentovanja genocida. Muamer Džananović u radu *Kulturni centar Pilica: Mjesto ponovljenog genocida u Bosni i Hercegovini 1992. i 1995. godine* analizira upotrebu civilnih objekata kao mjesta zatočenja i ubijanja civila tokom rata u Bosni i Hercegovini, s posebnim osvrtom na lokalitet Pilica. Jasmin Medić u radu *Priznanja pred Međunarodnim krivičnim sudom za bivšu Jugoslaviju: Studija slučaja "Srebrenica 1995"* analizira ulogu priznanja optuženih u procesima utvrđivanja činjenica i konstrukcije sudske istine o genocidu. Mujo Begić u radu *Prikrivanje genocida i drugih oblika zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava – slučaj izmještanja masovnih grobnica u Srebrenici i Prijedoru* istražuje mehanizme prikrivanja zločina kroz premještanje masovnih grobnica te njihove implikacije za forenzička istraživanja i procesuiranje odgovornih. Rosa Aloisi i Jayden Salter u radu *Otpor memorijalizaciji i sudskoj istini: Mjera njihove moći* analiziraju odnos između procesa memorijalizacije, sudski utvrđenih činjenica i društvenih oblika otpora prihvatanju pravosudno utvrđene istine. U cjelini, ovi radovi obrađuju

različite aspekte dokumentovanja genocida i njegove pravne i forenzičke dimenzije.

Treći dio, *Negiranje, politike sjećanja i međunarodni odgovori*, bavi se savremenim oblicima negiranja genocida, politikama sjećanja i međunarodnim reakcijama. Edina Bećirević u radu *Negiranje genocida, podrivanje mira: Srbija, Rusija i napad na Bosnu i Hercegovinu* analizira povezanost negiranja genocida sa savremenim sigurnosnim i geopolitičkim procesima, Hikmet Karčić i Ben Gerstein u radu *Institucionalizirano sjećanje nasuprot institucionaliziranom negiranju: Političke implikacije Rezolucije A/RES/78/282* razmatraju političke implikacije Rezolucije Generalne skupštine Ujedinjenih nacija o genocidu u Srebrenici, dok Benjamin Valentino u radu *Srebrenica: Naučene i nenaučene lekcije* razmatra međunarodna iskustva i pouke povezane s genocidom u Srebrenici. Radovi u ovoj cjelini tematiziraju različite savremene političke, društvene i međunarodne aspekte suočavanja s genocidom i njegovim negiranjem.

Četvrti dio, *Sjećanje, svjedočenje i kulturne reprezentacije*, okuplja radove posvećene svjedočenju, kulturi sjećanja i obrazovanju o genocidu. Hariz Halilovich u radu *Pisati nakon Srebrenice: Gramatika tuge i etika svjedočenja* razmatra etičke dimenzije svjedočenja, Sarina Bakić u radu *Od šutnje do sjećanja: Uloga kulture u održavanju sjećanja na genocid u Srebrenici i oko nje* piše o ulozi kulture u očuvanju kolektivnog pamćenja, Hasan Nuhanović u radu *Put sjećanja: Putovanje cestom od Sarajeva do Srebrenice* predstavlja lično svjedočanstvo o prostoru sjećanja, Kim Sadique u radu *Srebrenica, nikad više nikome i nigdje: Akcijski pristup obrazovanju o genocidu* analizira ulogu obrazovanja o genocidu kao sredstva prevencije budućih zločina. Rafiki Ubaldo u radu *Želimo da znate da naša budućnost nije zarobljena u razaranju* tematizira pitanja oporavka nakon genocida i obrazovanja usmjerenog na njegovu prevenciju. Ova cjelina obuhvata radove koji genocid razmatraju iz perspektive sjećanja, iskustva preživjelih i obrazovanja kao dijela kulture pamćenja.

Posebna vrijednost zbornika ogleda se u činjenici da povezuje domaće i međunarodne istraživačke perspektive, omogućavajući dijalog između

historiografskih, pravnih, društvenih i memorijskih pristupa proučavanju genocida u Bosni i Hercegovini.

Posebna pažnja posvećena je terminološkoj dosljednosti, uredničkoj obradi i dvojezičkoj prezentaciji sadržaja. Radovi u zborniku objavljeni su na bosanskom ili engleskom jeziku, dok su svi sažeci prevedeni kako bi sadržaj bio dostupan široj međunarodnoj i domaćoj publici.

Zbornik je namijenjen akademskoj zajednici, istraživačima, nastavnicima i studentima, ali i široj javnosti zainteresovanoj za razumijevanje genocida u Bosni i Hercegovini, procesa suočavanja s prošlošću, kulture sjećanja i savremenih izazova negiranja genocida.

Za stavove, mišljenja i zaključke iznesene u pojedinačnim radovima odgovorni su isključivo njihovi autori te oni ne odražavaju nužno stavove urednice.

Dr. sc. Zilha Mastalić Košuta
Viša naučna saradnica Univerziteta u Sarajevu - Instituta za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava

EDITOR'S NOTE

The volume of proceedings entitled *Srebrenica 30 years after the genocide: Memory, Responsibility and the Challenges of Denial* is an interdisciplinary publication devoted to the study of the genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with particular focus on the genocide in Srebrenica and on its historical, legal, political, memorial and educational dimensions. The publication brings together authors from Bosnia and Herzegovina and abroad, working in the fields of history, law, sociology, political science, anthropology, genocide studies and the culture of remembrance.

This publication is not solely a collection of original scientific research; it is an interdisciplinary publication that brings together different kinds of contributions aimed at understanding the genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its long-term historical, legal, political, social and memorial consequences. It comprises scientific and professional papers, essays, analytical reflections and testimonies, and thus seeks to unite a broad spectrum of approaches, from historically grounded research and historiographical analyses, through legal and evidentiary considerations, to contributions devoted to the culture of remembrance, education and the experiences of survivors. This conception is one of the publication's strengths, for it allows the genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina to be examined across different scientific disciplines and methodological perspectives, linking the study of the past with contemporary questions of responsibility, memorialization and countering denial. The contributions are arranged not by type or formal academic character, but by thematic affinity and the internal logic of the volume. Accordingly, the volume is organized into four parts, which lead the reader from the conceptual and historical foundations of the genocide, through legal questions, evidentiary material and judicially established facts, to contemporary politics of denial, processes of memorialization, testimony and education about genocide. This editorial approach allows different voices, research approaches and types of sources to be considered within a single scholarly whole, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina and of its significance

in contemporary genocide studies, human rights and the culture of remembrance.

The first part, *Conceptual, Historical and Historiographical Foundations of the Genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, brings together papers that examine the theoretical, historical and historiographical aspects of the genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In *The Genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina in Historical and Ideological Context*, Ben Kiernan analyzes the historical and ideological context of the genocide. In *The Srebrenica Massacre as the Culmination of the Genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Marko Attila Hoare considers the genocide in Srebrenica within the broader genocidal policy pursued in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In *Changing Historiographical Perspectives on the Srebrenica Genocide*, Norman M. Naimark addresses shifts in the historiographical interpretations of the Srebrenica genocide. In *The Road to the Srebrenica Genocide: Mechanisms of the Genocidal Process in Eastern Bosnia (1992-1995)*, Zilha Mastalić Košuta analyzes the political, military, humanitarian and institutional mechanisms that preceded the genocide in Srebrenica. These papers address a range of historiographical and theoretical approaches to the study of the genesis, character and interpretations of the genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The second part, *Law, Evidence and the Shaping of Judicial Truth*, is devoted to the legal, forensic and evidentiary aspects of establishing and documenting the genocide. In *The Pilica Cultural Centre: A Site of Recurrent Genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1992 and 1995*, Muamer Džananović analyzes the use of civilian buildings as sites of detention and killing of civilians during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with particular reference to the Pilica site. In *Guilty Pleas Before the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia: The "Srebrenica 1995" Case Study*, Jasmin Medić analyzes the role of the accused's admissions of guilt in establishing the facts and constructing the judicial truth about the genocide. In *Concealing Genocide and Other Forms of Crimes against Humanity and International Law: The Case of Relocation of Mass Graves in and around Srebrenica and Prijedor*, Mujo Begić investigates the mechanisms by which crimes were

concealed through the relocation of mass graves, and the implications of those mechanisms for forensic research and the prosecution of those responsible. In *Resistance to Memorialization and Judicial Truth: A Measure of Their Power*, Rosa Aloisi and Jayden Salter analyze the relationship between processes of memorialization, judicially established facts and social forms of resistance to accepting judicially determined truth. Taken together, these papers address various aspects of documenting the genocide and its legal and forensic dimensions.

The third part, *Denial, Politics of Memory and International Responses*, deals with contemporary forms of genocide denial, politics of memory and international reactions. In *Denying Genocide, Undermining Peace: Serbia, Russia, and the Assault on Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Edina Bećirević analyzes the links between genocide denial and contemporary security and geopolitical processes. In *Institutionalized Memory versus Institutionalized Denial: The Political Implications of Resolution A/RES/78/282*, Hikmet Karčić and Ben Gerstein consider the political implications of the United Nations General Assembly resolution on the Srebrenica genocide. In *Srebrenica: Lessons Learned and Unlearned*, Benjamin Valentino reflects on the international experiences and lessons associated with the genocide in Srebrenica. The papers in this part address various contemporary political, social and international aspects of confronting the genocide and countering its denial.

The fourth part, *Memory, Testimony and Cultural Representations*, brings together papers devoted to testimony, the culture of remembrance and education about genocide. In *Writing After Srebrenica: The Grammar of Grief and the Ethics of Witnessing*, Hariz Halilovich considers the ethical dimensions of bearing witness. In *From Silence to Remembrance: The Role of Culture in Sustaining the Memory of the Genocide in and around Srebrenica*, Sarina Bakić analyzes the role of culture in preserving collective memory. In *A Memory Journey: Road Tour from Sarajevo to Srebrenica*, Hasan Nuhanović offers a personal testimony about the landscape of memory. In *Srebrenica, Never Again to No-one and Nowhere: An Action-Oriented Approach to Genocide Education*, Kim Sadique analyzes the role of genocide education as a

means of preventing future crimes. In *We Wish You to Know That Our Future Is Not Frozen in Destruction*, Rafiki Ubaldo addresses questions of recovery after genocide and of education aimed at its prevention. This part comprises papers that consider the genocide from the perspective of memory, the experiences of survivors and education as part of the culture of remembrance.

A particular strength of the volume lies in the fact that it connects research perspectives from Bosnia and Herzegovina and abroad, enabling a dialogue between historiographical, legal, social and memorial approaches to the study of the genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Special attention has been paid to terminological consistency, editorial preparation and the bilingual presentation of the contents. The papers in the volume are published in Bosnian or in English, while all abstracts have been translated so that the contents are accessible to a wider international and domestic readership.

The volume is intended for the academic community, researchers, teachers and students, as well as for the wider public interested in understanding the genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the process of confronting the past, the culture of remembrance and the contemporary challenges of genocide denial.

The views, opinions and conclusions expressed in the individual papers are solely those of their authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor.

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Dio I: Konceptualni, historijski i historiografski temelji genocida u Bosni i Hercegovini

Part I: Conceptual, Historical and Historiographical Foundations of the Genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Prof. dr. Ben Kiernan
Yale University

THE GENOCIDE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA IN HISTORICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Abstract: This chapter situates the Genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina within a broader comparative and historical framework of twentieth-century mass violence. It argues that the ideological foundations of the genocide in Bosnia in the early 1990s shared key characteristics with other genocidal regimes, including those in Cambodia, Rwanda, and elsewhere. Four central ideological elements are identified: racial and religious prejudice, territorial expansionism, the drive to restore a perceived lost national grandeur, and the idealization of rural life combined with anti-urban sentiment. Drawing on historical precedents from the Second World War and the postwar period in Yugoslavia, the chapter demonstrates how these ideological patterns evolved into a coherent framework that enabled and legitimized genocidal violence. Particular attention is paid to the role of Serbian nationalist discourse in constructing Bosniaks as both a biological and political threat, thereby justifying their destruction. The chapter also highlights the interplay between expansionist ambitions and practices of "ethnic cleansing", as well as the symbolic targeting of urban spaces. By placing the Genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina in a wider comparative perspective, the chapter contributes to a deeper understanding of the recurring ideological mechanisms that underpin genocide. It concludes by emphasizing the importance of international justice processes, including the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, in establishing accountability and historical truth.

Keywords: *genocide, Srebrenica, ideology, nationalism, "ethnic cleansing", territorial expansion, racism, religious prejudice, genocide studies, comparative genocide, Yugoslavia, international justice*

GENOCID U BOSNI I HERCEGOVINI U HISTORIJSKOM I IDEOLOŠKOM KONTEKSTU

Sažetak: Ovo poglavlje smješta genocid u Bosni u širi komparativni i historijski okvir masovnog nasilja dvadesetog stoljeća. Argumentira se da su ideološki temelji genocida u Bosni početkom 1990-ih dijelili ključne karakteristike s drugim genocidnim režimima, uključujući one u Kambodži, Ruandi i drugdje. Identificiraju se četiri centralna ideološka elementa: rasna i religijska netrpeljivost, teritorijalni ekspanzionizam, težnja ka obnovi percipirane izgubljene nacionalne veličine, te idealizacija ruralnog života uz istovremeni antiurbani sentiment. Polazeći od historijskih presedana iz Drugog svjetskog rata i poslijeratnog perioda u Jugoslaviji, poglavlje pokazuje kako su se ovi ideološki obrasci razvili u koherentan okvir koji je omogućio i legitimirao genocidno nasilje. Posebna pažnja posvećena je ulozi srpskog nacionalističkog diskursa u konstruiranju Bošnjaka kao biološke i političke prijetnje, čime se opravdavalo njihovo uništenje. Također se naglašava povezanost između ekspanzionističkih ambicija i praksi "etničkog čišćenja", kao i simboličko ciljano uništavanje urbanih prostora. Smještanjem genocida u Bosni u širi komparativni kontekst, ovo poglavlje doprinosi dubljem razumijevanju ponavljajućih ideoloških mehanizama koji stoje u osnovi genocida. Zaključno, naglašava se značaj međunarodnih pravosudnih procesa, uključujući rad Međunarodnog krivičnog suda za bivšu Jugoslaviju, u uspostavljanju odgovornosti i historijske istine.

Ključne riječi: *genocid u Bosni i Hercegovini, Srebrenica, ideologija, nacionalizam, teritorijalni ekspanzionizam, rasizam, religijska netrpeljivost, studije genocida, komparativni genocid, Jugoslavija, međunarodna pravda*

Introduction

The political and ethnic catastrophes in Cambodia and Rwanda, and the crimes of other genocidal dictatorships in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Guatemala, and Iraq, all exemplify in varying degrees the widespread late-twentieth-century ideological and racial "cleansing" that those regimes deployed to combat what they claimed to be the threat of political or biological contamination. Such propaganda could coexist with the contradictory assertion of genetic difference. The perpetrators were preoccupied with their ethnic group's susceptibility to threats even when they proclaimed their group to be superior. As historian Norman Cigar comments, "This dualistic self-view of superiority and accompanying vulnerability bordering on paranoia can be a particularly explosive mix."[1]

In the early 1990s, that combination fueled the genocide in Bosnia, where perhaps 200,000 local Muslims perished at the hands of Bosnian Serb forces. The Bosnian case exhibited all four of the common ideological features of most genocide perpetrators throughout history.[2] These were: racial and/or religious prejudice, territorial expansionism, an urge to recover long-lost national grandeur, and an idealization of rural life and denigration of cities. Here we shall examine in turn each of these features and the role they played in the Genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina of the early 1990s, with brief reference to their similar role in Cambodia under Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime of 1975-79. I do not wish to imply any comparison between the size of the death toll in Cambodia (1.7 million people) and that in Bosnia. However, key ideological features of the two perpetrator regimes were similar.

[1] Norman Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia: The Policy of "Ethnic Cleansing"*, College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1995, p. 78.

[2] See Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007, esp. pp. 21-33.

Racism and Religious Prejudice

An earlier genocide imposed on Yugoslavia during World War II had set the scene in Bosnia. Under Nazi occupation, German units and the allied Croatian fascist Ustashe regime killed approximately 65,000 of Yugoslavia's 75,000 Jews and as many as 300,000 Serbs.[3] The chauvinism that had begun to surface as early as World War I exacerbated this catastrophe. The leading Serbian politician Stojan Protić had predicted at that time: "As soon as our army crosses the Drina, it will give the Turks [that is, Bosnian Muslims] twenty-four – perhaps even forty-eight – hours to return to the faith of their forefathers [in Protić's view, Orthodoxy] and then slay those who refuse, as we did in Serbia in the past."[4] Again in 1941, Serbian Chetnik leaders called for a "Homogeneous Serbia." According to historian Ivo Banac, "the Chetniks of Draža Mihailović set out to destroy" the Muslims "and in the process slaughtered not a few ardent Serb-Muslims. In Foča, before killing a Serb Muslim who appealed to his record of Serb patriotism, the Chetniks explained themselves in the following way: "Inasmuch as you were a Serb, you sullied the Serb name, because you are a Turk. And since you helped us, we shall not torture you." They shot him instead of slashing his throat."[5]

Josip Broz Tito's postwar Communist regime, which fostered ethnic integration, also incurred Serb chauvinist wrath. In a 1987 article entitled "The Semi-Arabs against the Europeans," a Serbian intellectual described Yugoslavia's Muslims as members of an inferior, non-European, "semi-Arab subculture" that reflected their "desert ancestors" and other elements of purported "genetic predetermination," including even a "special gene of the Ottoman soldiery." A Serb nationalist leader declared in 1991 that "within this Yugoslav area, biologically we [Serbs] are the strongest

[3] Jay Winter, "War and Genocide in the Twentieth Century," in *The Cambridge World History of Genocide*, Vol. III, *Genocide in the Contemporary Era, 1914-2020*, edited by Ben Kiernan, Wendy Lower, Norman Naimark, and Scott Straus, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023, pp. 44-66, at 57.

[4] Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984, p. 107.

[5] Banac, *The national Question in Yugoslavia,* p. 377.

nation and have the strongest historic roots." Yet such strength was feared to be inadequate to ensure immunity from an insidious minority. Bosnian Serbs depicted Islam as a "malignant disease" threatening to "infect" Europe.[6]

However the appeal of Serb racism was spotty. Ironically, it derived much of its force from frustration at that fact. Serb chauvinists were outraged at fellow Serbs' participation in the multicultural pluralism of Communist Yugoslavia. The high level of ethnoreligious intermarriage in Bosnia-Hercegovina reached 40 percent in that republic's industrial towns. In 1981, 15 percent of the children of Bosnia-Hercegovina came from ethnically mixed marriages, and half the republic's population had interethnic relatives. Other Serbs viewed this as contamination of their nation. In poetry he wrote in 1993–94, Serb military commander Božidar Vučurević described the largely Muslim town of Trebinje as "urban pestilence" and the Croatian city Dubrovnik as "Serbia's spleen" and "the mausoleum of red blood cells."[7] Such virulent racism inflicted casualties on both sides of supposed ethnic divides. The feared contamination could just as easily leap religious barriers, too. Genocidists justified their actions as preventative attacks on "infected" members of both groups. In Bosnia in 1991–95, Serb perpetrators considered fellow Orthodox, but politically dissident, Serbs to be a special threat and treated them with the same brutality as they treated their much more numerous Muslim victims.[8] Comparable racism in Guatemala and Rwanda moved Christians there to commit genocide against coreligionists, and moved Muslims to do likewise in Bangladesh and in Darfur. And in Cambodia, Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge regime targeted suspect members of the ethnic Khmer majority population as having "Khmer bodies with Vietnamese minds."[9]

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[6] Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia*, pp. 9, 18-19, 26, 31, 73, 100.

[7] Sreten Vujović, "An Uneasy View of the City," in Nebojsa Popov, *The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis*, Budapest, 2000, pp. 123–45, 136, 132.

[8] Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia*, pp. 83–85, 103.

[9] Ben Kiernan, *Cambodia: The Eastern Zone Massacres*, New York: Columbia University Center for the Study of Human Rights, Documentation Series No. 1, 1986; Ben Kiernan, "The Pol Pot regime's simultaneous war against Vietnam and

Territorial Expansionism

Just as Nazi Germany and the Pol Pot regime had both attacked all of their countries' neighbours and perpetrated genocide against their ethnic minorities, Bosnian Serb forces showed once again the power of territorial aggression to promote ethnic mass murder. According to Edina Bećirević, "The narrative of Serb nationalism has long situated [Bosnia-Herzegovina] as the territory of Serbs," just as its rhetoric characterized Muslims as "traitors" to Serbian Orthodoxy.[10] Calling for a "Greater Serbia" in 1941, Chetnik leaders had recommended "cleansing the lands of all non-Serb elements." The 1986 intellectuals' cultural manifesto known as the "Serbian Memorandum," which laid much of the ideological basis for the genocide in Bosnia, included an appeal for "the complete national and cultural integrity of the Serbian people, . . . no matter in which republic or province they might find themselves living."[11] Five years later, Slobodan Milošević, the Serbian leader of post-Tito Yugoslavia, revealed the importance he attached to territorial expansion when he warned that "it is always the powerful who dictate what the borders will be, never the weak. Thus, we must be powerful." Serbia's new borders would incorporate not only Montenegro and Bosnia but parts of Croatia, too. Another Yugoslav official, Mihailj Kertes, predicted "a great Serbian state from Montenegro to the left bank of the Neretva with Dubrovnik as the capital."[12]

Territorial expansion went hand in hand with ethnic aggression. Just as Hitler in 1939 had threatened the Jews with annihilation if war broke out, Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić asserted in 1991 that

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genocide of Cambodia's ethnic Vietnamese minority," *Critical Asian Studies* 53:3, Sept. 2021, pp. 342-358.

[10] Edina Bećirević, "Genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1992-1995," in *The Cambridge World History of Genocide*, Vol. III, *Genocide in the Contemporary Era, 1914-2020*, Ben Kiernan *et al.*, eds., pp. 627-46, at p. 632.

[11] Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia*, pp. 105, 18; Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences Memorandum, 1986, English translation at www.haverford.edu/relg/sells/reports/memorandumSANU.htm (accessed Oct. 21, 2003).

[12] Vujović, "Uneasy View of the City," p. 131.

Bosnia's Muslim community would "disappear from the face of the Earth" if it decided to "opt for war" by choosing an independent Bosnia-Herzegovina. He added later that "Muslims are the most threatened, . . . not only in the physical sense . . . rather, this is also the beginning of the end of their existence as a nation." Karadžić further stated in 1992: "The time has come for the Serbian people to organize itself as a totality, without regard to the administrative [existing] borders." The next year, the speaker of the Bosnian Serb parliament proclaimed the need "to grasp our ethnic space," while Belgrade's army chief of staff pursued the Nazi precedent even more explicitly when he referred to "our lebensraum in Bosnia."[13] A Serb nationalist leader added: "Our ideal, brothers, which we will attain, is to lead our motherland of Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, all of Bosnia-Herzegovina, . . . and [in Croatia] all of the Serbian Krajina under the roof of a single state." Božidar Vučurević, who became the Serb governor of Herzegovina, promised to "correct the injustice with regard to the borders which Josip Broz [Tito] drew with his dirty finger. He gave Serbian lands cheaply to the Croatians and Muslims." Vučurević thought it would be "pure Serbian masochism to keep Broz's borders." The Italian border was another target, in the words of the top Bosnian Serb military commander Ratko Mladić, who was indicted for genocide in 1995: "Trieste is an old Serbian city, too, and will be ours in the end. The Serbian army will finish this war, just like the previous two, on the Trieste-Vienna line."[14] Genocide and expansionism still marched in step.

Like the genocide perpetrators in Cambodia and Rwanda, Serb nationalists employed the common propaganda technique of "Accusation in a mirror."[15] The Serbian Memorandum had paved the way in 1986 by denouncing Muslim Albanians, with great hyperbole, for "[t]he physical, political, legal and cultural genocide perpetrated against the Serbian population of Kosovo."[16] Then, during his 1992–93 operations

[13] Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia*, pp. 23, 40, 42, 63, 79.

[14] Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia*, pp. 105–6, 43–44; Vujović, "Uneasy View of the City," pp. 85, 103, 138.

[15] E.g. on Rwanda, see Alison Des Forges, "*Leave None to Tell the Story": Genocide in Rwanda*, New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999.

[16] Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia*, 92ff.; Serbian Memorandum. Available at: www.haverford.edu/relg/sells/reports/memorandumSANU.htm (accessed Oct. 21, 2003).

against Bosnian Muslims, Serb General Ratko Mladić repeated that it was Serbs who were threatened with extinction, and that German and Croatian as well as Muslim goals all included "the complete annihilation of the Serbian people." Mladić complained: "We Serbs always wait until it reaches our throats. Only then do we retaliate." His response, then, posed as mere self-defense: "I have not conquered anything in this war. I only liberated that which was always Serbian, although I am far from liberating all that is really Serbian."[17]

Restoring Lost History

Many genocidal regimes have striven to reverse their country's historical and territorial decline and to recover a long-past era of ethnic grandeur. That was a hallmark goal of the Pol Pot regime in 1975-79. Similar concerns preoccupied some Serbian leaders in the subsequent decade and a half.

Speaking at the 600th anniversary of the 1389 Serbian defeat at the hands of Ottoman armies in the battle of Kosovo, Serbia's leader Slobodan Milošević proclaimed, "Six centuries later, again we are in battles and quarrels. They are not armed battles, though such things should not be excluded yet." The Bosnian Serb general Ratko Mladić also yearned for a long-lost era of ethnic Serbian grandeur. Serbs had once been a populous nation: "In the thirteenth century, we were more numerous than the Germans. Now, there are just over twelve million of us, while they have grown to one hundred fifty million." Serbia's minister of culture added in 1992: "Serbs are one of the five imperial peoples. It is an ancient people and one of the most Christian ones."[18]

[17] Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia*, pp. 78, 81.

[18] John W. Miller, "Serbs Shrug Off Milosevic's Death," *Wall Street Journal*, March 13, 2006, p. A4; Cigar, *Genocide in Bosnia*, pp. 78, 74.

The authors of the 1986 Serbian Memorandum explained their country's alleged decline by complaining that for the previous 50 years, "the Serbian nation was incapable of deriving support from its own history." Under "the shadow cast by the Serbian socialist and labor movement," the memorandum went on, "[m]any aspects of this history itself were even brought into question." Its authors declared that Communist Yugoslavia had paid inadequate attention to Serbia's nineteenth-century "democratic bourgeois tradition" and to "the contribution made by Serbian bourgeois society to law, culture, and statesmanship." The memorandum blamed "Austrian Marxists, confirmed opponents of movements of national liberation," for a Yugoslav Communist nationalities policy that continued to obstruct Serbian efforts at "preserving or reviving historical self-confidence." By 1986, according to the memorandum's authors, this had resulted in "the cultural achievements of the Serbian people" being officially "ignored" or allowed to "retrogress." Even their language was "being displaced and the Cyrillic script is gradually being lost." The memorandum alleged that "[n]o other literary and artistic heritage is so disordered, ravaged and confused as the Serbian heritage." The contemporary crisis of Yugoslav Communism had "destroyed the old system of values."[19] That needed to be revived.

A Lethal Combination of Prejudices

Triangulating their racist, pro-rural, and antiurban instincts, Serb nationalist forces in the 1990s treated the towns of targeted ethnic groups with especial viciousness. Radovan Karadžić saw the Bosnian capital Sarajevo as the neck of a snake: "If we did not hold Sarajevo, there would be no state. . . . Never hold a snake by the tail, but by the neck." He set out "to kill the city in it." One Serbian writer called Sarajevo an

[19] Serbian Memorandum. Available at: www.haverford.edu/relg/sells/reports/memorandumSANU.htm (acc. Oct. 21, 2003).

"unnatural creation," and another confessed to "Neronian" joy as the city burned under Serb bombardment. The Serb commander in chief Božidar Vučurević, who expelled all Muslims from Trebinje and then destroyed the town's mosque, also dismissed coastal Dubrovnik as "neither a Serbian nor a Croatian town but a Latin town built on Serbian rocks. Life within it was always whorish and there was never room for an honest Serb. Zero elevation produced a zero category of people." Another Serb called Dubrovnik "a prostituted city of hotel keepers visited by American grandmothers, British queers, stupid Frenchmen and German typists."[20] Racial and rural prejudice intertwined. As Karadžić threatened in September 1991, "in just a couple of days, Sarajevo will be gone and there will be five hundred thousand dead, [and] in one month the Muslims will be annihilated in Bosnia… They won't stand a chance." The next month the Bosnian parliament voted to pursue independence, and Karadžić again warned: "Do not think that you will not take Bosnia and Herzegovina to hell, and maybe [to the disappearance] of the Muslim people, because Muslim people cannot defend themselves if war breaks out here." As Mladić noted the next year, the only way to achieve Karadžić's goals "would be genocide."[21]

Parts of the 1986 Serbian Memorandum had prefigured the ethnic and territorial notions behind the genocide in Bosnia and helped legitimize it. Karadžić stated in a 1990 interview with the Belgrade daily *Nin*: "We are now openly saying what could not even be whispered before: the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina are pinning all their hopes on their mother country, Serbia, and will never allow a state border to separate them from Serbia."[22]

Predominantly Muslim towns obstructed this vision. In January 1992, shortly after the parliament and presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

[20] Vujović, "Uneasy View of the City," pp. 132–36, 145 n.3.

[21] Karadžić and Mladić quoted in Edina Bećirević, "Genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1992-1995," pp. 635-36.

[22] Quoted in Heikelina Verrijn Stuart, "ICTY grapples with genocidal intent for Srebrenica," *International Justice Tribune*, The Hague, 11 July 2005. Available at: www.justicetribune.com/index.php?page=v2_article&id=3103 (accessed Jan. 12, 2006).

had voted for independence, Bosnian Serbs countered with "the Republic of the Serb People of Bosnia and Herzegovina," soon renamed Republika Srpska. In the same year, General Ratko Mladić signed a directive ordering the "ethnic cleansing" of the urban enclaves of Srebrenica, Žepa, and Goražde.[23] Serb forces also subjected other Bosnian towns to genocidal massacres. In Višegrad in southeastern Bosnia in June 1992, Serb forces burned alive two groups of Bosniak civilians, killing 132 victims in all. In Bratunac, over 600 civilians were killed. In Kozarac, 800 people were killed in two days in May 1992. In Prijedor municipality, "around 4,000 Bosniaks were killed in the summer of 1992 alone." After the war ended, 99 mass graves were found there, and in one mass grave in Tomašica, 800 bodies were found. In all, 750 mass graves were unearthed after the war.[24]

After three years of brutal attacks on Muslim communities in Bosnia, which killed tens of thousands, in March 1995 Radovan Karadžić gave the following order to his forces: "By planned and well-thought-out combat operations, create an unbearable situation of total insecurity with no hope of further survival or life for the inhabitants of Srebrenica and Žepa." Mladić gave the Muslims of Srebrenica the choice to either "survive or disappear." His forces overran the city, separated men from women, and murdered at least 8,300 Muslim men in July 1995 alone.[25] In a series

[23] Bećirević, "Genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina," pp. 636-38; Stuart, "ICTY grapples with genocidal intent for Srebrenica".

[24] Bećirević, "Genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina," pp. 641-44.

[25] More than 800 children, i.e., persons under the age of 18, were killed in Srebrenica between 1992 and 1995.

More about this in: Zilha Mastalić Košuta, "Genocid nad djecom u sigurnoj zoni Srebrenica jula 1995" ["Genocide against Children in the Srebrenica UN Safe Area in July 1995"], *Prilozi*, 2010, 123–143; Muamer Džananović, "Dijete i porodica u genocidu – S posebnim osvrtom na genocid nad Bošnjacima u i oko Srebrenice jula 1995. godine" ["The Child and the Family in Genocide: A Special Focus on the Genocide against Bosniaks in and around Srebrenica in July 1995"], *Monumenta Srebrenica*, no. 9, Tuzla–Srebrenica: Institute for the Protection and Use of Cultural-Historical and Natural Heritage of Tuzla Canton, 2020, 117–120; Zilha Mastalić Košuta, "Zločini nad djecom u Bosni i Hercegovini na primjerima Sarajeva, Mostara i Srebrenice (1992–1995)" ["Crimes against Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Examples from Sarajevo, Mostar and Srebrenica (1992–1995)"],

of cases in The Hague from 2001 to 2005, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia convicted the Bosnian Serb officers Radislav Krstić, commander of the Drina Corps, and Vidoje Blagojević, a colonel who had commanded the Bratunac Brigade, of aiding and abetting the genocide at Srebrenica.[26] Blagojević received a fifteen-year sentence and was jailed in a Norwegian prison until 2012, when he was released after serving two-thirds of his sentence, having demonstrated "good behaviour" and "a degree of rehabilitation." However, in 2025, Bosnian state prosecutors indicted Blagojević for additional wartime crimes against civilians, and they requested measures to detain him in Bosnia. They charged him and four others in relation to the killing of "700 civilians" in the Zvornik area in the first week of June 1992. Blagojević and ten others also faced charges of crimes against humanity involving 20 civilian deaths in the Bosnian town of Karakaj in late May-early June 1992.[27]

Meanwhile the United Nations Tribunal had also indicted Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić.[28] In 2008, Radovan Karadžić, former President of Republika Srpska and the Supreme Commander of the armed forces of Republika Srpska, was arrested in Belgrade and transferred to the UN Tribunal in The Hague. There in 2016, Karadžić was convicted of genocide, crimes against humanity including extermination, and war crimes.[29] The next year the Tribunal convicted Ratko Mladić, former

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in *Genocide against Bosniaks: Srebrenica 1995–2020: Causes, Scope and Consequences*, Sarajevo: Institute for Research of Crimes against Humanity and International Law, 2021, 443–452.

[26] Radovan Karadžić, March 1995 "Krivaja 95" order, quoted in Heikelina Verrijn Stuart, *op.cit.*, "ICTY grapples with genocidal intent for Srebrenica," *International Justice Tribune*, The Hague, 11 July 2005; Bećirević, "Genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina," p. 640.

[27] Marija Tausan, "Bosnian Prosecutors Seek Custody for War Criminal Facing New Charges," *Balkan Transitional Justice*, Feb. 14, 2025. Available at: https://balkaninsight.com/2025/02/14/bosnian-prosecutors-seeks-custody-for-war-criminal-facing-new-charges/ (accessed June 20, 2025).

[28] *Indictment at The Hague: The Milosevic Regime and Crimes of the Balkan Wars*, by Norman Cigar and Paul Williams, New York, 2002, pp. 257–87.

[29] United Nations. Available at: https://www.irmct.org/en/cases/mict-13-55 (accessed Feb. 27, 2025).

Commander of the Main Staff of the Bosnian Serb Army (VRS), of genocide, crimes against humanity including extermination, and war crimes.[30]

One year later, in 2018, a UN-sponsored tribunal, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), convicted the former Khmer Rouge leaders Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan of genocide against Cambodia's ethnic Vietnamese and Muslim Cham minority groups. In 2014 the ECCC had also convicted the two of the crime against humanity of extermination of members of Cambodia's Khmer majority population.[31] Pol Pot had died in his sleep in 1998. But the arrest, conviction, and imprisonment of two of his former top accomplices for extermination and genocide brought a measure of justice for the many Cambodian victims of their regime.

Slobodan Milošević had died in prison in The Hague in 2006, while facing charges of genocide at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. But the UN tribunal's arrest and conviction of the perpetrators Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić, and their imprisonment for genocide and extermination along with their accomplices Radislav Krstić and Vidoje Blagojević, and the continuing cases against Blagojević and his own accomplices, also brought some measure of justice for their thousands of Bosnian victims.

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THE SREBRENICA MASSACRE AS THE CULMINATION OF THE GENOCIDE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Abstract: The Srebrenica massacre is referred to as the 'Srebrenica genocide', in light of the fact that it is the only atrocity of the 1990s war in Bosnia-Hercegovina that has unambiguously been ruled to have been genocide by the international courts. In fact, the Srebrenica massacre was not a standalone or local genocide, but the culminating genocidal act of a genocide that had begun in 1992. The form that the Srebrenica massacre took is only comprehensible in relation to the events of the previous three years, not only in the Srebrenica region but across Bosnia-Hercegovina.

Keywords: *Bosnia and Herzegovina, Srebrenica, Genocide, War*

MASAKR U SREBRENICI KAO KULMINACIJA GENOCIDA U BOSNI I HERCEGOVINI

Sažetak: Masakr u Srebrenici naziva se "genocid u Srebrenici", s obzirom na to da je to jedini zločin iz rata u Bosni i Hercegovini 1990-ih koji su međunarodni sudovi nedvosmisleno okarakterizirali kao genocid. Međutim, masakr u Srebrenici nije bio izolirani niti lokalni genocid, već završni genocidni čin genocida koji je započeo 1992. godine. Oblik koji je masakr u Srebrenici poprimio može se razumjeti samo u kontekstu događaja iz prethodne tri godine, ne samo u regiji Srebrenice već i širom Bosne i Hercegovine.

Ključne riječi: *Bosna i Hercegovina, Srebrenica, genocid, rat*

Introduction

The Srebrenica massacre is sometimes referred to as the 'Srebrenica genocide', in light of the fact that it is the only atrocity of the 1990s war in Bosnia-Hercegovina that has unambiguously been ruled to have been genocide by the international courts. It is consequently the atrocity of the Bosnian war that is most commemorated, both in BiH and internationally. Yet it makes no sense to speak of Srebrenica as some sort of local or 'municipal' genocide; the product of primarily local conditions. This is, in fact, how the ICJ judges presented it, in their 2007 judgment in the case of Bosnia vs Serbia, when they faulted Serbia's leadership, on the grounds that it was 'fully aware of the climate of deep-seated hatred which reigned between the Bosnian Serbs and the Muslims in the Srebrenica region.'[1] The implication being that it was this local hatred that produced the genocide. Yet this makes no sense at any level. The climate of hatred was not greater in and around Srebrenica than it was in other areas in Bosnia - Prijedor, Foča, Višegrad, Vlasenica and other places

Srebrenica was no 'municipal genocide'

The ICTY's conviction in 2012 of Zdravko Tolimir, the Assistant Commander of Intelligence and Security of the Bosnian Serb army, determined that the group targeted for genocidal destruction was the Bosniak population of East Bosnia as a whole, not simply of Srebrenica.[2] The cruelty involved in the atrocities in these other areas

[1] Case concerning the application of the convention on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide (Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro): International Court of Justice (ICJ), *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro)*, Judgment, 26 February 2007, 225.

[2] International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the

was just as great - and in some cases may have been even greater, when we consider cases of prisoners being forces to bite off each other's testicles (Omarska), or being burned alive, or of underage girls being raped. The overall RS military commander, Ratko Mladić, presided over the Srebrenica massacre; he was not from the Srebrenica region (but from the Kalinovik municipality), and would undoubtedly have been guided by overall Bosnian conditions. The conquest of Srebrenica also involved considerable logistical support from Serbia itself. As scholars such as Žarko Puhovski have pointed out, the Srebrenica massacre was no 'municipal genocide'.[3]

What distinguished the Srebrenica massacre was not greater hatred, but a more organised and systematic mass-murder of a larger numbers of victims than occurred in previous massacres. This can only be understood if the Srebrenica massacre is viewed in relation to the events of the previous three years, not only in the Srebrenica region but across Bosnia-Hercegovina. Just as, when Holocaust historians consider the Babi Yar massacre or Auschwitz death camp, they consider them as constituent parts of a wider genocide, not as local genocides. Academic opinion is divided over whether the mass violence of the Bosnian war, outside of Srebrenica and the surrounding area in summer 1995, should be viewed as genocide.[4] The opinion of this author is that genocide occurred across BiH between 1992 and 1995. But we must recognise that there is legitimate scope for disagreement on this issue.

Conceptualising the Srebrenica genocide

Over the past 30 years, the trend among genocide scholars has been to move away from a narrow definition of genocide, whereby it occurred

Former Yugoslavia since 1991, Prosecutor v. Zdravko Tolimir ‚Judgment, 12 December 2012.

[3] Ahmed Burić, "Opštinski genocid", *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, 2 July 2007.

[4] Marko Attila Hoare, "Towards an Explanation for the Bosnian Genocide of 1992–1995", *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2014, p. 516.

only a very few times in history, toward a broader definition of genocide. Judges, both in the ICTY and the ICJ, favoured the more conservative, narrower definition of genocide, whereby only Srebrenica qualifies. The international legal definition of genocide according to the 1948 convention itself represented a political compromise between different states, and was narrower than Raphael Lemkin's preferred definition. Lemkin believed that the definition of genocide should have included cultural genocide.[5] If his view had prevailed, the mass violence in Bosnia would have qualified more unambiguously. Be this as it may, this ultimately boils down to a debate over definitions and terminology, rather than of substance. Whether a particular word is used to describe something, does not change what that thing is. What should be uncontested, is that the Srebrenica massacre was not an anomaly, but the culmination of a process and policy of mass violence that occurred across BiH from 1992 to 1995. I consider the entirety of the mass violence to have been genocide, and I will refer to it as such in this paper, although as I said, scholarly opinion differs on the question.

To summarise the process briefly: the genocide that properly began in the spring of 1992 was very carefully planned in the months before. It aimed at the creation of an ethnically homogenous Serb state or entity, and eventually a Great Serbia, by the removal of the non-Serb, above all Bosniak and Croat population. This removal was to be achieved through violence. The violence was intended to kill just one, relatively small part of the unwanted population, while the rest was to be expelled or forced to flee - what is colloquially referred to as 'ethnic cleansing'. In some respects, some episodes of mass violence in 1992 were arguably even more genocidal than the massacre at Srebrenica, insofar as women and other categories of people other than combat-age males were sometimes targeted more systematically for killing and abuse. For example, in the Zaklopaca massacre in May 1992, Serb forces surrounded the unarmed village of Zaklopaca in the Vlasenica municipality, blocked off all exits from the village and massacred 63 inhabitants – men, women and children.

[5] Leora Bilsky and Rachel Klagsbrun, "The Return of Cultural Genocide ?", *The European Journal of International Law*, vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 373-396.

Or in the Bikavac Hill massacre near Višegrad in June 1992, about 70 Bosniak civilians, women, children and the elderly, were barricaded into a house which was then petrol bombed – only one woman survived, severely burned. Furthermore, the biggest phase of mass killing was the initial Serbian assault on Bosnia-Hercegovina in the spring and summer of 1992. In that year, in East Bosnia alone, more Bosniaks were killed than in 1995, the year of the Srebrenica massacre, according to the figures of Mirsad Tokača's Research and Documentation Centre.[6] If anything, the careful, central, top-down planning that went into organising the July 1995 massacre suggests it may have had less to do with the hatred of ordinary rank-and-file perpetrators than some of the earlier, smaller massacres.

It should be borne in mind that, according to the international legal definition, genocide does not technically have to involve killing, which is just one means to achieve it; other means may include, for example, preventing births within a group or transferring children of the group to another group. Thus, for example, forced sterilisation unambiguously qualifies as a means of genocide according to the international legal definition, which includes 'Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group'.[7] So, the fact that there was no single massacre in 1992 on a scale of Srebrenica in 1995 does not mean that it was not genocide. Furthermore, more Bosniaks were murdered in Podrinje in 1992 than in 1995. It has never been convincingly explained why the fact of killing every single combat aged male implies a greater genocidal intent than the kind of atrocities that previously occurred in other parts of Bosnia. The view that the elimination of males meant the destruction of the community is not necessarily a stronger argument than the attack on Bosniak female fertility through the earlier mass rapes.

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[6] Marko Attila Hoare, "What do the figures for the Bosnian war-dead tell us?", *Greater Surbiton*, 4 January 2008. Available at: https://greatersurbiton.wordpress.com/2008/01/04/what-do-the-figures-for-the-bosnian-war-dead-tell-us/, downloaded 24 February 2026.

[7] Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide Approved and proposed for signature and ratification or accession by General Assembly resolution 260 A (III) of 9 December 1948 Entry into force: 12 January 1951, in accordance with article XIII, p. 1.

Be that as it may, the Serb perpetrators in 1992 were not yet aiming to kill every single combat aged Bosniak male, because they did not yet see any need to do this. Their genocide was being perpetrated against a population that was not yet militarily organised or capable of offering decisive resistance to the perpetrators. The violence that was launched in spring 1992 was based on an awareness of overwhelming military superiority: a heavily armed Serb perpetrator group attacking a largely unarmed and disarmed non-Serb, above all Bosniak victim group. The form the genocide took then evolved in response to the Bosniak capacity for resistance.

The Srebrenica massacre as culmination

Edina Bećirević, in her seminal work Genocide on the Drina River, explained the evolution in relation to Srebrenica:

1) The Serb perpetrators occupied most of East Bosnia (or Podrinje) in 1992, and expelled most of the Bosniak population. However, in some enclaves such as Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde, the Bosniaks were initially able to resist. These enclaves also absorbed refugees expelled from elsewhere in the region.
2) Consequently, the Serb perpetrators besieged the enclaves, using hunger and deprivation as weapons to break the Bosniak resistance - this was the second stage of genocide. The Bosnian army, particularly under Naser Oric, nevertheless fought back and inflicted losses on the Serbs.
3) Finally, when the siege failed to break the Bosnian army's resistance, the perpetrators occupied Srebrenica and carried out an organised mass murder of its combat-aged males - this was the third stage.[8]

[8] Edina Bećirević, *Genocide on the Drina River*, New Haven:Yale University Press, 2014.

The form this third stage took - systematic murder of every single combat-aged male - was a response to developments across BiH. By summer 1995, the non-Serb population of Bosnia, primarily Bosniaks, were no longer largely defenceless victims.

The ARBiH was by now properly organised and, in conjunction with Croat forces (HVO and HV) following the signing of the Washington Agreement in March 1994, was steadily regaining territory from the Serb occupiers, who found themselves increasingly outnumbered. In this context, the Serb perpetrators no longer considered it militarily sensible simply to expel combat-age Bosniak males, who could simply return to fight them. Their determination in the Srebrenica massacre to prevent this happening, by killing every single one, was a reflection of this military predicament. Conversely, the perpetrators were much more aware of the international media attention in summer 1995 than they had been in 1992, which likely influenced their decision not to kill most of the women and children in Srebrenica, and later to permit the evacuation of the population of Žepa. Another reason they did not massacre the Žepa Bosniaks was the military pressure they came under from Croatian forces in Bosanska Krajina, which forced them to redeploy their own forces away from East Bosnia.[9]

However, there is every reason to believe that, if they had succeeded in conquering other ARBiH-held enclaves unwilling to surrender, such as Goražde or Bihać, they might have carried out further Srebrenica-type massacres. Thus, we have a three-year process of mass violence, whose form evolved over the period. It does not make conceptual sense to view genocide as only have begun in the last stage of this process. The Srebrenica massacre represented a change of form, not of essence. The ICJ judges in 2007 argued that the goal of Great Serbia was not necessarily genocidal, as it could in principle have been achieved by means other than genocide, namely expulsion: ‘an essential motive of

[9] Edward P. Joseph, “The Fall of Žepa Showed Bosnian Serb Forces’ Cruelty”, *Balkan Insight*, 20 July 2020. Available at: https://balkaninsight.com/2020/07/25/the-fall-of-zepa-showed-bosnian-serb-forces-cruelty/?adlt=strict&toWww=1&redig=44AD38A81986456593DD305FA57D9AD3, downloaded 24 February 2026.

much of the Bosnian Serb leadership — to create a larger Serb State, by a war of conquest if necessary — did not necessarily require the destruction of the Bosnian Muslims and other communities, but their expulsion.'[10] But this fails properly to untangle the relationship between intent and motive.

Conclusion

Genocide is above all a means to an end. It is never simply an end in itself. The Holocaust was motivated by the goal of defending the German nation and Aryan race from the supposed threat posed to them by the Jews, and to create a Jew-free, ethnically pure Reich. The Rwandan genocide was motivated by the goal of preserving Hutu supremacy in Rwanda and preventing the restoration of a Tutsi-dominated country. The Genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina was motivated by the goal of creating an ethnically pure Serb state or entity in Bosnia, and eventually a Great Serbia. This motive had necessarily genocidal implications, even if it could have hypothetically been achieve without genocide.The mass violence of the Serb perpetrators was the means to the end. The motive or goal did not change between 1992 and 1995, nor did the intent to destroy the non-Serbs, above all Bosniaks, as a group. What changed was only the strategy and type of organised mass violence. The perpetrators wanted the combat age males of Srebrenica in 1995 to die, and they wanted the women and children of Bikavac Hill and Pionirska Street in 1992 to die. Neither the motive nor the intent fundamentally changed.

[10] Case concerning the application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro), p. 196.

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CHANGING HISTORIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE SREBRENICA GENOCIDE

Abstract: This essay examines the ways in which the historiography of the Srebrenica genocide has changed over the years in the context of the history of genocide studies. It focuses, among other questions, on the problems of using the genocide concept, on the increasing importance of understanding political causation of genocide, and, finally, on the various forms of denial.

Keywords: *Genocide, Srebrenica, Raphael Lemkin, Ben Kiernan, Armenian Genocide, Holocaust, A. Dirk Moses, Serbian Republic, Slobodan Milošević, Potočari, William Schabas, Denial*

PROMJENE U HISTORIOGRAFSKIM POGLEDIMA NA GENOCID U SREBRENICI

Sažetak: Ovaj esej analizira načine na koje se historiografija genocida u Srebrenici mijenjala tokom vremena u kontekstu razvoja studija genocida. Fokusira se, između ostalog, na probleme primjene pojma genocida, na sve veći značaj razumijevanja političkih uzroka genocida, te, na kraju, na različite oblike negiranja.

Ključne riječi: *genocid, Srebrenica, Raphael Lemkin, Ben Kiernan, genocid nad Armenima, holokaust, A. Dirk Moses, Republika srpska, Slobodan Milošević, Potočari, William Schabas, negiranje*

Introduction

Since the revelations of those awful days of mid-July 1995, when the Srebrenica genocide took place, perceptions by scholars and the public about what happened have shifted and altered over time. The actual crimes – the "facts" -- remain the same: Bosnian Serbs carried out genocide against the Bosniaks of Srebrenica and the surrounding towns and villages, especially along the Drina River. But the way the events are talked about by the public and studied by scholars have evolved and changed. This is noticeable when comparing the 2005 conferences in Sarajevo and visit to Potočari on the 10th Anniversary of Srebrenica with the 30th Anniversary and visit to Potočari sponsored by the University of Sarajevo.

On July 11, 2005, almost 800 bodies were buried at the memorial gravesite at Potočari, the victims' grieving families gathered in informal groups around the graves. Still thousands of the missing had not been identified. The Serbs had buried and reburied their victims in mass graves spread over the countryside; pieces of corpses were frequently scattered in multiple graves. The atmosphere at Potočari in 2005 was unbearably sad and filled with the trauma of Bosnian women who had lost their husbands, sons, brothers, and fathers. The conference itself focused on pursuing justice against the perpetrators, with presentations by lawyers on the ICTY (the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia). The trial of Slobodan Milošević had begun in The Hague, which ended with his death in custody in March 2006. But both Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić remained at liberty, which outraged many in the public and scholarly community. There were notes of reconciliation at the conference, with the attendance of sympathetic Serb liberals from Belgrade. But there was also a great deal of pent-up anger about the slowness of the judicial proceedings and the light sentences meted out by the courts, especially in the interpellations of representatives of the "Women of Srebrenica."

The Sarajevo University Conference in July 2025 had a much different tone to it, as did the corresponding visit to Potočari, though the latter was

not on July 11, when seven victims were buried and formal ceremonies at the memorial took place. The Sarajevo conference was focused on Serb denial of the Srebrenica events. Anger directed at the courts had dissipated. Instead, it was the insult and injury of denial – and how to understand denial in an academic as well as political context -- that took center stage at the conference. At Potočari, inevitably, there was still grief and anger in the air, but the memorial increasingly sees itself as an educational institution, one that guards memory and helps Bosnians and others understand how the genocide could and did take place.

The purpose of this essay is to move beyond these personal observations of the differences between the 2005 and 2025 conferences and explore other changes in perceptions of Srebrenica in comparative genocide studies that have influenced the public and scholars. There are three I will focus on in this essay: 1) the way the term "genocide" has been used, 2) the increasing focus of genocide studies on perpetrators and their "intentions," and 3) the growing attention to the role of "denial" in understanding genocide.

The term "genocide"

There can be little question that the term "genocide" has become increasingly problematic since the beginning of this century, both in scholarly and public discourse. Of course, this was also true almost since the term came into common use in the 1970s and 1980s. But especially in the past several years, the abuse and misuse of the term has been shocking in its various aspects and dimensions**.** Instead of an analytical concept deriving from the life's work of Raphael Lemkin and the definition provided by the U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide of December 1948, genocide has become a term of perceived national suffering at the hands of an opponent of any sort, a mark of opprobrium for national enemies. Its loose and undisciplined application has also become part of the defense of deniers, an issue I will get to later.

Those accused of genocide blithely turn that indictment around without the least grounding in fact: Russians accuse Ukrainians, Serbs accuse Bosniaks, and Israelis accuse Palestinians – all of genocide, when the reverse case can much more justifiably be made. No matter the actual history of oppression and murder, indigenous peoples too easily accuse all white settlers of genocide. The President of the United States has blithely accused Black South Africans of genocide against white farmers to legitimate their emigration to the United State and Muslims in Nigeria of genocide against Christians to undergird Washington's attempts to interfere in Nigerian affairs. There is a kind of hyperbolic discourse here that is hard to control and impossible to eliminate.

There is a long history of academics criticizing the use of genocide in analyzing the history of mass killing. Already in the 1970s, prominent scholars insisted that genocide could only be applied to the Holocaust, Hitler's assault on the European Jews. They even suggested that pointing out that there were other groups that might have been the victims of genocide was a form of Holocaust denial. Armenian historians and activists were among the first to counter this kind of argument in relation to the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1916. Although the Holocaust exclusivist argument has not completely disappeared in the literature, genocides in Rwanda (1994) and in Bosnia (1995) provided important material for understanding that genocide was a much more common phenomenon than most genocide scholars had earlier thought possible. Moreover, scholars became aware that genocide was a world-wide phenomenon that had been part of human history from its very beginnings. Here I would mention the importance of Ben Kiernan's work, first on the Cambodian genocide of 1975, and then in his wide-ranging and systematic *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide* (2007). The more recent three volume *Cambridge World History of Genocide*, published in 2023 under Kiernan's general editorship, also reflects this approach.[1] Given research in Raphael Lemkin's archives, scholars also came to understand that his

[1] Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007). Ben Kiernan, general editor, *The Cambridge World History of Genocide*, three volumes (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2023). (Hereafter *CWHG*).

own views on genocide were embedded in a world-historical approach, even before the Holocaust and before he coined the term in 1943.[2] Too often, it is forgotten that the preamble of the genocide convention itself, reflecting Lemkin's ideas, made clear that: "Recognizing that in all periods of history genocide has inflicted great losses on humanity."[3]

Beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, there emerged a rather different scholarly critique of the term genocide and that was from social scientists who, reacting to the initial proliferation of its use, found the term too encapsulating. They suggested a bevy of concepts that would be more "precise" than genocide. Terms like ethnocide, politicide, sociocide, gendericide, democide, and surgical excision were thought to be more exact and descriptive than the more generic term of genocide.

This kind of analysis seemed to lose impetus for the most part until recently, when A. Dirk Moses published his influential book, *The Problems of Genocide: Permanent Security and the Language of Transgression*.[4] Moses is a distinguished and prolific historian of comparative genocide, specializing initially on the Holocaust and then pioneering the field of "settler genocide," the mass murder of indigenous peoples. He has also written widely on the Armenian genocide. Moreover, since 2011, he has been editor of *The Journal of Genocide Research*, the official journal of the Association of Genocide Studies and probably the most influential voice in the field. It's impossible to do justice to Moses's argument in a few sentences. But let me try to restate his major points:

1) Like many other scholars in the field, Moses is vexed that the concept of genocide is so ubiquitous in contemporary discourse about atrocity crimes of various sorts. Because of its definition

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[2] See, for example, Douglas Irvin-Erickson, *Raphael Lemkin and the Concept of Genocide* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017). See also Norman M. Naimark, *Genocide: A World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 2-4.

[3] *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*. Approved and proposed by General Assembly resolution 260A (III) of 9 December 1948. Entry into force: 12 January 1951, in accordance with article XIII.

[4] A. Dirk Moses, *The Problems of Genocide: Permanent Security and the Language of Transgression (New York: Cambridge University Press*, 2021).

as purportedly "the crime of crimes," genocide occludes our attention to such horrific historical events as the aerial bombing of civilians, civil war, war crimes, and "ethnic cleansing".

2) Moses underlines the fact that mass killing is a political process that involves the integral relationship between political struggle and violence conflict. It is *not*, he states, something that depends on a Holocaust-like situation in which there are wholly innocent, virtuous, and unknowing victims and an overwhelmingly evil sea of villainous perpetrators who conduct mass murder. He claims in this connection that Raphael Lemkin is responsible in a negative way for proffering this image of mass killing phenomena as black and white situations.
3) Moses prefers the concept the concept of "permanent security" to describe the needs of states and political elites to target minorities of various sorts that they perceive as active threats to their rule and the stability of their states. The broader concept, he argues, allows for more flexibility in coming to terms with and stopping the multifarious types of persecution that states inflict on segments of their own populations and on peoples of rival entities.

Moses's arguments are complex and intricate. This is not the place to unravel them. Genuinely scholarly challenges to the use of "genocide" are analytically useful and legitimate. However, let me say from the start, that I firmly believe that we – scholars, publicists, and commentators – should continue to insist on using the term genocide in our work**.** This pertains directly to our evaluations of Srebrenica and the war in Bosnia in general, but we need to underline the case for genocide with as much analytical precision as we can muster. The public, the press, politics, education, and international justice continue to speak the language of "genocide." But it doesn't make sense to argue at length about exactly what is genocide and what not: fine distinctions in this case tend to minimize other forms of mass violence that border on or literally bleed into genocide. As part of the editorial team for the third volume of the *Cambridge World History of Genocide*, I agreed with chief editor's Ben Kiernan's formulation that genocide and extermination (formally a

crime against humanity) are closely related if distinct episodes of mass violence.[5] In any case, I think we can all agree genocide's expansive and unreflective usage in online media and political propaganda has not helped the cause of understanding, preventing, or interdicting genocide.

Political causation

The second general point I would make about changes in the character of genocide studies as the field relates to Srebrenica has to do with questions directed at the planning and carrying out of genocide. We all understand the importance of "intentionality" to the definition of genocide and to proving its perpetration both in international judicial bodies and in scholarly representations of the history of genocide. In several prominent cases in the historiography of genocide – the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust, Rwanda, and Srebrenica – it has become apparent that scholars have moved forcefully in the direction of trying to get the facts straight and providing a veracious narrative of what happened, almost in a von-Ranke sense of reconstructing "*wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*." In part, this is a direct and understandable response to denial. These narratives appropriately strengthen arguments that there is nothing spontaneous about genocide and that – above all – it is the product of political decisions that have little to do with natural processes or happenstance. Whether in the case of Hitler and the SS, the Young Turks and their Special Organization, the Bosnian Serbs and their Belgrade allies, or the Hutu youth militants, arguments about improvisation and contingency only work up to a point. These – and most genocidal events – are highly centralized affairs, planned by political elites and carried out by their emissaries. This has become clearer now than ever before.

[5] Ben Kiernan, Wendy Lower, Norman Naimark and Scott Straus, "Introduction to Volume III," *The Cambridge World History of Genocide, vol. III, Genocide in the Contemporary Era, 1914-2020*, eds. Ben Kiernan, Wendy Lower, Norman Naimark et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), pp. 11-12.

Let me provide a couple of examples:

1) In the Armenian genocide of 1915-16, Fuat Dündar demonstrated in a 2011 article based on the Ottoman archives that the Young Turks fully understood that the deportation of hundreds of thousands of Armenians to the northern Syrian borderlands, Der Zor in particular, would result in their death by hunger and privation.[6] There was simply no way they could be sustained by the existing local resources and no additional resources would be forthcoming. In short, they were doomed to die. Raymond Kevorkian notes that roughly 300,000 perished in this way.[7] Taner Akcam has recently concluded from previously unused Ottoman sources that there was a second phase of the genocide in Syria in late 1915-16, where the Young Turks determined that too many Armenians had survived and, in places like Aleppo, Ras ul-Ayn, and Der Zor itself**,** deported Armenians were to be executed.[8] These and other works have demonstrated, now more than a hundred years since the Armenian genocide took place, that there was much less spontaneous killing on the part of the Turkish army and Special Organization of the Committee of Union and Progress than many historians had earlier assumed.
2) The recent historiography of the Holocaust demonstrates that Heinrich Himmler used his growing political influence in the Third Reich (and the trust that Hitler showed in him) to both expand his SS Empire in the east, which was to be centered in Lublin, and to control the fate of the Jews. While we have no evidence of Himmler's direct involvement in the massacres of 23,600 Jews at

[6] Fuat Dündar, "Pouring a People into the Desert: the 'Definitive Solution' of the Unionists to the Armenian Question," in *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, eds. Ronald Grigor Suny, Fatma Müge Göcek, and Norman M. Naimark (New York: Oxford, 2011), pp. 276-287.

[7] Raymond Kevorkian, *The Armenian Genocide: A Complete History (*New York and London: I.B. Tauris, 2011): p. 693.

[8] Taner Akcam, "The Armenian Genocide: An Overview," *CWHG,* vol. III, pp. 81-88. Taner Akcam, *The Young Turks' Crime Against Humanity; The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 203-226.

Kamenets-Podolsk, August 26-28, 1941, or the better documented killing of 33,771 Jews at Babyn Yar by *Einsatzgruppen C*, September 29-30, 1941**,** it is highly unlikely that he did not encourage their execution through his immediate deputy SS General Friedrich Jeckeln. There is more direct evidence that he personally planned, along with SS General Otto Globocnik, the carrying out of Operation Reinhard, as part of which three new death camps would be built in the fall of 1941. Together, Himmler and Jeckeln planned Operation "Erntefest" (Harvest Festival) in the Lublin region in which some 42,000 Jews lost their lives in November 1943, including roughly 18,000 Jews who were killed at Majdanek on November 3.[9] The bottom line, of course, is that the Holocaust was a top-down operation, much like the Armenian genocide.

There is also a recent historiography, represented best in the work of Thomas Weber, that Hitler himself had murderous programs in mind for the Jews from as earlier as 1919 and 1920, when, according to Weber, the Nazi leader underwent a kind of existential crisis that resulted in his readiness to advocate the elimination of all the Jews. Best of all would be their physical elimination, which he did not shy away from in several of conversations at this time. But he understood what was possible and what not and moderated his actions – if not his thoughts – according to pragmatic principles. He was skilled at concealing his ultimate goal, but, as World War II unfolded, his wishes were became perfectly clear to his immediate underlings, Himmler chief among them, who in turn shared this with the leading SS *Einsatzgruppen* leaders who carried out the Holocaust.

3) Scott Straus, an eminent scholar of mass killing in Africa, emphasizes in his most recent works the complicated set of events in Rwanda that led up to mass murder by Hutu militants of

[9] The massacre is described in detail in Christopher Browning, Ordinary Men: Reserve Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland (New York: Harper, 1980, pp. 135, 138-139. See Norman M. Naimark, "Introduction," to Jerzy Kwiatkowski, *485 Days at Majdanek* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2021), pp. 29-30.

mostly Tutsi "enemies" was the result of government actions. The centralized Rwandan state played a crucial role in the genocide; less important were the unplanned attacks resulting from the shooting down of moderate Hutu President Habariyama's airplane on April 6, 1994.[10] "By April 21," writes Straus, "widespread and systematic violence against Tutsi civilians had become the norm in almost every area of the country that had not yet fallen to the [Rwandan Patriotic Front, Tutsi] rebels."[11] These were organized and planned attacks, though it is certainly true that the murderousness in Rwanda took on a more combustible and spontaneous character than in the cases mentioned above.

4) A similar historiography that focuses on the organization and planning of genocide has developed in the case of Srebrenica and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Thoroughgoing research by scholars like Edina Bećirević have made it apparent what was not clear at the beginning or at least was hard to prove – and that is that Srebrenica and other attacks on Bosniaks along the Drina Valley were planned and organized by Bosnian Serbs in conjunction with Belgrade. "For Serbs in Bosnia," she writes, "a declaration of independence inevitably meant war, a partition of the state, and the annihilation of Bosnian Muslims."[12] The extraordinary exchanges between Slobodan Milošević, in his own defense, and Robert Donia, an American historian of Bosnia and expert witness at Milošević's trial, sharpen our focus even more on the ways in which the attack on the Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica was planned and carried out through the Bosnian Serb hierarchy with the cooperation and approval of Belgrade.[13]

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[10] Scott Straus, "The Rwandan Genocide in Context," *CWHG*, vol. III, p. 667.

[11] Scott Straus, *Making and unmaking Nations: War, Leadership, and Genocide in Modern Africa* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), Pp. 308-309.

[12] Edina Bećirević, *Genocide on the Drina River* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 55.

[13] International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), 12 September, 2003. https://www.icty.org/x/cases/slobodan_milosevic/trans/en/030912IT.htm pp. 26524-26568,

My understanding of the recent literature on the planning and organizing of genocide – its highly calculated character -- is that it does not eliminate the strong emotional and ideological origins of mass murder. Resentment and anger frequently morph into hatred. Hatred in these cases is not blind or in any way demobilizing, just the opposite, but it does motivate the chief perpetrators, the political elites, to carry out their frequently conspiratorial plans to destroy their purported enemies. They develop what Ronald G. Suny has called in the case of the Young Turks a collective "affective disposition," which he suggests allowed them take the leap from resentment bred of defeats in the Balkans and the plight of *mujahirs*, refugees, worry about Armenian treachery, especially in connection with the Russian enemy to the East, and accusations of Armenian exploitation as the source of their wealth, to taking genocidal actions.[14] If one thinks about the SS elite that was responsible ultimately for destroying the vast majority of Jews, or the Hutu militants, who urged on their co-ethnics to murderous action against the Tutsis, or the Bosnian Serb and Belgrade elite, which planned and organized an action like Srebrenica, then we are dealing with a collective "affective disposition," as well – cool, calculating, rationalist, and – on the surface anyway – devoid of emotion. But roiling anger and hatred underneath.

Denial

The final point I would make about changes in the scholarly literature and what we know about the genocide is directly tied to the title of this conference, "Srebrenica: 30 Years After Genocide. Memory: Responsibility, and Challenges of Denial." The paper sent around by

[14] Ronald G. Suny, "110 Years on: What the Armenian Genocide Tells Us," pp. 7-9. University of Denver, April 24, 2025. Thanks to the author for sending me the most recent explanation of "affective disposition." See also his history of the genocide which relies on the concept to explain Turkish behavior. *They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else: A History of the Armenian Genocide* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

the conference organizers, "Politics of Revisionism – Denial of Crimes and Genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina 19912-2025" also elucidates in detail the present problems of denial in former Yugoslavia.[15] Denial, in short, has become more and more important to our understanding of genocide. It is the topic of the day, not just for this scholarly conference, but in contemporary national and international discourse. I was at the 100th anniversary conference of the Armenian genocide in Istanbul in 2015, as were a few participants in the audience – and denial was the main subject of discussion there. The AfD – the "Alternative for Germany" – is political party that is gaining ground in Germany in part because of an implicit denial of the Holocaust. Explicit statements to that effect are illegal and subject to imprisonment in Federal Republic. But the AfD carefully avoids direct denials. In Rwanda, the Tutsi led government, embellishes all aspects of the Hutu-led genocide of Tutsi, but denies any support for the Tutsi-led militia, M-23, which has caused enormous damage on Hutu refugee groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo.

Persistent denial by Serbs in the Republika Srpska, especially, but also in Serbia proper, understandably sticks in the craw of Bosniaks and some Croats, as well. Serbian denial has become more insistent and more virulent over time, even as the events themselves sink further into the past. No doubt, the political dynamics at work in Aleksandar Vucic-led Serbia – the ongoing struggle against student groups and opposition protesters of various persuasions – frequently break down on denial fault lines. Just as the Belgrade government denounces those who supported the recent U.N. resolution designating July 11 as the International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Srebrenica genocide as Serb-hating and enemies of the Serbian people, the recent demonstrators and their supporters are accused of lining up with Western liberal sympathizers with the Bosnians and anti-Serb traitors.

[15] Jasmin Medić, Hikmet Karčić, et al., "Politics of Revisionism: Denial of Crimes and Genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 19912-2015 (A Research Study)," Institute for Research of Crimes against Humanity and International Law, University of Sarajevo (Sarajevo, 2025).

It is worth adding a few core observations about denial that are derived from the comparative study of genocide. First, I do not agree with the assessment of a number of scholars that denial is the final stage of genocide. Instead, I would assert that denial is present in genocidal situations from the very inception of the process, not something tacked on to its conclusion. We know that genocide is a process and has no clear beginning and end. But to the extent that we can identify weeks or months when genocide "takes off," denial is a part of it, while containing a dynamic rhythm of its own. Fatma Müge Gocek's book on the Turkish denial of the Armenian genocide makes precisely this point.[16] No sooner than the mass deportations and killings began in April 1915, the Young Turks denied it – to the Armenians, to the public at large, to the Germans who were watching it unfold, and to the American ambassador, Henry Morgenthau Sr., who held a series of important conversations with Young Turk leader and Minister of Internal Affairs, Talaat Pasha, considered by most scholars as the primary organizer of the genocide. It is true that Morgenthau extracted from Talaat confessions that Armenians were being deported and in some cases killed, and Talaat even made episodic statements in his conversations with Morgenthau to the effect that Armenians could not be expected to survive the war in the Ottoman Empire.[17] But this is really the extent of the "admission" of guilt in the case of the Ottomans, until the courts-martial of 1919-1920, which, under Allied pressure, indicted the Young Turk triumvirate (Talaat Pasha, Enver Pasha, and Djemal Pasha) in absentia for murdering Armenians and sentenced other Ottoman Turkish leaders to terms of imprisonment. The new Turkish republican government of Kemal Atatürk unfortunately committed itself to an institutional denial of the Armenian genocide that has lasted until this day.

Although in the early stages of the Holocaust there was some admissions on the part of the Third Reich that so-called "Judeo-

[16] Fatme Müge Gocek, *Denial of Violence: Ottoman Past, Turkish Present, and Collective Violence Against the Armenians, 1789-2009* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[17] Henry Morgenthau Sr., *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story (Princeton and London: Taderon Publishers, 2000).*

Bolshevik" commissars and partisans were being executed on the Eastern front and that Jews were subjected to internment in ghettoes, these public statements were quickly ended and the Nazi government denied any claims of mass murder or genocide. Not only that the "crime without a name," as Winston Churchill called the massacres of Jews and Poles in the first days of the war, was covered up – but the Nazis eventually engaged in an organized program of destroying the bodies for the purposes of hiding their crimes. In the death camps, this meant the horrific incineration of dead Jews in crematoria, which was, above all, about denial. Unfortunately, Holocaust deniers use the evidence from the crematoria as an argument that so many people could not have been destroyed by that method. The Nazis also had a program, *Sonderaktion 1005*, not unlike the Bosnian Serbs, of disinterring the bodies of the victims of massacres, like the one in Babyn Yar. But instead of carting the bodies off to be reburied in secret and obscure places, as did the Bosnian Serbs, at Babyn Yar prisoners of war from the nearby Syrets concentration camp were forced to erect pyres of wood and railway ties, dousing the corpses with gasoline and oil, and setting them on fire. Those parts of the bodies not burned were crushed with sledgehammers and stones. Completing the process of denial, the prisoners who carried out these acts were murdered so that they could not bear witness, much like the Sonderkommandos of Jewish prisoners who were killed once their work at the crematoria had been completed.[18]

Even though it is clear that the Bosnian Serbs understood exactly what genocide was – Slobodan Milošević, Radovan Karadžić, and Ratko Mladić were quoted almost from the onset of the war as warning the Bosnian Serbian Assembly of its potential – they denied genocidal acts from the beginning to the end. At their trials, they refused to accept responsibility for the murder of Bosnian Muslims, not to mention war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide, for which they were indicted.

[18] Norman M. Naimark, "The Many Lives of Babi Yar," *Hoover Digest*, August 21, 2017, pp. 76-87.

An additional point about denial that needs to be emphasized – and this conforms to the paper, "Politics of Revisionism" cited above, and other writings on denial -- and that is that there are many different forms of denial. There are subsequently different ways that scholars can analyze its manifestations. My four classifications are somewhat different from those I have seen. But they frequently overlap and do not necessarily contradict one another.

First, there are the denials by the perpetrators themselves, who know exactly what happened, where and when, but are not willing to acknowledge outright facts, even when presented to them in black and white form. As indicated above, Milošević, Mladić, Karadžić, fall into this category. The same applies to the case of many Nazis. Eichmann at his trial in Jerusalem was a classic case of denial, claiming to be nothing more than a cog in an impersonal machine.[19] The Hoover Institution Library and Archives has now made available the Gerd Heidemann collection, tapes of interviews with ex-Nazis in Latin America in the 1970s, talking about their deeds in an exculpatory way.[20] The former Nazis, if that is the right expression to summarize their politics, are ready to acknowledge thirty years later that Jews died in large numbers, though they insist that the numbers are in the thousands, maybe tens of thousands, but not millions. They note that it was wartime, after all, and that many Germans died. (This is reminiscent of the Turkish government's argument. "People die in war, Turks and Armenians. Why focus just on the Armenians?") None of the former Nazis, interestingly, take full responsibility for their deeds, and most want to detach Hitler from the killing, which as noted earlier, has been demonstrated to be completely wrong-headed. Do they lie to themselves? Perhaps they do; maybe the lapse in time may have

[19] Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (London and New York: Penguin Classics, 2006). See also the recent rebuttal of Arendt's idea that Eichmann represented the banality of evil and was instead a committed anti-Semite and Nazi murderer. Bettina Stagneth, *Eichmann Before Jerusalem: The Unexamined Life of a Mass Murderer* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014).

[20] Gerd Heidemann collection. Hoover Institution Library and Archives. For a discussion of the meaning of the archives for understanding the way ex-Nazis remembered their criminal past, see "Archives Uncovered: Revealing the Third Reich and the Inner Lives of Extremists," on YouTube. (March 24, 2025).

something to do with their skewed memories. But more likely denial is a highly stylized way that perpetrators can bend historical reality to fit their psychological, social, familial (after all, they need to explain the period to their children and grandchildren), and political needs. Human memory is malleable and fallible. Those who have much to hide frequently actually believe their prevarications.

Second, there are deniers who have not themselves participated in the carrying out of genocide, but make excuses for it, alter the fact of the genocide, or otherwise deny it in a variety of ways. Given the passage of time, it is a remarkable aspect of the genocide story that denials can sometimes take on virulent and even violent forms decades, even centuries, after the genocides occur. This phenomenon frequently has political or "national" origins, meaning the perpetrators' progeny want to alter the reality of the past to fit the needs of the present. I don't need to point out to Bosniaks that many Bosnian Serbs and Serb nationals have found this a very convenient way to push political programs originating in the Republika Srpska and Serbia proper. This kind of denial also drives the need, as discussed earlier, for the rest of us to work harder to provide highly empirical, fact-based histories of the genocide in Srebrenica, among others. A new academically legitimate history of the Srebrenica genocide, *Losing Humanity : Srebrenica as a Historical Fact,* was published and presented this year in Novy Sad by Dragan Popović, helping on the margins to break the ice of Serbian denial. If the cases of denial in Germany and Turkey are instructive at all, then I think they demonstrate that while politics remains the dominant determinant of genocide denial, good history can chip away at the edges of denial. This has been especially the case in Germany, where repentant German governments have spent a lot of time and energy supporting scholarship on Nazism that has gone a long way to undermining the arguments of the deniers. Even the Ankara government has allowed some reputable Western scholarship on the Armenian genocide to be translated into and published in Turkish.

Third, academic deniers are, in many ways, the hardest to understand. Professional historians and analysts of contemporary culture and politics

share a dedication to empirical work and honest evaluations of the past. But it is also true that there are those who are simply corrupted by the environments and circumstances in which they work. This happens almost everywhere: otherwise reputable Russian academics find it difficult to deal straightforwardly with the genocide of the Ukrainian Holodomor of 1932-33; there are Turkish academics who are intimated or simply won over by the Erdogan government to deny the Armenian genocide; and, of course, there are Serbian academics who do not want to break for one reason or another with the propaganda lines of Belgrade or Pale. But this is not strictly nationally determined. There are European and American academics who are at work in Turkey, who feel they need to line up with Turkish denial; it is hard to say whether they genuinely believe the Turkish argument or not. There are also American academics in the United States, specialists on Turkey, who express denialist sentiments about the Armenian genocide, in some cases because their chairs are supported by the Turkish government money or their research is backed by Turkish sources. Once again, it is hard to know whether they genuinely believe the denialist line.

Fourth, another type of academic genocide denier – and this applies to a number of journalists and popular historians, as well – belong to what I would call the deniers through the use of perverse logic. By this I mean they go carefully and systematically through the materials and documents involved and put them together in such a way that genocide denial is the result. History, as we know, does not speak for itself. The British author, David Irving, is the most famous Holocaust denier. He spent time in prison in Austria, lost a suit in court to Deborah Lipstadt, who he claimed wrongfully accused him of being a Holocaust denier.[21] His work remains influential in many circles and is followed closely by right wing, pro-Nazi ideologists in Germany and Austria. In Germany, too, there was the famous controversy, the so-called *Historikerstreit* of the late 1980s, about the work of Ernst Nolte, who used the comparison of the Nazis to

[21] Deborah E. Lipstadt, *History on Trial: My Day in Court with a Holocaust Denier* (New York: Ecco, 2006). See also Eberhard Jackel, trans. H. David Kirk, *David Irving's Hitler: A Faulty History Dissected* (Brentwood Bay, Canada: Ben-Simon Publishers, 1993).

the Soviets and the supposed influence of the Soviets on the Nazis, to diminish the crimes of the Nazis and place responsibility of them on the Bolshevik revolution.[22] This, too, is a perverse argument, though I would not necessarily put Nolte in the class of deniers**.** I once reviewed a book by Guenter Lewy, a Professor Emeritus of Political Science at University of Massachusetts, calling into question the Armenian Genocide**.**[23] Like Irving and Nolte, there is no reason I know of to doubt Lewy's motives, but also like Irving and Nolte, there is good reason to call into question his use of logic. There are ways to put together almost any historical argument that can make sense if more important factors are ignored and less important ones overemphasized. Scholars, even legitimate ones, can fall into traps of their own internal logic and arguments.

Fifth, there are legitimate academics who will deny that genocide takes place in particular cases from what might be called "pure" motives and a serious attempt to understand. I think it is probably not correct to put them in a category with the other deniers. In other words, there are and can be reasonable arguments about whether a concrete set of events should or should not be considered genocide. This is rarely the case anymore with the Holocaust or the Armenian genocide, where the documentation and arguments are so overwhelming that denial is a form of prevarication. But it does happen about the Cambodian genocide of 1975-79, the genocide of the Herero and Nama in German Southwest Africa (today Namibia) in 1904-8, and the Soviet genocide famine against Ukrainians in 1932-33.[24] There are those who would argue sensibly for using the word genocide to describe the actions of the Russians in Ukraine during the present war and the Israelis in Gaza in the recent past. There are also those who would argue against, equally sensibly. I recall from the 2005 conference

[22] Charles S. Maier, *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1989).

[23] Norman M. Naimark on Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2005), in *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, vol. 21, Issue 2 (Fall 2007): 298-303.

[24] Mark Kramer, Joshua Rubenstein, et al., "Perspectives on Norman Naimark's *Stalin's Genocides*," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, vol. 4, no. 3 (Summer 2012): 149-189.

on the 10th anniversary a paper by the Paris social scientist and historian Jacques Semelin who argued against using the genocide appellation to describe the Srebrenica massacre.[25] He urged instead using the concept of "massacre."

The early writings of the distinguished international legal scholar, William A. Schabas, stands out as a work of "denial." In 2001, he published an article called "Was Genocide Committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina" arguing against the use of genocide even in the Srebrenica case. He was not alone in his views, especially among legal scholars.[26] But then he authored another article, "Genocide and the International Court of Justice" that seems, somewhat reluctantly, to agree with the ICJ that genocide took place in Srebrenica but not in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a whole.[27] Later, in a somewhat testy interview with Reuters in December 2019, Schabas is reported to have stated: "I'm not arguing with anybody about whether genocide took place in Srebrenica. That has been decided. The train has left the station and the fact that I had an opinion about it before the decisions were reached seems to me to be quite normal and understandable."[28]

Despite controversies over his involvement in judicial proceedings about the Israelis in Gaza and Myanmar's persecution of the Rohingya, I am not aware of reasons to doubt Schabas's scholarly integrity – he is a respected legal analyst and an eminent student of the U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide. But, in my view anyway,

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[25] See Jacques Semelin, *Purify and Destroy: The Political Uses of Massacre and Genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

[26] William A. Schabas, "Was Genocide Committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina? First Judgements of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia," *Fordham International Law Journal,* vol. 25, issue 1 (2001): 22-53. See, similarly, Katherine G. Southwick, "Srebrenica as Genocide? The Krstić Decision and the Language of the Unspeakable," *Yale Human Rights and Development Law Journal*, no. 8 (January 2005): 188-227.

[27] William A. Schabas, "Genocide and the International Court of Justice: Finally, a Duty to Prevent the Crime of Crimes," *Genocide Studies and Prevention*, 2,2 (August 2007,) 101-122.

[28] Anthony Deutch, "Myanmar's lawyer to critics on genocide case: Everyone has a right to defense," Reuters, December 13, 2019. Accessed June 15, 2025.

there is every reason to doubt his conclusions. I think there are two fundamental problems with his reasoning. First, he believes the Bosnian Serbs' argument that they killed the men and boys of Srebrenica because they were of military age and therefore potential combatants. I do not. They were killed precisely because they were Bosnian Muslims from the Srebrenica region, in short for the genocidal goals of eliminating them, "as such," as stipulated in the U.N. convention. And second, Schabas's idea of intentionality in genocide does not include judgment about the emotional state of the killers, what I described earlier as the collective affective disposition of people like Krstić, Karadžić, Mladić, and others. They killed – as we can tell from their testimony and that of witnesses and victims, and from memoirs – because they wanted to eliminate the Bosniaks from the map of territories they felt were their own. In this sense, it was cold-blooded killing, of the sort one could see oneself in the famous film clips of the Scorpion shootings of Bosniak youth soldiers along the roadside.[29] These cold-blooded leaders urged on their men do the worst to the Bosniaks, whom they intensely hated. They wanted to eliminate them, and their charges did so in brutal fashion, with torture, abuse, humiliation, and intimidation as part of the process of execution. The screaming and terrified women and children of Srebrenica were not, as Schabas describes, merely bussed off to safety in Bosnia proper in a purified image of "ethnic cleansing," demonstrating the "rational" decision to get rid of the Bosnian Serbs from the Srebrenica region. Rather they were themselves beaten, abused, sometimes raped, their valuables stolen, and the busses were stopped periodically while soldiers went through the process again, threatening and abusing their passengers.[30]

[29] Stephen Talbot, "Srebrenica: The Video of a Wartime Atrocity," *Frontline World*, July 13, 2005. Pbs.org.

[30] Norman M. Naimark, "Srebrenica and the History of Genocide: A Prologue," in Nancy Adler, Selma Leydesdorff, et. al., eds. *Memories of Mass Repression: Narrating Life Stories in the Aftermath of Atrocity* (London: Routledge, 2009): 3-21.

Conclusion

The scholarly community cannot let denial succeed in any of its forms. At the same time, there needs to be a way for legitimate opponents of the appellation of genocide to express their views. I, personally, would not prosecute genocide deniers, as do the Germans, the French, and others. Rather, scholars and publicists need to strengthen their arguments through research and writing in the scholarly community and for the public. The consciousness of the populations involved with the genocide story – prior perpetrators and victims -- need to be informed through scholarship, films, documentaries, museums and other public enterprises of the character and history of genocide, both in the specific and comparative perspectives. There is a lot of work to be done, and if the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust, and Srebrenica are any examples, that work will never end.

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THE ROAD TO THE SREBRENICA GENOCIDE: MECHANISMS OF THE GENOCIDAL PROCESS IN EASTERN BOSNIA (1992–1995)

Abstract: This article examines the Srebrenica genocide as the final stage of a multi-year historical process in which the genocidal process in Eastern Bosnia between 1992 and 1995 gradually developed, became institutionalized, and was implemented through the interaction of political objectives, military strategies, administrative structures, and mechanisms directed toward the destruction of the Bosniak population. Drawing on theoretical approaches that conceptualize genocide as a process rather than an isolated event, the study argues that the mass killings committed in July 1995 constituted the culmination of previously established political, military, administrative, and humanitarian mechanisms directed toward the destruction of the Bosniak community in the Podrinje region. The paper analyzes the strategic objectives of the political leadership of Republika Srpska, the military directives of the Main Staff of the Army of Republika Srpska, systematic violence committed against the Bosniak population of Eastern Bosnia, the prolonged blockade of Srebrenica, the obstruction of humanitarian assistance, and the institutional preparation of the final military operation. Particular attention is devoted to the analysis of Directive No. 4 (1992) and Directives No. 7 and 7-1 (1995) as key military documents that provide important evidence of the planning and implementation of measures aimed at creating conditions of insecurity, isolation, and physical depletion of the population as integral components of the broader genocidal process. This research is based on an analysis of primary sources, including military documents, international reports, and relevant case law of international tribunals, employing historical and comparative methods. It concludes that the Srebrenica genocide was neither a spontaneous consequence of military operations nor solely the result of the July 1995 offensive, but rather the final stage of a deliberately organized and institutionally implemented process in which political objectives, military strategy, and humanitarian isolation created the conditions for the physical destruction of a substantial part of the Bosniak population of Eastern Bosnia.

The article proposes an interpretative framework that situates the Srebrenica genocide within broader historiographical debates concerning the temporal development of genocidal processes and the transformation of policies of exclusion into mechanisms of physical destruction.

Keywords: *Srebrenica, genocide, Eastern Bosnia, Podrinje, genocidal process, Army of Republika Srpska, political and military mechanisms*

PUT PREMA GENOCIDU U SREBRENICI: MEHANIZMI GENOCIDNOG PROCESA U ISTOČNOJ BOSNI (1992–1995.)

Sažetak: Ovaj rad analizira genocid u Srebrenici kao završnu fazu višegodišnjeg historijskog procesa u kojem se genocidni proces u istočnoj Bosni između 1992. i 1995. godine postepeno razvijao, institucionalizirao i provodio kroz međudjelovanje političkih ciljeva, vojnih strategija, administrativnih struktura i mehanizama usmjerenih ka uništenju bošnjačkog stanovništva. Polazeći od teorijskih pristupa koji genocid konceptualiziraju kao proces, a ne kao izolirani događaj, istraživanje pokazuje da su masovna ubistva počinjena u julu 1995. godine predstavljala kulminaciju prethodno uspostavljenih političkih, vojnih, administrativnih i humanitarnih mehanizama usmjerenih prema uništenju bošnjačke zajednice u regiji Podrinja. Rad analizira strateške ciljeve političkog rukovodstva Republike srpske, vojne direktive Glavnog štaba Vojske Republike srpske, sistematsko nasilje počinjeno nad bošnjačkim stanovništvom istočne Bosne, višegodišnju blokadu Srebrenice, ograničavanje humanitarne pomoći i institucionalnu pripremu završne vojne operacije. Posebna pažnja posvećena je analizi Direktive broj 4 (1992) i Direktive broj 7 i 7-1 (1995) kao ključnih vojnih dokumenata koji pružaju značajne dokaze o planiranju i provođenju mjera usmjerenih na stvaranje uslova nesigurnosti, izolacije i fizičkog iscrpljivanja stanovništva kao sastavnih elemenata šireg genocidnog procesa. Ovo istraživanje zasniva se na analizi primarnih izvora, uključujući vojne dokumente, međunarodne izvještaje i relevantnu sudsku praksu međunarodnih tribunala, uz primjenu historijskih i komparativnih metoda. Zaključuje se da genocid u Srebrenici nije bio ni spontana posljedica vojnih operacija niti isključivo rezultat ofanzive iz jula 1995. godine, već završna faza planski organiziranog i institucionalno provedenog procesa u kojem su politički ciljevi, vojna strategija i humanitarna izolacija stvorili uslove za fizičko uništenje značajnog dijela bošnjačkog stanovništva istočne Bosne.

Rad predlaže interpretativni okvir koji genocid u Srebrenici smješta u šire historiografske rasprave o vremenskom razvoju genocidnih procesa i transformaciji politika isključivanja u mehanizme fizičkog uništenja.

Ključne riječi: *Srebrenica, genocid, istočna Bosna, Podrinje, genocidni proces, Vojska Republike srpske, politički i vojni mehanizmi*

Introduction

The genocide committed against Bosniaks in Srebrenica in July 1995 represents one of the most thoroughly documented crimes in contemporary European history. Nevertheless, despite extensive historiographical and legal scholarship, the genocide has frequently been examined primarily through the events of July 1995, while comparatively less attention has been devoted to the processes that, beginning in 1992, gradually created and consolidated the political, military, administrative, and humanitarian conditions that enabled its perpetration.

Historiography on the Srebrenica genocide has largely concentrated on reconstructing the events of July 1995, establishing genocidal intent, and evaluating the responsibility of Republika Srpska's political and military leadership. Existing scholarship has made indispensable contributions to the reconstruction of events and the establishment of responsibility; however, the temporal development of genocidal practices and their transformation from instruments of territorial control into mechanisms of physical destruction requires further historical analysis. Key contributions include the scholarship of Marko Attila Hoare, Norman Cigar, and Edina Bećirević, as well as the jurisprudence of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT). While these works provide extensive analyses of the political, military, and ideological dimensions of the conflict, the relationship between these factors as interconnected components of a longer genocidal process remains an area requiring further historical synthesis.

Drawing upon theoretical approaches that conceptualize genocide as a process, as reflected in broader genocide studies scholarship, including the works of Raphael Lemkin, Helen Fein, Gregory Stanton, and Martin Shaw, this article argues that the Srebrenica genocide constituted the culmination of a multi-year genocidal process that developed in Eastern Bosnia from the spring of 1992 onward. Such approaches challenge interpretations of genocide as sudden episodes of mass violence and emphasize the importance of examining the political, social, and institutional developments that precede genocidal destruction. Rather than revisiting the legal qualification of genocide established by international jurisprudence, this study seeks to provide a historical analysis of the interconnected processes that gradually created the conditions for its execution. The research relies primarily on military documents of the Army of Republika Srpska, records of political institutions of Republika Srpska, United Nations documentation, reports of international organizations, and judgments of the ICTY and MICT. Through historical analysis and contextual interpretation, the article examines the relationship between political objectives, military operations, and mechanisms of population destruction. The paper analyzes the development of the genocidal process through four interconnected mechanisms: political planning, the military transformation of territory, the humanitarian attrition of the population, and the institutional preparation of the final stage of the genocidal process. The central research question of this article is how political decisions, military strategies, and mechanisms of population control developed between 1992 and 1995 and contributed to the conditions that enabled the execution of genocide in Srebrenica. This framework enables an examination of the interrelationship between political decisions, military strategies, administrative practices, and humanitarian measures implemented by the political and military structures of Republika Srpska.

Political Foundations and the Development of a Genocidal Process in Eastern Bosnia

The first mechanism in the development of policies that formed part of the genocidal process involved the establishment of a political framework during the initial months of the war, through which territorial objectives were defined and ideological foundations were established for subsequent military and administrative actions. At the session of the Assembly of the Serb People in Bosnia and Herzegovina held on 12 May 1992, strategic objectives were adopted that defined the direction of action of the political and military leadership of the Serb Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, later known as Republika Srpska. From a historical perspective, these objectives are significant not only because they articulated immediate wartime goals, but also because they provided a conceptual framework within which later practices of expulsion, segregation, and destruction were organized. Two objectives concerning the Podrinje region, to which Srebrenica belonged, were of particular significance. These objectives included the "establishment of a corridor in the Drina River valley, namely the elimination of the Drina as a border between Serbian states," and the "state demarcation from the other two national communities."[1] The strategic objectives established a political framework in which territorial restructuring was linked to the permanent removal of the non-Serb population from areas considered to be of strategic importance.

[1] The other strategic objectives adopted at this session on 12 May 1992 included: the establishment of a corridor between Semberija and Krajina, the establishment of borders along the Una and Neretva rivers, the division of the city of Sarajevo into Serb and Muslim parts and the establishment of effective state authority in each of these areas, as well as securing access to the sea for Republika Srpska. These objectives were subsequently further developed. Službeni glasnik Republike Srpske, 26. novembar 1993, *Odluka o strateškim ciljevima srpskog naroda u Bosni i Hercegovini;* Zapisnik sa 16. sjednice Skupštine srpskog naroda u BiH održane 12. maja 1992. u Banjoj Luci, http://icr.icty.org, ICTY – Online Database of Judicial Documents; ICTY, *Odluka o strateškim ciljevima srpskog naroda u Bosni i Hercegovini*, Skupština Srpskog naroda u Bosni i Hercegovini, broj: 02-130/92, Banja Luka, 12. maj 1992.

From the very beginning of the war, Srebrenica occupied a particularly strategic position within these plans. Since Srebrenica was located in the central Podrinje region, it represented one of the last larger territories under the control of the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ARBiH) between Zvornik, Bratunac, Vlasenica, and Višegrad. According to the 1991 census, Bosniaks accounted for more than three-quarters of the municipality's population. This demographic composition was incompatible with the territorial objectives pursued by the Republika Srpska political leadership. Consequently, the Srebrenica region emerged as a primary focus of wartime political and military planning from the very outset of the conflict. Thus, Srebrenica should not be interpreted solely through the military circumstances of 1995, but within the longer historical trajectory of territorial engineering and demographic transformation pursued in Eastern Bosnia from the beginning of the war.

Military Isolation, Territorial Transformation, and the Humanitarian Attrition of Srebrenica

The second mechanism of this process involved the transformation of territory through systematic violence, which altered the demographic and social structure of Eastern Bosnia. Parallel to military operations, a systematic campaign of violence was carried out against the Bosniak population of Eastern Bosnia. Following the capture of Zvornik, Bratunac, Vlasenica, Foča, Višegrad, and other municipalities, mass killings, mass detention in camps, systematic sexual violence, the destruction of cultural and religious heritage, and the forced expulsion of tens of thousands of Bosniaks were carried out. These patterns of violence constituted the initial stages of a process that would culminate with the genocide in Srebrenica in 1995. Historically, these campaigns established patterns of violence, displacement, and territorial restructuring that would later reappear in a more concentrated and destructive form during the events of July 1995.

During 1992, operations of the military and police forces of the Army of the Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (VSr RBiH),[2] Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) and the Yugoslav Army (VJ), were not aimed solely at territorial conquest. The earliest directives issued by the Main Staff indicate that the objective was to establish complete control over communications routes in the central Podrinje region and to gradually remove the Bosniak population. Throughout this period, these forces planned and attempted to seize the Srebrenica area. In an order issued in June 1992 by Ratko Mladić, Commander of the Main Staff (GŠ) of the VSr RBiH, instructions were given for the "expansion of the corridor between Romanija and Semberija" and the "liberation of communications in the middle course of the Drina River".[3] Additional military forces were mobilized to achieve this objective, while in the following months troop numbers were further reinforced through the redeployment of units from other corps.

In November 1992, the Main Staff issued an operational directive for Army of Republika Srpska (VRS) activities, known as Operational Directive No. 4, which stated that it was necessary to "exhaust the enemy, inflict the heaviest possible losses on them and force them to leave the Birač, Žepa and Goražde areas with the Muslim population".[4] A major VRS offensive toward Srebrenica followed in mid-December 1992, with particularly intense attacks launched from the direction of Kravica, through the villages of Glogova and Ježeštica. Through these operations, the civilian population became a direct object of military planning.

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[2] In August and September 1992, at the 19th and 20th sessions of the Assembly of the Serbian People in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the name was changed to Republika Srpska, and the army was consequently renamed the Army of Republika Srpska (VRS). For more on this, see Muamer Džananović, Jasmin Medić, and Hikmet Karčić, Nastanak Republike Srpske: od regionalizacije do strateških ciljeva 1991–1992 (The Emergence of Republika Srpska: From Regionalization to Strategic Goals, 1991–1992), Univerzitet u Sarajevu – Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava, Sarajevo, 2023, 140–142.

[3] ICTY, Glavni štab VSr RBiH, *Širenje koridora između Romanije i Semberije i oslobađanje komunikacija u srednjem toku Drine, direktiva,* (*Expansion of the Corridor between Romanija and Semberija and the Liberation of Communications in the Middle Course of the Drina River*, Directive) str.pov.broj: 02/5-35, 23.06.1992.

[4] ICTY, *Naredna dejstva Vojske Republike Srpske, Direktiva (Directive for further operations of the Army of Republika Srpska),* str. pov. br: 02/5-210, 19.11.1992.

On 10 January 1993, the Main Staff of the VRS issued an order under the strictly confidential number 02/2-22 entitled "Order for the Execution of Operation Fist" (Naređenje za izvođenje operacije "Pesnica"), which was designated as the "liberation of Podrinje." The order stated, among other things, that "the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces of Republika Srpska assigned the VRS the task of maintaining the Vlasenica–Caparde–Zvornik corridor, breaking up the enemy in the area of Cerska and Konjević-Polje, and eliminating the threat of the seizure of the territory of the Municipality of Bratunac." To achieve this objective, a guideline was issued to "separate the area of Srebrenica from the area of Cerska, liberate the Milići–Konjević-Polje–Zvornik communication route, and then, through the gradual breaking up of the enemy, inflict losses upon them and prevent the connection of the Cerska area with the Tuzla area."[5] The forces of the Drina Corps failed to accomplish the objectives set out in the earlier Operational Directive No. 4. Therefore, on 22 January 1993 the VRS Main Staff issued a combat order designated Operational No. 5, which called for the forces to "switch to offensive activities in the Middle Podrinje…"[6] ARBiH forces resisted for nearly two months; however, by mid-March 1993, the enclaves of Cerska, Konjević-Polje, and the surrounding areas of central Podrinje

[5] "through energetic and rapid actions, break up the enemy forces along the axis: Milići mine – village of Kasaba – Konjević-Polje – village of Drinjača, thereby separating the Muslims in the Srebrenica area from the Muslims in the Cerska area. At the same time, with the available forces in the wider Bratunac area, maintain the current positions, prevent the penetration of Muslims into Bratunac and the displacement of the Serbian population across the Drina River …" AIIZ, Glavni štab Vojske Republike Srpske, str. pov. broj 02/2-22, 10. januar 1993, *Izvođenje operacije "Pesnica", Naređenje (Order for the Execution of Operation "Fist").*

[6] "grouping the main body of force in the direction: Bratunac-village Potočari-Srebrenica-bauxite mine (village Gunjaci), and grouping the auxiliary forces in the direction: village Skelani-village Osmače-village Zeleni Jadar-Srebrenica with the following objective: break and destroy the enemy forces in the wider region of Srebrenica, liberate mines Sase and Gunjaci, and cut off the green transversal in the wider region of Srebrenica in coordinated action with the Drina Corps forces, then, gradually destroy the enemy in the wider region of Cerska and Žepa in coordinated action with the Drina Corps forces." ICTY, Main Staff of the Republika Srpska Army, *Combat order, Operational number 5,* To the Drina corps command, 02/5-49, 22 January 1993.

came under VRS control. Approximately 30,000 Bosniak inhabitants from these areas fled to Srebrenica.

The third mechanism consisted of the systematic humanitarian attrition of the population. At the beginning of 1993, this process entered a new phase. Following the military operations in Cerska and Konjević-Polje, a large number of displaced persons arrived in Srebrenica. VRS forces gradually tightened the encirclement of Srebrenica, where approximately 50,000 inhabitants were located from March 1993 onward. The town, which lacked the capacity to accommodate such a large population was transformed into an overcrowded and isolated enclave.

At the same time, VRS forces gradually established an almost complete blockade of the enclave. The restriction or complete suspension of humanitarian convoys, denial of food, medicine, fuel, and medical supplies, interruptions in electricity and water supplies, and continuous shelling of civilian areas progressively worsened the living conditions of the population.[7] International organizations, including the UNHCR, continuously reported cases of malnutrition, the spread of disease, and the worsening health conditions of the population. The humanitarian crisis was therefore not merely a consequence of military operations, but an integral element of the policy of isolating and exhausting the enclave. Within the broader historical trajectory of the conflict, the blockade of Srebrenica represented a transition from direct military violence toward a form of controlled deprivation aimed at weakening the physical and social resilience of the enclave's population.

Within genocide studies scholarship, such practices have been examined as indirect mechanisms contributing to the physical destruction of protected groups. Within this analytical framework, the multi-year blockade of Srebrenica constitutes an integral component of a strategy designed to wear down and destabilize the Bosniak community ahead of the final military operation.

The significance of these measures also derives from the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime

[7] See further: Zilha Mastalić Košuta, "Genocid nad djecom u Srebrenici – sigurnoj zoni UN-a jula 1995. godine", ("Genocide against Children in Srebrenica – the UN Safe Area in July 1995,") Prilozi, Institut za historiju, 2010, 123-143.

of Genocide, which identifies, among acts constituting genocide, the deliberate infliction of conditions of life calculated to bring about the physical destruction of a protected group.

On 12 April 1993, a shell fired from a position held by the VRS struck the playground in front of the Secondary School Centre in Srebrenica, killing approximately 70 people and injuring more than 100 others.[8] Several days later, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 819 (16 April 1993), declaring Srebrenica a "safe area" that must be free from any armed attack or hostile act.[9] The status of the safe area was further confirmed by Resolution 824 of 6 May 1993.[10]

Within the framework of implementing these resolutions, and under the mediation of UNPROFOR, an Agreement on the Demilitarization of Srebrenica was concluded between representatives of the ARBiH and the VRS.[11] The agreement provided for a ceasefire, the deployment of UNPROFOR forces, freedom of movement, the evacuation of wounded persons, and the unhindered delivery of humanitarian assistance. Demilitarization also included the surrender of weapons to UNPROFOR, based on the assumption that international forces would ensure the protection of the population.[12] In practice, however, the established

[8] Marinko, Sekulić, "Srebrenica: Masakr na školskom igralištu", https://www.dw.com/bs/srebrenica-masakr-na-%C5%A1kolskom-igrali%C5%A1tu/a-17563008; Zilha Mastalić Košuta, "Zločini nad djecom u Bosni i Hercegovini na primjerima Sarajeva, Mostara i Srebrenice (1992-1995) ("Crimes against Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Cases of Sarajevo, Mostar and Srebrenica (1992–1995)"), Zbornik radova, Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međuanrodnog prava Univerziteta u Sarajevu, 2021, 443.

[9] United Nations Security Council Resolutions, Resolution 819, 1993, 62–64.

[10] The other areas designated as UN safe areas were Sarajevo, Tuzla, Žepa, Goražde, and Bihać. See also: United Nations Security Council Resolution 824, 1993, 72–74.

[11] ICTY, br. 01239650, 8. maj 1993, *Sporazum o prekidu vatre na teritoriji Bosne i Hercegovine*; ICTY, br. 01239651, 8. maj 1993, *Sporazum o demilitarizaciji Srebrenice i Žepe*.

[12] See further: Tilman Zülch, „Zločin genocida u Srebrenici", in: Zločini nad Bošnjacima u Srebrenici za vrijeme agresije na Republiku Bosnu i Hercegovinu 1991-1995: Zbornik radova sa međunarodnog skupa održanog u Sarajevu 12. jula 1997, Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava, knjiga 1, Sarajevo, 1998, 27.

protection system proved to be highly limited. Units of the Army of Republika Srpska retained control over dominant positions surrounding the enclave, continued restricting communications and humanitarian assistance, and maintained constant military pressure.[13] Consequently, international protection remained largely formal in nature, while demilitarization further weakened the enclave's defensive capabilities.

During 1994, the majority of VRS combat activities were directed toward other battlefields; however, existing positions around Srebrenica and Žepa were maintained, and control over communication routes was further strengthened. The isolation of the two enclaves became increasingly pronounced, while their mutual connection was reduced to a narrow corridor under VRS control. In this way, the operational conditions were created for the future final military operation.

Institutional Preparation and the Execution of the Final Phase of the Genocidal Process in Srebrenica

The fourth mechanism concerns the institutional preparation of the final phase of the genocidal process. Directives No. 7 and 7-1 represented a crucial stage in the institutional preparation of the operation that culminated in the genocide in July 1995. Their historical significance lies in revealing the continuity between earlier wartime practices of territorial exclusion and the final stage of physical destruction. On 8 March 1995, the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces of Republika Srpska, issued Operational Directive No. 7, signed by Supreme Commander Radovan Karadžić,[14] which revealed the actual intentions concerning the enclaves

[13] ICTY, Prosecutor v. Radislav Krstić, IT-98-33-T, 2.8.2001, par. 21.

[14] ICTY, br. 00823169, Vrhovna komanda OS Republike Srpske, dt. br. 2/2-11, 8.3.1995, Komandi 1. i 2. KK, SRK, IBK, HK, DK, ViPVOi CVŠ VRS, *Direktiva za dalja dejstva op. br. 7* (*Directive for Further Operations No. 7*). Four days earlier, on 4 March, the military and political leadership of Republika Srpska and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had thoroughly discussed the content of the Directive at Jahorina, with particular attention devoted to the Podrinje region. *Info,*

in Eastern Bosnia. The Directive stated that, "through the competent state and military bodies responsible for cooperation with the UNHCR and humanitarian organizations, through planned and unobtrusively restrictive approval of requests, reduce and restrict the logistical support of UNPROFOR forces in the enclaves and the delivery of material resources to the Muslim population, and make them dependent on our goodwill, while at the same time avoiding condemnation from the international community and world public opinion".[15] The Directive ordered the Drina Corps of the VRS to: "through demonstrative and active combat operations, applying measures of operational and tactical concealment, tie down the strongest possible enemy forces in the northwestern part of the battlefield, and toward the Srebrenica and Žepa enclaves, as soon as possible, carry out the complete physical separation of Srebrenica from Žepa, thereby preventing even individual communication between these enclaves." The Directive further stated that it was necessary "through daily planned and deliberate combat activities to create conditions of complete insecurity, intolerability, and hopelessness regarding the further life and survival of the inhabitants of Srebrenica and Žepa."[16] The Directive further provided that, "in the event of the withdrawal of UNPROFOR forces from Žepa and Srebrenica, the Drina Corps command shall plan an operation under the name 'Jadar' with the task of 'breaking up and destroying Muslim forces in these enclaves and the definitive liberation of Podrinje'." Ratko Mladić implemented the orders contained in Directive No. 7 through the chain of command by issuing Operational Directive No. 7-1.[17]

These orders mandated the restriction of humanitarian assistance and the creation of the population's dependence on political and military

University Information Bulletin, Special Edition, Sarajevo: University of Sarajevo, July 2009, 14.

[15] AIIZ, Vrhovna komanda OS Republike Srpske, dt. br. 2/2-11, 8. marta 1995, Komandi 1. i 2. KK i drugima.

[16] ICTY, br. 00823169, Vrhovna komanda OS Republike Srpske, dt. br. 2/2-11, 8.3.1995, Komandi 1. i 2. KK, SRK, IBK, HK, DK, ViPVOi CVŠ VRS, *Direktiva za dalja dejstva op. br. 7* (*Directive for Further Operations No. 7*).

[17] ICTY, br. 00868778, Glavni štab vojske Republike Srpske, dt br. 02/2-15, 31.3.1995, *Direktiva za dalja dejstva op.br. 7/1 (Directive for Further Operations No. 7/1)*.

control, thereby transforming humanitarian aid into an instrument of pressure. They also demonstrate that the objective was not limited exclusively to the military defeat of opposing forces. At the center of this planned action was the civilian population, with measures designed to create conditions that made its survival impossible. For this reason, these Directives constitute key documentary evidence for reconstructing the intentions, priorities, and operational logic of the political and military leadership, particularly regarding the creation of conditions of insecurity, isolation, and physical exhaustion that preceded the execution of genocide.

By the spring of 1995, the political, military, and humanitarian mechanisms analyzed in this article had been fully established. The Bosniak population of most of Podrinje had been systematically expelled into isolated enclaves, subjected to prolonged blockade, and deprived of effective international protection. The final military operation represented the realization of a process that had developed over the preceding three years.

It is important to emphasize that during this period the international security environment was also deteriorating. The capture of UNPROFOR personnel, restrictions on their movement, and the absence of a decisive response from the international community further strengthened the belief among the leadership of Republika Srpska that they would not face immediate consequences for their planned military activities. The failure of the safe area protection system represented one of the key factors that enabled the execution of genocide. Its final phase began in July 1995.

At the end of May and during June and July 1995, the Army of Republika Srpska intensified operations aimed at the complete capture of Srebrenica. In accordance with Directives No. 7 and 7-1, the operational plans *Krivaja 95* and *Stupčanica 95* were prepared.[18] The attack began on

[18] On 2 July, based on Operational Directives No. 7 and 7/1, Commander of the Drina Corps Milenko Živanović signed two orders: Preparatory Order No. 1 (for forthcoming operations against the enclaves) and Order for Active Combat Operations No. 1. The first order aimed at preparing units for combat activities, while the second presented the plan of attack on Srebrenica, defined the operational objectives, combat deployment, tasks of units, and other elements. The operation

6 July 1995, with the objective of "completely separating and narrowing the Srebrenica and Žepa enclaves through a surprise attack, improving the tactical position of forces in the depth of the zone, and creating conditions for the elimination of the enclaves."[19]

On 6 July 1995, the military and police forces of the VRS began shelling the "safe area" of Srebrenica using their available artillery resources, followed shortly thereafter by infantry attacks. The Dutch Battalion (DUTCHBAT) forces did not respond to the attacks, and on 8 July the VRS captured an armoured personnel carrier with a Dutch crew.[20] After the capture of the neighbouring villages of Pusmulići and Ljubisavići, panic and a state of severe insecurity spread throughout the town. During these attacks, VRS members wounded and killed a large number of people. The limited defence of Srebrenica organized by its inhabitants was quickly overcome. Following the capture of the Bojne settlement, located 300 metres from the town centre, and the burning of residential buildings by VRS forces, the inhabitants of Srebrenica abandoned their homes and fled toward the hospital and the PTT building, where UN observers were located.

The inhabitants of Srebrenica were unable to prevent the entry of VRS forces into the town, primarily because of the assurances given by UNPROFOR forces that they would provide protection, the lack of weapons, the absence of military organization, and the unfavourable strategic position created earlier when VRS forces had captured the surrounding areas of Kamenica, Cerska, Konjević-Polje, and most of the remaining free territory around Srebrenica in April 1993. Forcibly

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was designated "Krivaja 95." See: Smail, Čekić, *Genocid i istina o genocidu u Bosni i Hercegovini (Genocide and the Truth about the Genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina),* Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava Univerziteta u Sarajevu, Sarajevo, 2012, 132-133; Mastalić Košuta, "Zločini nad djecom u Bosni i Hercegovini…", ("Crimes against Children…"), 447.

[19] ICTY, No. 00920486, Command of the Drina Corps, Confidential No. 04/154-2, 2 July 1995, *Order for Active Combat Operations No. 1.*

[20] ICTY, UNPROFOR Command for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dutchbat III, Base in Potočari, Srebrenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina, UN CONFIDENTIAL, *General Information, Deterioration of the Situation in Srebrenica*, 7 July 1995, signed by Commander of the Dutch UN Infantry Battalion Colonel Karremans.

displaced persons from all surrounding captured villages had gathered in Srebrenica, and the entire population withdrew toward Potočari and other locations. The commander of the Dutch Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Karremans, promised NATO military intervention against VRS positions and a withdrawal to the original positions. This did not occur, and the defenders of Srebrenica no longer had any realistic possibility of defending the town.

On 9 July, Radovan Karadžić issued a verbal order to Miroslav Deronjić, stating: "Miroslav, all of them must be killed. The West Slavonia principle." He then added: "Everything you can reach."[21]

The VRS offensive against Srebrenica, launched in early July 1995 within the framework of Operation "Krivaja 95," represented the final realization of political and military plans that had been developing since the beginning of the war. The operation was conducted in circumstances in which the enclave had already been isolated for years, exhausted through humanitarian deprivation, demographically overcrowded, and deprived of effective international protection. Consequently, the mechanisms analyzed above created the conditions in which the final military operation could be carried out with minimal organized resistance.

After the entry of units of the VRS into Srebrenica on 11 July 1995, there followed the systematic separation of the population, the forced transfer of women, children, and elderly persons, and the capture of thousands of Bosniak men and boys. Among those captured and subsequently executed were a significant number of children and other minors, further confirming the indiscriminate nature of the crimes and the genocidal intent of the perpetrators.[22] The list of victims of the genocide

[21] ICTY, *Case of Miroslav Deronjić*, Case No. IT-02-61, Witness Statement, 53.

[22] Zilha Mastalić Košuta, "Genocid nad djecom u sigurnoj zoni Srebrenica jula 1995" ["Genocide against Children in the Srebrenica UN Safe Area in July 1995"], *Prilozi*, 2010, 123–143; Zilha Mastalić Košuta, "Zločini nad djecom u Bosni i Hercegovini na primjerima Sarajeva, Mostara i Srebrenice (1992–1995)" ["Crimes against Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Examples from Sarajevo, Mostar and Srebrenica (1992–1995)"], in *Genocide against Bosniaks: Srebrenica 1995–2020: Causes, Scope and Consequences*, Sarajevo: Institute for Research of Crimes against Humanity and International Law, 2021, 443–452; Muamer Džananović, "Dijete i

against the population of the UN-designated safe area of Srebrenica in July 1995, which contains the names of 8,372 individuals, also includes three-year-old Nesiba (Muharem) Alić, four-year-old Emina (Nail) Vranjko, five-year-old Edin (Zijad) Mujić, six-year-old Bego Begić, and other children. All of them were killed on 11 July 1995.[23] In the days that followed, mass executions were carried out at multiple locations in Eastern Bosnia,[24] while the victims' bodies were subsequently transferred from primary to secondary and tertiary mass graves.[25]

The scale, coordination, and logistical complexity of these activities provide strong evidence of a high degree of institutional organization and planned action, which international jurisprudence has recognized as one of the key indicators of genocidal intent. Within only a few days, it was necessary to coordinate the actions of military and police units, secure the transportation of thousands of prisoners, prepare execution sites, deploy machinery for the burial of bodies, and subsequently organize the relocation of remains from primary to secondary and tertiary mass graves in order to conceal evidence of the crimes. Such a level of logistical coordination could not have represented a spontaneous reaction by units in the field; rather, it confirms the existence of centralized planning,

porodica u genocidu – S posebnim osvrtom na genocid nad Bošnjacima u i oko Srebrenice jula 1995. godine" ["The Child and the Family in Genocide: A Special Focus on the Genocide against Bosniaks in and around Srebrenica in July 1995"], *Monumenta Srebrenica*, no. 9, Tuzla–Srebrenica: Institute for the Protection and Use of Cultural-Historical and Natural Heritage of Tuzla Canton, 2020, 117–120.

[23] Zilha Mastalić Košuta, „Historijski osvrt na događaje u i oko Srebrenice (1992–1995)" ("A Historical Overview of the Events in and around Srebrenica (1992–1995)"), *Almanah*, br. 97–98, Podgorica, 2025, 89–100.

[24] ICTY, No. 04220277, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republika Srpska Government, Commission for Investigation of Events in and around Srebrenica from 10 to 19 July 1995, *Events in and around Srebrenica from 10 to 19 July 1995*, Banja Luka, June 2004, 15–22; Mastalić-Košuta, „Genocid nad djecom u Srebrenici..." (Genocide against Children in Srebrenica…"), 129-139.

[25] ICTY, No. 00967377, ICTY, *Investigation into Srebrenica, Summary of Forensic Evidence – Execution Sites and Mass Graves*, 16 May 2000; For further discussion on mass graves in Srebrenica, see: Smail, Čekić, Meldijana, Arnaut, Haseljić, Bećir, Macić, *Masovne grobnice u Bosni i Hercegovini: Sigurna zona Ujedinjenih nacija Srebrenica,* (*Mass Graves in Bosnia and Herzegovina: The United Nations Safe Area of Srebrenica*), Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava Univerziteta u Sarajevu, Sarajevo, 2010;

hierarchical command structures, and institutional support for the execution of genocide.

The jurisprudence of the ICTY and the MICT supports this interpretative framework. While judicial proceedings necessarily focused on establishing individual criminal responsibility, historical analysis allows these findings to be placed within a broader temporal framework that explains how political decisions, military practices, and institutional structures interacted over time. Although international jurisprudence legally connected the genocide in Srebrenica with the events of July 1995, the factual findings of the ICTY and MICT were not limited exclusively to that time period. In fact, judicial chambers in nearly all major cases (Krstić, Popović et al., Karadžić, and Mladić) examined in detail the political, military, and humanitarian circumstances in Eastern Bosnia from the beginning of the war in 1992 onward. These judgments address the strategic objectives of the political leadership of Republika Srpska, campaigns of systematic violence against the Bosniak population in the municipalities of central Podrinje, the forced displacement of the Bosniak population into Srebrenica, the prolonged blockade of the enclave, the establishment and functioning of the United Nations "safe area," restrictions on humanitarian assistance, and military directives ordering the creation of conditions of intolerable life for the populations of Srebrenica and Žepa. Only after such a reconstruction of the multi-year development of events did the judicial chambers proceed to analyze Operation "Krivaja 95" and the mass executions of July 1995.

Therefore, the factual findings of international courts confirm the interpretation of the Srebrenica genocide as the final stage of a multi-year process in which political objectives, military planning, humanitarian isolation, and institutional preparation gradually created the conditions for its execution.

Conclusion

The analysis of developments in Eastern Bosnia between 1992 and 1995 confirms the central thesis of this article that the genocide in Srebrenica was neither an isolated act nor the consequence of several days of military operations. Rather, it represented the final stage of a prolonged process in which political planning, systematic violence, military isolation, humanitarian attrition, and institutional preparation operated as interconnected mechanisms that created the conditions for its execution. Viewing the Srebrenica genocide as a process does not alter its legal qualification established in the judgments of international courts; instead, it provides a broader historical explanation of how these mechanisms developed from 1992 onward and culminated in the mass executions of July 1995.

The findings of this study indicate that the analyzed mechanisms did not operate independently. Political decisions established strategic objectives, military operations enabled territorial and demographic transformation, while the prolonged blockade of Srebrenica contributed to the physical and social exhaustion of the enclave's population. The directives of the Main Staff of the Army of Republika Srpska, particularly Operational Directive No. 4 and Directives No. 7 and 7-1, demonstrate continuity in planned actions and reveal the connection between military objectives and measures aimed at creating conditions of insecurity, isolation, and intolerable living conditions for the populations of the enclaves.

Such an approach complements existing historiography by emphasizing the continuity of the political, military, and humanitarian processes that preceded the execution of genocide. The contribution of this article lies not in questioning the established legal qualification of genocide, but in developing a historical framework that explains how political decisions, military strategies, administrative practices, and humanitarian policies interacted over time to create the conditions for mass destruction. In this regard, the Srebrenica case provides an important example of how exclusionary policies and institutional mechanisms can gradually develop into genocidal violence.

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Dio II: Pravo, dokazi i oblikovanje sudske istine

Part II: Law, Evidence and the Shaping of Judicial Truth

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THE PILICA CULTURAL CENTRE: A SITE OF RECURRENT GENOCIDE IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, 1992 AND 1995

Abstract: During the 1992–1995 aggression against the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the authorities of the self-proclaimed Republika Srpska (RS) established a system of camps and detention sites in which schools and cultural centres were used for mass detention, torture, and killing of civilians, primarily Bosniaks. This article analyses the systematic character, geographical spread, and scale of these crimes, with particular focus on Pilica as an example of recurrent genocide: in 1992 against Bosniaks from the Petkovci and Zvornik area, and in 1995 during the genocide in and around Srebrenica. By examining the chain of detention facilities, the study demonstrates the spatial, institutional, and methodological continuity of genocidal practices. It also addresses post-war attitudes toward these sites, marked by insufficient memorialisation, denial and relativisation of crimes, and the role of the educational system in sustaining a culture of genocide and war-crimes denial.

Keywords: *Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1992-1995, Pilica, detention camps, schools and cultural centres, genocide, memory politics*

KULTURNI CENTAR PILICA: MJESTO PONOVLJENOG GENOCIDA U BOSNI I HERCEGOVINI 1992. I 1995. GODINE

Sažetak: Tokom agresije na Republiku Bosnu i Hercegovinu 1992-1995. godine, vlasti samoproglašene Republike srpske (RS) uspostavile su sistem logora i mjesta zatočenja u kojima su škole i domovi kulture korišteni za masovno pritvaranje, mučenje i ubijanje civila, prvenstveno Bošnjaka. Ovaj rad analizira sistematski karakter, geografsku rasprostranjenost i razmjere ovih zločina, s posebnim fokusom na Pilicu kao primjer ponavljanog

genocida: 1992. godine nad Bošnjacima s područja Petkovaca i Zvornika te 1995. godine tokom genocida u Srebrenici i oko nje. Analizom lanca zatočeničkih objekata pokazuje se prostorni, institucionalni i metodološki kontinuitet genocidnih praksi. Rad se također bavi poslijeratnim odnosom prema ovim mjestima, obilježenim nedovoljnom memorijalizacijom, negiranjem i relativizacijom zločina, kao i ulogom obrazovnog sistema u održavanju kulture negiranja genocida i ratnih zločina.

Ključne riječi: *Bosna i Hercegovina, 1992–1995, Pilica, logori, škole i kulturni centri, genocid, politika sjećanja*

Introduction

According to the jurisprudence of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), detention encompasses acts involving the deprivation of an individual's liberty or arbitrary confinement in the absence of regular legal procedure. Even where a person is initially deprived of liberty on a lawful basis, the continued holding of that person after the expiration of such legal grounds likewise constitutes detention. This form of criminal conduct is referred to in ICTY case law as unlawful detention.[1]

Facilities of unlawful detention in armed conflicts can be divided into two basic types: concentration camps and death camps. Concentration camps are used for the unlawful confinement of members of specific groups, political opponents, or dissenters, as well as for the exploitation of forced labour, and are characterised by the systematic use of torture, ill-treatment, killings, and other forms of abuse. Death camps, by contrast, are facilities specifically designed for the mass killing of detainees, in which executions are carried out in a systematic manner.[2] In addition,

[1] ICTY, Trial Judgment in the case of Mićo Stanišić and Stojan Župljanin (IT-08-91-T), 27 March 2013, Vol. I, par. 77, 79.

[2] Steven L. Jacobs, "Concentration Camps and Death Camps," in Israel Charny (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Genocide*, Vol. 1: A–H, Jerusalem: The Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide, 1999, 152; "Concentration Camps," *Croatian Encyclopedia*, https://www.enciklopedija.hr/natuknica.aspx?ID=32708 (accessed 14 April 2022).

there exists a classification that includes labour camps, which were characteristic of the early Soviet period, collection or internment camps, and other types of facilities.[3]

Beverly Allen also introduced the category of rape camps, in which "Bosnian and Herzegovinian and Croatian women and girls were detained and systematically raped for weeks or months by Serbian members of the Yugoslav Army, irregular Serbian forces, Chetniks, and even civilians."[4] The United Nations Expert Commission, commonly referred to as the Bassiouni Commission, determined through its investigations that rape was a prevailing crime in concentration camps under RS control, committed primarily against Bosniak women. Perpetrators summarily killed victims who resisted rape, often carrying out executions in the presence of other female detainees. Acts of rape were likewise perpetrated in front of other detainees. These practices were intended to instil terror among the imprisoned population.[5] Allen explains that the purpose of rape camps was the infliction of torture preceding death or forced pregnancy. Female detainees were held in the camps until an advanced stage of pregnancy, after which they were released while still in a late phase of gestation.[6] The scale of rape and sexual abuse during the armed conflicts in the former Yugoslavia at the end of the twentieth century is authoritatively demonstrated by the fact that, in indictments issued by the ICTY up to mid-2001, crimes of rape and/or sexual violence constituted an integral part of the charges in 48 per cent of cases.[7]

The unlawful detention of Bosniaks and Croats in camps and other detention facilities during the 1992–1995 period was a planned and

[3] "Concentration Camps," *Croatian Encyclopedia.*

[4] Beverly Allen, *Rape Warfare. The Hidden Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1996, 65.

[5] Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 780 (1992), M. Cherif Bassiouni (Chairman), United Nations Security Council, S/1994/674/Add.2 (Vol. I), 28 December 1994, para. 230.

[6] B. Allen, *Rape Warfare. The Hidden Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina*, vi-vii.

[7] "Poslijeratna pravda i trajni mir u bivšoj Jugoslaviji", Tematski izvještaj komesara za ljudska prava Vijeća Evrope, Vijeće Evrope (Issue Paper of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Council of Europe), February 2012, 24.

deliberate policy of the RS leadership, rather than a collateral consequence of military operations. This conclusion is supported by the widespread and systematic nature of such practices throughout RS-controlled territory.[8] This crime constituted a key instrument in the implementation of the so-called "strategic goals" of Serbian policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, among which the objective of the "separation of peoples" and the creation of territorially homogeneous Serbian areas was of particular importance. At a session of the Assembly of Republika Srpska held on 12 May 1992, Radovan Karadžić presented six "strategic goals of the Serbian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina." This constituted, in effect, a platform for the subsequent actions of military, political, and police officials of the Serb Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Following an extended address, Karadžić stated that "the Serbian side in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Presidency, the Government, and the National Security Council have adopted strategic priorities of the Serbian people, that is, the strategic goals of the Serbian people." These goals were: "1. the separation of the Serbian people from the other two communities, state separation; 2. the establishment of a corridor between Semberija and Krajina… 3. the establishment of a corridor in the Drina River valley, that is, the elimination of the Drina as a border between two worlds; 4. the establishment of a border on the Una River and the Neretva River… 5. the division of the city of Sarajevo into a Serbian and a Muslim part and the establishment of effective state authority for each of these two parts and their constitutive states… 6. access of the Serb Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the sea."[9] At the sixteenth session of the Assembly of the Serbian People in Bosnia and Herzegovina, these goals were articulated both politically and militarily, and already in the spring of 1992 they were implemented on the ground through mass arrests, the

[8] See the judgments of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT), in particular the cases against Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić. Available at: https://www.icty.org/ (ICTY) and https://www.irmct.org/en (IRMCT).

[9] ICTY, *Zapisnik sa 16. sjednice Skupštine srpskog naroda u Bosni i Hercegovini*, Banja Luka, 12. maj 1992; ICTY, *Odluka o strateškim ciljevima srpskog naroda u Bosni i Hercegovini*, Skupština Srpskog naroda u Bosni i Hercegovini, broj: 02-130/92, Banja Luka, 12. maj 1992.

establishment of camps, systematic violence, forced displacement, and killings.[10] In the judgments of the ICTY and the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT), the existence of a joint criminal enterprise aimed at the permanent removal of the non-Serb population from territories proclaimed as "Serbian" has been confirmed.[11] Hikmet Karčić described this system as "the Bosnian Serb camp system," emphasising that the camps constituted a central instrument of a policy of mass crimes and genocide: sites of ceremonial brutality, humiliation, and the collective traumatization of survivors and their communities.[12] Footage from the Prijedor camps of Omarska and Trnopolje, which the global public saw in August 1992, revealed extreme conditions and acts of torture, but constituted only the tip of the iceberg of a broader network of detention facilities across RS-controlled territory.[13]

A particularly significant characteristic of this system was the use of schools and cultural centres—buildings that before the war had symbolised education, culture, and communal life—as sites of detention, torture, and killing. In many localities, after the crimes had been committed, the same buildings were cleaned, repainted, and returned to regular use, without any visible traces of the crimes documented by survivors and witnesses.[14]

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[10] See the judgments of the ICTY and the IRMCT referred to in this article, in particular those against Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić. IRMCT, *Appeals Judgment in the case of Radovan Karadžić* (MICT-13-55-ES), 20 March 2019; IRMCT, *Appeals Judgment in the case of Ratko Mladić* (MICT-13-56), 8 June 2021; ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Radovan Karadžić* (IT-95-5/18-T), Trial Chamber Judgment, 24 March 2016; ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Ratko Mladić* (IT-09-92), Trial Chamber Judgment, Vol. III of V, 22 November 2017.

[11] Ibid; See also: IRMCT, *Appeals Judgment* (MICT-15-96-A), 31 May 2023, paras. 562–563. Available at: https://www.irmct.org/sites/default/files/case_documents/IRMCT-Appeal-Judgement-Stanisic-Simatovic-ENG.pdf.

[12] Karčić, Hikmet, *Torture, Humiliate, Kill – Inside The Bosnian Serb Camp System*, University of Michigan Press, 2022.

[13] For further details, see: ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Radoslav Brđanin* (IT-99-36-T), Trial Chamber Judgment, The Hague, 1 September 2004; ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Milomir Stakić* (IT-97-24-T), Trial Chamber Judgment, The Hague, 31 July 2003; ICTY, Trial Judgment in the case of Radovan Karadžić.

[14] Muamer Džananović, "Schools and Cultural Centers as Detention Sites in the Territory of the Self-Proclaimed Republic of Srpska During the Aggression Against

The village of Pilica, located in the municipality of Zvornik, illustrates this pattern in a particularly dramatic manner: the Pilica Cultural Centre and the school in Pilica were used as camps and sites of mass crimes first in 1992 and then again in July 1995, in the context of the genocide against the Bosniaks of Srebrenica. Pilica thus becomes a symbol of the repetition of crimes in the same spaces and against the same targeted group—the Bosniaks of Eastern Bosnia.

This article is based on judicially established facts derived from judgments and evidentiary material of the ICTY and the IRMCT, as well as relevant case law of the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It draws on testimonies of survivors and witnesses given before international and domestic courts, including statements by direct participants that enable the reconstruction of modes of perpetration and patterns of command responsibility. The study also relies on archival sources, such as minutes and decisions of political and military bodies, military orders and telegrams, as well as forensic evidence concerning mass and secondary graves, exhumations, and DNA identifications. Secondary literature (books and scholarly articles) is used for the theoretical and conceptual framing of the camp system, genocidal policies, and the culture of memory, while media sources serve a supplementary illustrative function. In addition, the article incorporates the author's own research based on the analysis of court records, field findings, and the cross-referencing of multiple sources. Methodologically, the article employs a comparative approach through a parallel analysis of Pilica in 1992 and 1995, examining spatial, institutional, and methodological continuities of the crimes, thereby interpreting Pilica as a paradigmatic example of the repetition of genocidal practice.

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the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995)", *Bosnian Studies*, BZK Preporod, Sarajevo, 2024, Volume VIII, Number 1, p. 58-85.

Schools and Cultural Centres as Instruments of the Camp System

Already from the spring of 1992 onwards, a large number of camps and detention facilities were established in municipalities under Serb control, located in school buildings, cultural centres, sports halls, student dormitories, and workers' hostels.[15] In numerous municipalities - including Foča, Višegrad, Rogatica, Vlasenica, Bratunac, Zvornik, Ključ, Sanski Most, Prijedor, Bosanska Krupa, Brčko, Teslić, Doboj, and others - schools and cultural centres were transformed into sites of mass civilian detention.[16]

In the majority of these camps, the following patterns were recorded: mass arrests and the concentration of Bosniak and Croat civilians; systematic physical and psychological torture, including beatings, humiliation, sexual violence, and rape; selective killings and mass executions; starvation and inhumane conditions (overcrowded facilities, lack of water, sanitation, and medical care); and the "transit" of detainees to other camps (Manjača, Batković, Sušica, Omarska, etc.).[17]

In many cases, camps established in schools and cultural centres were organised during the summer recess: classrooms and halls were filled with detainees, and after the crimes were committed the premises were cleaned and prepared for the beginning of the new school year. Bosniak

[15] CTY, Trial Judgment in the case of Radovan Karadžić; ICTY, Trial Judgment in the case of Ratko Mladić; ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Momčilo Krajišnik* (IT-00-39-T), Trial Chamber Judgment, The Hague, 27 September 2006; ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Radoslav Brđanin* (IT-99-36-T), Trial Chamber Judgment, 1 September 2004, para. 449; ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Dragoljub Kunarac, Radomir Kovač and Zoran Vuković* (IT-96-23-T & IT-96-23/1-T), Trial Chamber Judgment, 22 February 2001, paras. 28–244; ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Milorad Krnojelac* (IT-97-25-T), Trial Chamber Judgment, 15 March 2002; ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Blagoje Simić, Miroslav Tadić and Simo Zarić* (IT-95-9-T), Trial Chamber Judgment, 29 October 2003, paras. 517, 549–561; ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Milan Lukić and Sredoje Lukić*, Trial Chamber Judgment, 20 July 2009; ICTY, *Prosecutor v. Mitar Vasiljević* (IT-98-32-T), Trial Chamber Judgment, 29 November 2002.

[16] Ibid; See also: M. Džananović, "Schools and Cultural Centers as Detention Sites."

[17] For further detail, see the relevant judgments of the ICTY and the IRMCT cited above.

and Croat children who had been killed or expelled did not return to these schools; instead, they were attended exclusively by Serbian children. Over the subsequent decades, generations of pupils in these schools received no systematic education about the crimes that had been committed there.[18]

In the remainder of the article, the focus will be on Pilica, where this pattern is particularly evident across two temporal moments: 1992 and 1995.

The Pilica Cultural Centre Camp, 1992

The crime committed against the Bosniaks of the Petkovci area represents a paradigmatic example of the perpetration of mass crimes against Bosniaks in the Zvornik region in 1992.[19] During April and May 1992, in the villages of Đulići, Klisa, Kučić Kula, and other surrounding localities in the Petkovci area, Serbian military and police structures carried out preparations for the mass expulsion and detention of Bosniaks, including disarmament, pressure, threats, selective arrests, and the establishment of a local guard network. On 1 June 1992, in the immediate vicinity of the school and the dam in Petkovci, several thousand Bosniak civilians were gathered and transferred to the Bijeli Potok site, located only a few kilometres away. There, able-bodied men and older male minors were separated from women, children, and the elderly. After being robbed, women, children, and the elderly were

[18] "Nekad mjesta susreta: Škole i domovi kulture u BiH poprišta egzekucija", *AA*, 11.06.2022,https://www.aa.com.tr/ba/balkan/nekad-mjesta-susreta-%C5%A-1kole-i-domovi-kulture-u-bih-popri%C5%A1ta-egzekucija/2611206, accessed 13 December 2025.

[19] For more detailed accounts of this crime and other mass crimes in the territory of the Zvornik municipality, see: Muamer Džananović, Elvedin Mulagić, *Zvornik 1992-1995: Genocid na kapiji Bosne (*Zvornik 1992–1995: Genocide at the Gate of Bosnia), Univerzitet u Sarajevu – Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava, Sarajevo, 2025, p. 535-627.

expelled in the direction of Kalesija, while more than 600 men were singled out and detained.[20]

This pattern of separation and selection of men of military age, combined with the deportation of the remaining family members, fully corresponds to the pattern of crimes that would be applied three years later in Srebrenica.

The men separated at Bijeli Potok were taken to the Karakaj Technical School Centre, where over the following five days they were subjected to severe torture and killings. According to survivor testimonies, the premises were overcrowded, with extremely high temperatures and a lack of ventilation, water, and food. As a result of the large number of detainees confined in a relatively small space and the summer heat, some individuals suffocated, while others were killed through beatings, selection, and executions.[21] It is estimated that approximately 200 civilians were killed in that school or died as a result of the severe conditions of detention and torture. The political and military leadership of the "Serb Municipality of Zvornik" decided that the surviving detainees from the Karakaj Technical School Centre be transferred, on 5 June 1992, to the camp in the Pilica Cultural Centre. On that occasion, the detainees were told that they were being taken for an "exchange," a typical pattern of false assurances used to maintain a minimum level of hope and control over prisoners. The detainees were held in the Pilica Cultural Centre camp "under the guard of the Pilica Territorial Defence unit, commanded by Dragan Mašanović," as established on the basis of statements by multiple witnesses.[22] The Serbian police escorted the convoy to the Pilica Cultural Centre, where a large number of Serbian soldiers were already waiting. Upon arrival at the camp, the detainees were forced to run into the cultural centre while shouting Serbian nationalist slogans, a practice that combined humiliation, coercion, and political symbolism.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Arhiv Fonda za humanitarno pravo Beograd (AFHP) (Archive of the Humanitarian Law Center, Belgrade), Viši sud u Beogradu, *Prvostepena presuda protiv Branka Grujića i Branka Popovića*, poslovni broj: K-Po2 br. 28/2010, 22. novembar 2010, 262.

According to the testimonies of Fedahija Hasanović and Vejsil Hamzić—the only two detainees who survived the final execution of this group of civilians—at least approximately 400 Bosniaks were detained in Pilica. Guards fired shots above their heads and confiscated money, gold, belts, and shoelaces, continuing the patterns of humiliation and looting that had begun in Karakaj.[23] During the three days of their detention, Hasanović states that the soldiers "sometimes merely fired shots into the ceiling."[24]

According to the testimonies, the extent of physical abuse was somewhat less severe than in the Karakaj Technical School Centre, but the conditions of detention remained below any minimum standard: lack of food, water, and sanitation; constant uncertainty and fear; occasional forced singing of Serbian nationalist songs; and the selection of individuals for execution. Vejsil Hamzić states that upon their arrival in "Pilica," "they called out Đulić Hamed (about 50 years old) and Softić Hakija (about 50 years old), saying that colleagues from their workplace were looking for them. As soon as the door closed behind them, two bursts of gunfire were heard, and we never saw them again."[25] On 8 June 1992, the remaining detainees in the Pilica Cultural Centre were informed that they would be transported for an "exchange" to Živinice, a municipality under the control of the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ARBiH). They were registered in front of the building, which for many reinforced the belief that a "genuine exchange" was to take place. Instead, the detainees were taken to a facility known as the "Gerina slaughterhouse," where a mass execution was carried out. According to the testimonies of the two survivors, the detainees were led into separate rooms, positioned facing the wall, and then fired upon. Of the entire group, only the two aforementioned detainees survived the execution.[26]

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[23] M. Džananović, E. Mulagić, *Zvornik 1992-1995.*

[24] Arhiv Tuzlanskog kantona (ATKT) (Tuzla Canton Archive), RBiH, Državna komisija za prikupljanje činjenica o ratnim zločinima - Živinice, br. 01-0328/93, *Izjava Fedahije Hasanovića (Statement of Fedahija Hasanović),* Živinice, 24 June 1993, 3.

[25] ATKT, RBiH, Državna komisija za prikupljanje činjenica o ratnim zločinima, br. 01-0222/93, *Izjava Vejsila Hamzića (Statement of Vejsil Hamzić),* Živinice, 26 March 1993, 2.

[26] M. Džananović, E. Mulagić, *Zvornik 1992-1995.*

In this crime, that is, in the related executions at the Karakaj Technical School Centre, the Pilica Cultural Centre, and the "Gerina slaughterhouse," at least 631 Bosniak men and boys were killed.[27] The scale of such a large number of deliberately detained and collectively killed victims within a very short period of time was not recorded elsewhere in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the 1992–1995 war until July 1995 and the genocide in Srebrenica.

Pilica 1995: The School and the Cultural Centre as Sites of Genocide

After the fall of the "safe area" of Srebrenica on 11 July 1995, men from Srebrenica were divided into two main groups: those who attempted to break through the forests toward territory under the control of the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ARBiH), and those who were captured in Potočari or during the breakout. Most of them were either killed immediately or detained in schools, cultural centres, and other facilities and subsequently killed in the following days.[28]

Based on survivor testimonies, it is possible to reconstruct the route taken by a number of captives to the school in Pilica. One witness describes being transported, after separation in Potočari, to the "old school" near the Vuk Karadžić School in Bratunac, where he was held for two days, before being placed on a bus on 15 July and taken to the school in Pilica. Another witness, captured on 13 July in Nova Kasaba as part of the column moving in what has been termed the "death march," was first detained at a football field, then transferred to Bratunac, and on 14 July taken to the sports hall of the Nikola Tesla Primary School in Kula, Pilica.[29]

[27] Ibid., p. 628.

[28] ICTY, Trial Judgment in the case of Radovan Karadžić; ICTY, Trial Judgment in the case of Ratko Mladić.

[29] ICTY, Richard J. Butler, Testimony on the Military Events in Srebrenica – Operation "Krivaja 95," 15 May 2000, 74.

In the early morning hours of 14 July 1995, the 1st Battalion of the Zvornik Brigade of the Army of Republika Srpska received a telegram from Brigade command instructing it to prepare the school gymnasium in Kula for the arrival of men from Srebrenica. In the afternoon, several fully loaded buses carrying captured Bosniaks, including boys, arrived in front of the school. They were ordered to enter the gymnasium in single file, with their hands placed on the backs of their heads. Once the gymnasium became completely overcrowded, some detainees were left in the corridors and on the staircases, while others remained locked inside the buses parked in front of the school, later to be distributed into classrooms.[30]

Conditions in the School in Pilica and the Transfer to the Branjevo Military Farm

Conditions in the school in Pilica were catastrophic. Due to the summer heat and the lack of ventilation, the gymnasium became stifling and filled with an unbearable stench; three detainees died as a result of suffocation. Throughout the entire period of detention in the school, small groups of detainees were repeatedly taken away. Bursts of gunfire and screams were heard, and bodies remained within the school complex. The soldiers ordered the detainees to surrender their watches, jewellery, and money, threatening that they must "collect 10,000 German marks or all would be killed." The prisoners handed over all the money they had.[31]

On the morning of 16 July, the detainees' hands were tied, and some were also blindfolded; during this process they were insulted and beaten with rifle butts. In an intercepted conversation at 11:11 a.m. on 16 July,

[30] For a more detailed account of the detention in the school in Pilica, the Pilica Cultural Centre, and the execution at the Branjevo Military Farm, see: Sud Bosne i Hercegovine (BiH) (Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina), Predmet Tužilaštva protiv Franca Kosa i ostalih (Stanka Kojića, Vlastimira Golijana i Zorana Goronje), *Prvostepena presuda* S1 1 K 003372 10 Krž od 15. juna 2012, 55-106; ICTY, Trial Judgment in the case of Ratko Mladić, Vol. III, paras. 2826–2863.

[31] ICTY, Trial Judgment in the case of Radovan Karadžić, Vol. IV, paras. 5416–5425.

Slobodan Slobodan Cerović informed Ljubiša Beara that he had received instructions "to carry out the triage of the captured prisoners," to which Beara replied that he "would not discuss this over the telephone." Before establishing direct contact with Beara, Cerović repeatedly referred to the "triage of the wounded."[32] The prisoners were transported by bus to a field at the Branjevo Military Farm, where members of the 10th Sabotage Detachment of the Army of Republika Srpska carried out mass executions, which, according to the testimony of Dražen Erdemović, lasted from 10 to 15 hours.[33] In the afternoon hours, a group of soldiers from Bratunac, under the command of Vidoje Blagojević, replaced the members of the sabotage detachment and continued the killings. The wounded were left to die slowly, and the few survivors managed to escape only after nightfall.[34]

The Killing of Detainees in the Pilica Cultural Centre

The Pilica Cultural Centre had already served as a camp under the control of the local Serb authorities in Zvornik in 1992, a fact particularly evident from the crime described in this article, in which more than 600 Bosniak men, including boys, were killed in that facility and in associated locations in Karakaj and the "Gerina slaughterhouse." The use of the same building as a camp in July 1995 thus constituted a continuation of an already established practice.

After the completion of the mass executions at Branjevo, members of the 10th Sabotage Detachment, including Franc Kos and Dražen

[32] ICTY, Predmet protiv R. Karadžića, dokaz br. P6400, ARBiH, Komanda 2. korpusa, str. pov. br. 13/16795, Presretnuti razgovor pukovnika Beare i Cerovića, 16 July 1995; See also: ICTY, Trial Judgment in the case of Radovan Karadžić, Vol. IV, para. 5426.

[33] Dražen Erdemović pleaded guilty and, in the appellate proceedings, was sentenced to five years' imprisonment. ICTY, *Appeals Judgment in the case of Dražen Erdemović* (IT-96-22-A), 7 October 1997.

[34] ICTY, R. Butler, "Testimony on the Military Events in Srebrenica (Revised): Operation 'Krivaja 95'," 73–74.

Erdemović, went to a café across the street from the Pilica Cultural Centre, where they encountered Vujadin Popović and Ljubiša Beara. Between the café and the cultural centre there was a checkpoint with a large number of Serbian military and civilian police officers and other soldiers. Erdemović and Kos saw bodies lying in front of the cultural centre, and Kos later testified that he also saw bodies inside the building itself.[35]

On 16 July 1995, members of the Bratunac Brigade executed hundreds of detainees in the Pilica Cultural Centre. There is no evidence that

[35] ICTY, Trial Judgment in the case of Radovan Karadžić, Vol. IV, para. 5440.
In addition, several proceedings concerning the genocide committed in and around Srebrenica in 1995 have been conducted before the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. For a more detailed overview of these proceedings, see: https://www.sudbih.gov.ba/Court/Practice (accessed 12 January 2024).
In one of the proceedings against members of the 10th Sabotage Detachment for the crime of genocide, Franc Kos was sentenced to 35 years' imprisonment. In the same case, Stanko Kojić was sentenced to 32 years, Vlastimir Golijanin to 15 years, and Zoran Goronja to 30 years' imprisonment. Sud BiH, Predmet br: S11K00337210Krl, Drugostepena presuda protiv Franca Kosa, Stanka Kojića, Vlastimira Golijanina i Zorana Goronje, 15 February 2013.
In a case transferred by the ICTY to the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Milorad Trbić, an officer in the security and intelligence affairs body of the Zvornik Brigade, was finally sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment in connection with events during the genocide in and around Srebrenica in July 1995. SUD BIH, Predmet br: S11K01779114Krž, Drugostepena presuda protiv Milorada Trbića, 19 January 2015.
More generally, a number of proceedings concerning the genocide committed in and around Srebrenica in 1995 have been conducted before the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina. For a more detailed overview of these proceedings, see: https://www.sudbih.gov.ba/Court/Practice (accessed 12 January 2024).
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anyone survived. According to Erdemović's testimony, the executions in the cultural centre were carried out by soldiers from Bratunac who had previously participated in the executions at the Branjevo Military Farm.[36]

At the moment when the soldiers from Bratunac arrived, they stated that "everything was finished." Beara subsequently said: "The state will be grateful to you for this."[37] This statement not only illustrates the level of cynicism involved but also clearly indicates that the perpetrators believed they were acting in accordance with "state interests."

Post-war investigations and forensic examinations of the facility enabled a precise reconstruction of the manner in which the executions were carried out, corroborating testimonial accounts of mass executions in the Pilica Cultural Centre. Forensic inspections at the Pilica Cultural Centre established the presence of human blood, bones, and tissue adhered to the walls and floor, as well as extensive damage caused by the use of firearms and explosives. Bullet impacts on the wall behind the stage indicate that detainees were brought onto the stage and executed there, while soldiers positioned on the cultural centre's balcony fired upon them. Spent cartridges were found on the first floor, on the staircases, around the stage, and in front of the building.[38]

Concealment of Victims' Remains

Most of those killed in the Karakaj school, the Pilica Cultural Centre, and the "Gerina slaughterhouse" in 1992 were exhumed from the mass grave known as "Crni vrh." This was a secondary mass grave discovered in 2003 in the territory of the municipality of Zvornik. A total of 629 sets of human remains were exhumed from the Crni vrh mass grave.[39]

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[36] ICTY, R. Butler, "Testimony on the Military Events in Srebrenica (Revised): Operation 'Krivaja 95'."
[37] ICTY, Trial Judgment in the case of Radovan Karadžić, Vol. IV, paras. 5440–5442.
[38] Ibid.
[39] M. Džananović i E. Mulagić, *Zvornik 1992-1995.*, p. 627-633.

The primary Branjevo grave was exhumed in September 1996. It contained incomplete bodies of at least 132 individuals, all male, aged between 15 and 61 years. In 130 cases, the cause of death was gunshot wounds. Forensic teams established a link between Branjevo and the secondary Čančarski put 12 graves through soil analysis and DNA testing. By 2012, 1,597 victims from the Čančarski put graves connected to the primary Branjevo grave had been identified, and in total, combining both locations, 1,735 victims who had previously been detained in the school and the Pilica Cultural Centre were identified. Estimates indicate that between 1,000 and 1,500 people were killed in the school in Pilica and at the Branjevo Military Farm, and approximately 500 Bosniaks in the Pilica Cultural Centre.[40]

Pilica as a Symbol of Recurrent Crimes: Continuities, 1992–1995

An analysis of the crimes committed against the Bosniaks of the Petkovci area in 1992 and of the genocide against the inhabitants of Srebrenica in 1995 demonstrates that Pilica was not an "accidental" location, but rather a key node of genocidal practice. Spatial continuity is evident in the use of the same sites—namely the school in Petkovci, Bijeli Potok, the Karakaj Technical School Centre, the Pilica Cultural Centre, the dam in Petkovci, the Branjevo Military Farm, and Kamenica—in two temporally separate yet logically connected cycles of crime. Institutional continuity is likewise apparent, as similar or identical structures operated in both periods, including local military and police units, the Zvornik and Bratunac Brigades of the Army of Republika Srpska, in coordination with higher command levels of the East Bosnian Corps, the Drina Corps, and the Main Staff of the Army of Republika Srpska.[41] Methodological continuity is reflected in mass arrests, the separation of men, their

[40] ICTY, Trial Judgment in the case of Radovan Karadžić, Vol. IV, paras. 5453–5464; ICTY, R. Butler, "Testimony on the Military Events in Srebrenica (Revised): Operation 'Krivaja 95'," 122.

[41] M. Džananović i E. Mulagić, *Zvornik 1992-1995*, p. 535-627; 928-933

concentration in schools and cultural centres, starvation and torture, mass executions, and the organised exhumation and relocation of bodies.

Pilica, a locality in the Zvornik area, thus stands as a symbol of an evil so profound that it offers a condensed illustration of the process stretching from local mass crimes in 1992 to the culmination of genocide in 1995. In the same cultural centre in which Bosniaks from the Petkovci and Zvornik areas were killed in 1992, Bosniaks detained during the Srebrenica genocide were murdered three years later. In this way, a symbolic continuity was marked in the most brutal manner: the same space, the same walls, the same floor, the same balcony - yet new columns of victims.

Culture of Memory, the Educational System, and the "Normalization" of Sites of Crime

After the war, most schools and cultural centres that had been used as camps and sites of execution during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina were returned to their regular civilian functions, often without any markers indicating the crimes committed within them. In some cases, such as Pilica, memorials to fallen Serb fighters were erected in front of these buildings, while the victims of the camps remain invisible.[42]

Such an approach contributes to a culture of denial and relativisation of crimes. Within the educational system of Republika Srpska, there is no systematic teaching about the Srebrenica genocide or about the camps in which mass crimes against Bosniaks and Croats were committed. On the contrary, narratives are often promoted that deny genocide, minimise the number of victims, or portray convicted war criminals as "heroes." In schools that functioned as camps during the war, children today are taught

[42] "Dom kulture u Pilici jedan od ključnih dokaza kontinuiteta zločina nad Bošnjacima", AA, 7 June 2024, https://www.aa.com.tr/ba/balkan/dom-kulture-u-pilici-jedan-od-klju%C4%8Dnih-dokaza-kontinuiteta-zlo%C4%8Dina-nad-bo%C5%A1njacima-/3242717, 25 December 2025.

according to mono-ethnic curricula, surrounded by iconography that affirms those who participated in crimes, while learning virtually nothing about the crimes themselves.[43] In this way, classrooms that once served as sites of detention and torture are assigned a "neutral" or even heroised function, while the dark history of these spaces is pushed into collective silence. As for cultural centres that were used as sites of detention and killing during the war, most of them are today in a state of ruin. Institutional denial of genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina continues, and the competent authorities in Republika Srpska do not permit even the memorialisation of sites of mass suffering. Such practices prevent the recognition and marking of places that bear witness to crimes committed against Bosniaks. Most recently, the Ministry of the Interior of Republika Srpska did not allow staff of the Srebrenica Memorial Center to carry out the planned filming of the Pilica Cultural Centre, a key site of genocide in the Podrinje region.[44]

By contrast, court judgments, scholarly research, survivor testimonies, and forensic findings clearly demonstrate that confronting the past - including the memorialisation of schools and cultural centres as sites of crime - is essential for building a just peace and trust.

[43] "Škole u Podrinju bili su logori smrti, a generacijma novih učenika danas to niko ne pominje", Klix.ba, 19 June 2022, https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/skole-u-podrinju-bili-su-logori-smrti-a-generacijma-novih-ucenika-danas-to-niko-ne-pominje/220619022, 14 November 2025.

[44] "MUP RS zabranio snimanje Doma kulture u Pilici, Memorijalni centar upozorava na opasnost za istraživanje genocida", Euronews, 18 January 2025, https://euronews.ba/bosna-i-hercegovina/aktuelno/10266/mup-rs-zabranio-snimanje-doma-kulture-u-pilici-memorijalni-centar-upozorava-na-opasnost-za-istrazivanje-genocida, accessed 13 November 2025.

Conclusion

Schools and cultural centres, once focal points of education and culture, became key instruments of genocidal policy during the aggression against the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. They were used as camps, sites of torture, and places of mass execution, and were subsequently, in many cases, returned to everyday use without adequate marking or education about the crimes committed there.

The case of Pilica, and in particular its Cultural Centre, demonstrates how crime can literally be repeated in the same spaces: in 1992 against the Bosniaks of the Zvornik area, and in 1995 against Bosniaks from Srebrenica and other municipalities who were killed during the genocide. In both instances, the cultural centre and the school in Pilica functioned as central nodes of the camp system, while sites such as the "Gerina slaughterhouse," the Branjevo Military Farm, and the "Valley of Graves" in Kamenica revealed the scale and planned nature of the crimes.

Without acknowledgement of these facts, without reform of the educational system in Republika Srpska, without an end to genocide denial, and without serious memorialisation of buildings that served as camps and execution sites, there can be no real prospects for stable democracy and coexistence in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Appropriate memorialisation of the Pilica Cultural Centre and the school in Pilica, as well as other schools and cultural centres used as camps, together with education of younger generations about this dark past, is necessary in order to preserve the memory of the victims and to prevent the recurrence of similar crimes in the future.

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PRIZNANJA PRED MEĐUNARODNIM KRIVIČNIM SUDOM ZA BIVŠU JUGOSLAVIJU: STUDIJA SLUČAJA "SREBRENICA 1995"

Sažetak: Među sedamnaest optuženih za ratne zločine pred Međunarodnim krivičnim sudom za bivšu Jugoslaviju (MKSJ) u Hagu, koji su priznali krivicu, posebno se izdvajaju tri slučaja vezana za učešće u zločinima počinjenim na području Srebrenice u julu 1995. godine koje su počinili pripadnici Vojske Republike srpske (VRS). Krivicu su priznali Dražen Erdemović, pripadnik 10. diverzantskog odreda; Momir Nikolić, pomoćnik komandanta za bezbjednost i obavještajne poslove Bratunačke brigade; te Dragan Obrenović, zamjenik komandanta Zvorničke brigade. Uz njih, značajan je i slučaj Radislava Krstića, načelnika štaba Drinskog korpusa, koji je postao prva osoba osuđena za genocid pred MKSJ-om. Iako se tokom samog postupka nije izjasnio krivim, Krstić je u više navrata, dok je izdržavao kaznu zatvora, priznao vlastitu odgovornost.

Analiza se usmjerava na pravne i društveno-političke implikacije ovih priznanja, okolnosti pod kojima su ona data te na narative koje su optuženi oblikovali u svojim iskazima. Poseban akcenat stavljen je na značaj njihovih svjedočenja u postupcima protiv drugih optuženika za genocid, čime je doprineseno utvrđivanju činjenica i direktnom učešću vojnog vrha RS-a u počinjenju genocida. Također, u radu se razmatra i širi društveni kontekst, odnosno utjecaj koji su ova priznanja imala na javni diskurs u Bosni i Hercegovini.

Ključne riječi: *Srebrenica, MKSJ/ICTY, priznanja, genocid, presude, diskurs*

GUILTY PLEAS BEFORE THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL FOR THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA: THE "SREBRENICA 1995" CASE STUDY

Abstract: Among the seventeen individuals indicted for war crimes before the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague who entered guilty pleas, three cases stand out in particular in relation to participation in crimes committed in the Srebrenica area in July 1995 by members of the Army of the Republika Srpska (VRS). Guilty pleas were entered by Dražen Erdemović, a member of the 10th Sabotage Detachment; Momir Nikolić, Assistant Commander for Security and Intelligence of the Bratunac Brigade; and Dragan Obrenović, Deputy Commander of the Zvornik Brigade. In addition to these, the case of Radislav Krstić, Chief of Staff of the Drina Corps, is also significant, as he became the first person convicted of genocide before the ICTY. Although he did not plead guilty during the proceedings themselves, Krstić acknowledged his own responsibility on several occasions while serving his prison sentence.

The analysis focuses on the legal and socio-political implications of these admissions of guilt, the circumstances under which they were made, and the narratives the accused constructed in their testimonies. Particular emphasis is placed on the importance of their testimonies in proceedings against other defendants accused of genocide, thereby contributing to the establishment of facts and demonstrating the direct involvement of the Republika Srpska military leadership in the commission of genocide. The paper also examines the broader social context, specifically the impact these admissions had on public discourse in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Keywords: *Srebrenica, ICTY, guilty pleas, genocide, judgments, discourse*

Uvod

U ranim fazama djelovanja MKSJ-a, hapšenje Dražena Erdemovića, pripadnika 10. diverzantskog odreda VRS-a, predstavljalo je jedan od prvih važnih trenutaka u njegovom radu. Erdemović je istovremeno postao i prvi optuženi koji je priznao krivicu, čime je otvoren presedan u procesnoj praksi MKSJ-a. Tokom narednih godina, sporazumi o

priznanju krivice postupno su se razvili u institucionalizirani mehanizam tužilačke strategije, omogućavajući optuženima da priznaju odgovornost za pojedine tačke optužnice u zamjenu za smanjenje kazne i obavezu saradnje sa Sudom. U sklopu nagodbe s optuženim, Tužilaštvo je zauzvrat odustajalo od preostalih optužbi. Ovakva praksa našla je primjenu u slučajevima Momira Nikolića iz Bratunačke brigade i Dragana Obrenovića iz Zvorničke brigade, dok je Radislav Krstić, načelnik štaba Drinskog korpusa i prva osoba osuđena za genocid pred MKSJ-om, naknadno – tokom izdržavanja kazne – javno priznao svoje učešće u genocidu u Srebrenici.

Institucionalizacija sporazuma o priznanju krivice, naročito u prvim godinama 2000-ih, imala je dalekosežne posljedice. Osim što je utjecala na ishode pojedinačnih postupaka, ova procesna praksa predstavljala je važan instrument u ostvarivanju šire strategije Tribunala, usmjerene ka uspostavljanju individualne odgovornosti za ratne zločine počinjene u Bosni i Hercegovini. Na taj način, sporazumi o priznanju krivice prevazišli su svoju funkciju procesne ekonomije i postali jedno od ključnih sredstava u izgradnji pravnog i historijskog okvira razumijevanja genocida i drugih teških zločina.

Priznanje krivice Dražena Erdemovića

"Prije svega, poštovani Sude, želio bih reći da mi je žao svih žrtava, ne samo tih žrtava što su stradale tada na tom imanju, nego i svih žrtava, nema veze koje su nacionalnosti, koje su stradale u bivšoj Bosni i Hercegovini. Ja sam izgubio dosta dobrih prijatelja raznih nacionalnosti, sve zbog tog rata, a uvjeren sam da ti svi moji prijatelji nisu bili za rat, isto kao i ja. Uvjeren sam da nisu imali drugog izlaza. Jednostavno, to im je bilo sve. Došao je taj rat, nisu imali drugog izlaza, kao i ja. Zbog mog slučaja, zbog svega što se desilo, ja sam sâm, bez ičijeg hapšenja, bez ičijega – kako da kažem – ispitivanja i pritiska priznao, još prije nego što sam uhapšen u Saveznoj Republici

Jugoslaviji, novinarki. Tada, tom prilikom sam joj rekao da želim da idem pred Međunarodni sud, da pomognem Međunarodnom sudu da shvati šta se u bivšoj Jugoslaviji radilo sa običnim ljudima, ovakvim kao što sam ja. Kao što je rekao gospodin Babić, u Saveznoj Republici Jugoslaviji sam isto priznao na sudu sve. Organima državne bezbjednosti sam priznao sve, isto kao i vama ovdje. Gospodin Babić, prvi put kada je došao ovdje, rekao mi je: 'Dražene, možeš li da promijeniš odluku? Ne znam šta se može dogoditi, šta će biti.' Ja sam rekao, zbog žrtava, zbog moje savjesti, zbog moga života, moga dijeta, moje supruge, ja ne mogu da poništim ono što sam rekao novinarki i što sam rekao u Novom Sadu. Znači, zbog moje duše, zbog mog poštenja, zbog žrtava, zbog svega. Iako sam znao da će moja porodica, moji roditelji, moj brat, moja sestra imati problema zbog toga, ja nisam to htio da poništim. Zbog svega što se desilo, jako mi je žao, ali ništa nisam mogao učiniti. Kada sam mogao, to sam i učinio. Hvala."[1]

Ovim je riječima Dražen Erdemović, pripadnik 10. diverzantskog odreda VRS-a, 20. novembra 1996. priznao krivicu za počinjene zločine u "zaštićenoj zoni UN-a" Srebrenica u julu 1995. godine. Bilo je to prvo priznanje krivice u ovome sudu. Erdemović je, kako je navedeno u optužnici i dokazano u procesu protiv njega, u samo jednom danu, 16. jula 1995. godine, učestvovao u ubistvu oko 1.200 civila na poljoprivrednom dobru Branjevo i oko 500 civila u društvenom domu "Pilica". Rekao je da je sam ubio između 70 i 100 civila.[2]

Nakon što je priznao krivicu, osuđen je na kaznu zatvora u trajanju od deset godina. Osuđen je za tačku *ubistvo* kao kršenje zakona i običaja ratovanja. Uloživši žalbu na visinu kazne, Žalbeno vijeće mu je zatvorsku kaznu smanjilo na pet godina. Prebačen je u Norvešku na izdržavanje kazne. Budući da mu je u zatvorsku kaznu uračunato i vrijeme provedeno u pritvoru, 13. augusta 1999. godine odobreno mu je prijevremeno puštanje na slobodu.[3]

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[1] Snimak i tekst priznanja krivice Dražena Erdemovića: https://www.icty.org/bcs/sid/212

[2] ICTY, IT-96-22, Pred pretresnim vijećem, Tužilac protiv Dražena Erdemovića, Den Haag, 5. mart 1998, paragraf 15.

[3] https://www.icty.org/x/cases/erdemovic/cis/bcs/cis_erdemovic_BCS.pdf

S obzirom na to da je s Tužilaštvom sklopio sporazum o priznanju krivice, Erdemović se obavezao i da će svjedočiti u drugim predmetima pred MKSJ-om. Tako je, između ostalog, svjedočio u predmetu protiv Radislava Krstića 2001. godine, Slobodana Miloševića 2003, Zdravka Tolimira 2010, Radovana Karadžića 2012. i Ratka Mladića 2013. godine. Tako je na suđenju Karadžiću, koji je sudu pokušao dokazati da je Erdemović priznao krivicu samo da bi izbjegao višegodišnju zatvorsku kaznu, izjavio da je priznao krivicu jer mu je tog dana (16. jula 1995. godine, op. a.), kada je učestvovao u masovnom pogubljenju civila, "život uništen i da je to učinio zbog svih ostalih osoba koji su stradali toga dana".[4] Važno je napomenuti da je Erdemović na suđenju Slobodanu Miloševiću objasnio i kako su pripadnici 10. diverzantskog odreda VRS-a bili na obuci u kasarnama Jugoslavenske vojske u Pančevu te da ih je Vojska Jugoslavije (VJ) snabdijevala oružjem.[5]

Neposredno nakon odsluženja zatvorske kazne, Erdemović je dobio novi identitet i mjesto boravka te je, da ne bi bio identifikovan u sredini u kojoj sada živi, svjedočio pod svojim pravim imenom, ali uz mjere zaštite lika i glasa.[6] Nikada nije utvrđeno pod kojim identitetom i u kojoj državi živi, ali je, prema pisanju medija, 2009. godine tražio prijem u državljanstvo Republike Hrvatske.[7]

[4] "Svjedok pokajnik: Tog dana mi je uništen život", *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, 28. 2. 2012, https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/svjedok_pokajnik_tog_dana_mi_je_unisten_zivot/24499089.html; "Erdemović svjedočio kako su za šest sati ubili 1200 Srebreničana", *Večernji list*, 2. 7. 2013, https://www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/erdemovic-svjedocio-kako-su-za-sest-sati-ubili-1200-srebrenicana-578412

[5] "Erdemović, svjedok protiv Miloševića: Ubijali smo na smjenu", *Voice of America*, 25. 8. 2003, https://ba.voanews.com/a/a-29-a-2003-08-25-13-1-86202507/686791.html

[6] https://arhiva.sensecentar.org/vijesti.php?aid=8097

[7] "Ubojica iz Srebrenice traži hrvatsko državljanstvo", *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 3. 2. 2009,https://slobodnadalmacija.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/ubojica-iz-srebrenice-trazi-hrvatsko-drzavljanstvo-38927

Momir Nikolić – "insajder", saradnik Tužilaštva i švedski državljanin

Optužnica koju je MKSJ 1995. godine podigao protiv Momira Nikolića, teretila ga je za: genocid ili, alternativno, saučesništvo radi počinjenja genocida; istrebljivanje, ubistvo, progone na političkoj, rasnoj i vjerskoj osnovi, nehumana djela (prisilno premještanje) (zločini protiv čovječnosti) i ubistvo (kršenja zakona i običaja ratovanja).[8]

On je nakon Erdemovića drugi optuženik koji je priznao krivicu za zločine u Srebrenici. Budući da se radi o pomoćniku komandanta za bezbjednost i obavještajne poslove Bratunačke brigade VRS-a, njegovo je priznanje samim time značajnije. No, nagodba koju je sklopio značila je i da je Tužilaštvo odustalo od prvih tačaka optužnice – genocid i saučesništvo radi počinjenja genocida. Tokom izjašnjavanja o krivici, Nikolić je izjavio:

> "Časni sude, želim ovom izjavom da vam na najjednostavniji i najkraći način predočim svoje razloge zbog kojih sam se izjasnio krivim po tački pet optužnice. Odluku sam donio sam, bez bilo kakvog pritiska, pretnje ili nagovaranja od strane mojih advokata ili Tužilaštva, da izađem pred ovaj časni sud i priznam da se u Srebrenici dogodio zločin u kojem sam i sam učestvovao i za koji očekujem adekvatnu kaznu. Iskreno želim da pred ovim časnim Sudom i javnim mnijenjem, a posebno bošnjačkim, izrazim svoje duboko i iskreno žaljenje i kajanje zbog zločina koji se dogodio i da se izvinim žrtvama, njihovim porodicama i bošnjačkom narodu zbog svog učešća u tom zločinu. Svjestan sam da mrtve ne mogu vratiti, da porodicama svojim priznanjem bol ne mogu ublažiti, ali sam ovim činom želio da doprinesem da se napokon sazna potpuna istina o Srebrenici i njenim žrtvama, da državni organi Republike Srpske i svi pojedinci koji su učestvovali u zločinu slijede moj put, priznaju svoje učešće i krivicu, predaju se i odgovaraju za ono što su uradili. Priznanjem sam želio da pomognem Sudu i Tužilaštvu da dođe do potpune istine i da svjedoke, žrtve zločina, njihove majke, braću i sestre ne izlažem novim patnjama

[8] https://www.icty.org/x/cases/nikolic/cis/bcs/cis_nikolic_momir_BCS.pdf

i da ih ne podsjećam na tu užasnu tragediju. Ja mislim, časni Sude, da moje priznanje predstavlja jedan od značajnih koraka ka izgradnji povjerenja i zajedničkog života u Bosni i Hercegovini, i nakon ovog priznanja kazne koja mi slijedi, a kada kaznu izdržim, moja je želja da se vratim u moj rodni grad Bratunac i tamo živim sa svim drugim narodima u miru i slozi kao i prije izbijanja ratnih sukoba."[9]

Nakon nagodbe sklopljene s Tužilaštvom, Nikolić je proglašen krivim za progone na političkoj, rasnoj i vjerskoj osnovi (zločini protiv čovječnosti): učestvovao je u ubistvima hiljada civila Bošnjaka, uključujući muškarce, žene, djecu i starije osobe; učestvovao je u okrutnom i nečovječnom postupanju prema civilima Bošnjacima, uključujući teška premlaćivanja u Potočarima i zatočeničkim objektima u Bratuncu i Zvorniku; terorizirao je civile Bošnjake u Srebrenici i Potočarima; uništavao je ličnu imovinu i predmete koji su pripadali Bošnjacima; prisilno je premještao Bošnjake iz srebreničke enklave.[10] Pretresno vijeće osudilo ga je na zatvorsku kaznu u trajanju od 27 godina. Nikolić je uložio žalbu, zbog čega mu je Žalbeno vijeće smanjilo kaznu na 20 godina zatvora. Ubrzo nakon izricanja presude, prebačen je u Finsku na izdržavanje kazne.[11]

Postizanje nagodbe s Tužilaštvom značilo je i da će biti svjedok u predmetima protiv drugih optuženika za genocid i druge zločine na području Srebrenice.[12] Kao dio sporazuma o priznanju krivice, Nikolić se obavezao da svjedoči u drugim predmetima koji se odnose na genocid u Srebrenici. Pojavio se kao svjedok protiv Ratka Mladića, Dragana Jokića (načelnika inženjerije Zvorničke brigade VRS), Vidoja Blagojevića (komandanta Bratunačke brigade), Vujadina Popovića (načelnika bezbjednosti Drinskog korpusa VRS), Ljubiše Beare (načelnika Uprave za bezbjednost VRS), Drage Nikolića (načelnika bezbjednosti

[9] Snimak i tekst priznanja krivice Momira Nikolića: https://www.icty.org/bcs/sid/218

[10] Kompletan tekst presude: ICTY, IT-02-60/1-S, Pred sekcijom A pretresnog vijeća, Tužilac protiv Momira Nikolića, Den Haag, 2. decembar 2003.

[11] https://www.icty.org/x/cases/nikolic/cis/bcs/cis_nikolic_momir_BCS.pdf

[12] U jednom dijelu presude Pretresnog vijeća, Nikolić detaljnije opisuje hronologiju zbivanja u Srebrenici u julu 1995. godine. ICTY, IT-02-60/1-S, Pred sekcijom A pretresnog vijeća, Tužilac protiv Momira Nikolića, *Aneks B: Izjašnjenje o činjenicama i prihvatanje krivice*.

Zvorničke brigade VRS) i Radovana Karadžića. U svojim iskazima, Nikolić je potvrdio umiješanost Ratka Mladića i Radovana Karadžića u zločine, navodeći da je lični predstavnik Karadžića bio prisutan kada je donesena odluka o pogubljenju svih zarobljenika. Njegovo svjedočenje predstavljalo je prvi iskaz iznutra o planiranju i izvršenju masovnih ubistava.[13] Tokom svjedočenja protiv Mladića, Nikolić se prisjetio detalja kojim je potvrdio da je komandant VRS-a dao odobrenje za masovna pogubljenja: "General Mladić je krenuo prema vozilu i ja sam ga pitao: Generale, šta će se zapravo desiti s tim ljudima? Želim da kažem ovdje da ni tada nisam vjerovao da će ići tamo gdje su željeli; ne vjerujem ni sada, jer, naravno, znam šta se desilo. General Mladić se, odnosno, nasmijao, nije ništa rekao, samo je ovako rukom mahnuo i krenuo prema vozilu", izjavio je, demonstrirajući pokret rukom u visini kuka, s lijeva na desno.[14]

Nikolić je oslobođen 2014. godine odlukom Tribunala. Međutim, ta je vijest objavljena tek godinu dana poslije.[15] Nakon puštanja, dobio je boravišnu dozvolu u Švedskoj, gdje su mu supruga i djeca pronašli zaposlenje. Također je zabilježeno da je viđen u porodičnoj kući u naselju Repovac kod Bratunca. Prema navodima lokalnih medija, jedan Bošnjak koji ga je prepoznao izjavio je da je Nikolić tvrdio kako je "riješio svoje životne probleme", hvaleći se da je osigurao boravak u Švedskoj, da su mu djeca zaposlena u javnom sektoru, a supruga također radi.[16]

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[13] Bosnian Serb War Criminal Secretly Freed in 2014, *Balkan Trnasitional Justice*, 13. 10. 2015, https://balkaninsight.com/2015/10/13/former-bosnian-serb-officer-granted-early-release-10-13-2015/; "Nastavljeno suđenje oficirima vojske i policije RS", *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, 5. 5. 2009, https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/1621674.html; "MUP Srbije učestvovao u napadu na Srebrenicu", *Sense – Centar za tranzicijsku pravdu*, 19. 9. 2003; https://arhiva.sensecentar.org/vijesti.php?aid=1639

[14] "Pokajnik na suđenju Mladiću: Osjećam se užasno zbog Srebrenice", *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, 3. 6. 2013, https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/pokajnik-na-sudjenju-mladicu-osjecam-se-uzasno-zbog-srebrenice/25005699.html

[15] "Haški tribunal: Momir Nikolić završio služenje kazne", *N1 BiH*, 13. 10. 2015, https://n1info.ba/vijesti/a64978-Haski-tribunal-Momir-Nikolic-zavrsio-sluzenje-kazne/

[16] "Momir Nikolić dobio boravak u Švedskoj, žena i djeca i posao", *Dnevni avaz*, 17. 10. 2015, https://avaz.ba/vijesti/bih/200611/momir-nikolic-dobio-boravak-u-svedskoj-zena-i-djeca-i-posao

“Bit ću sretan ako moje svjedočenje pomogne porodicama žrtava...”

Nagodbe s Tužilaštvom u MKSJ-u u pogledu genocida u Srebrenici nastavljene su. Dan nakon Momira Nikolića, žaljenje je izrazio i Dragan Obrenović. Značaj njegovog priznanja leži u činjenici da je bio zamjenik komandanta brigade s područja općine Zvornik, na čijoj je teritoriji ubijen najveći broj civila.

Ovim riječima Obrenović je izjavio da se kaje:

“Na teritoriji zemlje u kojoj sam rođen, pucanje iz vatrenog oružja bilo je uobičajeno prilikom proslave rođenja muškog djeteta. Ti pucnji govore sve – šta znači novi muški član porodice i šta se od njega očekuje – snaga, zaštita; da bude ratnik, vojnik, glava porodice, kako se kaže u našim krajevima. Nažalost, kada je počelo drugo pucanje u bivšoj Jugoslaviji, pucanje u ratu, bilo je normalno da svaki muškarac, svako muško dijete, obuče uniformu, uzme oružje i krene da štiti svoju domovinu, svoj narod i, na kraju, svoju porodicu. To se od njega očekivalo. To je bila njegova uloga, sveta uloga. Nije bilo izbora. Mogao si biti ili vojnik ili izdajnik. Na početku rata činilo se kao da je rat i sve što on donosi nemoguće, da se to zapravo ne dešava nama, i da će sve biti riješeno za nekoliko dana, i da će naša generacija konačno dobiti priliku. Nismo ni primijetili kako nas je uvukao vrtlog međuetničke mržnje i kako komšije više nisu mogle živjeti jedna pored druge, kako se smrt uselila u našu blizinu, i nismo ni shvatili da smo se na nju navikli. Smrt je postala naša stvarnost. Nažalost, postala je svakodnevica. Ko je prije toga mogao povjerovati da će užasi rata postati naša svakodnevna stvarnost? Ko je mogao povjerovati da će postati dio naših života? Okruženi užasima, navikli smo se na njih i nastavili tako živjeti. Među tim užasima dešavale su se stvari koje su činili ljudi koji su se međusobno poznavali, ljudi koji su do juče živjeli gotovo kao porodica. U Bosni komšija znači više od rođaka. U Bosni, piti kafu s komšijom je ritual, a to smo pogazili i zaboravili. Izgubili smo sebe u mržnji i brutalnosti. I u tom vrtlogu

nesreće i užasa dogodio se užas Srebrenice. Nalazim se pred vama, časni sudije, jer želim izraziti svoje kajanje. Dugo sam razmišljao i uvijek me prati ista misao – krivica. Teško mi je izgovoriti ovu istinu. Kriv sam za sve što sam tada učinio. Pokušavam sve to izbrisati i postati ono što tada nisam bio. Također sam kriv i za ono što nisam učinio – što nisam pokušao zaštititi te zarobljenike, bez obzira na privremenu prirodu moje tadašnje funkcije. Stalno se pitam – šta sam još mogao učiniti, a nisam? Hiljade nevinih žrtava su stradale. Iza njih su ostali grobovi, izbjeglice, opća razaranja, nesreća i bijeda. Nosim dio odgovornosti za to. Nesreća postoji na svim stranama i ostaje kao upozorenje da se to nikada više ne smije ponoviti. Moje svjedočenje i priznanje krivice treba da ukloni svaku kolektivnu krivicu s mog naroda, jer je riječ o individualnoj krivici – o krivici čovjeka po imenu Dragan Obrenović. Ostajem pri tome. Odgovoran sam za to. Za tu krivicu osjećam kajanje i zbog nje se izvinjavam žrtvama i njihovim sjenama. Bit ću sretan ako to doprinese pomirenju u Bosni, ako komšije ponovo mogu pružiti ruke jedni drugima, ako naša djeca mogu ponovo zajedno igrati i imati pravo na priliku. Bit ću sretan ako moje svjedočenje pomogne porodicama žrtava, ako ih mogu poštedjeti ponovnog svjedočenja i proživljavanja užasa i boli. Moja je želja da moje svjedočenje pomogne da se ovo više nikada ne ponovi, ne samo u Bosni, nego bilo gdje u svijetu. Za mene je sada prekasno, ali za djecu koja danas žive u Bosni nije, i nadam se da će im ovo biti opomena. U našim ratnim stradanjima niko nije izašao kao pobjednik; svi sada pate. Na svim stranama i dalje postoji bol. Pobjedu je odnijela nesreća i jad, posljedica slijepe mržnje. Duh te nesreće i dalje lebdi nad našim bosanskim brdima koja su toliko propatila, i trebat će godine da se izbrišu tragovi ovog užasnog rata, da ponovo dim izlazi iz dimnjaka i ognjišta, i možda decenije da se izliječe rane u dušama ljudi. Ako moje priznanje, moje svjedočenje i moje kajanje, moj pokušaj suočavanja sa samim sobom, doprinesu bržem zacjeljivanju tih rana, ispunio sam svoju dužnost – dužnost vojnika, borca, čovjeka i oca. Na kraju želim zahvaliti Tužilaštvu na

njihovim naporima da se utvrdi istina i da se postigne pravda. Želim zahvaliti vama, časni sudije, što ste me pažljivo slušali tokom mog svjedočenja. Trudio sam se da na svako pitanje odgovorim što tačnije i iskrenije. Hvala vam."[17]

U optužnici koju je podigao MKSJ, Dragan Obrenović je optužen za saučesništvo u genocidu; ubistvo, istrebljenje, progone i nečovječna djela (zločine protiv čovječnosti); kao i za ubistvo kao kršenje zakona ili običaja ratovanja. U decembru 2003. godine osuđen je na 17 godina zatvora, nakon što je proglašen krivim za zločine protiv čovječnosti po tački progona na političkoj, rasnoj i vjerskoj osnovi. Presudom je utvrđeno da je Obrenović pomagao i podržavao planiranje, pripremu i izvršenje progona, te da nije spriječio svoje podređene da počine krivična djela niti ih je kasnije sankcionisao. Progoni u kojima je učestvovao sprovedeni su kroz više oblika: ubistvo hiljada bošnjačkih civila, uključujući muškarce, žene i djecu; pogubljenje oko 1.200 Bošnjaka na vojnoj farmi Branjevo kod Zvornika; zlostavljanje i silovanje žena odvedenih u školu u Luci kod Tišće, nakon što su odvojene od svojih porodica u Potočarima; te zlostavljanje i pogubljenje muškaraca i dječaka koji su također bili "odabrani". Počevši od 12. jula 1995. godine, i tokom čitavog perioda egzekucija, pripadnici VRS-a i Ministarstva unutrašnjih poslova (MUP) sistematski su oduzimali i uništavali ličnu imovinu i identifikacione dokumente bošnjačkih zarobljenika.[18] Ni Obrenović ni njegov branilac nisu uložili žalbu na presudu te je 2004. godine prebačen u Norvešku na izdržavanje kazne.[19] Međutim, nagodba koju je sklopio s Tužilaštvom značila je da će biti povučena tačka optužnice koja ga tereti za genocid.

Kao dio sporazuma o priznanju krivice, Obrenović je svjedočio kao svjedok optužbe u predmetima protiv Vidoja Blagojevića i Dragana Jokića.[20] U svom svjedočenju protiv ove dvojice eksplicitno je naveo

[17] Kompletan tekst i snimak priznanja krivice dostupni na: https://www.icty.org/bcs/sid/219

[18] ICTY, IT-02-60, Pred pretresnim vijećem, Tužilac protiv Dragana Obrenovića, Den Haag, 10. decembar 2003.

[19] https://www.icty.org/x/cases/Obrenović/cis/bcs/cis_Obrenović_BCS.pdf

[20] "Mladić 'naredio' bosanske masakre", IWPR, 30. 4. 2005, https://iwpr.net/sr/global-voices/mladic-naredio-bosanske-masakre

da je likvidacije bošnjačkih civila naredio komandant VRS-a Ratko Mladić.[21] Osim toga, dao je detaljnu izjavu MKSJ-u u kojoj je hronološki opisao događaje, počevši od ulaska snaga VRS-a u Srebrenicu, preko zločina nad bošnjačkim civilima širom istočne Bosne u narednim danima i sedmicama, do uloge viših oficira i informacija koje je dobio o masovnim grobnicama.[22]

Slično kao i Dražen Erdemović, Obrenović je od Tribunala dobio posebne mjere zaštite, uključujući novi identitet. Pušten je na slobodu 2011. godine i od tada živi u inostranstvu sa svojom porodicom.[23]

"To je bio genocid…"

Radislav Krstić bio je prvi optuženik koji je pred MKSJ-om osuđen za genocid. Sudsko vijeće ga je 2001. godine proglasilo krivim za genocid i saučesništvo u genocidu, a ovu presudu je 2004. godine potvrdilo i Žalbeno vijeće. Pored genocida, Krstić je osuđen i po pet tačaka za zločine protiv čovječnosti – istrebljenje, ubistvo, progon, deportaciju i nečovječna djela (prisilno premještanje) – kao i po četiri tačke za kršenje zakona ili običaja ratovanja. Osuđen je na kaznu zatvora u trajanju od 35 godina.[24]

Iako tokom suđenja nije priznao krivicu, Krstić je dospio u javnost dok je služio kaznu u Poljskoj, nakon što je uputio pismo u kojem je zatražio prijevremeno oslobađanje. Pismo, objavljeno 13. jula 2024. godine, ima poseban značaj jer sadrži priznanje genocida počinjenog u

[21] "Likvidaciju naredio general Mladić", *Sense – Centar za tranzicijsku pravdu*, 2. 10. 2003, https://arhiva.sensecentar.org/vijesti.php?aid=1659

[22] ICTY, IT-02-60/2-S, Pred pretresnim vijećem, Tužilac protiv Dragana Obrenovića, Aneks B: Izjava o činjenicama i prihvatanje odgovornosti, Den Haag, 5. mart 1998.

[23] "Srebrenica Genocide Convicts Return to Freedom", *Balkans transitional justice*, 7. 7. 2017, https://balkaninsight.com/2017/07/07/srebrenica-genocide-convicts-return-to-freedom-07-06-2017/

[24] ICTY, IT-98-33, Pred pretresnim vijećem, Tužilac protiv Radislava Krstića, Den Haag, 2. august 2001; ICTY, IT-98-33, Pred žalbenim vijećem, Tužilac protiv Radislava Krstića, Den Haag, 19. april 2004.

Srebrenici. U njemu se Krstić obratio mladim generacijama koje žive na prostoru bivše Jugoslavije, pozivajući ih da razmisle i da ne dopuste da se takvi zločini ikada više ponove: "Nikada više rat, nikada više smrt zato što je neko druge vjere, druge nacije ili drugog uvjerenja, nikada više genocid."[25] Krstić je također priznao svoje učešće u udruženom zločinačkom poduhvatu, čiji je cilj bio prisilno uklanjanje bošnjačkih civila iz Potočara između 10. i 13. jula 1995. godine. Vlastitim riječima priznao je da su njegove radnje doprinijele stvaranju humanitarne krize koja je prethodila prisilnom premještanju žena, djece i starijih osoba iz Srebrenice, te da je to činio svjestan ubistava, silovanja, premlaćivanja i zlostavljanja civila u Potočarima. Pismo je završio izražavajući želju da, ukoliko bude oslobođen, posjeti Potočare, pokloni se žrtvama i zatraži oprost.[26] Na Krstićevo "pokajničko" pismo, uslijedile su reakcije. Iz Srebrenice su pojedinci poručili da bi Krstić trebao otkriti lokacije preostalih masovnih grobnica te navesti i druge saučesnike u zločinima.[27] Memorijalni centar Srebrenica iznio je stav da Krstić treba svoja saznanja o počinjenim zločinima podijeliti s Tužilaštvom. Također je navedeno da "ipak, uzimamo sve s rezervom i vidjet ćemo šta će to donijeti ukoliko mu se odobri puštanje na prijevremenu slobodu. Znamo da presuđeni ratni zločinci u svoju korist odluče da priznaju genocid u Srebrenici i druge ratne zločine, ali kada se nađu na slobodi, tu priču promijene, tako da sve ovo uzimamo s rezervom i skepticizmom".[28] Nepovjerenje u iskrenost Krstićevih riječi izrazile su i majke čiji su sinovi ubijeni u toku genocida. Stava su da se radi o "trikovima u pokušaju da izađu iz zatvora" i da "on to sigurno ne radi od srca, nego samo da bi dobio pomilovanje".[29]

[25] "Pismo Radislava Krstića: Priznao genocid u Srebrenici", *Al Jazeera Balkans*, 13. 11. 2024; https://balkans.aljazeera.net/news/balkan/2024/11/13/pismo-radislava-Krstića-priznao-genocid-u-srebrenici

[26] Ibid.

[27] "Reakcije Srebreničana na pokajanje Krstića: 'Neka kaže gdje su preostale masovne grobnice'", *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, 13. 11. 2024, https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/reakcije-srebrenicana-pokajanje-Krstić-radislav/33200937.html

[28] "Memorijalni centar Potočari: Očekujemo da Krstić s Tužilaštvom BiH podijeli sve što zna o ratnim zločinima", *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, 13. 11. 2024, https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/bih-Potočari-krsic/33200752.html

[29] "Dio srebreničkih majki o pismu zločinca Krstića – 'To su njihovi trikovi, pokušavaju izaći iz zatvora'", *Oslobođenje*, 13. 11. 2024.

Stavovi i reakcije na priznanja krivice

Kada optuženi prizna krivicu, zadatak je Sudskog vijeća da osigura da su ispunjeni svi proceduralni i suštinski uslovi. To uključuje utvrđivanje da je priznanje dato dobrovoljno, nedvosmisleno i s punom sviješću o njegovom značenju i mogućim posljedicama, te potvrđivanje postojanja dovoljne činjenične osnove – odnosno odgovarajućih dokaza koji potvrđuju da je optuženi zaista počinio djela na koja se priznanje odnosi.[30]

Neposredno nakon što je uvedena praksa mogućnosti nagodbe optuženog s Tužilaštvom, porodice ubijenih iz Srebrenice izrazile su svoje nezadovoljstvo takvom praksom u djelovanju MKSJ-a.[31] Praksa MKSJ-a, prema kojoj je optuženi mogao sklopiti sporazum s Tužilaštvom – priznajući krivicu po određenim tačkama optužnice u zamjenu za povlačenje drugih – pokazala se kao "mač s dvije oštrice". U mnogim slučajevima ostale su sumnje u to da li su oni koji su prihvatili takve sporazume zaista osjećali iskreno kajanje zbog svojih djela ili su to učinili prvenstveno kako bi izbjegli dugogodišnje zatvorske kazne.[32] Stepen u kojem su osobe koje su priznale odgovornost zaista doživjele iskreno kajanje ostaje neizvjestan. Takvi osjećaji mogu biti prolazni i površni, ali mogu prerasti i u trajnu psihološku patnju, zavisno od težine zločina i snage savjesti pojedinca.[33] Teško je utvrditi jesu li priznanja krivice bila motivisana moralnim suočavanjem ili nadom u blažu kaznu. Ono što je, međutim, jasno jeste da su ovi sporazumi često predstavljali rezultat pregovora između tužilaca i branilaca, proces koji na kraju nije dao očekivane rezultate.[34]

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[30] Ljiljana Helman, "Pravda na nišanu rizika", u: *Hag među nama: zbornik tekstova*, ur. Slobodan Kostić, Beograd: Fond za humanitarno pravo, 2005, 321.

[31] https://www.sensecentar.org/hr/node/1361

[32] Jasmin Medić, "Obmana ili iskrenost? Dva priznanja pred Međunarodnim krivičnim sudom za bivšu Jugoslaviju", *Pregled: Časopis za društvena pitanja*, Vol. 64, No. 2, Sarajevo: Univerzitet u Sarajevu, 2022, 52.

[33] Ismet Dizdarević, "Osjećanje krivice i kajanja planera i izvršilaca genocida", *Pregled: Časopis za društvena pitanja*, br. 1–2, Sarajevo: Univerzitet u Sarajevu, 2007, 229.

[34] Edina Bećirević, "Pogodbe haškog tužilaštva sa optuženim ratnim zločincima: Restorativna pravda ili samo trgovina?", *Kriminalističke teme: Časopis za*

Razvoj priznanja krivice pred MKSJ-om prolazio je kroz nekoliko faza. Početna faza bila je obilježena određenim optimizmom u pogledu njihovog doprinosa suočavanju s prošlošću u Bosni i Hercegovini. Emir Suljagić – u to vrijeme dopisnik sarajevskog sedmičnika *Dani* iz Haga, a danas direktor Memorijalnog centra Srebrenica – opisao je svoja tadašnja očekivanja da će detaljna priznanja onih koji su imali komandne funkcije tokom genocida u Srebrenici "otvoriti prostor u medijima koji ranije nije postojao, prostor koji bi omogućio drugima da priznaju svoja nedjela; da će ta priznanja olakšati Srbima koji nisu učestvovali u zločinima da razgovaraju sa svojim nesrpskim susjedima". Ipak, kako je kasnije priznao, "nije bilo tako jednostavno; očigledno sam bio previše naivan".[35] Za Suljagića su priznanja krivice ipak ostavila dubok lični dojam, iako njihovi širi efekti nisu ispunili očekivanja. Prisjećajući se trenutka kada je jedan od optuženih za Srebrenicu priznao krivicu, izjavio je: "Plakao sam u sudnici. Kada je optuženi rekao: 'Priznajem krivicu', otrčao sam na sprat, zaključao se u toalet i plakao. Bio je to iskren osjećaj olakšanja čuti da neko poput njega kaže: 'Da, ubili smo sedam ili osam hiljada ljudi.'"[36] Suljagić je zaključio da priznanja krivice mogu imati vrijednost ako ih Tužilaštvo koristi u dobroj vjeri – bilo radi pribavljanja novih dokaza, bilo radi pružanja određene satisfakcije žrtvama. Međutim, kada se njima prvenstveno rukovodi politički interes, institucionalna praktičnost ili želja za smanjenjem troškova, takvi sporazumi često daju suprotne rezultate, jer odražavaju pritiske vremena i resursa, a ne iskreno traganje za pravdom.[37]

Nesporna je činjenica da Bosna i Hercegovina nije u dovoljnoj mjeri iskoristila institut priznanja krivice kao mehanizam suočavanja s prošlošću. Ovaj nedostatak često se pripisuje nacionalističkim političkim agendama koje se opiru priznavanju posljedica takvih izjava, jer one

kriminalistiku, kriminologiju i sigurnosne studije, br. 1–2, Sarajevo: Fakultet za kriminalistiku, kriminologiju i sigurnosne studije, 2004, 23-24.

[35] Diane Orentlicher, *That someone guilty be punished: The impact of the ICTY in Bosnia*, New York: Open Society Justice Initiative, 2010, 63.

[36] Ibid., 63.

[37] "Da li će 'moderni Nurnberg' završiti kao skupi i propali eksperiment?", *Dani*, 26. 9. 2003.

samom svojom prirodom potvrđuju da su zločini zaista počinjeni.[38] U današnjem političkom kontekstu Bosne i Hercegovine jasno je da priznanja krivice i prateći izrazi kajanja počinilaca nisu imali stvarni utjecaj na procese suočavanja s prošlošću. To je naročito vidljivo u entitetu RS i u Srbiji, gdje političke elite ulažu značajne resurse u negiranje počinjenih zločina. Relativizacija zločina u Srebrenici i negiranje sudski utvrđenog genocida i dalje su posebno izraženi.[39]

Zaključak

Nakon priznanja krivice i izraženog kajanja, Dražen Erdemović, Momir Nikolić i Dragan Obrenović dobili su pravo na promjenu identiteta i mogućnost preseljenja izvan teritorije bivše Jugoslavije. Budući da nemaju obavezu da sarađuju s istražnim organima u Bosni i Hercegovini niti da javno govore o svom učešću u agresiji na Republiku Bosnu i Hercegovinu i genocidu nad bošnjačkim stanovništvom, i dalje je izuzetno teško procijeniti autentičnost njihovog kajanja. Njihova priznanja mogu se tumačiti ili kao iskreni čin savjesti ili kao pragmatični sporazum o priznanju krivice postignut s Tužilaštvom radi izbjegavanja osuđujuće presude za genocid. Vrlo je vjerovatno da će pitanje jesu li njihovi postupci pred MKSJ-om bili motivisani moralnim promišljanjem ostati nerazjašnjeno.

Međutim, jasno je da su ova priznanja sistematski ignorisana u nacionalističkim krugovima Srbije i RS-a, gdje su negiranje genocida i historijski revizionizam sve prisutniji unutar političkih elita. U takvim narativima, osobe koje su priznale krivicu često su stigmatizirane kao izdajnici, bez obzira na to jesu li njihova kajanja ili izvinjenja bila iskrena.

[38] "Krstićevo priznanje genocida nedovoljno iskorišteno za suočavanje s prošlošću", *Detektor*, 5. 12. 2024, https://detektor.ba/2024/12/05/Krstićevo-priznanje-genocida-nedovoljno-iskoristeno-za-suocavanje-s-prosloscu/

[39] Jasmin Medić, Hikmet Karčić, Muamer Džananović, Elvedin Mulagić, *Politika revizionizma: Negiranje zločina i genocida u Bosni i Hercegovini 1992–2025. (istraživačka studija)*, Sarajevo: Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava, 2025, 11-36.

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PRIKRIVANJE GENOCIDA I DRUGIH OBLIKA ZLOČINA PROTIV ČOVJEČNOSTI I MEĐUNARODNOG PRAVA - SLUČAJ IZMJEŠTANJA MASOVNIH GROBNICA U SREBRENICI I PRIJEDORU

Apstrakt: Agresija na Republiku Bosnu i Hercegovinu rezultirala je genocidom i drugim oblicima zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava koje su počinile srpske vojne i policijske snage. U ovom radu bavit ćemo se masovnim grobnicama pronađenim na području Srebrenice i Prijedora, pokušajima prikrivanja zločina te izmještanjem posmrtnih ostataka žrtava iz primarnih u druge grobnice. Kroz rad želimo ukazati na sistematsko, plansko i organizirano prikrivanje masovnih ubijanja i ulogu najviših vojnih, policijskih i političkih struktura Republike srpske u vremenu agresije na Republiku Bosnu i Hercegovinu. Cilj rada jeste uporediti i ukazati na sličnost u postupanju te pokazati da ove radnje i aktivnosti nisu rezultat pojedinačnih odluka, nego da su donesene na najvišem nivou. Osim toga, ukazat ćemo i na posljedice ovih radnji u smislu otežanog pronalaska, ekshumacije i identifikacije žrtava.

Ključne riječi: *Srebrenica, Prijedor, masovne grobnice, prikrivanje zločina, izmještanje grobnica, pronalazak, ekshumacije i identifikacije*

CONCEALING OF GENOCIDE AND OTHER CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY AND INTERNATIONAL LAW – THE CASE OF MASS GRAVE RELOCATIONS IN AND AROUND SREBRENICA AND PRIJEDOR

Abstract: The aggression against the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina resulted in genocide and other forms of crimes against humanity and international law committed by Serbian military and police forces. This paper will address the mass graves found in the areas of Srebrenica and

Prijedor, the attempts to cover up the crimes, and the relocation of the victims' remains from primary to secondary graves. Through this work, we aim to highlight the systematic, planned, and organized concealment of mass killings and the role of the highest military, police, and political structures of the Republic of Srpska during the aggression against the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Our goal is to compare and point out the similarities in the actions and to show that these actions and activities were not the result of individual decisions but were made at the highest level. Additionally, we will highlight the consequences of these actions in terms of the difficulty of finding, exhuming, and identifying the victims.

Keywords: *Srebrenica, Prijedor, mass graves, crime concealment, grave relocation, discovery, exhumation, and identification*

Uvod

U ovom radu analizira se prikrivanje zločina genocida i drugih oblika zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava kroz izmještanje masovnih grobnica. Poseban fokus stavlja se na izmještanje masovnih grobnica u Srebrenici i Prijedoru. U toku agresije na Republiku Bosnu i Hercegovinu posmrtni ostaci žrtava prikrivani su u pojedinačnim, zajedničkim i masovnim grobnicama. U cilju prikrivanja dokaza o počinjenju genocida i drugih oblika zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava zločinci su posmrtne ostatke žrtava premještali s primarnih lokacija na više različitih lokacija. "U osvajačkim (agresorskim) ratovima i drugim oružanim sukobima (međunarodnog ili unutrašnjeg karaktera), u kojima je prisutno masovno stradanje civila (i na genocidnoj osnovi), a izvršioci zločina nastoje se što prije osloboditi (tijela) žrtava, ukop je nezakonito rješenje da se prikriju materijalni dokazi o zločinima protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava i izbjegne krivična odgovornost."[1] Na mjestima na kojima su vršena masovna ubijanja tokom agresije na Bosnu i Hercegovinu, pored primarnih grobnica u

[1] Smail Čekić, Meldijana Arnaut-Haseljić, Bećir Macić, *Masovne grobnice u Bosni i Hercegovini: Sigurna zona Ujedinjenih nacija Srebrenica*, Sarajevo, Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava Univerziteta u Sarajevu, 2010, 45.

kojima su prvobitno bila zakopana tijela žrtava, nastale su i sekundarne, pa čak i tercijarne grobnice, kako bi se prikrio zločin premještanjem tijela iz primarnih grobnica u novoiskopane grobnice.[2] "Ovu praksu planirale su, organizirale i izvodile vojne, policijske i civilne vlasti, a posebno je to bilo izraženo na prostoru Srebrenice i Prijedora, ali i na još nekim lokacijama u zapadnoj i istočnoj Bosni, gdje su srpske vlasti pokušavale prikriti tragove masovnih zločina i genocida."[3] Prikrivanje dokaza o genocidu i drugim oblicima zločina u Srebrenici i Prijedoru nije bilo akt pojedinaca, nego se radilo o dobro koordiniranim, planskim i organiziranim aktivnostima u koje su bili uključeni najodgovorniji i najviši predstavnici političkih, vojnih i policijskih struktura Republike srpske. O masovnim zločinima i potrebi njihovog prikrivanja govori se u brojnim dokumentima. U jednoj službenoj zabilješci pripadnika Službe državne bezbjednosti navedeno je: "Nakon prestanka sukoba na ovim područjima jedan broj lica koji je učestvovao u sahranjivanju poginulih napustilo je naše područje konvojima, puštanjem iz logora Manjača i na drugi način. Pod uticajem muslimanskih propagandnih medija u inostranstvu i medija pojedinih zapadnih zemalja njihova saznanja iskorištena su za propagandno djelovanje u cilju uspješnije borbe, pojačanje međunarodnog pritiska itd. protiv srpskog naroda. U muslimanskim glasilima 'Ljiljan', 'BH EXCLUSIV' navedeni su neki konkretni lokaliteti popraćeni su komentarima koji imaju za cilj da srpski narod prikažu genocidnim. MJERE RDB: u cilju suprotstavljanja ovim pojavama, odnosno blagovremeno spriječavanje korištenja pomenutih događaja u propagandne svrhe i pritiske prema srpskom narodu cijenimo da treba predložiti da odgovarajuće institucije animiraju nadležne organe u S. Mostu na saniranju spornih lokaliteta."[4]

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[2] Potvrdu navedenog nalazimo u slučaju 14-godišnjeg dječaka Senada Beganovića iz Srebrenice koji je ubijen u Srebrenici, a čiji su posmrtni ostaci pronađeni u četiri masovne grobnice: Glogova, Budak, Zeleni Jadar i Zeleni Jadar 5. Još drastičniji primjer je slučaj Kadrije Musića čiji su posmrtni ostaci pronađeni u pet različitih masovnih grobnica.

[3] Mujo Begić, Senadin Ramić, Zlatan Ališić, *Tomašica - masovna grobnica*, Sarajevo, Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava Univerziteta u Sarajevu, 2015, 50.

[4] AIIZ, inv. br. 5-1900, CRDB Banja Luka, Detašman Prijedor, op. radnik: 132, 28. mart 1994, *SLUŽBENA ZABILJEŠKA*.

Nakon što je međunarodna javnost saznala o masovnim ubijanjima i postojanju masovnih grobnica, započelo je izmještanje i prikrivanje posmrtnih ostataka, posebno nakon zauzimanja zaštićene zone UN-a Srebrenica. "Nezakonito odnošenje tijela i nezakoniti napori uklanjanja tijela (prekopavanje grobnica), u cilju prikrivanja dokaza o genocidu i drugim oblicima zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava, predstavlja teško kršenje međunarodnog humanitarnog prava."[5]

Prikrivanje masovnih grobnica u Prijedoru

U Prijedoru je ubijeno 3.176 Bošnjaka i Hrvata. Ubijeno je 102 djece.[6] Do sada su posmrtni ostaci ubijenih pronađeni na 507 lokacija, od čega su 73 masovne grobnice. Posmrtni ostaci ubijenih pronađeni su u Bosni i Hercegovini, u Republici Hrvatskoj i u Republici Srbiji. Nakon ubijanja zločinci su žrtve zakopavali ili ostavljali na otvorenom. Žrtve su pronalažene u šumama, prirodnim jamama, u rudnicima, septičkim jamama, u spaljenim kućama, bunarevima za vodu i na drugim mjestima. Nakon što je osnovan Međunarodni krivični sud za bivšu Jugoslaviju (dalje: MKSJ),[7] najviši vojni, policijski i politički predstavnici Republike srpske u strahu od otkrivanja zločina donijeli su odluku da započnu premještanje-prikrivanje posmrtnih ostataka žrtava. Namjeru o premještanju masovnih grobnica na području općine Prijedor Simo Drljača saopćio je Ratku Mladiću te policijskim i visokim vojnim oficirima. Namjera je bila da se izmjesti najveća masovna grobnica u Prijedoru – Tomašica.

Ratko Mladić u svom dnevniku od 27. maja 1993. godine navodi:

"Pre četiri-pet dana došao je Simo Drljača, raniji načelnik SUP-a Prijedor, uputio ga je Ministar MUP RS-a, a došao je u vezi rudnika

[5] Čekić, Arnaut-Haseljić, Macić, *Masovne grobnice u Bosni i Hercegovini*, 64-65.

[6] *Ni krivi ni dužni: Knjiga nestalih općine Prijedor*, Prijedor, Udruženje Prijedorčanki "Izvor", 2000.

[7] Vijeće sigurnosti Rezolucijom 827 od 25. maja 1993. godine osnovalo je Međunarodni krivični sud za bivšu Jugoslaviju.

Tomašica kod Prijedora, gdje su oni ranije zatrpali 5.000 muslimanskih leševa. Drljača je došao da to utrapi nama, a oni bi da se toga reše (spaljivanjem, mljevenjem ili na neki drugi način). Tu ima svakakvih leševa, a u to su uvukli Subotića. U timu je Drljača, on je bio nosioc dok se to radilo, tu je na sastanku bio general Subotić, Arsić, Drljača, ja i Mile Matijević iz SUP-a Banje Luke. Molim vas za vas stav oko toga.-Pukovnik Bogojević."[8]

Iz navedenog je vidljivo da je tadašnji ministar unutrašnjih poslova znao za masovnu grobnicu Tomašica i da su svi iz vojnih, policijskih i političkih struktura RS-a znali za zločine u Prijedoru i masovnu grobnicu Tomašica. Posebno je uočljivo kako su planirali da se "reše" posmrtnih ostataka žrtava. Planirali su spaljivanje, mljevenje ili na neki drugi način da unište posmrtne ostatke žrtava i tako prikriju dokaze o izvršenom zločinu. General Mladić u dnevniku navodi da je Simo Drljača "bio nosioc dok se to radilo", pri tome misleći na izvršene zločine nad Bošnjacima i Hrvatima s područja općine Prijedor. Uprkos saznanjima o tome da je Simo Drljača, tadašnji načelnik SJB Prijedor, bio upoznat s veličinom zločina, političko i policijsko rukovodstvo RS-a nagradilo ga je višim funkcijama (zamjenik savjetnika ministra i zamjenik načelnika Centra javne bezbjednosti Banjaluka, načelnik Centra javne bezbjednosti i savjetnik ministra unutrašnjih poslova RS).

Premještanje posmrtnih ostataka žrtava iz masovne grobnice Tomašica počelo je početkom jula 1993. godine. Iz iskaza učesnika u premještanju – vozača kamiona ili bagera koji su prekopavali grobnicu – ovim procesom rukovodio je Simo Drljača. Za ovu aktivnost bili su angažirani bageri iz rudnika Omarska i kamioni kiperi. Plan je bio da se posmrtni ostaci izmjeste u napuštenu rudničku jamu površinskog kopa na Jakarinoj kosi u blizini Ljubije. Udaljenost između Tomašice

[8] Dana 27. maja 1993. godine, na sastanku s komandom 1. krajiškog korpusa, pukovnik Stevo Bogojević, načelnik bezbjednosti 1. krajiškog korpusa, tražio je od generala Ratka Mladića "rješavanje 5.000 muslimanskih leševa". Dnevnik Ratka Mladića je dokazni predmet u suđenju pred MKSJ. Prijepis dnevnika objavljen na http://www.jugiliks.com/images/Pdf/hag/md2/P01483transcript-pdf (pristup: 30. oktobar 2024).

i Jakarine kose iznosi oko 35 kilometara. Kako je vršeno premještanje, jedan svjedok navodi:

> "U mom selu je bilo oko 30 kuća. To je u blizini rudnika Tomašica, možda jedan i po kilometar udaljeno. U taj rudnik su dovođeni i ubacivani leševi. Osim što su ubacivali leševe, tu su i ubijali ljude. Dovozili su tu mrtve i žive koje su ubijali. Često smo znali, kad smo radili na polju, ostaviti sve i slušati rafale. Čuli bi pucnjavu i bagere koji bi sve to zatrpavali. Kad bi dovodili te ljude trebalo bi pažljivo slušati, tada bi se čuo zvuk kamiona. Oni su ih pretežno dovodili oko 17:00 to je bilo u srpnju. Te rupe gdje su ih bacali bile su velike jer se tu kopala ruda. Do tih rupa moglo se doći na oko 10 metara. Niko od Srba nije krio šta se tu radilo. (...) Kasnije, početkom srpnja 1993., vršili su vađenje tih leševa. Vidjela sam tu kninsku policiju, jer sam išla u školu, preko ceste. Svi su bili maskirani, svi su bili nekako grozni. Pričali su ti njihovi Srbi da se ni po danu ne zovu imenom. Po tome sam znala da su iz Knina. Oni su po noći vadili te leševe od 21:00 do 5:00 i prevozili. Pitala sam Karu kud ih vode, rekao mi je:'Idu u Kozarac, ali nikom o tome ni riječi.' Kasnije se toliki smrad osjećao od tih leševa da se nije moglo disati. Do rudničke kapije se osjećalo malo, a od kapije do škole je bilo grozno."[9]

Posmrtni ostaci žrtava izmješteni su na lokalitet Jakarine kose u periodu od 1. do 12. jula 1993. godine. Dio posmrtnih ostataka koje zločinci nisu izmjestili, ekshumiran je 2004, 2006. i 2013. godine.[10] U toku premještanja tijela uveden je policijski sat u Prijedoru i zabranjeno je kretanje. Stanovništvo hrvatske nacionalnosti koje je živjelo u okolini Jakarine kose privremeno je iseljeno. Postavljeni su policijski punktovi na cesti Ljubija – Stara Rijeka i onemogućen je saobraćaj i kretanje pješaka. Ova blokada trajala je do završetka izmještanja. Kada su kamioni dovozili posmrtne ostatke s Tomašice, istresali su ih u rudničku jamu. Kada su završili s prevoženjem, minirali su i urušili dio površinskog kopa

[9] Mujo Begić, *Genocid u Prijedoru*, Zagreb, Sarajevo, Hrvatski memorijalno-dokumentacijski centar domovinskog rata; Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava Univerziteta u Sarajevu, 2015, 660-661.

[10] Begić, Ramić, Ališić, *Tomašica-masovna grobnica*, 70.

kako bi prikrili posmrtne ostatke. Od siline eksplozije popucala su stakla na prozorima kuća u blizini, a neke su kuće i oštećene. Mještani koji su privremeno iseljeni nakon povratka kućama mogli su osjetiti intenzivan miris s mjesta na koje su prikrili posmrtne ostake.

Nakon izmještanja Tomašice donesena je odluka da se izmjesti masovna grobnica Kevljani. Ova grobnica nalazila se u selu Kevljani, u muslimanskom mezarju u blizini džamije koja je porušena. Žrtve ukopane u tu grobnicu bili su zatočenici koncentracionog logora Omarska. Između 25. maja i 15. juna 1999. izvršena je ekshumacija. Pronađena su 72 kompletna tijela. Na lokaciji su pronađeni dijelovi tijela žrtava koje su izmještene u masovnu grobnicu Stari Kevljani. Pretpostavlja se da je izmješteno pola grobnice. "Prema tome, razumna procjena sveukupnog broja tijela koja su se prvobitno nalazila na tom području kreće se oko 144."[11] Prilikom ekshumacije na lokalitetu su pronađeni povezi za ruke, čahure od vatrenog oružja i dio ličnih dokumenata. Prema iskazu vozača bagera koji je učestvovao u premještanju masovne grobnice Kevljani, ovim aktivnostima rukovodio je Simo Drljača.[12] Potvrdu izmještanja nalazimo u izvještaju tima MKSJ koji je radio ekshumaciju u kojem se navodi: "Među tim znacima narušavanja bio je i jedan veliki rov. Rov je doslovno bio ispunjen do vrha. Rov je bio vlažan i u njemu su rasle biljke koje traže vodu, poput šaši. Slična ulegnuća i vlažna mjesta vidna su na krajnjem jugozapadnom dijelu poljane. Pokazaću kako su ti ulegnuti dijelovi nastali pljačkanjem grobnica - drugim riječima, grobovi su iskopani i tijela su prenesena negdje drugdje."[13] Osim toga, pronađeni

[11] ICTY, Izvještaj o iskopavanju i ekshumacijama u Kevljanima 1999, Dokazni predmeti 00931549, 12.

[12] Vozač bagera rekao je da je lično po njega kući došao Simo Drljača i odveo ga na lokalitet. Vozač je naveo da je izmještanje radio bagerom koji je pripadao Slavku Ećimoviću koji je ubijen u logoru Omarska. Nakon ubistva porodice Ećimović (otac, majka, brat, supruga i snaha Slavka Ećimovića) policajci SJB Prijedor imovinu Slavka Ećimovića nezakonito su oduzeli. Među tom imovinom bio je bager. Istim bagerom i isti vozač-bagerista radio je na izmještanju masovne grobnice Tomašica. Ove podatke vozač-bagerista dao je istražiteljima Instituta za nestale osobe Bosne i Hercegovine.

[13] ICTY, Izvještaj o iskopavanju i ekshumacijama u Kevljanima 1999, Dokazni predmeti 00931549, 5.

dijelovi tijela istih žrtava u masovnim grobnicama Stari Kevljani i Kevljani jasno ukazuju na sistematsko izmještanje i pokušaj prikrivanja zločina.

Zločin nad Bošnjacima i Hrvatima općina Prijedor i Kotor-Varoš na lokalitetu Korićanske stijene od 21. augusta 1992. godine predstavlja prepoznatljiv obrazac pokušaja prikrivanja zločina. Prilikom suđenja pred Sudom Bosne i Hercegovine pripadnici Civilne zaštite Kneževo (Skender-Vakuf) Čedo Vuković, Živorad Pelengić i Radovan Đukarić opisali su pokušaje uklanjanja tijela ubijenih civila zbog "strašnog mirisa i straha od trovanja vode. Milan Komljenović, bivši predsjednik Kriznog štaba Kneževo, kazao je da je za ubistva civila saznao 22. augusta 1992. godine, te je otišao da izvidi lokaciju. 'Tamo sam vidio sliku užasa, jednostavno to se samo tako može opisati. S desne strane se nalazio usjek u provaliji, i tamo su bile hrpe ljudi, jedni preko drugih. Ljudi su visili po stijenama i granama. To je bila strašna slika i odmah sam otišao'."[14] Kako je bio ljetni period, raspadanje posmrtnih ostataka bilo je brzo i okolinom se širio intenzivan miris. Okolno stanovništvo od vojnih i policijskih organa tražilo je da se posmrtni ostaci uklone s mjesta zločina. Nakon nekoliko dana od izvršenja zločina na lokalitet su došli najviši vojni i policijski predstavnici CSB Banja Luka radi dogovora o asanaciji terena i uklanjanju tijela. Pokušaji uklanjanja posmrtnih ostataka žrtava iz provalije vršeni su pomoću dizalice. Nakon što su izvučena četiri tijela, dizalica se pokvarila i prekinuto je izvlačenje tijela iz provalije.[15] Pripadnici Civilne zaštite iz Skender-Vakufa nedaleko od ovog lokaliteta (oko 1,5 km) ukopali su posmrtne ostatke četiri žrtve koje su izvučene iz provalije. Te žrtve ukopane su uz put Skender-Vakuf – Donji Korićani, neposredno uz rijeku Ilomsku. Ekshumacija na lokalitetu 1 vršena je na osnovu naredbe Kantonalnog suda u Bihaću broj: KPP-14/03 od 2. oktobra 2003. godine. Ekshumacija je rađena 3. oktobra 2003. godine. Posmrtne ostatke žrtava koji nisu izvučeni s mjesta zločina, prema iskazu svjedoka, pokušali su uništiti kiselinom koju su dovezli u cisterni i njome posipali tijela ubijenih. U iskazu svjedok navodi:

[14] Mujo Begić, Jasmin Medić, *Korićanske stijene-kamena grobnica*, Sarajevo, Bihać:,Institut za historiju Sarajevo, Muzej Unsko-sanskog kantona, 2024, 65.

[15] Sve vrijeme pripadnici policije snimali su izvlačenje tijela iz provalije. Vidjeti na: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWNTVmyUxrY

“(...) Od početka augusta negdje od oko 5-6 augusta 1992 godine jedinica je imala zonu odgovornosti Vlašić planina i bila smještena u selu Donji Koričani a to je 30-tak kilometara od Skender Vakufa starim putem prema Travniku. (...) Tu sam se zadržao par minuta, kad sam vidio da nema nikog u blizini, sišao sam niz kosinu na put, pretrčao na drugu stranu puta i kako na drugoj strani pored puta ima velikih gromada kamenja, sakrio sam se za jedan veći kamen da me ne bi ko primijetio, i lagano sam se približio ivici puta odakle sam gledao u provaliju odakle me je roj muha saletio a vidio sam niz litice po stijenama vise leševi ljudski a pri dnu gomilu leševa. Niz provaliju stotinjak metara od puta bila je velika izbočina na kojoj se zadržala najveća gomila tijela. Zapazio sam jedno tijelo muškarca na površini ove izbočine, bio je debeljuškast, crn u licu, zelenu košulju na kopčanje kroz koju mu je ispao stomak, i bijelu jaknu je imao na sebi. Par tijela je ležalo raskomadano od bombi na pomenutoj izbočini. Od tad pa sve do negdje 3. septembra 1992 godine tu sam dolazio skoro svaki dan kad sam imao vremena i vidio sam da su leševi netaknuti a od trećeg dana masakra već su bili počeli da se raspadaju. Ovim prostorom širio se neizdrživ zadah leševa tako da je deveti ili deseti dan nakon masovnog ubistva mještani obližnjeg sela Donji Koričani su se bunili zbog neprijatnog zadaha leševa. Iako se zločin desio na udaljenosti oko 200 metara vazdušne linije od komande diviziona, nije mi jasno kako smo i mi izdržavali ovaj neprijatan zadah a prijetila je i epidemija, niko nije ništa poduzimao niti obilazio leševe. (...) Sutradan ujutro 04.09.1992 godine iz priče od vojnika, čuo sam da je došla cisterna iz fabrike INCEL iz Banja Luke. Kako nisam bio puno zaposlen, odmah sam otišao na mjesto događaja i vidio sam veliku cisternu bijele boje i na bočnoj strani vidio sam veliko ispisano slovo’F’ a pored ovog slova bilo je još jedno slovo koje nisam mogao da vidim jer sam gledao sa udaljenosti oko 150 metara. Čuo sam da je cisternu dovezao vozač zaposlen u INCEL-u. Sa njima su došli 4 čovjeka obučeni u plave uniforme civilne zaštite a na leđima su imali boce sa kisikom i maske na licu jer se ovom mjestu drukčije nije moglo prići. Cisterna je bila nasred puta iznad

leševa i ova četvorica su sa šmrkovima iz cisterne prskali u provaliju po leševima. Osjetio sam pored zadaha leševa i jak miris kiseline koja me je počela gušiti a vidio sam da iz pravca koji je posipan kiselinom izdiže se bijeli oblak dima. Unatoč svemu posmatrao sam događaje i kad su ispraznili cisternu, otišli su u pravcu Skender Vakufu odnosno Banja Luci."[16]

O tome da su imali informaciju o zločinu u komandi 1. krajiškog korpusa navodi se u izvještaju komande 1. krajiškog korpusa od 3. septembra 1993. godine: "Prijedor na čelu sa Stevom Drljačom, koji je sprovodio konvoj ljudi koji su želeli napustiti krizno žarište, su izvršili masakar na preko 150 muškaraca u reonu Skender Vakuf, a koji su želeli napustiti prostor AR Krajina. Takav postupak izazvao je revolt ne samo građana već i boraca 1. Krajiškog korpusa. Tamna mrlja koja je napravljena nije imala podršku, a sva je sreća što o tome nije detaljnije saznala međunarodna javnost."[17] Iz izvještaja je vidljivo da se ne govori o potrebi sudskog procesiranja odgovornih nego o tome da nije saznala međunarodna javnost.

Nakon što nisu uspjeli uništiti posmrtne ostatke žrtava kiselinom, donesena je odluka da se prikrije zločin. Pripadnici Civilne zaštite Kneževo i pripadnici policije SJB Prijedor organizirali su premještanje tijela ubijenih. Oko 80 metara od mjesta zločina tijela su premjestili i zatrpali desetinama kubnih metara kamena.

Prikrivanje masovnih grobnica žrtava genocida u Srebrenici

Po unaprijed utvrđenom planu, pripadnici srpskih vojnih i policijskih snaga, nakon zauzimanja zaštićene zone UN-a Srebrenica, započeli su masovna ubijanja Bošnjaka. Odmah po izvršenju zločina genocida nad

[16] Izjava D. S., lični arhiv autora, navedeno u: Begić, Medić, *Koričanske stijene-kamena grobnica*, 67-70.

[17] ICTY, Komanda 1. Krajiškog korpusa, Op. str. pov. br. 631 od 3. septembra 1992. godine, *Stanje borbenog morala jedinica 1. KrK za mesec avgust 1992. god--Izveštaj*, 4-5.

muškarcima i dječacima, zločinci su žrtve počeli ukopavati u masovne grobnice. Po saznanju da međunarodna javnost raspolaže informacijama o izvršenim zločinima, srpske snage započele su s prikrivanjem posmrtnih ostataka radi uklanjanja tragova zločina.

> "Mnoge su masovne grobnice u sigurnoj zoni Ujedinjenih nacija Srebrenica otkopane i posmrtni ostaci preneseni na druge lokacije. I forenzički dokazi pokazuju da su početkom jeseni 1995. kolaboracionističke snage velikosrpskog agresora ('Vojska Republike Srpske') uložile značajan napor da prikriju masovna pogubljenja Bošnjaka, tako što su premještali primarne grobnice u (udaljene) sekundarne grobnice. Naime, forenzički dokazi pokazuju da je u periodu od nekoliko sedmica u septembru i početkom oktobra 1995. 'Vojska Republike Srpske' iskopala mnoge primarne grobnice i tijela žrtava premjestila u sekundarne grobnice. Forenzičke analize uspjele su povezati određene primarne i sekundarne grobnice, kao što su: Vojna ekonomija Branjevo i Čančarski put; Brana Petkovci i Liplje 2; Orahovac (Lazete 1 i Hodžići put 3 i 4); Glogova i Zeleni Jadar 5; Kozluk i Čančarski put 3."[18]

Prekopavanje i prikrivanje masovnih grobnica planirano je i organizirano uz uključenost velikog broja pripadnika VRS-a i značajnih materijalnih resursa, kako vojnih tako i civilnih. U nedostatku vojne mehanizacije (kamiona, bagera ili drugih mašina) angažirana su i komunalna preduzeća sa svojom mehanizacijom te pripadnici Civilne zaštite.

> "Dok je fokus međunarodne zajednice krivičnopravno gonjenje glavnih političkih i vojnih vođa koji su imali političku i vojnu odgovornost u vrijeme izvršenja genocida i zločina protiv čovječnosti i ratnih zločina, dokazi koji se otkrivaju forenzičkom istragom često ukazuju na manje bitne ljude koji su bili umiješani, kao što su, naprimjer, ljudi koji su pravili grobne jame ili upravljali teškom mehanizacijom koja je korištena za transport tijela. I dok takvi pojedinci mogu biti optuženi za kršenje međunarodnog humanitarnog prava kao saučesnici, njihova

[18] Čekić, Arnaut-Haseljić, Macić, *Masovne grobnice u Bosni i Hercegovini*, 64-65.

glavna uloga je da pruže iskaz koji (kasnije) u istrazi može biti od pomoći pri dovođenju njihovih nadređenih na sud."[19]

Potvrda organiziranog i sistematskog prikrivanja i izmještanja posmrtnih ostataka iz masovnih grobnica nalazi se i u dnevniku "u koji su zapisivana pitanja razmatrana na povremenim sastancima sa Štabom komande korpusa, koje je sazivao komandant Bratunačke brigade, vidi se da je 16. oktobra 1995. kapetan Nikolić, pomoćnik komandanta za obavještajne poslove i bezbjednost, rekao da je Brigada angažirana na zadacima na koje je rasporedio Glavni Štab Vojske Republike Srpske. Kapetan Nikolić je za opisivanje tog posla upotrijebio riječ 'asanacija', odnosno 'saniranje terena', što se, prema vojnoj terminologiji, odnosi na nalaženje, identifikovanje i ukop mrtvih."[20] Nakon zločina u skladištu Zemljoradničke zadruge u Kravici 14. i 15. jula 1995. godine posmrtni ostaci ubijenih ukopani su u masovne grobnice u Glogovi. Na suđenju pred Sudom Bosne i Hercegovine jedan od svjedoka govorio je kako su prvobitno posmrtni ostaci ubijenih u skladištu Kravica prebacivani u masovnu grobnicu Glogova i rekao:

"Javio se u sjedište te mu je naređeno da natoči gorivo i da se uputi prema Zemljoradničkoj zadruzi Kravica. Pet-šest kamiona je išlo sa njima i imali su pratnju Vojne policije. Kad je došao u skladište, vidio je vojnike i tijela unutar skladišta. Rekao je da su tu bili i pripadnici civilne zaštite koji su ubacivali tijela u kašiku utovarivača, a utovarivač je tovario tijela u kamione. Primijetio je da su ljudi ubijeni iz pušaka i da su većina njih bili muškarci. Na fasadi su bile vidljive rupe od metaka i fasada je bila znatno oštećena. Tog prvog dana je utovar trajao do 16:00 sati. Nakon utovara, krenuli su prema selu Glogova u pravcu Bratunca. Vojna policija je ponovo išla ispred kamiona. U koloni je bilo 5-6 kamiona. Kad su stigli u Glogovu, skrenuli su sa ceste 300-400 metara i vidjeli su vojnike koji su obezbjeđivali to područje. Vidio je i iskopanu grobnicu, širine 2,5 metra, dužine 50 metara i oko 2 metra dubine. Grobnicu je iskopao bager ili rovokopač.

[19] Ibid., 72.

[20] ICTY, IT-98-33-T, Pred pretresnim vijećem, Tužilac protiv Radislava Krstića, Den Haag, 2. august 2001, paragraf 259.

Vidio je nekoliko tijela unutar grobnice, ali ne zna tačno koliko. To su bila tijela muškaraca u vojnim uniformama. Kamioni su stigli, istovarili tijela u grobnicu i otišli."[21]

U nastavku svjedočenja on govori o izmještanju. Narednog dana rečeno im je da će ih ponovno pozvati ukoliko bude potrebe. On se vratio u Glogovu nakon 2-3 mjeseca. Desilo se isto kao i prvi put. Vojna policija ponovo je došla tražeći kamione za premještanje tijela na drugu lokaciju. Svjedok je ponovo bio sa svojim kolegom, tu su bili i neki ljudi iz njegovog preduzeća i nekoliko osoba iz komunalnog preduzeća. Ponovo su se skupili ispred sjedišta, natočili gorivo u svoja vozila i krenuli s Vojnom policijom. Momir Nikolić je bio s njima. Ukupno pet kamiona je otišlo iz Bratunca oko 18 sati. Nisu čak ni znali šta trebaju raditi. Kad su stigli u Glogovu, vidjeli su dva vozila, veliki rovokopač i utovarivač koji je bio malo veći od onog iz Kravice. Zatim je rovokopač počeo podizati tijela i tovariti ih u kamione. Pripadnici Civilne zaštite su pomagali. Nakon toga su se udaljili putem Glogova – Bratunac – Potočari – Srebrenica – Zeleni Jadar. Pratili su vozila Vojne policije. To je bilo poslije 20 sati. Stigli su u Zeleni Jadar, tu je bila mašina, utovarivač, koji je poravnavao zemlju nakon istovara tijela. Tu su bili i radnici Civilne zaštite. I tu je bila jedna već iskopana grobnica.[22]

Američka vojska načinila je satelitske snimke lokacija masovnih grobnica prije, u toku i nakon premještanja posmrtnih ostataka žrtava genocida. O masovnim ubijanjima nakon zauzimanja Srebrenice javnost je 10. augusta 1995. godine obavijestila Madeleine Albright prikazivanjem satelitskih snimaka na kojima su bila vidljiva mjesta ubijanja, ukopavanja ili tijela ubijenih. Na satelitskim snimcima od 17. jula na lokalitetu farme Branjevo vidljivi su posmrtni ostaci ubijenih, gomila iskopane zemlje i tragovi kopanja bagerom. Na tom su mjestu nakon ubijanja žrtve ukopane. Na satelitskom snimku od 21. septembra 1995. godine vidljiva je masovna grobnica koja nije uznemiravana, odnosno prekopavana. Nekoliko dana nakon tog snimka, tačnije 27. septembra 1995. godine na

[21] Sud Bosne i Hercegovine, X-KR-05/24-2, Presuda u predmetu Miladin Stevanović, Sarajevo, 29. juli 2008, 26.

[22] Ibid.

satelitskom snimku jasno se vidi da je zemlja prekopavana, odnosno da su posmrtni ostaci izmješteni.[23] Nakon objave ovih informacija najviši politički, vojni i policijski dužnosnici Republike srpske počeli su s planiranjem, organiziranjem i izmještanjem masovnih grobnica u cilju prikrivanja zločina. Pošto se radilo o iznimno složenoj i kompleksnoj operaciji, za njenu realizaciju bili su potrebni značajni ljudski resursi i logistički kapaciteti. Bilo je potrebno obučeno ljudstvo (inžinjerijske jedinice), mašine i gorivo. Kako bi se ovaj zadatak realizirao, Glavni Štab Vojske Republike srpske izdao je 14. septembra 1995. godine komandi Drinskog korpusa odobrenje za pet tona goriva (dizela). Kapetan Milorad Trbić iz Zvorničke brigade trebao je primiti gorivo.[24] Zbog složenosti organizacije prekopavanja i izmještanja masovnih grobnica u Srebrenici najviši vojni i politički vrh Republike srpske taj zadatak povjerio je izvršiocima genocida. Prilikom premještanja iz primarnih grobnica u sekundarne grobnice kamioni su posmrtne ostatke vozili i 40 kilometara. "Najveća udaljenost između primarnih i sekundarnih grobnih lokaliteta (između Vojne ekonomije Branjevo i Čančarskog puta) iznosila je 40 kilometara."[25] "Dokazi o premještanju tijela i njihovom ponovnom pokapanju ukazuju na usaglašene pokušaje da se sakriju tijela muškaraca iz tih primarnih grobnica, što je bilo nesumnjivo potaknuto pojačanom pažnjom koju je međunarodna zajednica posvećivala događajima koji su uslijedili poslije zauzimanja Srebrenice. Takve krajnje mjere ne bi bile nužne da je većina tijela u tim primarnim grobnicama pripadala žrtvama poginulim u borbi."[26]

Ratko Mladić, komandant VRS-a, u svom dnevniku od 23. marta 1996. godine bilježi razgovor s Radovanom Karadžićem, predsjednikom Republike srpske, o prikrivanju genocida. Tom prilikom Radovan Karadžić je rekao: "Pripremljen je bio veliki šou za Olbrajtovu, ona je očekivala da će kod Pilice naći 1.200 muslimanskih leševa, a oni su našli

[23] https://srebrenica-genocide.blogspot.com/2009/12/satellite-photos-of-srebrenica-massacre.html, (pristup: 27. oktobar 2025).

[24] ICTY, IT-98-33-T, Pred pretresnim vijećem, Tužilac protiv Radislava Krstića, Den Haag, 2. august 2001, paragraf 258.

[25] Ibid., par. 260.

[26] Ibid., par. 78.

nekih 5 leševa. Mi smo se sastali (Koljević, Biljana …) i zaključili da je najbolje da se formira paritetna komisija koja bi realno ispitala sve pogibije i ubistva oko Srebrenice tokom rata. - Doće Milić Dragiša i on će prikazati kasetu o njenom boravku… Videćemo je … - Sinoć je bio Fićo i on kaže da bi ona dvojica prodali priču o Srebrenici za Hag."[27]

Na okruglom stolu "Srebrenica 30 godina poslije", održanom u Hrvatskom saboru 23. maja 2025. godine, u svom izlaganju Muamer Džananović navodi:

> "Dana 21. marta 1996. Vlada SAD-a objavila je fotografije slikane iz vazduha na kojima se vidi veliki broj tijela koja su ležala na polju u blizini vojne ekonomije Branjevo 17. jula 1995. godine. Naredni dan, 22. marta 1996, Albright je posjetila grobnicu na Ekonomiji. Ratko Mladić je tada izjavio da je bio spremljen 'veliki šou za Albrightovu, ona je očekivala da će kod Pilice naći 1.200 muslimanskih leševa, a oni su našli nekih pet leševa'. Dan nakon toga, Radovan Karadžić je izdao naređenje da se formira civilno-vojna komisija za ekshumaciju tijela sa područja Pilice. Radilo se o tome da su Mladić i Karadžić, kao najveći politički i vojni funkcioneri Republike Srpske, u potpunosti vladali informacijama da su gotovo sva tijela iz primarne masovne grobnice već bila premještena u sekundarnu grobnicu u septembru 1995. Tijela iz te masovne grobnice bila su premještana u sekundarnu masovnu grobnicu Čančarski put odnosno u Kamenicu, što je bilo dobro poznato i vojnim i civilnim vlastima RS-a kao i političko-vojnim vlastima lokalnog nivoa u općini Zvornik."[28]

Prilikom ekshumacija, antropološke obrade tijela i identifikacije posmrtnih ostataka žrtava genocida u Srebrenici neosporno je utvrđeno da su raskomadani dijelovi posmrtnih ostataka premještani iz jedne u drugu grobnicu. Posmrtni ostaci pojedinih žrtava pronađeni su u dvije, tri, četiri, pa čak i u pet različitih masovnih grobnica.

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[27] ICTY, IT-09-92, Pred pretresnim vijećem, Tužilac protiv Ratka Mladića, tom I-V, Den Haag, 22. novembar 2017. Dokazni predmet, Izvod iz dnevnika Ratka Mladića.

[28] Muamer Džananović, "Obrasci negiranja genocida", *Bošnjački glas*, broj 91, Zagreb, BNZH, 2025, 9; Detaljnije o tome vidi: Muamer Džananović, Elvedin Mulagić, *Zvornik 1992-1995: Genocid na kapiji Bosne*, Tom 2, Univerzitet u Sarajevu – Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava, Sarajevo, 2025, 934-936.

Za potrebe suđenja pred Haškim tribunalom u predmetu protiv generala Krstića Dean Paul Manning sačinio je *Rezime sudsko-medicinskog dokaznog materijala – mjesta pogubljenja i masovne grobnice*/, 16. maja 2000. godine u kojem je navedeno da je "od 1996. ekshumiralo 21 grobnicu u vezi s genocidom u sigurnoj zoni Ujedinjenih nacija, Srebrenici, jula 1995, i to: četiri ekshumacije tokom 1996. (grobnice u Cerskoj, Novoj Kasabi, Orahovcu-poznata i pod nazivom Lažete 2, i na Vojnoj ekonomiji Branjevo – Pilica); osam tokom 1998. (Brana kod Petkovaca, Čančarski put 12, Čančarski put 3, Cesta prema Hodžićima - lokalitet br. 3, Cesta prema Hodžićima - lokalitet br. 4, Cesta prema Hodžićima - lokalitet br. 5, Liplje 2 i Zeleni Jadar 5); pet grobnica 1999. (Kozluk, Nova Kasaba, Konjević-Polje 1, Konjević-Polje 2 i Glogova), te četiri grobnice 2000. (Lažete 1, Lažete 2C, Ravnice i Glogova 1). Od 21 ekshumirane grobnice, 14 su primarne (grobnice), u koje su tijela bačena neposredno nakon što su te žrtve ubijene. Od tih grobnica, osam je kasnije neovlašteno prekopano i tijela su premještena i zakopana na drugom mjestu, često u sekundarnim grobnicama, lociranim na zabačenijim područjima. Sedam od ekshumiranih grobnica bile su sekundarne (grobnice). (...). Kao rezultat tih analiza otkrivene su veze između određenih primarnih i određenih sekundarnih grobnica."[29]

Na osnovu provedenih forenzičkih dokaza jasno je da su "snage bosanskih Srba tokom razdoblja od nekoliko sedmica u septembru i početkom oktobra 1995. otkopale mnoge od primarnih masovnih grobnica i tijela ponovo pokopale"[30] u više različitih sekundarnih i tercijarnih grobnica. Jasno su forenzički dokazi povezali "određene primarne i sekundarne grobnice, i to: Vojnu ekonomiju Branjevo i Čančarski put 12, branu kod Petkovca i Liplje 2, Orahovac (Lažete 2) i cestu prema Hodžićima – lokacija br. 5, Orahovac (Lažete 1) i cestu prema Hodžićima – lokacije 3 i 4, Glogovu i Zeleni Jadar 5, te Kozluk i Čančarski put 3".[31]

[29] ICTY, IT-98-33-T, Pred pretresnim vijećem, Tužilac protiv Radislava Krstića, Den Haag, 2. august 2001, paragraf 71.
[30] Ibid., paragraf 78.
[31] Ibid.

Masovna grobnica pronađena 1999. godine u blizini naselja Kozluk na osnovu informacija "izbjeglica u Njemačkoj dobijene su informacije koje su upućivale na Kozluk kao moguću lokaciju gdje je došlo do ubijanja. Istrage sprovedene na licu mjesta potvrdile su da je na tom mjestu bilo masovnih egzekucija. Iz razgovora istražitelja Tužilaštva s izbjeglicama utvrđeno da je oko 500 zarobljenika bilo prisiljeno da pjeva srpske pjesme dok su ih vojni kamioni prevozili u Kozluk, gdje ih je pobio odred za egzekuciju."[32] Prilikom ekshumacije "minimalni broj tijela izvađenih iz grobnice u Kozluku iznosio je 340, a sve osobe za koje se to moglo utvrditi, bile su muškog spola. (...) Zračne snimke pokazale su da je masovna grobnica u Kozluku nastala između 5. i 17. jula 1995, a da je ponovo prekopana između 7. i 27. septembra 1995. (...) Sudski vještaci Tužilaštva ICTY-a primarnu grobnicu u Kozluku povezali su sa sekundarnom grobnicom Čančarski put 3 koju je Tužilaštvo ekshumiralo između 27. maja i 10. juna 1998. Zračne snimke pokazale su da je grobni lokalitet Čančarski put 3 prvi put iskopan nakon 27. septembra 1995 a da je zatim zasut prije 2. oktobra 1995."[33]

Zaključna razmatranja

Prikrivanje zločina genocida i drugih oblika zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava u slučaju Prijedora i Srebrenice kroz izmještanje masovnih grobnica bilo je dio planirane, organizirane i sistematske kampanje koju su provodile srpske vojne i policijske snage uz znanje i saglasnost najviših političkih, vojnih i policijskih zvaničnika Republike srpske. Zajedničkim naporima pokušali su prikriti masovna ubijanja, premještajući posmrtne ostatke iz primarnih grobnica na udaljenije sekundarne lokacije. Zločinci su za cilj imali prikriti broj ubijenih i onemogućiti njihov pronalazak, a time i izbjeći odgovornost za počinjenje zločina. Posmrtni ostaci žrtava prikrivani su u pojedinačnim,

[32] Ibid., par. 249.
[33] Ibid., par. 253-257.

zajedničkim i masovnim grobnicama. Zajednički element za prikrivanje zločina i izmještanje masovnih grobnica u Prijedoru 1992. i 1993. godine i Srebrenici 1995. godine jesu zabilješke u ratnom dnevniku Ratka Mladića koje govore o tome.

Prilikom premještanja masovnih grobnica posmrtni ostaci žrtava građevinskim mašinama kidani su i uništavani što je u značajnoj mjeri otežavalo proces antropološke obrade i identifikacije žrtava. Ta postupanja dovela su do toga da su kod pojedinih žrtava pronađeni samo dijelovi tijela. Po identičnom scenariju vršena su izmještanja posmrtnih ostataka iz masovnih grobnica u Prijedoru i Srebrenici. Jasno se može uočiti isti obrazac postupanja prilikom prikrivanja i izmještanja posmrtnih ostataka žrtava genocida u Srebrenici i Prijedoru.

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RESISTANCE TO MEMORIALIZATION AND JUDICIAL TRUTH: A MEASURE OF THEIR POWER

Abstract: On May 23, 2024, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 78/282, designating July 11 as the 'International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica' (hereafter the Resolution). Co-sponsored by Germany and Rwanda and supported by over 2,000 organizations, the Resolution constitutes a significant instrument for the institutionalization of historical memory. However, the measure faced significant opposition from Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić and the President of the Republika Srpska, Bosnia-Herzegovina's political entity, Milorad Dodik. These leaders characterized the institutionalized memorialization as a politicized assault on Serbian sovereignty, arguing that such initiatives serve to exacerbate ethnic hostilities and undermine regional stability rather than facilitate reconciliation.

This represents a recent instance where the international community's efforts to utilize memorialization as a tool for reconciliation have been subverted into a political weapon. It also represents one of the many tools of denials and revisionism that are constantly used to rewrite the historical and legal truth established in countless judicial pages and archival testimonies.

This contribution suggests that denial is a powerful interconnected net of actions, all contributing to the dismantlement of established legal and historical truth. We plan to systematically analyze some of the legal truth established by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and three different types of denialism that we call "urban," "literary," and "political." Through the assessment of the historical evolution of sites of memorialization, the publications of former convicts, and the statements of leaders, this contribution provides a complex, layered account of denialism and of its dangers.

Keywords: *Memorials, judicial truth, political rhetoric, denial*

OTPOR MEMORIJALIZACIJI I SUDSKOJ ISTINI: MJERA NJIHOVE MOĆI

Sažetak: Dana 23. maja 2024. godine Generalna skupština Ujedinjenih nacija usvojila je Rezoluciju 78/282, kojom je 11. juli proglašen Međunarodnim danom sjećanja i obilježavanja genocida u Srebrenici iz 1995. godine (u daljem tekstu: Rezolucija). Rezolucija, čiji su sponzori bile Njemačka i Ruanda, a koju je podržalo više od 2.000 organizacija, predstavlja značajan instrument institucionalizacije historijskog sjećanja. Međutim, ova mjera suočila se sa značajnim protivljenjem predsjednika Srbije Aleksandra Vučića i predsjednika Republike srpske, političkog entiteta u Bosni i Hercegovini, Milorada Dodika. Ovi su lideri institucionalizirano obilježavanje sjećanja prikazali kao politizirani napad na srpski suverenitet, tvrdeći da takve inicijative služe produbljivanju etničkih podjela i podrivanju regionalne stabilnosti, umjesto da doprinose pomirenju.

Ovo predstavlja noviji primjer u kojem su napori međunarodne zajednice da koristi kulturu sjećanja kao sredstvo pomirenja preusmjereni u političko oružje. Također predstavlja jedan od brojnih oblika negiranja i revizionizma koji se kontinuirano koriste za preoblikovanje historijske i pravne istine utvrđene na brojnim stranicama sudskih presuda i u arhivskim svjedočenjima.

Ovaj rad ukazuje na to da je negiranje snažna međusobno povezana mreža djelovanja, pri čemu svi njeni elementi doprinose razgradnji već utvrđene pravne i historijske istine. Planiramo sistematski analizirati dio pravne istine koju je utvrdio Međunarodni krivični tribunal za bivšu Jugoslaviju, kao i tri različita oblika negacionizma koje nazivamo "urbanim", "književnim" i "političkim". Kroz analizu historijskog razvoja mjesta sjećanja, publikacija bivših osuđenika i izjava političkih lidera, ovaj rad pruža složen, višeslojan prikaz negacionizma i opasnosti koje on nosi.

Ključne riječi: *memorijali, sudski utvrđena istina, politička retorika, negiranje*

Introduction

"I am proud of all crimes attributed to me and ready to repeat them in the future […] We will never give up the idea of a Greater Serbia. […] I don't care about the ruling. Now I'll go and have a siesta." Vojislav Šešelj, 11 April 2018.

"There is no blood on my hands. I didn't kill anyone, I slaughtered anyone, I killed anyone, I hung anyone. They accused me and convicted me of the atrocities he could only commit by a monster. Powerful Western propaganda nailed me to a pillar of shame." Duško Tadić, 5 July, 2009.

In 2018, the Appeals Chamber of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) reversed Vojislav Šešelj's 2016 acquittal and sentenced him to 10 years in prison for crimes against humanity. Despite this, the leader of the Serbian Radical Party—who had been elected to Parliament while awaiting his appeal—adamantly repeated that he would never abandon the idea of a "Greater Serbia." Similarly, a decade earlier, shortly after serving a 20-year sentence for crimes against humanity and war crimes, Duško Tadić vehemently claimed in multiple interviews that he had not committed any of the offenses for which he was convicted. This denial persisted despite undisputed evidence in multiple court decisions proving he had persecuted and tortured civilians in several concentration camps near Prijedor. Statements such as these indicate that those convicted of crimes in the former Yugoslavia remain undeterred in their beliefs. They continue to manufacture alternative narratives to challenge the facts established by the ICTY and attempt to rewrite both historical and legal truths.

The denial of past atrocities—whether genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes, and often all of them—is not a straightforward process. Contrary to the idea that we recognize denial when we see, hear, or even feel it, its essence is an ambiguous process made of travesties, justifications, counter-rhetoric, and the outright falsification of records. Denial takes many forms; it is often directly proportional in strength and deceitfulness to the power of the established truth. After decades of

investigations and trials, the ICTY and the ICJ have provided a massive record of facts and evidence establishing beyond any reasonable doubt that the events that escalated in Bosnia and Herzegovina beginning in 1992 were a campaign led by Bosnian Serb forces to "cleanse" the territory of Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks).

Through war crimes, crimes against humanity, "ethnic cleansing", and genocide, hundreds of thousands of civilians were killed from 1992 to 1995,, which culminated with killing more than 8,000 civilians in Srebrenica in July 1995. Numerous decisions in the ICTY as well as the work of the ICJ established that the massacre was genocide.

Despite the several critical voices describing the ICTY's work as slow, partial, and too costly,[1] the powerful truth established in the countless pages written down by the judges at the ICTY are a monument of words;[2] an archival legacy meant to stand the test of historical revisionism. Yet, those pages have always been the object of denialism, a practice that over time has taken many forms.

This paper aims to describe three of the many forms of denialism and counternarrative construction. On one side, this study systematically compares the judicial truth established in courts with the subsequent memorialization—or lack thereof—of sites of atrocities. We frame this type of denialism as an "urban" project whose goal is that of "going back to normal," through the erasure, repurposing, and/or destruction of the sites of crimes. Traveling through some of the areas where the atrocities were perpetrated shows that many of the places, for which there is an established judicial historical record, are a battleground of denial and construction of a truth which stands in stark contrast with the countless pages representing the ICTY judicial archive. The actions undertaken by local authorities speak of a willingness to build a collective

[1] Ralph Zacklin, "The failings of ad hoc international tribunals", J. Int'l Crim. Just. 2 (2004), 541;

David Wippman, "The costs of international justice", American Journal of International Law, 100.4, (2006), 861-880; Robert M. Hayden, "Biased justice: Human rights and the international criminal tribunal for the former Yugoslavia", Clev. St. L. Rev. 47 (1999), 549.

[2] Rosa Aloisi and James Meernik, *Judgment Day*, Cambridge University Press, 2017.

representation of events that are incompatible with the ascertained past. As cogently pointed out by Cohen (2017), traveling through Bosnia and Herzegovina shows that while the war among the factions might have ended, there is a war over memory that is fought between local officials and victims of the crimes, which creates a sense of fragility in the peace and reconciliation process of the region.[3] The reconciliation process between opposing factions in the region is far from being accomplished; the construction of collective memory is contested; traveling through Bosnia and Herzegovina leaves a sense of "interpersonal" insecurity[4] as if the work of the tribunal has had little impact on the reconciliation process of opposing ethnic factions. Thus, while the repurposing and destruction of the sites is often claimed as an attempt to reestablish normality, it is an attempt at erasing the pain and the recognition of the right to remember of the victims in the name of a not better defined "right to go back to a normal life."[5]

On the other side, we try to analyze a form of denial about the same sites and crimes, which is perpetrated by those convicted of crimes through the publishing of books and political statements/actions. We call this form of denial "literary" and "political." Building upon authoritative scholarship, which has chronicled the life after conviction and post-incarceration of ICTY indictees,[6] we attempt to systematically analyze one form of denial conducted through the publication of books which reframe the historical narrative about the object of the analysis. We

[3] Laura Beth Cohen, "Finding Global Justice Locally at Sites of Atrocity: The Case for the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Center and Cemetery" in Scott W. Murray (ed.), *Understanding Atrocities: Remembering, Representing and Teaching Genocide*, Calgary University Press, 2017, 49-82.

[4] Jodi Halpner and Harvey M. Weinstein, "Rehumanizing the Other: Empathy and Reconciliation", in Human Rights Quarterly, 2004, vol. 26(4), 561-583.

[5] Halpern and Weinstein, "Rehumanizing the Other", 562.

[6] Vladimir Petrović, "The ICTY library: War criminals as authors, their works as sources", International Criminal Justice Review 28.4 (2018), 333-348; Susanne Karstedt, "I Would Prefer to Be Famous: Comparative Perspectives on the Reentry of War Criminals Sentenced at Nuremberg and The Hague", International Criminal Justice Review, 28(4), 2018, 372-390; Katarina Ristić, "The media negotiations of war criminals and their memoirs: The emergence of the 'ICTY celebrity'", International Criminal Justice Review 28.4, 2018, 391-405.

suggest that convicted criminals narrate their stories with two specific goals in mind; on the one hand, they offer a justification for the crimes perpetrated at those sites, therefore depriving the events of their criminal connotation. In doing this, they reinforce the "going back to normal project" – the crimes adjudicated by the ICTY were either justified, never occurred, or did not occur with the magnitude described by the Tribunal as to warrant memorials and/or commemorations. Thus, the sites should not become the object of a specific destination, beyond what they were meant to serve when created. On the other hand, by reframing the events as part of the war effort to defend the land, the people, and national pride, they send a specific "political" message about their role during the war; they were the heroes and as such should be remembered and honored. This type of denial consists of an added layer in the institutional structure of denialism. It is often perpetrated by the authors of "literary" denialism and can potentially foster additional forms such as political statements by those currently in power. In short, as other scholars suggest "denial has expanded to include glorification and outright triumphalism"[7] and, under the false pretense of reestablishing the truth, denial actually "destabilize[s]" the facts.[8] Ultimately, the paper tries to make a connection between the work of the ICTY, more specifically its "unstated" goal to promote reconciliation through the establishment of accountability and historical evidence, and the efforts to undermine the same goal through the erasing or reframing of the truth.

The paper is structured as follows. We first provide the importance of this work through a brief explanation of different types of denialism. We then discuss the research methodology, followed by the description of our data. We systematically proceed by first assessing the historical and legal truth of the events adjudicated. Then we analyze for each case in our sample the three different forms of denialism perpetrated. Lastly,

[7] Ben Gerstein and Hikmet Karčić, "The United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Srebrenica and the Struggle Against Genocide Denial", Comparative Southeast European Studies 73.1, 2025, 3-35.

[8] Adnan Delalić, "Wings of Denial", in Hikmet Karčić, and Sead Turčalo, eds., *Bosnian Genocide Denial and Triumphalism: Origins, Impact and Prevention*, Faculty of Political Science, University of Sarajevo, 2021

we draw some conclusions on the type of dialogue (figurately speaking) that has been developing over time between the legal truth, the social narrative (sites) and the convicted criminals' public accounts.

Three Denials and Three Dangers

The historical legacy handed down by the ICTY after the end of its proceedings goes beyond the initial mandate to punish perpetrators and identify the guilty; it was intended to limit the wider moral responsibility of the national community.[9] It provided the first step toward reconciliation through the condemnation of the prior government's political project,[10] while simultaneously establishing a historical record of the pain and suffering of victims and survivors. Accountability was considered the major tool for reconciliation. International trials were justified on the basis that the recognition of individual responsibility helped victims move forward and assigned liability for the disruption of interethnic relationships to specific individuals rather than entire societies.[11] However, rather than becoming a source of reconciliation, the historical and legal findings of the ICTY's judgments are being questioned. We identify three different types of denialism: one shaped by the disruption of memories at the sites of mass atrocities; another shaped by the written words of those convicted of crimes; and, lastly, one forged through political statements about the events adjudicated. In this section, we provide a brief description of these forms of denialism and their potential impact on the erasure of historical memory and, in turn, reconciliation.

[9] Michael Humpherey, "International intervention, justice and national reconciliation: the role of the ICTY and ICTR in Bosnia and Rwanda", Journal of Human Rights, vol. 2 (4), 2010, 500.

[10] Humphrey, 500.

[11] Lauren Fletcher and Harvey M. Weinstein, "Violence and Social Repair: Rethink the Contribution of Justice to Reconciliation", in Human Rights Quarterly, vol. 24(3), 2002, 573-639

A. Urban Denialism

One of the extensive efforts to deny the crimes committed and adjudicated is an overt attack of the sites of mass atrocities and the disruption of all attempts at making those sites places of national dialogue and remembrance. Over time the places where mass atrocities have occurred are becoming widely contested and "used to further entrench mutually incompatible versions of the past […] contribut[ing] to a renew[al] of mistrust, untruth and injustice."[12] Responsible for this form of political violence and denial is a new political community, one that has not participated in the project of mass atrocities adjudicated by the ICTY. It is the community that is experiencing a deepened sense of ethnic divisions caused by the passage of time. In fact, time strengthens the need to go back to normality and impermeabilizes generations that have not gone through ethnic divisions from the urgency to remember.

Together with a campaign of historical revisionism, memorialization and commemoration are seen as non-consequential exercises to the achievement of reconciliation and victims' protection. We believe that, at its core, reconciliation is something that cannot only be achieved through individual accountability and that, in a way, individual liability should be complemented by a national collective effort, beyond legal responsibility, to recognize the obligations of society. We suggest that the function of memorialization is twofold. On one side memorialization speaks of a society which is accepting its troubled past. On the other, it validates the pain and suffering of the victims, it gives names and identity to those who have died, and it offers an additional reassurance that those crimes will not be perpetrated again. For the collectivity, reconciliation means healing the divisions of a society, the scars suffered during violence, rebuilding the trust broken by the war, "glue back together" the broken pieces of interethnic pre-war friendly and familial relationships. We contend that this type of reconciliation is an extension of that achieved through accountability; reconciliation demands that the words written by judges in their judgements come out of those pages and are set in places

[12] Jelena Subotić, *Hijacked justice: Dealing with the past in the Balkans,* Cornell University Press, 2011, 125.

where they can foster dialogue among ethnic groups and empathy among individuals in a public space, while recognizing the victims' suffering and their ability to publicly mourn and commemorate. In this manner memorialization becomes an extension of the truth established by the ICTY. The memorialization of the atrocities described by the tribunal, especially at the sites where the crimes were committed, can become a reminder that we all bear a collective responsibility for the events that have destroyed the region. While international criminal justice addresses individual accountability, memorialization can become a reminder that the crimes committed bears on the collectivity and society.[13]

As cogently stated by Gustafson: "a Hitler – like a Stalin, a Karadžić, a Tuđman, a Mao – is only as strong as the power of mass obedience and support"[14] and the collectivity carries the moral burden as well as the brunt of the crimes committed. The recognition and acknowledgment through the construction of memorials that those crimes were committed, especially at the sites where crimes were perpetrated, are meant to build a stronger society in which the rule of law is restored. It sends a message that there is a culture of collective moral indignation against irrational hatred and ethnic violence.[15] What we think can be achieved through memorialization, beyond the legacy of the tribunal, is a change in collective attitudes. Beyond the trials' "established consensus on the events as they unfolded"[16] memorials can provide places of mourning to help restore some sense of agency. There must be public acknowledgment of the losses that people have experienced and recognition of the victimization that many feel."[17] The most important aspect of memorialization is the ability to remind us that, beyond a courtroom, a criminal legal definition,

[13] Ron Dudai, "Rescuers for Humanity: Rescuers, Mass Atrocities, and Transitional Justice", Human Rights Quarterly, 2012, vol. 34 (1).

[14] Carrie Gustafon, "International criminal courts: some dissident views on the continuation of war by penal means", Houston Journal of International Law, vol. 21 (1), 1998, 61.

[15] Aloisi and Meernik, *Judgment Day*; Rosa Aloisi, "The Broken Path to Reconciliation in Bosnia & Herzegovina - A Field Study of Memories", in *ICTY Legacies*, Oxford University Press, 2020.

[16] Fletcher and Weinstein, 625

[17] Fletcher and Weinstein, 626.

and a punishment, there are memories to pass on to future generations to avoid the repetition of the horrors, those same generations whose sense of need to go back to normal and urgency to remember is respectively present and absent. As stated by Megret "monuments stand as an implicit condemnation of the faults of past regimes. They act as a reminder to future generations of certain dangers and places through which contemporary dreams of national future are imagined."[18] In this regard, what is most important is that the memorialization of sites of atrocities become part of a collective memory of the people that can stop society's aberrations and reinforce the protection of individuals. We think that memorialization of sites of atrocity might just be that signal that society at large is accepting the troubled past, is recognizing that crimes were committed, and is allowing victims and survivors to publicly display their sorrow and the need to mourn.

For the victims, memorialization of the sites of atrocities increases the value of the sentence handed by the ICTY. Indeed, delivering a meaningful sense of justice, one that speaks to the pain and suffering of the victims of the heinous crimes committed during times of wars, is probably the most problematic aspect of addressing societal peace after war. After all, what is the right punishment for those who have killed, raped, and tortured thousands of individuals? How can victims and survivors of those killed believe in just deserts and move forward toward reconciliation, when the punishment handed down by international courts is something short of life in prison? Scholars Moffett 2014 have indicated how the judgements of the tribunal might not fully speak to the emotional needs of victims and, after all, in the legalist framework within which the ICTY has operated, one created for the punishment of the guilty individuals, the specific needs of victims are not necessarily the goal to be pursued.[19] However, as rightly stated by Schabas:

[18] Frederic Marget, "Of Shrines, Museums, and Memorials – Using the International Criminal Court's Victims Reparation and Assistance Regime to Promote International Justice," Buffalo Human Rights Law Review, vol. 16, 2003, 22.

[19] Luke Moffett, *Realising justice for victims before the International Criminal Court*, The Hague: International Crimes Database, 2014.

"for the victims, and for the public in general, the thirst for justice may be better satisfied by society's condemnation of anti-social behavior than by the actual punishment of the offenders. What is desired is a judgment, a declaration by society, and the identification and stigmatization of the perpetrator. This alone is often sufficient redress. What is actually done to the offender as a result of conviction may be far less important".[20]

Nonetheless, the ICTY represents the first international tribunal in which the voices of the witnesses and victims were given ample space in the judgements and during the proceedings. Emblematic in the memory of all remains the testimony of witness DD in the case of The Prosecutor v. Radislav Krstić recalling how her son had been snatched away from her and begging in her oral testimony for the judicial bench to ask Krstić whether he knew of her son's whereabouts. Yet, once witness DD left the courtroom, as many other witnesses, she might have returned to a community where public officials are constantly covering the sites of crimes, unmarking mass graves, and rewriting the history of the conflict. Once again, the reported details of this testimony seemingly aimed at giving an identity to a child whose name is unknown and whose suffering can only be recounted by those who have shortly met him, do not find a comparable account within the local community.

Memorialization of sites of atrocities reinforce and validate the suffering of victims and witnesses. They add to the accounting of events whose record populates thousands of pages of the ICTY judgements, a vivid description of the images and of the deep fear and desperation of victims. They can become the most emblematic depiction of the campaign of terror during the genocide in Bosnia and a clear example of the "ultimate suffering" of the population. More than any punishment, the sites of atrocity stand out as universal reminders of the horrors committed during the war. We might be reading in the future the names of those who committed the atrocities during the Balkans war, but memorials stand out because they represent the living memories of those whose names or

[20] William A. Schabas, "Sentencing by International Tribunals: A Human Rights Approach", Duke Journal of Comparative and International Law, vol. 7, 1997, 502.

existence might be easily forgotten: the children, the women, and men who became the object of international crimes.

We recognize there are several voices among scholars warning against memorialization as a source of national reconciliation. Memorials can perpetrate the images of old wrongs, reigniting conflicts, and affecting the present and future relations of interethnic relations.[21] Memories and memorials can also become the tool of political propaganda as we noted during the travel through Bosnia and Herzegovina, where memorials and statues honoring the memory of fallen Serb soldiers are strategically located in places where Bosniaks civilians suffered torture and death. However, we contend that this is indeed that form of unilateral historical interpretation through memorialization, which leaves little space to a public space of dialogue and imposes a political will over moral consideration. It is what memorialization should not be – namely the furtherance of a political system of terror and persecution.

B. "Literary and Political Denialism"

The adjudication by the ICTY of the crimes committed against Bosniaks has been a double-edged sword. While the ICTY is without a doubt the modern international criminal tribunal that has produced the most extensive historical and legal record of the war in the Balkans, the tribunal was also the stage and performative space where denial took place for the first time. From the first accused to enter the court, Duško Tadić, to the dramatic exit from the courtroom of Slobodan Praljak – who committed suicide during his sentencing – the courtrooms of the ICTY have offered the accused a moment of public visibility to deny the accusations and an opportunity for further nationalistic propaganda.

However, as noted by scholars Petrović, Ristić and Strupinskienė, accused war criminals did not stop their propaganda after conviction.[22]

[21] David Bloomfield, Terri Barnes, and Lucien Huyse, eds., *Reconciliation of the Violent Conflict; A Handbook*, International Idea, 2003.

[22] Petrović, "The ICTY library: War criminals as authors, their works as sources", 333-348; Ristić, "The media negotiations of war criminals and their memoirs: The emergence of the 'ICTY celebrity'", 391-405; Lina Strupinskienė, "Life

Reinforced by the support of local, ethnically affiliated communities celebrating these figures as martyrs and heroes[23] and resisting the acceptance of the international tribunal's decisions,[24] convicted criminals morphed into literary figures and promoters of a return to a romanticized political past. The production of literary work – consisting mostly of memoirs or chronicle accounts of their trials, as well as direct and indirect political statements aimed at denying, reframing, and justifying their actions– has been very prolific. Scholars have provided a compelling record of books, memoirs, poems, and blogs turned into news articles.[25] Scholars and news reports have also reported on the artistic and literary proclivities of war criminals before and during the war as evidence of their culpability and attempts at restoring their images.[26] In this section, we aim to identify the dangerous consequences of literary and political denialism through an analysis of the intended audience of those messages. Specifically, we suggest that literary denialism identifies four types of constituent audience, which we briefly describe below. The four types of audience are the post-conflict generation, a larger intellectual community, the victims, and the international community. We suggest that for each audience there is a specific message, which is not necessarily unique to that specific constituent group, but whose general aim is to deny the facts ascertained by the ICTY. We conclude that the high number of

After Conviction at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia: Mapping the Empirical Reality", Journal of International Criminal Justice, 21.1, (2023), 113-135.

[23] Subotić, *Hijacked justice: Dealing with the past in the Balkans,* 125, Katarina Ristić, "Imaginary Trials." *War Crimes and Memory in Former Yugoslavia*, Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, (2014).

[24] Olivera Simić, "Bringing "justice" home? Bosnians, war criminals and the interaction between the cosmopolitan and the local", German Law Journal 12.7 (2011), 1389-1407.

[25] Petrović, "The ICTY library: War criminals as authors, their works as sources", 333-348; Ristić, "The media negotiations of war criminals and their memoirs: The emergence of the 'ICTY celebrity'", 391-405; Strupinskienė, "Life After Conviction at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia: Mapping the Empirical Reality", 113-135.

[26] Jay Surdukowski, "Is Poetry a War Crime-Reckoning for Radovan Karadžić the Poet-Warrior", *Mich. J. Int'l L.,* 26, (2004), 673.

these works is the reflection of a systemic effort to shape the future and memories of the crimes perpetrated.

1. The post-conflict generation

Literary production with primarily regional distribution sends confusing signals to the public. These messages consist of factual statements and tribunal findings on one side and, on the other, a counternarrative that either blatantly denies events or – where evidence is corroborated – provides justifications for criminal behavior. Much of the confusion stems from the audience's lack of direct knowledge regarding the events.

We are specifically considering a two-pronged audience: a general post-conflict generation whose ethnic affiliation creates an uncritical, loyal bond to these narratives, and a specific group of students whose learning experience through Serbian textbooks indoctrinates them with a partial, biased, or falsified version of history.[27]

In this context, literary works and textbooks serve as symbolic messages triggering two specific attitudes. First, the post-conflict generation's attachment to a specific ethnic identity deepens, increasing emotional distance and reinforcing the urgency to 'return to normal.' Second, scholarly education strengthens the perception of Serbs as a suffering group while framing other ethnic groups – who may have also suffered – primarily as perpetrators. Promoting a false historical account centered on victimhood and martyrdom deepens ethnic divisions, fuels nationalistic discourse, and risks reigniting violence.

2. The Intellectual Community

Over time, a large intellectual community has rallied around convicted criminals and supported their denialism. Much of this indirect support

[27] Milica Stojanović, "Serbian History Textbooks 'Give One-Sided View' of 1990s Wars", BIRN, September 8, 2020; Nevena Bogdanović, "This is what a Textbook is Teaching Young Serbs about the Balkan Wars", *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty.* November 30, 2022.

has been for those considered the masterminds of the genocidal campaign against the Bosniaks. Frequently publicized and distributed to a broad, non-regional audience, books on this subject present convicted war criminals as heroes who were wrongly convicted by the ICTY, providing them with an additional platform to build consensus.

Commonly cited works include *Commander* by Serbian historian Bojan Dimitrijević, which strongly counters ICTY evidence proving that Mladić ordered the Srebrenica genocide.[28] Similarly, Belgrade journalist Ljiljana Bulatović wrote two books—one on Mladić titled *General Mladić* and another on Radovan Karadžić titled *Radovan* in which she claims to defend the "truth" about the Serbian state and describes the dangers Mladić and Karadžić faced while "defending" Serbia.

Highly controversial was the Nobel Prize awarded to Austrian author Peter Handke, who has not only openly denied crimes against Muslims but has characterized Srebrenica as a "revenge massacre" for earlier killings of Serbs.[29] As other scholars (Trahan 2021) suggest, this narrative is attributable to nationalistic leadership and is easily framed as political propaganda.[30] Because of its targeted audience and distribution hubs, such as the Belgrade Book Fair, this rhetoric normalizes a specific narrative intended to restore the old political status and shape the region's future governments.

3. Victims

Among the relevant audience to which the literary work and public statements of convicted criminals speak, victims are perhaps the most vulnerable and as such the most in need of protection. Throughout the history of the ICTY, the role and relevance of victims have been central

[28] Mladen Lakić, Anja Vladisavljević and Filip Rudić, "Books that End the War", Vreme, October 31, 2018.

[29] Ehlimana Memišević, "Why we need to challenge genocide denialism in the Balkans", *Al Jazeera*, July 16, 2021.

[30] Jennifer Trahan, "Examining the Benchmarks by which to Evaluate the ICTY's Legacy and Lessons for the Future", in Hikmet Karčić and Sead Turčalo, eds., *Bosnian Genocide Denial and Triumphalism: Origins, Impact, and Prevention*. Faculty of Political Science, University of Sarajevo, 2021.

to the adjudication of crimes. Their strengthened participation in the proceedings has given victims the opportunity to tell their stories and set a historical account of their truth and suffering.[31] As such, most of the victims' statements have become a central focus of the tribunal's decision-making process and have often informed the outcome of the judicial decision, determining the fate of the convicted criminals. The detailed accounts of victims' testimony defy denialism as they provide names, places, and dates. Even more, it provides evidence of the emotional scar carried by local communities. Denial is particularly dangerous in this case, as it creates a source of re-traumatization: the fear that surrounding communities enveloped in a project aiming at rewriting history and a political nationalistic entourage might escalate violence again.

4. The International Community

For those used to observing international criminal trials, it is not surprising that the accused standing trials are often seen in, what we define "*composure defiance of the court*." In revisiting the many videos in the archives of the ICTY, it is common to see the defendants nodding in disapproval or at times disrupting proceedings with long lectures about the facts and the law. As mentioned above, their contempt rarely ends with their conviction. Literary work based on memoirs or lengthy blogs (in the case of Praljak 800 pages) very often provides a detailed account of the criminal proceedings. Most importantly, some of the literary production tries to legally counter the arguments submitted by judges in their decisions. Outside of the courtroom, still jailed, or back in their communities, convicted war criminals use countless pages to reframe their convictions and their statements in court. To mention a few of these works aiming at contesting the international community's legitimacy to adjudicate their crimes, we can list Biljana Plavšić, President of the President of Republika Srpska between 1996 and 1998, who published her memoir *I Testify* in which she extensively contradicts her guilty plea at the ICTY. Veselin Šljivančanin in his book, self-explanatorily titled *I*

[31] Aloisi and Meernik, *Judgment Day*, 2017.

Defended the Truth, depicts his indictment and consequent conviction as unjust. Too many to count are the publications by Vojislav Šešelj, whose more than 60 publications contain accusations to the ICTY, its proceedings, findings, and ultimately its legacy. One last example brings us back to the very first indicted entering the courtroom and probably, as we write, the latest of convicted war criminals' books. Duško Tadić's book titled *The Deception of the Century* was published by the publishing house Sajnos in October 2025 and it was introduced by the author himself at one of the stands of the International Book Fair in Belgrade. The title is telling of Tadić's intentions: disputing the tribunal's findings and, based on new evidence he claims to have gathered, ask for a revision of the trial.[32] All these works have the sole objective of undermining the international community's attempts at writing the history of the war in the Balkans and to rehabilitate the convicted criminals in the eyes of the public opinion.

Research Methodology

Before describing the research methodology applied in this work, we would like to start with an initial disclaimer. This paper analyzes a very small and symbolic sample of cases decided by the Tribunal, and in turn a small sample of memorialization or lack thereof, as well as literary or political denialism. Since it is the intention of the authors to expand this work and include a broader analysis of the cases, we are initially selecting situations that have been part of already developed field work precisely focusing on the executions at the Kravica Warehouse, the crimes perpetrated in Višegrad, including the incidents in Bikavac and Pionirska streets, and Vilina Vlas, and lastly another front of the persecution of the Bosniak community in Stolac, the Koštana Hospital.

[32] Reported by Srpska National – News Agency of the Republika Srpska, October 29, 2025.

In order to identify the different layers of denial and their corresponding dialogue with the judicial and historical truth established by the ICTY, the research will present each case analyzed by a specific order. First and foremost, we start with the summary of the Tribunal's judgements and the relevant portions linked to the sites of mass atrocities. This provides the established historical and legal truth that is at the center of denial efforts. As mentioned in the introduction, as of today, the Tribunal's judgments represent one of the most comprehensive historical analysis and legal determinations of responsibility existent. Thus, the information is readily available. The lengthy judgements were divided by the type of crimes committed, with specific reference to the sites of their perpetration, and the identification of the individuals found responsible.

The following section identifies the first form of denial. We offer an examination of the status of the three sites of atrocities listed above. Thus, we compare that legal truth with the story told by some of the sites. In doing this, we try to assess how the established judicial truth shapes the "destination" (use) of those sites. We consider of particular importance the location and municipality of the site. As other scholars have pointed out, it is the case that denialism is much more prevalent in the areas under the political administration of the Republika Srpska and the Republic of Serbia.[33] In fact, Bosnia and Herzegovina comprises two entities: The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska. These autonomous political entities were created following the Dayton Accords in late 1995, which tried to put an end to the bloodshed that had been perpetrated since the early 1990s. The Accords signed when there was yet no evidence of the magnitude of the crimes committed in some of the areas of the region, geographically partitioned the territory by freezing the location of the different ethnicities within specifically territorial boundaries.

All municipalities we visited are in areas which are under the control of the Republika Srpska. As we traveled through the region, it became immediately evident that the ethnic divisions are still very much in place

[33] Gerstein and Karčić, "The United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Srebrenica and the Struggle Against Genocide Denial", 3-35.

and the tension about how historical truth is recounted clashes along the same ethnic lines that have brought to the collapse of Yugoslavia. We provide some analysis of the historical evolution of the site in terms of its intended use. In fact, the sites where crimes were perpetrated are a constant battleground part of that "going to normal" project and their structure have evolved over time, most of them toward a stripping of the evidence and memories of the crimes perpetrated. This specific section allows us to analyze how sites shape the societal narrative of the legal archives and, in turn, of the crimes committed.

The third part investigates the presence, or lack thereof, of literary and political denialism by convicted individuals with specific reference to the sites where crimes were committed. In identifying the literature published, we rely on prior work[34] listing some of the writings of convicted individuals, as well as on news sources and interviews released by the authors. This part of the analysis is particularly important in understanding what we are calling the dialogue between the judicial truth and the practice of denial. The reframing of the historical narrative by those who were convicted of crimes represents a particularly dangerous form of denial. As mentioned above, it creates a cult of impunity, an aura of martyrdom, and ultimately fuels the desire to redress the wrongs suffered by retaking the political and social spaces taken away by a perceived biased justice.

To capture the impact of this form of denial, we have tried, when possible, to use a proxy measure of the distribution of the work published, as well as repeated political statements. It is undoubtedly the case that the data and situations through which we examine denial is biased in favor of most notable indictees and most controversial cases, as well as convicted individuals whose interest to reenter the public and political life of the country prompts them to be more vocal.

[34] Petrović, "The ICTY library: War criminals as authors, their works as sources", 333-348; Ristić, "The media negotiations of war criminals and their memoirs: The emergence of the 'ICTY celebrity'", 391-405; Strupinskienė, "Life After Conviction at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia: Mapping the Empirical Reality", 113-135.

Analysis

1. Kravica

1.1 ICTY Findings

In July of 1995, more than 7,000 Bosniak Muslim men and boys were killed as part of the Srebrenica Genocide by members of the Bosnian Serb Army and Serbian paramilitary groups. Over 1,000 of these killings took place within a warehouse owned by the Agricultural Cooperative in Kravica.[35] The ICTY established these facts throughout a multitude of cases, including the *Krstić*, *Popović et al.*, and *Obrenović* cases, and as such, this case law serves as the basis for the official judicial narrative that follows.

On July 13, 1995, "several thousand" Bosnian Muslim men were captured near Sandici Meadow and the Nova Kasaba football field from a larger column of men leaving Srebrenica.[36] Following their capture, the men wound up under the control of the Drina Corps, one of the six corps of the Army of the Republika Srpska, and their commander, Radislav Krstić. These men were "forced to turn over their valuables and abandon their belongings" before being "shepherd[ed]" out of the meadow – with many of the men from Sandici Meadow being placed onboard buses or marched to the Kravica Warehouse late on the afternoon of the 13th.[37]

One witness testified that upon their arrival to the Kravica Warehouse, where they were "packed in" and guarded by Bosnian Serb forces, another prisoner "complained to a [guard] that he had nowhere to sit [in] the packed West room, [to which] the guard opened fire upon him."[38] Ljubomir Borovčanin, Deputy Commander of the Republika Srpska MUP Special Police Brigade, arrived at the warehouse around 5:15-

[35] ICTY, IT-00-39-T, Prosecutor v. Momčilo Krajišnik, *Trial Judgement*, 27 September 2006, 73.
[36] Prosecutor v. Krstić, [19].
[37] Prosecutor v. Krstić, [60-72].
[38] ICTY, IT-05-88-T, Prosecutor v. Vujadin Popović et al., *Trial Judgement*, Volume 1, 10 June 2010, 170.

5:30pm where he saw a "pile of bodies in front of the West and Center Rooms"[39]

Around 6:00pm in the evening, these same soldiers in the Drina Corps began "throwing grenades and shooting directly into" the men packed within the warehouse. A survivor of the massacre testified to the Tribunal that:

> *"All of a sudden there was a lot of shooting in the warehouse… there were rifles, grenades, bursts of gunfire and it… got so dark in the warehouse that [they] couldn't see anything. People started to scream, [shout], and [cry] for help".*[40]

The gunfire continued intermittently until nightfall with Bosnian Serb forces "periodically [entering] the warehouse [to shoot] and [throw] grenades through the windows."[41] Another survivor of the massacre was unable to describe their experience in the massacre; they state to the tribunal that "[they had not] seen anything like it in any of the horror movies that [they watched]" and that it was "far worse than any film."[42] Any prisoner who tried to escape from the warehouse through the windows was shot by guards surrounding the building.[43] Witnesses described how "dead bodies… covered the entire concrete" floor of the warehouse once the shooting stopped, and how they only escaped the massacre by "pretending to be dead."[44] The following morning, Serbian soldiers "called out to the wounded" within the warehouse, claiming they would take survivors to the hospital, but once the survivors were identified they were "made to sing nationalistic Serb songs about Draža Mihajlovic and subsequently killed."[45]

After the last identified survivors had been killed, "an excavator began taking the bodies out of the warehouse" with a water tank being

[39] Prosecutor v. Popović, [172].
[40] Krstić (n 34), [72].
[41] Popović et al. (n 37), [173].
[42] Krstić (n 34), [73].
[43] Krstić (n34), [73].
[44] Krstić (n34), [73].
[45] Popović et al. (n 37), [173].

employed to "wash the blood off the asphalt."[46] These excavators were used on July 14th to load the dead bodies into graves previously prepared in Glogova, among other locations.

In September of 1996, a team of forensic experts were sent to the warehouse where they collected "strong evidence of the killings" in the form of hair, blood, and explosives residue – finding "blood, bones, and tissue adhering to the walls and floors of the building."[47] The expert analysis and forensic evidence in the *Krstić* case tied the site to the mass graves of Glogova 2 and Zeleni Jadar 5. However, in the Popović et al. case, the tribunal provided further evidence that bodies were also buried in graves at Ravnice, Blječeva, and Budak. The tribunal described how following the Srebrenica Massacre "names previously used to mark settlements and communities, places of learning, culture, and work, and geographic features are now used to identify mass execution sites."[48]

In the Blagojević and Jokić case, the tribunal established that the killings that took place at Kravica Warehouse, in conjunction with other sites in Srebrenica, were part of the wider efforts to convert Potočari and Srebrenica into a Serbian enclave, and constituted a genocide against the Bosnian Muslim population. As part of his sentencing during the trial, Obrenović testified that "[O]f course I knew that what I was participating in was wrong. Any sane person would know that. And yet I did it anyway."[49]

1.2. Urban Denialism

Driving to Srebrenica from Sarajevo, means crossing many villages, such as Goglova and Bratunac, which still carry the signs of the war. The route takes you through beautiful mountains and forests and passes in front of the Kravica Warehouse. Over the past 10 years the place described as a site of one of the most horrific executions of men fleeing

[46] Krstić (n 34), [73].
[47] Krstić, [74].
[48] ICTY, IT-02-60/2-S, Prosecutor v. Dragan Obrenović, *Trial Judgement*, 10 December 2003, 9.
[49] *Prosecutor v. Obrenović*, [44].

the genocide in Srebrenica, has gone through multiple interventions, mainly attempting at covering and bringing back to some kind of *normal* use the building. In 2016[50] the warehouse was hardly visible from the street; covered by trees and a fence not higher than 150 centimeters. Upon closer approach, the place looked like a regular deposit for agricultural machinery and there were some dogs chained barking at the movement of people passing by. At that time, the only recognizable mark of the crimes described above were bullet holes on the concrete walls inside one of the rooms of the warehouse and on the walls in front of the building. There were no signs of commemoration and no indication that the warehouse was used to kill hundreds of individuals in a matter of hours, that Muslim men were summarily executed and buried close to the farm as a part of a genocidal campaign. Ironically, right in front of the fences we crossed to enter the area of the warehouse there was a small plaque commemorating a young boy who had died in a traffic accident.

Fast forward two years, the Kravica Warehouse bullet holes were partially covered. Still hidden from the street by trees and fences, the small entrance to the site once left open was now closed, a small gate secured with a chain. The process of bringing the place back to normal was moving forward. Today the Kravica Warehouse presents no signs of its gruesome past. Its white facades, clean surroundings, and completely fenced delimitations indicate that the Kravica Warehouse is ready to become, according to reports[51] an entrepreneurial hub with no better specified use. The transformation of a site of suffering into buildings that will be destined for commercial activities with no sign of commemoration is inevitably inflicting upon the victims an additional trauma. It is a signal that the lives of those killed were disposable and that remembering them is therefore unnecessary.

[50] Part of this work was previously published by one of the authors in the edited volume *ICTY Legacies – Oxford University Press* with the title *The Broken Path to Reconciliation.*

[51] Leon Hartwell and Hikmet Karčić, "Critical UN Move: Draft Resolution Confronts Genocide Denial in the Balkans", Just Security, April 29, 2024.

1.3. Literary and Political Denialism

One of the most prolific and vocal deniers of the events which have unfolded at the Kravica Warehouse is the convicted war criminal Vojislav Šešelj. We have found that Šešelj's actions comprise both forms of literary and political denial. Founder and leader of the Serbian Radical Party, with high hopes to be the leader of the new Serbia, Šešelj never gave up the idea of a greater Serbia and called his publishing house "Greater Serbia."[52] Through the publication of more than 60 books, Šešelj not only attacks the ICTY as an *unlawful* institution that has handed down *unlawful* decisions but systematically describes the events that took place in Srebrenica and Kravica as "made-up crimes."[53] As during his trial, in many of his books Šešelj denies the number and the civilian identity of those who were executed at the warehouse. The Belgrade Book Fair, one of the longest running book fairs in the region, has come under attack for *de facto* promoting war criminals' denialism and for providing center stage and big stands to Šešelj's books. But Šešelj is not only a prolific writer, his political statements in support of Serbia's affiliation with Russia and his attacks against NATO, which is guilty in his mind of attacking Serbia and taking Kosovo away from them,[54] have been populating news outlets and filled his speeches at rallies. Kravica has been frequently one of his focuses; at the end of March of 2018 Šešelj stood in the gallery of the High Court of Belgrade in support of eight former Bosnian Serb policemen accused of killing some 1,300 Bosnian Muslims in Kravica. Outside the courtroom, Šešelj stated "All eight policemen are innocent, testimonies prove this […]" and as the number of those executed went from 1,300 to 317 people, he called the executions an "incident" and not a war crime.[55]

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[52] Lakić, Vladisavljević and Rudić, "Books that End the War".

[53] Mersiha Gadžo, "Denial of genocide prevails in dream for 'Greater Serbia'", *Al Jazeera,* 11 April 2018.

[54] Interview: N. Barker (Reporter), (n.d.), "*Last Yugoslav strongman returns to politics",* [Video], Al Jazeera English, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dG_REs0zdk4.

[55] Filip Rudić, "Serbia's Seselj Rallies Nationalists at Srebrenica Massacre Hearing", BIRN, February 26, 2019.

2. Koštana Hospital

2.1 ICTY Findings

On May 10, 1993, the Croatian Defense Council (HVO) took over the Koštana Hospital in Stolac Municipality with the intention of converting it into a detention center.[56] HVO soldiers transferred sick patients out of the hospital to the Grabovina Barracks in Čapljina with patients being detained with no medical assistance. The Tribunal found no evidence that these patients were part of "any armed forces at the time of their detention." During this same period, the Director of Koštana Hospital, Dr. Mehmet Kapić, was arrested and removed from his leadership role at the hospital.[57] According to testimony from Witness C, a "platoon from the 3rd Company of the 3rd Battalion of the Military Police" was quartered on the ground floor of the hospital, with Witness CM identifying Pero Matić as the commander of the unit.[58] Additionally, the Stolac Battalion of the 1st Knez Domagoj Brigade was quartered in the hospital's basement and was responsible for guarding several detainees.[59]

The Chamber identified that Muslim men who were arrested by the HVO in Stolac Municipality were detained at Koštana Hospital between the months of May and October of 1993. These men included Muslims who were part of the HVO, and the Army of Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ARBiH) as well as Muslim men who were not part of any army. Some of these men were also brought to prisons in Gabela and Dretelj between June and October of 1993.[60]

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[56] For a more detailed analysis of the formation and functioning of the Croatian Community of Herzeg-Bosnia, see: Zilha Mastalić Košuta, „Osnivanje i djelovanje Hrvatske zajednice Herceg-Bosna (1991−1995)" ("The Establishment and Activities of the Croatian Community of Herzeg-Bosnia (1991–1995)"), *Godišnjak BZK „Preporod"*, 2019, 147–173.

[57] ICTY, IT-04-74-T, Prosecutor v. Jadranko Prlić et al., *Trial Judgement*, Volume 1, 29 May 2013, 546.

[58] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [547].

[59] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [547].

[60] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [548].

The Military Police who were quartered in the hospital were repeatedly "implicated in… deaths and severe beatings" that took place there.[61] Numerous witnesses testified to these beatings, including Witness EF, who testified that during an interrogation between July 19th and 20th of 1993 members of the HVO "beat him so hard with billy clubs that they fractured his nose and cut his right ear with a knife."[62] The Witness also testified that Faruk Šarić and Osman Obradović received similar beatings and were subjected to physical violence during questioning. Zijad Vujinović also testified to seeing four detainees, Adnan Selmić, Suad Razić, Suad Boškailo and Hakija Omanić, who "bore traces of blows" during his detention in July of 1993.[63]

On August 2, 1993, Witness CM was detained at Koštana Hospital where he saw "three detainees with blood stains on their clothing and traces of blows on their faces." That same day, Milenko Perić and Boro Perić, both members of the Military Police, "interrogated and beat" Haso Đulić, Suad Đulić, Emir Đulić, Đemo Selimić, and Šerif Selimić.[64]

On August 3, 1993, a member of the HVO forced Witness CM to "beat his head against a wardrobe, which he did until it split open" – he was then "forced to spread his arms and legs" while "every one of the individuals present [but] one, took turns beating him with a billy club, punching and kicking him, … until he collapsed."[65] He was then threatened by Nikita Bošković, a Military Police Officer, with a switchblade and forced to get up before he was beaten for another hour until a separate military police officer arrived and "[forced] the brutality to stop." Witness CM was also beaten by Vidan Prkačin and Marinko Rajić with a truncheon "on the head, shoulders, and neck" inside his cell.[66]

That same day, Milenko Perić and Boro Perić, "interrogated and beat Vejsil Đulić" who was a 57-year-old detainee for approximately 90 minutes according to Witness CM. Witness CM testified that Đulić's face

[61] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [548].
[62] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [551].
[63] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [551].
[64] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [5551].
[65] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [551-552].
[66] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [552].

"was covered with bruises and [he was] no longer able to walk," he laid Đulić on a bed where he died of his injuries shortly after. Immediately after, another detainee, Salem Đulić, was also severely beaten and died of his injuries.[67] Soldiers arrived by truck shortly after to have Witness CM and other detainees bury the bodies of Vejsil Đulić and Salem Đulić in the cemetery of a nearby hamlet. Several witnesses testified to the Chamber that Salko Kaplan, who was detained on August 1, 1993, also died "following severe beatings by HVO soldiers from Stolac at Koštana Hospital."[68] Witness CD testified that Kaplan was severely beaten at the hospital, then subsequently taken to Dretelj Prison, "where he arrived nearly comatose [and] died shortly after."[69]

On September 25, 1993, 16 Muslim men were brought to Koštana Hospital where they were "violently assaulted… with truncheons, rifle butts, belts, [and] chair legs" by members of the Military Police for approximately one to two hours.[70] These beatings left Witness CQ with "three broken ribs," "balance problems" that lasted for years after the incident, and continued "numbness in his right arm, hand, leg, and foot."[71] Witness CQ testified that following the beatings, he and another detainee were brought by Vicko Marjanović, a member of the Military Police, to a separate room where Ante Krešić and Dragan Krešić, also members of the Military Police, were standing over the body of Ibro Razić – who was gravely injured.[72] The men ordered Witness CQ and the other detainee to "attach the wires from a telephone to the toes and ears of Ibro Razić… then press on a button [that sent] electrical charges to those parts of his body" – the detainees "were threatened with death if they failed to [comply]."[73] The detainees were forced to press the button repeatedly, to increase the power of the charges, for approximately 15 to 20 minutes in an attempt to "force the detainees to disclose who had

[67] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [549].
[68] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [549].
[69] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [549].
[70] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [549].
[71] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [552-553].
[72] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,*[549-550].
[73] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [550].

killed Ivan Krešić, an HVO soldier, and where he was buried." Razić was later brought to Gabela prison, where he was also beaten, before succumbing to his injuries.[74]

That same day, Dragan and Ante Krešić also severely beat Suad Obradovic, another detainee, before dragging his body to "the gaol cell… underground."[75] Witness testimony from Witness CQ and Edin Baljić confirmed that Obradović had "sustained severe injuries to the head" and that he was "covered in bruises [and] bleeding profusely from his mouth, ears, and nose."[76] Obradović died of his injuries during the night, and his body was taken by detainees and guards to the Muslim cemetery in Stolac the next day.[77] Upon Ibro Zlomužica's arrival at Koštana Hospital that day, he was forced by HVO members on duty to "stay propped [up] against the [hospital lobby] wall" alongside 14 other Muslim detainees "with their hands on their heads from 10:00am to 6:30pm." Zlomužica testified that "guards beat them with their boots, fists, rubber clubs, and rifle butts while they were in the hospital lobby."[78] During Zlomužica's detention between September 25, 1993 and October 1, 1993, he and the other Muslim men he was arrested with were "interrogated at least three times a day" by HVO soldiers and were beaten during the interrogations. Zlomužica was hit in the back with a wooden rod and "hanged by the neck two or three times with an electric cable," which caused him to lose consciousness.[79]

Another twelve men, including Edin Baljić, were arrested September 25, 1993, by members of the HVO near Borojevići.[80] Baljić and the other detainees were beaten for an hour before being taken into a room inside Koštana Hospital for interrogation by Miroslav Raguž. Baljić testified that the detainees were "selected at random" then "beaten for about an hour three to four times a day" – these beatings usually "took place after

[74] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [550].
[75] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [550].
[76] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [550].
[77] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [550].
[78] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [553].
[79] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [553].
[80] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [553].

dark with the lights off."[81] However, when beatings took place during the day, detainees were "positioned facing the wall so that they would not recognize the faces of those who beat them."[82]

The Trial Chamber found sufficient evidence that members of the Military Police and the HVO Army "participated in [the] beatings" which caused the deaths of Salem and Vejsil Đulić, Suad Obradović, Ibro Razić, and Salko Kaplan.[83] Additionally, the Chamber found that "members of the Military Police, … the HVO Army, … and the MUP engaged in severe beatings and other brutality towards the detainees at Koštana Hospital."[84]

2.2. Urban Denialism

The site of the Koštana Hospital in Stolac symbolizes how denial of memorialization of sites can take different shapes. The site, which as described above was the de facto a concentration camp run by the HVO, is currently owned by the State of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The building, once a specialized hospital with the purpose of curing bone diseases, has been the object of *neglect* and *vandalism*. Upon entering the premises of the old building, broken windows, pieces of glass, and crumbling walls almost stand as a mirror of the horrors recounted by the witnesses and detainees who were tortured at the site. The windows to the basement, where some of the most atrocious acts of torture occurred, are covered with plywood and the stairs leading to the entrance are all broken. Throughout many visits over the years, this is probably the place whose destination has changed the least and yet the most emblematic of the relevance of time and its essence in addressing memories to counter denial. The building is a representation of government officials' will to let the premises fall and maybe rebuild something new, erasing completely any memory that the once well-known medical facility transformed into a place where horrific crimes were perpetrated, if it ever existed.

[81] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [554].
[82] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [554].
[83] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [550].
[84] *Prosecutor v. Prlić,* [554].

Vandalism has been the other form of denying the memorialization of suffering. Over the years plaques were placed at the entrance of the building on the left side of the columns of the stone gate. All memorial plaques at the site have been vandalized and destroyed on numerous occasions, removed and repositioned once again, challenging the resilience of the victims and survivors who have asked repeatedly that the building be turned into the Stolac Memorial Center, a place not only for truth and justice for all citizens who lived through the war, but for the future generations.[85]

2.3. Literary and Political Denialism

The events that unfolded at the Koštana Hospital have been objectively neglected by scholars and the media. We found that part of the scant attention paid to the site is also due to the relevance assigned to those events in the judgement at the ICTY. More specifically, the crimes perpetrated at the Koštana Hospital were, in the overall assessment of the criminal responsibility of Prlić et al., a secondary incrimination, mostly leading to discussion of the command responsibility and connection of the HVO soldiers on the ground with the chain of command of the Council. Most of the cases that have adjudicated the responsibility for the specific events that occurred at the Koštana Hospital have been decided by municipal courts. That said, we suggest that the architectural neglect in which the building has been left and the lack of open condemnation of the vandalized plaques is a clear political statement of the unwillingness to remember.

As per a form of literary denial, the most infamous indictee connected with the events in the municipality of Stolac was Slobodan Praljak, who committed suicide in court while he was being sentenced to 20 years in prison. He wrote an 800 pages handbook, titled *How to Become a Joint Criminal.* In this book, Praljak, notorious for his lengthy self-defense speeches during court sessions, rewrites history and the magnanimous

[85] Amer Đulić, "What the Memorial Centre Koštana bolnica means to me", https://dwp-balkan.org, December 23, 2025.

role of Croatia in the war, justifies his actions and absolve himself of the crimes but, as pointed out by Milekić he fails to mention the connection between Croatia and the HVO while fighting in Stolac and its surrounding areas against the Army of Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which resulted in some of the crimes committed at the Koštana Hospital.[86]

3. Višegrad

3.1. The ICTY Findings

Throughout the early months of 1992, Muslims in the municipality of Višegrad were forced to "disarm… or requested to surrender their weapons"[87] Serbian politicians began to divide the police "along ethnic lines" in April of 1992, with barricades raised shortly afterward.[88] Muslim police officers were sent to police stations in other areas and "many [non-Muslim] men were mobilized into the reserve police force" in May of 1992.[89] The municipality became subject to "random acts of violence," including "shooting, … shelling, … [and] mortar[fire]," which led to "many civilians" fleeing from their homes.[90]

The JNA Užice Corps took control of Višegrad on April 14, 1992, and seized the hydroelectric dam, and began efforts to ethnically "cleanse" the area of Muslims before they then departed on May 19, 1992.[91] Thereafter, the municipality was controlled by a variety of paramilitaries who subjected Muslim residents to "mistreatment and humiliation [including] rapes or beatings" with "at least the acquiescence of local

[86] Sven Milekić, "Slobodan Praljak: Defending Himself by Distorting History", BIRN, December 4, 2017.
[87] ICTY, IT-00-39-T, Prosecutor v. Momčilo Krajišnik, *Trial Judgement*, 27 September 2006, 252.
[88] Prosecutor v. Krajišnik, [252].
[89] ICTY, IT-98-32/1-T, Prosecutor v. Milan Lukić and Sredoje Lukić, *Trial Judgement*, 20 July 2009, 25-26.
[90] Krajišnik (n 85) [252].
[91] Krajišnik, [252]; Lukić and Lukić (n 87) [20-21].

Serb authorities."[92] These paramilitary groups included "'Šešelj's Men,' 'Arkan's Men,' 'Garavi Sokak,' and 'Beli Orlovi' (or the 'White Eagles')," though many were "referred to as 'White Eagles' regardless of the group [they belonged to]."[93] The paramilitary groups began organizing convoys to "[empty] villages of their Muslim population[s]."[94] Approximately 200 "non-Serb civilians," predominantly Muslims were killed through the summer of 1992; many of these victims were killed by gunshot wounds, though many "showed signs of blunt force trauma."[95] According to Mevsud Poljo, many of these bodies were thrown in the Drina river – locals pulled between 170 and 180 bodies from the water between May and September of 1992.[96]

On June 7, 1992 a Muslim man, VG032, was hiding alongside Hasan Kustura and his father-in-law in the basement of their house in Bikavac[97] A car containing four soldiers, one of whom was Milan Lukić, approached the house around 5 pm; Lukić asked the man "why he had been hiding" then seized his identity card and "tore it up."[98] The man and Kustura were ordered to follow Lukić into a house in Bikavac near the Grad hill. Shortly after, Hasan Mutapčić and his 13 year old son entered the house, with Mutapčić's son "[visibly] terrified and [trembling]."[99] Several other individuals entered the house until there were between ten and thirteen people held inside.[100] That same day, Milan Lukić brought two other Muslim men to the same house.[101] Once Lukić entered the house, he ordered the detained men to "stand in a semi-circle," remove their shoes and socks, and "to place all valuables on the floor." Lukić seized banknotes from their wallets and placed them into his pockets before leaving the house with Meho Džafić to receive keys to one of the cars.[102]

[92] Krajišnik (n 85) [253].
[93] Lukić and Lukić (n 87) [27].
[94] Krajišnik (n 85) [253].
[95] Krajjšnik, [253-254].
[96] Lukić and Lukić (n 87) [23].
[97] Lukić and Lukić, [37].
[98] Lukić and Lukić, [37].
[99] Lukić and Lukić, [38].
[100] Lukić and Lukić, [38].
[101] Lukić and Lukić, [38-39].
[102] Lukić and Lukić, [39].

Upon returning indoors, Lukić ordered Ekrem Džafić, Hasan Kustura, Hasan Mutapčić and VG032 to follow him to an olive-green Yugo, where they were then driven alongside three other men to the Vilina Vlas hotel.[103] The Vilina Vlas hotel was used as the headquarters for Milan Lukić's paramilitary group and previously served as a detention facility for Muslim civilians. Upon their arrival at the hotel, Lukić searched for keys to the hotel manager's office but met resistance from a soldier named Šušnjar, who suggested "Lukić should let the seven men go."[104]

The seven men were later driven back towards Višegrad; on the journey, Mitar Vasiljević asked Lukić what would happen to the men, to which Lukić replied they were to be "'exchanged' for '300 soldiers who had fallen at Žepa.'"[105] Lukić ordered the car to stop "a few hundred meters from the intersection at Sase" then forced the men to leave the cars and walk towards the nearby Drina river.[106] About ten meters in front of the river, Lukić ordered the men to stop, asked if any of them could swim, then ordered them to move to the river, "warning them that they would be killed should they try to escape."[107] The seven men were then lined up on the bank of the river and Milan Lukić ordered the soldiers to "fire single shots."[108] Milan Lukić, using his sniper rifle, and two other soldiers opened fire killing several of the men with further shots fired to kill any survivors.[109]

VG032 and VG014 both survived the massacre by pretending to be dead until the soldiers left; after Lukić and the soldiers left, VG014 suggested they leave "because Milan Lukić had said he had six more people he wanted to bring and execute."[110] These killings were observed on the other side of the river by VG079, with VG079 testifying that the

[103] Lukić and Lukić, [39-40].
[104] Lukić and Lukić, [41].
[105] Lukić and Lukić, [41].
[106] Lukić and Lukić, [41].
[107] Lukić and Lukić, [42].
[108] Lukić and Lukić, [42].
[109] Lukić and Lukić, [42-43].
[110] Lukić and Lukić, [43-44].

bodies remained there two days later.[111] Milan Lukić and other individuals carried out killings of an additional seven Muslim men from the Varda factory in Višegrad town on June 10, 1992.[112]

On June 14, 1992 a large group of civilians were brought from Koritnik and neighboring villages under pretenses that they were to be transported to Kladanj in exchange for Serbians to move into Koritnik; one soldier told witness VG013 that the movement was part of "ethnic cleansing, and [that they] had to leave."[113] However, upon reaching the Vilina Vlas hotel the men were ordered by Mitar Vasiljević to spend the night in one of the empty Muslim-owned houses on Pionirska street.[114] Vasiljević provided them with a piece of paper which he stated was "proof that they were entitled to be there and were not to be harmed."[115] However, Milan Lukić and Sredoje Lukić arrived at the house, alongside Vasiljević who was armed with an automatic weapon, approximately an hour later where the civilians were ordered to surrender their valuables under threats of death.[116] Women and children in the group were separated from the men and subsequently strip searched by soldiers including Milan Lukić.[117] The women were later ordered to leave the house by Milan and Sredoje Lukić; upon returning an hour later, one of the women told other members of the group that they had been raped.[118]

Later that night, between approximately 9:30 and 11:30 pm, Milan Lukić, Sredoje Lukić, and Mitar Vasiljević returned to the house and ordered the civilians inside to move to another house "owned by an individual named Adem Omeragić" which was about 20 to 30 meters away.[119] Two individuals, witnesses VG078 and VG101, were able to escape during this transfer by "crawling behind a shed and down to the

[111] Lukić and Lukić, [43-46].
[112] Lukić and Lukić, [12].
[113] Lukić and Lukić, [115-116].
[114] Lukić and Lukić, [116-117].
[115] Lukić and Lukić, [117-118].
[116] Lukić and Lukić, [118].
[117] Lukić and Lukić, [120].
[118] Lukić and Lukić, [121-122].
[119] Lukić and Lukić, [122-123].

creek."[120] Upon reaching the house, the group was shepherded into a room on the ground floor; once all of them were inside, the door was shut by Milan Lukić and Vasiljević.[121]

Half an hour after locking the Muslim civilians inside, "the door was opened and an explosive device was placed into the room" by Milan Lukić.[122] Lukić fired bursts of gunfire into the floor to prevent the civilians from running away before the device exploded with flames reaching "[u]p to the ceiling."[123] According to witness VG084, a hand grenade was thrown in approximately half an hour later, resulting in a large explosion."[124] Witnesses testified to "[hearing] powerful explosions, shooting, cries and screams."[125] The two individuals who previously escaped testified that they could hear shots coming from Omeragić's house while hiding in the shed.[126]

Several individuals attempted to escape the burning room through the windows, and after two individuals successfully escaped, Lukić and the other soldiers began firing into the other windows to prevent further escapes.[127] While Lukić fired into the house, Vasiljević shined a flashlight into the windows according to witness testimony.[128] Several other civilians were able to escape during the chaos, but the incident led to the deaths of between 66 and 70 individuals.[129] The victims were "men, women, and children ranging in age from approximately two or three days old to 70 years old."[130]

[120] Lukić and Lukić, [124].
[121] Lukić and Lukić, [125].
[122] Lukić and Lukić, [125].
[123] Lukić and Lukić, [125-126].
[124] Lukić and Lukić, [126].
[125] Lukić and Lukić, [127].
[126] Lukić and Lukić, [128].
[127] Lukić and Lukić, [128-129].
[128] Lukić and Lukić, [130].
[129] Krajišnik (n 85) [254], Lukić and Lukić (n 87) [130-133].
[130] Lukić and Lukić (n 87) [133].

3.2 Urban Denialism

The crimes that were perpetrated in Višegrad will most likely remain as some of the most heinous crimes the post-Nuremberg justice system will ever adjudicate. The first time we visited Višegrad in 2016, we were immediately caught by the striking beauty of the town on the Drina River. The Ottoman bridge connecting the two sides of the river offers a panoramic view of Višegrad, on one side, and the mountains of Bikavac on the other. On the day we visited, there was almost a surreal feeling. As we were looking for the places where the crimes described in the Lukić and Lukić case took place, the town was celebrating a local holiday and music could be heard throughout town. We stepped on the famously described, by Nobel Prize winner Ivo Andrić, bridge on the Drina River. The lightness of life unfolding on that day speaks of a community at peace; however, a peace that seemed built by forgetting the past, a peace that is ultimately very fragile.

The first place we analyze is the house on Bikavac. Already in 2016 as today, the house where the crimes were perpetrated is no longer there, destroyed partially by the fire and then entirely to build a new house. During our first visit, as previously reported[131] the day we went, the owner of the house was working inside. He kindly agreed to talk to us. He really did not know what would happen to the house; he mentioned that it might be turned into a place housing an office for the search for missing people and the only thing he was almost certain about was that a plaque commemorating the victims would be placed on the front of the house. As we write, there is no evidence that a memorial has been established.

Similar to the house on Bikavac, the house on Pionirska street has gone through considerable remodeling, but only on the top floors. Hidden from the eyes of passersby, on the side of the house there is just a plaque commemorating the victims. We spoke of Višegrad, as a community who seems at peace, but where no signs of commemoration of the sites of atrocity are visible.

[131] Aloisi, "The Broken Path to Reconciliation in Bosnia & Herzegovina - A Field Study of Memories".

Perhaps the most troubling sign of urban denial in Višegrad is the once rape camp of the Hotel Vilina Vlas going back to be a tourist haven where hot spring waters and big ballrooms will accommodate celebrations and business meetings. The systematic rape of young Bosniak girls at the Vilina Vlas are well documented. Witness and victims' testimony has provided a grueling and detailed account of the inflicted pain. Images of rooms filled with blood testify to a ruthless campaign to humiliate and exterminate the population. Yet, driving up the hills to reach Vilina Vlas shows no sign of the past violence, no memorials for the victims, and if asked, those working at the Hotel or those living in Višegrad they would probably say that they did not know and do not wish to know. As Memišević wrote cogently "To not mention its past means to exonerate those who were responsible for these crimes."[132] But it also means condoning the community for not creating collective spaces to remember the victims who lived such horrors and, ultimately, condemning the future generation to a "collective amnesia."[133]

3.1. Literary and Political Denial

The Republika Srpska tourist board offered the strongest statement of political denial when, in July 2022, initiated a campaign promoting Vilina Vlas as a spa gateway and the perfect tourist destination.[134] Upon requests for comments by journalists about the memories of the hotel as a rape camp during the war, authorities replied that "claims […] of the former detention camp [were] 'unsubstantiated rumors' […]."[135] Vilina Vlas has been a very popular destination for Serbs finding the serene

[132] Ehlimana Memišević, "Promoting a Bosnian War 'Rape Hotel' Means Erasing History", BIRN, August 17, 2020.

[133] Hikmet Karčić, "An Erased Memorial, a Rape Motel, and a Nationalist Disneyland: Bosnian Genocide Denial and the Fight for Memory in a Bosnian Town", Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, 22.2, (2021), 170.

[134] "Genocide denial leave Bosniaks stuck in a violent past", CBC Radio, 18 Apr 2022, https://www.cbc.ca/radio/ ideas/genocide-denial-leave-bosniaks-stuck-in-a-violent-past-1.5851833

[135] "Genocide denial leave Bosniaks stuck in a violent past", CBC Radio; Kendra Bengtson, "Genocide Denial in Bosnia", World Without Genocide, Fall 2022.

surroundings of the hills a relaxing atmosphere. The hotel stands as a visual assault to the sensitivity of those who well know the history of the hotel and for the victims it represents a structural violence dehumanizing their feelings.

In 2011, the book of convicted war criminal Milan Lukić, titled *Confession of a Prisoner of The Hague*, appeared on the market with the support of the Serbian Radical Party's publishing house, 'Greater Serbia.' As much as the title could create hopes for a confession and accountability for his actions, Lukić's book is nationalist propaganda depicting himself as the hero who fought to defend Serbia. But most disturbing, as reported by Bolding (2024) are the sections of his book in which Lukić denigrates his victims and describes them as "professional rape victims, with a stage show of collapsing before the court and the eyes of the whole world."[136] While Šešelj's copious literary production has been largely promoted in Belgrade with the expansion of his stands at the Book Fair, which in turn has marginalized other authors, Lukić's book production initially set at 1,000 copies and then increased to 10,000,[137] which indicated an increasing interest in not only a non-fiction genre, but in a type of publications aimed at contesting the memories and historical record specifically built by the ICTY.

Considerations and Conclusion

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, time has proven to be of essence. As the distance between the events of the Balkans War and the adjudication and establishment of the historical and legal truth increases, so does the destruction of memories. The complex and layered structure of denial, through different forms of destructive narratives reinforces the calls for oblivion and entrenches divisions. In a post-war society, one

[136] Grady Bolding,"What I learned from the Confession of a War Criminal", Medium, January 17, 2024, 11.

[137] Saša Ilić, "Library without walls", *Peščanik,* 8 August 2011.

characterized by ethnic hatred and divisions, the factions still sharing the same territory face insurmountable obstacles in moving forward and rebuilding a society that has come unglued under the pressure of political demagogy. Remembering that not too long ago the villages ravaged by violence were peaceful places where neighbors had "the keys to each other's doors"[138] is no longer possible; denial in all its forms makes even the smallest gestures and attempts at remembering arduous and for the victims traumatic. It is sufficient to remember that the annual march in Prijedor – in which the Bosnian community commemorates the killing of 102 children in the area during wartime and the day in which the Nazi-style radio decree announced that all non-Serbs had to mark their houses with white flags or bedsheets and wear white armbands when going outside – has been prohibited by the local authorities. The reason behind this prohibition is the alleged organization of manifestations by two far right groups in Prijedor, which would make the additional commemorative march a threat to order and security of the city.[139] Time has reignited political polarization especially in the young generations that are mostly subject to political, literary, and urban denial. The memorialization of sites of atrocity is a tool in fighting denial and a constant reminder of the crimes committed, one reminder that not only speaks to those living in the region, but to the whole of humanity. The legacy of the monument of words left by the ICTY is together with memorialization of the historical validation for the victims and recognizes their right to mourn publicly. There is no international judgment that can ever resonate with the same power as the commemoration of the places where those crimes took place. The perception of personal loss and tragedy is felt by the community and can become a symbol, offered by the political structure of a country, of sincere remorse and truthful effort toward reconciliation. Where international justice cannot capture the pain and suffering of individuals, memorials and commemorations can become a place of dialogue, acceptance of responsibility and reconciliation. What we have

[138] Elizabeth Neuffer, *The key to my neighbor's house: Seeking justice in Bosnia and Rwanda*, Macmillan, 2001.

[139] Enes Hodžić, "How Right-Wingers Thwarted a War Crime Commemoration in Bosnia", BIRN, July 4, 2022.

unfortunately assessed in this preliminary study of the sites of atrocity is the lack of memorialization and the denial that some events described by the ICTY judgements have taken place. Denialism in all its forms is also proof of the power of the established truth. It counters the decades-long record built on evidence, stories, and writings with concealment, lies, and excusatory memoirs. The responsibility to challenge denial falls on the international and local communities and to neglect and not condemn denial means breaching a moral obligation toward the victims, survivors, and their families.

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Dio III: Negiranje, politike sjećanja i međunarodni odgovori

Part III: Denial, Politics of Memory and International Responses

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DENYING GENOCIDE, UNDERMINING PEACE: SERBIA, RUSSIA, AND THE ASSAULT ON BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Abstract: This paper analyzes the coordinated roles of Serbia, the regime of Milorad Dodik in Bosnia and Herzegovina's Republika Srpska entity, and Russia in destabilizing Bosnia and Herzegovina through the promotion of genocide denial and support for secessionist ambitions. It argues that denial of the genocide committed against Bosniaks is not merely a revisionist narrative, but part of a broader political strategy aimed at undermining the sovereignty of Bosnia and Herzegovina and delegitimizing Bosniak national identity. Drawing parallels with Russia's aggression against Ukraine and its denial of Ukrainian statehood and nationhood, the paper situates the political alignment among Serbia, the Dodik regime in Republika Srpska, and Russia within a broader global pattern in which authoritarian states use historical denialism as a geopolitical instrument. Through an analysis of political discourse, international alignments, and diplomatic obstruction, the paper demonstrates how this alignment normalizes historical revisionism, emboldens secessionist rhetoric, and threatens the long-term stability of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the wider region.

Keywords: *genocide denial, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Republika Srpska, Russia, secessionism, historical revisionism*

NEGIRANJE GENOCIDA, PODRIVANJE MIRA: SRBIJA, RUSIJA I NAPAD NA BOSNU I HERCEGOVINU

Sažetak: Ovaj rad analizira koordinirane uloge Srbije, režima Milorada Dodika u bosanskohercegovačkom entitetu Republika srpska i Ruske Federacije u destabilizaciji Bosne i Hercegovine kroz promoviranje negiranja genocida i podršku secesionističkim težnjama. U radu se argumentira da negiranje genocida počinjenog nad Bošnjacima nije tek revizionistički narativ, već dio šire političke strategije usmjerene na podrivanje suvereniteta Bosne i Hercegovine i delegitimizaciju bošnjačkog nacionalnog identiteta. Povlačeći paralele s ruskom agresijom na Ukrajinu i ruskim poricanjem ukrajinske državnosti i nacionalnog identiteta, rad političko savezništvo Srbije, Dodikovog režima u Republici srpskoj i Rusije smješta u širi globalni obrazac u kojem autoritarne države koriste historijski negacionizam kao geopolitički instrument. Analizom političkog diskursa, međunarodnih savezništava i diplomatskog opstruiranja, rad pokazuje kako ovo savezništvo normalizira historijski revizionizam, ohrabruje secesionističku retoriku i ugrožava dugoročnu stabilnost Bosne i Hercegovine i šire regije.

Ključne riječi: *negiranje genocida, Bosna i Hercegovina, Srbija, Republika srpska, Rusija, secesionizam, historijski revizionizam, geopolitički utjecaj*

Introduction

That a genocide was committed against Bosniaks in Srebrenica in July 1995 has been conclusively established in judgments of international courts, including the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ).[1] Despite this overwhelming legal and historical evidence, genocide denial remains deeply embedded in political discourse in some parts of

[1] ICTY, IT-98-33, Tužilac protiv Radislava Krstića, Presuda Pretresnog vijeća, Den Haag, 2 August 2001; ICTY, IT-98-33-A, Tužilac protiv Radislava Krstića, Presuda Žalbenog vijeća, Den Haag, 19 April 2004; International Court of Justice, *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro)*, Judgment, 26 February 2007.

the Western Balkans. And in Bosnia and Herzegovina and neighboring Serbia, where denial does not persist merely as a marginal expression of nationalist resentment, it is increasingly institutionalized within the narratives promoted by influential state actors and parts of political elites.

This paper argues that denial of the Srebrenica genocide should not be understood simply as an example of historical revisionism or a moral failure on the part of its proponents, but as a deliberate political strategy aimed at delegitimizing Bosniak national identity and undermining the sovereignity and territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As scholars of atrocity have long emphasized, denial is rarely a passive refusal to acknowledge historical truth. Rather, it constitutes an active political process through which states and political movements seek to evade responsibility, protect national myths, and neutralize demands for justice.[2] In this sense, denial operates as a form of narrative power capable of reshaping both domestic and international understandings of past violence.

The persistence of genocide denial in the Western Balkans is therefore best viewed within a broader political and geopolitical context. Over the past decade, denialist narratives centering the Srebrenica genocide have been integrated into a political strategy pursued jointly by leadership of the Republika Srpska and Serbia, with diplomatic and discursive support from Russia. Through coordinated political messaging, diplomatic obstructionism, and the strategic manipulation of historical narratives, this tripartite alignment has sought to challenge the legitimacy of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign state while simultaneously normalizing revisionist interpretations of the wars of the 1990s.[3]

This reflects a pattern seen in contemporary international politics writ large, as it has become almost standard for authoritarian or illiberal

[2] Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering* (Polity Press, 2001), 7–12.

[3] Sead Turčalo, "The Kremlin's Hand: How Russia Fuels Srebrenica Genocide Denial and Balkan Instability," *Just Security*, 1 May 2024, https://www.justsecurity.org/95283/the-kremlins-hand-how-russia-fuels-srebrenica-genocide-denial-and-balkan-instability/ [accessed 11 March 2026]; Mark Galeotti, *Russian Political War: Moving Beyond the Hybrid* (London: Routledge, 2019), 5–8.

regimes to deploy historical revisionism as a geopolitical instrument. For instance, Russia has engaged in the denial of Ukrainian nationhood, insisting that Ukraine represents an artificial state. This is strikingly parallel to the rhetoric deployed in and about Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bosniaks, with Russia's backing. In both contexts, these (anti-) historical narratives are mobilized not only to reinterpret the past but to justify present political ambitions and territorial claims.

Thus, as recent scholarship on strategic narratives in international relations and memory politics suggests, controlling the way history is interpreted has become ever more important in the geopolitical arena. Drawing on insights from this scholarship, as well as studies on genocide denial, this paper examines how the Serbia-Republika Srpska-Russia axis instrumentalizes genocide denial as a mechanism of political destabilization. This paper draws on insights from three strands of scholarship: studies of genocide denial, research on strategic narratives in international relations, and emerging work on hybrid forms of political destabilization.Through an analysis of political discourse, diplomatic practices, and recent episodes of organized denial, it demonstrates that denial of the Srebrenica genocide represents much more than a dispute over historical interpretation. Rather, it is an attempt to recast the normative and political foundations of the post-war order in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Genocide Denial and the Delegitimization of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Denial operates powerfully to remake meaning, and in the case of the Srebrenica genocide, it functions inside broader narratives that challenge the legitimacy of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign, multiethnic state. Although it has been unequivocally established by decisions of international courts and extensive documentation by historians, political elites in Republika Srpska and Serbia have consistently rejected or undermined findings that a genocide was committed against Bosniaks in Srebrenica in July 1995. This often takes the form of direct and

explicit denial. Yet, among actors who seek to present themselves as moderate, denial can manifest more indirectly; they may minimize the scale of the crime, reframe it as a "tragic event" but not a genocide, or portray international legal judgments as politically motivated attacks on Serbs. Indeed, across the region, only a relatively small number of Serb intellectuals, civil society actors, and human rights organizations have consistently acknowledged the genocide in Srebrenica without qualification.

It is through these different discursive strategies that a crime, determined to be so by law, has been transformed into a contested political narrative.[4] This serves several political purposes simultaneously. First, it is intended to reposition victims of the genocide not as the victims of targeted, systematic violence but as participants in a broader conflict in which all sides were equally culpable. By dissolving the distinction between victim and perpetrator, denial erodes the moral clarity established by international tribunals and undercuts efforts to ensure accountability. Second, it is used to consolidate nationalist political identities, in narratives promoted by leaders in Belgrade and Banja Luka that frame recognition of the genocide in Srebrenica as an attack on the collective dignity of Serbs as a nation. Through this lens, the question of historical responsibility is portrayed as a threat to national survival, making denial both a defense of the nation and a proactive political stance through which nationalist elites can reinforce their legitimacy. Third, it lays the groundwork for a narrative in which Bosnia and Herzegovina itself is depicted as an artificial or illegitimate state. This revisionism relies on denying the genocide as a means of divorcing the post-war political project of Serbs – including institution building in the Republika Srpska – from its roots in mass violence; which allows political actors to sustain an alternative interpretation of the war as a lawful expression of Serb self-determination and not a campaign of "ethnic cleansing".

[4] Refik Hodžić, "30 Years After: How Denial Can Fuel a New Conflict," *Justice Info*, 10 July 2025, https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/147752-30-years-after-how-denial-fuel-new-conflict.html [accessed 11 March 2026]; Memorijalni centar Srebrenica, *Izvještaj o negiranju genocida 2024: (Ne)procesuiranje negatora genocida* (2024).

In this sense, genocide denial does not merely reinterpret the past, it actively reshapes present and future political arrangements. By injecting doubt into the historical consensus established by international courts and reframing responsibility for wartime violence, the rhetoric of denial has created a discursive space for a revival and normalization of the very politics and ideologies that mobilized actors across the region to create ethnically homogeneous territories in the 1990s, ultimately culminating in the genocide against Bosniaks that lies at the heart of this denial today. Its continued contestation operates in service of broader revisionist narratives that relitigate political agendas violently pursued during the war and openly question the legitimacy of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a sovereign state.[5]

This explains why genocide denial has remained such a persistent feature of political discourse in the region. If acknowledging the genocide reinforces the legitimacy of Bosnia and Herzegovina and strengthens demands for accountability, then denying it positions political elites to assert that the existing constitutional order is unjust, externally imposed, or fundamentally unstable, and that accountability mechanisms are biased and corrupt. Denial has therefore become deeply intertwined with ongoing political struggles over the future of the Bosnian state.

The political significance of genocide denial comes into even sharper focus when viewed against the wider geopolitical landscape of the region, and the fact that, increasingly, the utility of narratives that deny the Srebrenica genocide intersects with the strategic interests of external actors. This is most notably true of Russia, which has played a significant role in reinforcing these narratives, through its diplomatic support for Dodik and for Serbia, as well as its discursive alignment and broader geopolitical positioning. Motivating Moscow is the opportunity to challenge the legitimacy of a Bosnian post-war political order that, the Kremlin argues, has been molded by the West to serve its own interests.

[5] Sonja Biserko, *Yugoslavia's Implosion: The Fatal Attraction of Serbian Nationalism* (Norwegian Helsinki Committee, 2012), 15–30.

This intersection of internal and external interests means that the persistence of genocide denial in the Western Balkans cannot be understood solely as a domestic phenomenon, and should be understood as part of a wider pattern in which historical revisionism and manipulated collective memory are used as instruments of geopolitical competition. Driving this across the region is a growing alignment between the political narratives promoted by leaders in the Republika Srpska and Serbia, with the strategic discourse advanced by the Russian state. These narratives frequently converge around a set of shared themes, portraying: Western institutions as illegitimate, international legal mechanisms as politically biased, and multinational states as artificial constructions imposed by external powers.

In recent years, Russia has placed a particular emphasis on the strategic use of historical narratives as a component of its foreign policy, including through official discourse that questions the validity of international structures in the post-Cold War era by portraying "Western institutions" as tools of political domination rather than neutral guarantors of international law. The reinterpretation of historical events and the contestation of widely accepted historical narratives thus become a powerful means for undermining established legal and political norms, potentially weakening the authority of international institutions and creating space for alternative geopolitical claims.[6] The rhetoric used by Russian leaders to justify the war against Ukraine has been a striking illustration of this. A political discourse has emerged whereby Ukraine is said to be an artificial state, making the existence of a distinct Ukrainian national identity impossible. According to this narrative, Ukrainians are actually part of the broader Russian civilizational imaginary; a limb separated from its body by illegitimate political borders.[7] This

[6] Ofer Fridman, *Russian "Hybrid Warfare": Resurgence and Politicization* (Oxford University Press, 2018).

[7] Björn Alexander Düben, "Revising History and 'Gathering the Russian Lands': Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian Nationhood," *LSE Public Policy Review* 3, no. 1 (2023): 1–12.

interpretation has been key to justifying Russia's territorial ambitions domestically, and mobilizing support for military intervention.

Similar narrative themes can be observed in the political discourse surrounding Bosnia and Herzegovina. In statements by political leaders in both Belgrade and Banja Luka, the country is often described as unstable or artificially constructed, with a political order lacking genuine legitimacy. Institutions created by the Dayton Peace Agreement are frequently portrayed as having been externally imposed for the purpose of constraining the political aspirations of Bosnian Serbs. Implicit to this framing is the notion that Bosnia and Herzegovina exists as a political entity *only* as a function of the Dayton Peace Agreement. However, this disregards the reality that the modern Bosnian state inherited its legal continuity from the Yugoslav Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that historical Bosnia can trace its political existence back to the medieval Bosnian Banate.[8]

The denial of genocide committed against Bosniaks during the 1992–1995 war plays a crucial role within this broader narrative by disputing one of the central moral and legal foundations upon which the international community's post-war engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been built. To that end, Russia has worked to reinforce these narratives of denial through a combination of diplomatic, political, and symbolic actions. In international forums such as the United Nations Security Council, Russian representatives have repeatedly opposed initiatives aimed at strengthening international recognition of the Srebrenica genocide or condemning its denial, for example. At the same time, Russian officials have consistently supported political actors in the Republika Srpska who challenge the authority of Bosnian state institutions, offering them public political endorsements and diplomatic backing, and officially participating in symbolic acts (such as religious rituals) that reinforce narratives of historical revisionism.[9]

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[8] Jasmin Mujanović, *Bosnia and Herzegovina after Dayton: Civic Nationalism, Democratic Consolidation and Counter-Mobilization* (Routledge, 2018); John V. A. Fine, *The Late Medieval Balkans* (University of Michigan Press, 2007).

[9] Turčalo, "The Kremlin's Hand"; Fridman, *Russian "Hybrid Warfare"*.

These are not mere gestures of political solidarity on the part of Moscow, but part of a comprehensive Russian strategy aimed at weakening Western influence in Southeastern Europe and maintaining zones of political instability along the periphery of the European Union and NATO. Support by Russia for narratives that challenge the legitimacy of Bosnia and Herzegovina's political order is intended to help nurture an environment in which secessionist rhetoric and institutional obstruction can flourish, opening the way for Russia to cleave the region from the Western sphere of influence. In this context, genocide denial operates as much more than a dispute over historical memory; it becomes core to a wider geopolitical struggle in which historical narratives are mobilized to reshape political realities.

By undermining the historical and legal consensus established by the adjudication of wartime mass atrocity crimes in international and domestic courts – whether the genocide perpetrated against Bosniaks, or the numerous judgments for war crimes and crimes against humanity – political actors who advance this denialist narrative seek to erode the moral authority of international institutions and relitigate fundamental questions about Bosnian statehood. In other words, they aim to instrumentalize denial at multiple levels. For, where domestic denialist narratives and external geopolitical strategies interact, historical revisionism is simultaneously a tool of domestic political mobilization, regional nationalist identity consolidation, and international power competition.

Populist Performance and the Politics of Denial

While genocide denial in the Western Balkans is often analyzed in terms of its nationalist ideology or geopolitical alignment, it is also worth noting that it operates through a particular style of political communication. When political leaders in Serbia and the Republika Srpska frame international efforts to acknowledge that genocide was

committed against Bosniaks – most prominently in Srebrenica in July 1995 – not as a matter of historical accountability but as a collective attack on the Serb nation as a whole, they embed denial within existing narratives of national victimhood and political resistance. This was on display in May 2024, in the reactions of Serb political actors to a United Nations General Assembly resolution establishing an international day of remembrance for the Srebrenica genocide.[10] Although the words "Serb" and "Serbia" do not appear in the resolution at all, and the text therefore does not lay blame for the crime on the Serbian state or Serbs as a people, Serbian government officials alleged the resolution was part of a campaign to stigmatize Serbs. This was echoed by pro-government media outlets, which described the initiative as an effort to label Serbs as a "genocidal people," effectively translating an innocuous commemorative resolution into a perceived threat to national dignity.[11]

This reframing was reinforced in highly visible political performances and messaging, designed to activate domestic audiences. In Belgrade, large public panels proclaimed, "We are not a genocidal nation," and political actors gave speeches critical of the resolution, highlighting themes of injustice, humiliation, and collective suffering. These performative displays may have been prompted by international developments, but their narrative construction was hardly new, having long formed part of a carefully crafted political discourse in which Serbia and Serbs are portrayed as victims of external political pressure and historical misrepresentation.[12]

[10] United Nations General Assembly, Resolution 78/282, *International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica*, adopted 23 May 2024.

[11] Marija Stojanović, "Serbian government uses UN resolution on Srebrenica for a pre-election nationalist frenzy," *European Western Balkans*, 24 May 2024, https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2024/05/24/serbian-government-uses-un-resolution-on-srebrenica-for-a-pre-election-nationalist-frenzy/ [accessed: 11 March 2026].

[12] Giuliana Băruș, "UN resolution on the Srebrenica genocide: Serbia's reactions, between historical revisionism and authoritarian drift," *Mondo Internazionale*, 29 May 2024, https://mondointernazionale.org/en/post/risoluzione-onu-sul-genocidio-di-srebrenica-le-reazioni-della-serbia-tra-revisionismo-storico-e-deriva-autoritaria [accessed: 11 March 2026].

In his address to the United Nations, following the vote on the resolution, Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić further exemplified this performative dimension of denial. His speech combined emotional appeals, dramatic gestures, and a rhetoric of defiance directed toward the international community. Instead of engaging with legal and historical findings relating to the genocide in Srebrenica, Vučić was focused on presenting Serbia as unfairly accused and morally misunderstood. In this way, he co-opted the international stage as a platform for reaffirming a domestic political narrative of Serb national pride and resistance to external powers. This style of communication is often observed in contemporary populist politics, which relies on emotionally charged, almost theatrical forms of political performance to fabricate a sense of authenticity. Populist leaders frequently present themselves as defenders of their nation against hostile elites, blurring the boundary between political disagreement and existential national threat by dramatizing political conflicts and framing international criticism as an attack on the people themselves.[13]

Within this narrative framework, genocide denial becomes intertwined with the politics of populist mobilization. Rather than presenting denial as a historical claim subject to empirical verification, political actors frame it as a defense of national honor. This allows denialist narratives to resonate more strongly with domestic audiences because they are no longer evaluated primarily in terms of historical accuracy but in terms of loyalty to the nation.[14] Still, the effectiveness of this strategy depends on the degree to which international legal judgments are perceived as instruments of political oppression, and not as reflections of truth. Hence, when political leaders claim international institutions are biased and hostile, they advance denialism simply by raising doubts about the legitimacy of historical and legal findings, and the international order that produced them.

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[13] Ruth Wodak, *The Politics of Fear: What Right-Wing Populist Discourses Mean* (SAGE, 2015).

[14] Edina Bećirević, *Genocide on the Drina River* (Yale University Press, 2014), 144–180.

At the same time, this performative politics of denial contributes to normalizing revisionist narratives within public discourse. When denial is presented as an expression of patriotism rather than as a rejection of established historical facts, it becomes easier for political elites to maintain a narrative environment in which this alternative interpretation of the past remains politically viable. The result is a politics in which historical truth, legal accountability, and national identity are deeply intertwined. This has been the case in Serbia and the Republika Srpska, where emotional political performances and carefully constructed narratives of victimhood have transformed genocide denial into a central element of contemporary political mobilization.

Genocide Denial as a Strategy of Hybrid Destabilization

Therefore, genocide denial cannot be viewed in isolation, which risks narrowing the scope of its meaning to little more than a dispute over historical interpretation or a manifestation of nationalist ideology. Within the political dynamics of the Western Balkans and the evolving geopolitics of Europe, denial in fact serves a much deeper strategic function. And in the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina specifically, political efforts intended to weaken the institutional foundations of the Bosnian state are now built upon the persistent contestation of the genocide committed against Bosniaks in the 1990s.[15] For this reason, the denialist narratives deployed in the region should be understood as part of a broader repertoire of hybrid strategies through which states and political actors alike seek to influence political outcomes and realities on the ground without resorting to direct military confrontation.

Such strategies often rely on a combination of narrative manipulation, diplomatic obstruction, and political pressure, to create environments of uncertainty and institutional fragility. Historical narratives themselves become the tools of political actors who implement these strategies, with

[15] Cohen, *States of Denial*; Bećirević, *Genocide on the Drina River*, 144–180.

the goal of challenging the existing legal and political order. As analysts have repeatedly warned, the sustained political destabilization this has wrought in Bosnia and Herzegovina has brought the country to the verge of serious political and security crises on more than one occasion, each time raising concerns about the potential for renewed conflict.[16]

Genocide denial plays a crucial role in this process, because it directly targets the normative foundations of the post-war political settlement. Recognition of the Srebrenica genocide has been central to the international community's understanding of the Bosnian war and to the moral and legal legitimacy of the Dayton Peace Agreement. By contesting this, denialism is aimed at undermining the historical consensus that supports the current political structure of the Bosnian state; a state denialist narratives portray not just as flawed and in need of reform but as illegitimate from its inception. This discourse and its role in a hybrid strategy of destabilization is particularly visible in the political rhetoric of leaders in the Republika Srpska. Over the past decade, officials in Banja Luka have repeatedly invoked narratives of historical injustice and international bias to justify political initiatives designed to subvert the authority of Bosnia and Herzegovina's central institutions. Threats of institutional withdrawal, open challenges to decisions of the Constitutional Court, and regular allusions to the possibility of secession have become reliable elements of political discourse in the entity.

It is in this context that genocide denial functions discursively to give such political claims a veneer of legitimacy. If the core narrative of the Bosnian war – including the recognition that genocide was central to its execution – is portrayed as a politically motivated fabrication, then the political order built upon the assumptions of that narrative can be depicted as equally fabricated. Denial thus lays the groundwork for secessionist arguments and for the normalization of political challenges to the territorial integrity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

[16] Ismet Fatih Čančar, "Russia's New Front with the West in Bosnia," *Commentary* (blog), RUSI, 21 March 2022, https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/russias-new-front-west-bosnia [accessed: 11 March 2026]; Majda Ruge, "The past and the furious: How Russia's revisionism threatens Bosnia," policy brief, European Council on Foreign Relations, September 2022.

The utility of denial for this purpose is further amplified by the interaction between domestic political narratives and external geopolitical influence efforts. Russia supports denialism in Bosnia and Herzegovina in a variety of ways, by offering diplomatic backing to extremist political actors in the Republika Srpska, by advancing narratives that question the legitimacy of Western institutions, and by contributing to a political environment in which genocide denial gains additional credibility and visibility. Indeed, Russian-funded media across the region is coordinated in reinforcing perceptions that international institutions are biased, and in doing so, have helped to transform narratives that might otherwise remain on the fringe into powerful components of mainstream political discourse.[17]

In this way, genocide denial has become part of a broader strategy of political destabilization, motivated by the same ideology and territorial ambitions that inspired genocide in the first place. Now, rather than pursuing territorial change through direct confrontation, political actors in Serbia, Russia, and the Republika Srpska have sought to gradually erode the legitimacy of existing institutions by challenging the historical narratives that underpin them. Over time, such a strategy is meant to create a political environment in which projects that were violently pursued during the war, including the disintegration of the Bosnian state, can be presented as reasonable or legitimate political alternatives.

This hybrid approach to destabilization resembles trends in contemporary international politics more broadly. Autocratic or revisionist actors increasingly seek to challenge established international norms not only through military force but through the manipulation of information, memory, and identity. By contesting widely accepted historical truths, the aim is to weaken the normative authority of international institutions and reopen political questions that were previously considered settled. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, where denialist narratives form part of an ongoing political struggle over interpretations of the war and the legitimacy of the post-war political order, they have created even greater space for revisionist political claims and external influence.

[17] Ruge, "The past and the furious."

Conclusion

To understand contemporary genocide denialism in the Western Balkans, it is essential to appreciate the degree to which the genocide committed against Bosniaks during the 1992–1995 war in Bosnia and Herzegovina remains at the heart of regional denialist narratives. This was a process of genocide that culminated in the crimes perpetrated in Srebrenica in July 1995, but because that is the only wartime mass atrocity legally recognized as a genocide in international courts, Srebrenica has come to occupy a potent symbolic role in international memory. It is the most widely recognized manifestation of genocide against Bosniaks during the war and a powerful reminder of the international community's failure to prevent mass atrocities throughout the 1990s. At the same time, the crime has become a deeply contested and politically charged point within Serbian public discourse. In this context, it is important not to dismiss the emotive dimension of denial, which "not only suppresses emotion [such as guilt], but often reflects, and/or can serve to induce… [the] hatred, fear, and resentment that directly spur ethnic violence itself."[18]

The argument here is that denial of the genocide committed against Bosniaks, supported by political elites in Serbia and the Republika Srpska and reinforced by geopolitical narratives emanating from Russia, functions as a strategic instrument on multiple levels, to delegitimize the Bosnian state and challenge the authority of international legal judgments. Through populist political performance, diplomatic obstruction, and the strategic manipulation of historical narratives, denialist discourse has transformed established historical and legal truths into contested political claims. The long-term consequences of this extend beyond its impact on victims or even on the country's stability, by normalizing denialism in a way that is reshaping political dynamics and remaking meaning. By framing accountability as an attack on the Serb nation and rewriting the narrative of historical responsibility as one of collective victimhood,

[18] Michael Woldemariam and Yilma Woldgabreal, "Atrocity denial and emotions in the Ethiopian civil war," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 73 (2023).

political elites in Belgrade and Banja Luka have managed to consolidate an authoritarian politics, deflect attention from their own corruption and failures of governance, and sustain the mobilization of their nationalist base.

In this sense, genocide denial operates not only as a strategy directed toward delegitimizing Bosnia and Herzegovina itself, but also as an internal political mechanism that upholds illiberal governance and entrenched power structures in Serbia and the Republika Srpska. Understanding this denial therefore requires acknowledging both of these functions, which facilitate a strategy that is simultaneously recasting regional political narratives, eroding the legitimacy of international legal institutions, and consolidating political authority within the regimes that promote denialist narratives. The continuing struggle over memory in the region thus represents not only a dispute about how to interpret the past but how to imagine the political future, and whether international norms established in the aftermath of the wars of the 1990s will endure.

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INSTITUCIONALIZIRANO SJEĆANJE NASUPROT INSTITUCIONALIZIRANOM NEGIRANJU: POLITIČKE IMPLIKACIJE REZOLUCIJE A/RES/78/282

Sažetak: Rad analizira politički i normativni značaj Rezolucije Generalne skupštine Ujedinjenih nacija A/RES/78/282 (2024), kojom je 11. juli proglašen Međunarodnim danom sjećanja i komemoracije genocida u Srebrenici iz 1995. godine. Rezolucija reafirmira sudski utvrđenu činjenicu da je nad Bošnjacima u Srebrenici počinjen genocid, osuđuje njegovo negiranje i glorifikaciju osuđenih ratnih zločinaca te time pozicionira Srebrenicu unutar šireg globalnog memorijalnog okvira. Rad pokazuje da je usvajanje Rezolucije izazvalo snažan politički otpor u Srbiji i Republici srpskoj, gdje je negiranje genocida postalo institucionalizirana politička praksa. Posebna pažnja posvećena je međunarodnoj dimenziji poricanja, uključujući neuspjeh Rezolucije Vijeća sigurnosti UN-a iz 2015. godine. Zaključno, argumentira se da Rezolucija iz 2024. godine predstavlja važan normativni instrument u borbi protiv revizionizma, ali da njena dugoročna djelotvornost zavisi od integracije u obrazovne, političke i memorijalne politike na regionalnom i međunarodnom nivou.

Ključne riječi: *genocid u Srebrenici, negiranje genocida, Rezolucija A/RES/78/282, Ujedinjene nacije*

INSTITUTIONALIZED MEMORY VERSUS INSTITUTIONALIZED DENIAL: THE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF RESOLUTION A/RES/78/282

Abstract: The paper analyzes the political and normative significance of United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/78/282 (2024), which designates 11 July as the International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Srebrenica Genocide. The Resolution reaffirms the judicially established fact that genocide was committed against Bosniaks in Srebrenica, condemns its denial and the glorification of convicted war criminals, and thereby situates Srebrenica within a broader global memorial framework. The paper demonstrates that the adoption of the Resolution provoked strong political opposition in Serbia and Republika Srpska, where genocide denial has become an institutionalized political practice. Particular attention is devoted to the international dimension of denial, including the failure of the 2015 United Nations Security Council resolution. In conclusion, the paper argues that the 2024 Resolution constitutes an important normative instrument in the struggle against revisionism, but that its long-term effectiveness depends on its integration into educational, political, and memorial policies at both regional and international levels.

Keywords: *Srebrenica genocide, genocide denial, Resolution A/RES/78/282, United Nations*

Uvod

Usvajanje Rezolucije Generalne skupštine Ujedinjenih nacija A/RES/78/282, kojom se 11. juli proglašava Međunarodnim danom sjećanja i komemoracije genocida u Srebrenici iz 1995. godine, predstavlja jedan od najznačajnijih međunarodnih normativnih iskoraka u borbi protiv negiranja genocida u postjugoslavenskom prostoru. Rezolucija, usvojena 23. maja 2024. godine, ne samo da potvrđuje sudski utvrđene činjenice o genocidu počinjenom nad Bošnjacima u Srebrenici već i eksplicitno osuđuje poricanje tog zločina i glorifikaciju osuđenih ratnih zločinaca, čime se pozicionira unutar šireg okvira međunarodnog prava ljudskih prava, tranzicijske pravde i politike sjećanja.[1]

[1] United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), *International Day of Reflection and*

Iako tekst Rezolucije ne sadrži nikakvo etničko, nacionalno ili državno imputiranje kolektivne krivice, njeno usvajanje izazvalo je snažan politički otpor u Srbiji i entitetu Republika srpska u Bosni i Hercegovini. Taj otpor bio je obilježen narativima prema kojima Rezolucija navodno proglašava "srpski narod genocidnim", destabilizira regionalne odnose i produbljuje etničke podjele. Ovakve reakcije nisu izuzetak, već dio dugotrajnog i sistemskog obrasca političkog i kulturnog negiranja genocida u Srebrenici, koji se od 1995. godine do danas neprekidno reproducira i prilagođava savremenim političkim okolnostima.

Rezolucija A/RES/78/282 usvojena je uoči tridesete godišnjice genocida, uz pokroviteljstvo Njemačke i Ruande, država čije su vlastite historije obilježene masovnim zločinima i kasnijim institucionalnim suočavanjem s prošlošću.[2] Time je Srebrenica simbolički i normativno smještena u isti globalni memorijalni okvir kao i genocid u Ruandi 1994. godine i holokaust. Takav potez UN-a ima višestruki značaj: on reafirmira sudski utvrđenu istinu, pruža međunarodno priznanje žrtvama i preživjelima, te istovremeno osporava pokušaje revizionizma koji su u regionu zapadnog Balkana postali sastavni dio političkog diskursa.

Pozitivne reakcije žrtava genocida i njihovih porodica jasno su ukazale na moralni i simbolički značaj Rezolucije. Predstavnice Udruženja "Majke enklava Srebrenica i Žepa" naglasile su da je međunarodno priznanje zakašnjeli, ali nužan čin pravde, kojim UN djelimično preuzima odgovornost za vlastiti neuspjeh da zaštiti civilno stanovništvo u julu 1995. godine.[3] Za preživjele, Rezolucija ne predstavlja samo čin sjećanja, već i političku potvrdu da se istina o genocidu ne može relativizirati ili izbrisati.

Commemoration of the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica, A/RES/78/282, 30. maj 2024. Dostupno na: https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/78/282 (pristup: 12. mart 2026).

[2] Vidjeti: United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), *International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda*, A/RES/58/234, 23. februar 2004. Dostupno na: https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/58/234 (pristup: 12. mart 2026).

[3] Milica Stojanović, Borislav Višnjić, Katarina Baletić i Azem Kurtić, „Srebrenica Survivors Hail UN Genocide Resolution, Serbs Question Vote's Legitimacy", *Balkan Insight*, 23. maj 2024. Dostupno na: https://balkaninsight.com/2024/05/23/srebrenica-survivors-hail-un-genocide-resolution-serbs-question-votes-legitimacy/ (pristup: 12. mart 2026).

Suprotno tome, reakcije političkih elita u Srbiji i Republici srpskoj bile su obilježene snažnom mobilizacijom nacionalističkih struktura. Predsjednik Srbije Aleksandar Vučić, obraćajući se Generalnoj skupštini UN-a uoči glasanja,[4] doveo je u pitanje svrhu Rezolucije,[5] tvrdeći da ona nema smisla ukoliko se genocid već tretira kroz individualnu krivičnu odgovornost. Ovakav argument zanemaruje činjenicu da međunarodne komemorativne rezolucije nisu pravni instrumenti krivične odgovornosti, već normativni alati kolektivnog pamćenja i prevencije budućih zločina.

Važno je naglasiti da Rezolucija ni u jednom svom dijelu ne spominje Srbiju, Republiku srpsku niti srpski narod. Ona dosljedno individualizira krivičnu odgovornost i fokusira se na žrtve genocida, u skladu s međunarodnim pravnim standardima. Uprkos tome, politički diskurs u Beogradu i Banjoj Luci interpretirao je Rezoluciju kao egzistencijalnu prijetnju kolektivnom identitetu, što ukazuje na duboko ukorijenjenu nesigurnost nacionalističkih narativa suočenih s institucionaliziranom istinom.

Rezolucija A/RES/78/282 ne predstavlja presedan u djelovanju UN-a. Generalna skupština je ranije usvajala slične rezolucije posvećene genocidu u Ruandi, holokaustu te općoj prevenciji genocida.[6] U tom smislu, njeno usvajanje odražava kontinuitet unutar međunarodnog režima sjećanja i ljudskih prava. Međutim, za razliku od drugih slučajeva, pokušaji institucionalne komemoracije Srebrenice nailazili su na znatno snažniji politički otpor, kako unutar regiona, tako i na međunarodnom planu, što ukazuje na specifičnu političku težinu ovog genocida u savremenim geopolitičkim odnosima.

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[4] "UN Approves Srebrenica Genocide Resolution, As Some Serbs Remain Defiant", Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 23. maj 2024. Dostupno na: https://www.rferl.org/a/un-srebrenica-resolution-bosnia-genocide/32960943.html [15. 2. 2025].

[5] United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), *International Day of Commemoration and Dignity of the Victims of the Crime of Genocide and of the Prevention of This Crime*, A/RES/69/323, 11. septembar 2015. Dostupno na: https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/69/323 [12. mart 2026]; United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), *Combating Holocaust Denial*, A/RES/76/250, 20. januar 2022. Dostupno na: https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/76/250 [12. mart 2026].

[6] International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), *Facts About Srebrenica*, Den Haag, ICTY Outreach Programme, n.d. Dostupno na: https://www.icty.org/x/file/Outreach/view_from_hague/jit_srebrenica_en.pdf [12. mart 2026].

Negiranje genocida u Srebrenici započelo je gotovo istovremeno s njegovim izvršenjem. Već tokom jula 1995. godine, vlasti bosanskih Srba nastojale su prikazati vojnu operaciju kao legitimnu akciju protiv "vojnih ciljeva", dok su sistematska ubistva civila prikrivana i logistički maskirana. Naknadno premještanje masovnih grobnica i fragmentacija posmrtnih ostataka žrtava imali su ne samo forenzičku već i duboko političku funkciju: otežati dokazivanje zločina i omogućiti dugoročno poricanje.[7]

Uprkos revolucionarnim dostignućima forenzičke genetike i identifikaciji hiljada žrtava, narativi sumnje i relativizacije opstaju do danas. Memorijalni centar Srebrenica – Potočari dokumentira kontinuirani porast negiranja genocida, naročito u periodima pojačanih međunarodnih inicijativa vezanih za sjećanje i komemoraciju.[8] Posebno je zabrinjavajuće što se poricanje sve češće pojavljuje u institucionalnom, medijskom i obrazovnom prostoru, čime poprima karakter normalizirane društvene prakse.

Negiranje genocida u ovom kontekstu ne predstavlja puki historiografski spor, već političku strategiju. Ono služi reafirmaciji nacionalističkih identiteta, delegitimizaciji međunarodnih sudova i održavanju etničkih podjela uspostavljenih ratom. Kao takvo, negiranje ima direktne implikacije na proces pomirenja, stabilnost Bosne i Hercegovine i regionalnu sigurnost. Upravo iz tog razloga Rezolucija UN-a iz 2024. godine ima značaj koji nadilazi simboliku: ona intervenira u prostor političke borbe oko istine.

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[7] Srebrenica Memorial Center, *Srebrenica Genocide Denial Reports 2020–2024*, Potočari, Srebrenica Memorial Center, 2020–2024. Dostupno na: https://srebrenicamemorial.org/en/investigations [12. mart 2026].

[8] Dokumentacioni centar Republike Srpske za istraživanje ratnih zločina i Biro Vlade Republike Srpske za odnose sa Međunarodnim krivičnim sudom u Hagu*, Izvještaj o slučaju Srebrenica (I dio)*, Banja Luka, Dokumentacioni centar Republike Srpske za istraživanje ratnih zločina i Biro Vlade Republike Srpske za odnose sa Međunarodnim krivičnim sudom u Hagu, 2002.

Institucionalizacija negiranja genocida u Republici Srpskoj i Srbiji

Negiranje genocida u Srebrenici u Republici srpskoj i Republici Srbiji ne predstavlja marginalnu pojavu ograničenu na ekstremne političke ili društvene aktere, već duboko ukorijenjen i institucionalno podržan proces. Tokom gotovo tri decenije nakon jula 1995. godine, političke elite, državne institucije, obrazovni sistemi i dijelovi medijskog prostora sistematski su proizvodili i reproducirali narative kojima se osporava sudski utvrđena činjenica da je u Srebrenici počinjen genocid nad Bošnjacima. Ovaj proces ima jasne političke ciljeve: očuvanje nacionalističkih identiteta oblikovanih ratom, delegitimizaciju međunarodnih sudova i izbjegavanje moralne i političke odgovornosti za prošle zločine.

U Republici srpskoj, negiranje genocida tokom godina preraslo je u svojevrsnu zvaničnu politiku sjećanja. Već 2002. godine, Vlada Republike srpske objavila je izvještaj pod nazivom "Izvještaj o slučaju Srebrenica", u kojem se eksplicitno negira postojanje masovnog zločina i odbacuje tvrdnja da su bošnjački civili bili meta sistematskog nasilja.[9] Iako je 2004. godine, pod snažnim međunarodnim pritiskom, usvojen novi izvještaj koji priznaje razmjere zločina i broj ubijenih, taj dokument kasnije je revidiran i konačno poništen rezolucijom Narodne skupštine Republike srpske 2018. godine.[10] Time je entitetski parlament institucionalno odbacio vlastito prethodno priznanje zločina, čime je negiranje genocida ponovo afirmirano kao politička norma.

[9] Mladen Lakić, "Bosnian Serb Assembly to Annul Report on Srebrenica", *Balkan Insight*, 23. juli 2018. Dostupno na: https://balkaninsight.com/2018/07/23/bosnian-serbs-to-annul-report-on-srebrenica-07-23-2018/ [12. mart 2026].

[10] Centre for Socio-Political Research of the Republic of Srpska, *Concluding Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Suffering of all People in the Srebrenica Region between 1992 and 1995*, Banja Luka: Centre for Socio-Political Research of the Republic of Srpska, 2020. Dostupno na: https://incomfis-srebrenica.org/report/ [12. mart 2026]; vidjeti i: Eric Gordy i dr., "Truth and Revisionism in Bosnia and Herzegovina", Beograd: Fond za humanitarno pravo, 2019. Dostupno na: https://www.hlc-rdc.org/informisanje/aktuelno-o-tranzicionoj-pravdi/truth-and-revisionism-in-bosnia-and-herzegovina/ [12. mart 2026].

Posebno važan korak u institucionalizaciji revizionizma predstavlja osnivanje tzv. Nezavisne međunarodne komisije za istraživanje stradanja svih naroda u srebreničkoj regiji u periodu 1992–1995, koju je 2019. godine formirala vlast Milorada Dodika. Izvještaj ove komisije, koji je Narodna skupština Republike srpske usvojila 2024. godine, otvoreno negira genocid i predstavlja Bošnjake kao glavne agresore, dovodeći u pitanje civilni status žrtava.[11] Brojni međunarodni stručnjaci za genocid, holokaust i tranzicijsku pravdu ocijenili su ovaj dokument kao pseudonaučni i politički motiviran pokušaj historijskog falsifikata.

Uloga Milorada Dodika u normalizaciji negiranja genocida ima centralni značaj. Iako je sredinom 2000-ih godina javno priznao da je u Srebrenici počinjen genocid, pozivajući se na presude Haškog tribunala, Dodik je tokom posljednje decenije postao jedan od najglasnijih promotora poricanja.[12] On je genocid opisivao kao "izmišljeni mit", "najveću prevaru 20. stoljeća" i politički konstrukt bošnjačke elite, istovremeno glorificirajući osuđene ratne zločince poput Radovana Karadžića i Ratka Mladića.[13] Takav diskurs nije ostao ograničen na retoriku, već je institucionalno ojačan kroz imenovanje javnih objekata, postavljanje murala i organiziranje manifestacija koje veličaju počinioce genocida.

Negiranje genocida u Republici srpskoj dodatno je produbljeno kroz pokušaje fizičkog brisanja mjesta sjećanja. Jedan od najupečatljivijih primjera jeste inicijativa za rekonstrukciju hangara u Kravici, mjesta gdje je u julu 1995. godine ubijeno više od hiljadu bošnjačkih muškaraca

[11] FACE HD TV, "Dodik: U Srebrenici je bio genocid!", YouTube, 9. juli 2015. Dostupno na: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t5kdl8ASd_Y [12. mart 2026].

[12] Katharina Bart i Maja Zuvela, "Bosnian Serb Leader: Srebrenica Was 20th Century's 'Greatest Deception'", *Reuters*, 25. juni 2015. Dostupno na: https://www.reuters.com/article/world/bosnian-serb-leader-srebrenica-was-20th-century-s-greatest-deception-idUSKBN0P52CI/ [12. mart 2026]; Associated Press, "Bosnian Serb Wrongly Calls Srebrenica Massacre a 'Myth'", 13. april 2019. Dostupno na: https://apnews.com/general-news-ba3e3d6495c545bab2592b8e197be030 [12. mart 2026].

[13] Nejra Džaferagić i Nermina Kuloglija-Zolj, "Tenderom za rekonstrukciju zadruge u Kravici predviđeno uklanjanje tragova zločina", *Detektor*, 29. april 2022. Dostupno na: https://detektor.ba/2022/04/29/tenderom-za-rekonstrukciju-zadruge-u-kravici-predvidjeno-uklanjanje-tragova-zlocina/ [12. mart 2026].

i dječaka. Planirana prenamjena tog prostora u poslovni objekat, uz uklanjanje tragova zločina, simbolizira nastojanje da se genocid izbriše ne samo iz narativa već i iz prostora kolektivnog pamćenja.[14]

U Srbiji, negiranje genocida u Srebrenici ima drugačiju, ali jednako sistemsku formu. Nijedna vlada Republike Srbije do danas nije zvanično prihvatila sudsku kvalifikaciju Srebrenice kao genocida, uprkos presudama Međunarodnog suda pravde i Međunarodnog krivičnog tribunala za bivšu Jugoslaviju. Rezolucija Narodne skupštine Srbije iz 2010. godine, kojom se osuđuje "zločin u Srebrenici" i izražava saučešće porodicama žrtava, namjerno izbjegava termin genocid, čime ostavlja prostor za nastavak revizionističkih interpretacija.[15]

Pod vlašću Srpske napredne stranke i predsjednika Aleksandra Vučića, negiranje genocida dodatno je institucionalno osnaženo. Izmjene Krivičnog zakonika Srbije iz 2016. godine kriminaliziraju negiranje genocida koje je utvrdio Međunarodni krivični sud, ali ne i onih utvrđenih presudama ICTY-ja, čime se implicitno omogućava nekažnjeno poricanje genocida u Srebrenici.[16] Paralelno s tim, država nije pokazala političku volju da ukloni grafite, murale i druge oblike javnog veličanja osuđenih ratnih zločinaca; naprotiv, u pojedinim slučajevima pružena im je policijska zaštita.

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[14] Narodna skupština Republike Srbije, *Deklaracija Narodne skupštine Republike Srbije o osudi zločina u Srebrenici*, 31. mart 2010. Dostupno na: https://www.parlament.gov.rs/akti/ostala-akta/doneta-akta/u-sazivu-od-11-juna-2008.31.1528.html [12. mart 2026].

[15] Narodna skupština Republike Srbije, *Zakon o izmenama i dopunama Krivičnog zakonika*, Službeni glasnik RS, br. 94/2016, 24. novembar 2016. Dostupno na: https://www.paragraf.rs/glasila/rs/sluzbeni-glasnik-republike-srbije-94-2016.html [12. mart 2026]; Milivoje Pantović, "Serbia to Punish Genocide Denial, Says Minister", *Balkan Insight*, 16. novembar 2016. Dostupno na: https://balkaninsight.com/2016/11/16/serbia-to-punish-genocide-denial-says-minister-11-16-2016/ [12. mart 2026].

[16] Hikmet Karčić, "Triumphalism: The Final Stage of the Bosnian Genocide", u: Denial: The Final Stage of Genocide?, ur. John Cox, Amal Khoury i Sarah Minslow, London: Routledge, 2022, 99–112. Dostupno na: https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003010708-6 [12. mart 2026].

Fenomen negiranja u Srbiji često poprima oblik onoga što su pojedini autori označili kao "trijumfalizam".[17] Ovaj koncept podrazumijeva ne samo poricanje zločina već i otvoreno slavljenje njegovih posljedica. Parole poput "Nož, žica, Srebrenica", koje se čuju na sportskim događajima, ili javne izjave političara koji masakr nazivaju "uspješnom vojnom operacijom", predstavljaju ekstremne, ali simptomatične izraze takvog diskursa.[18] Ovakvi narativi dodatno viktimiziraju preživjele i stvaraju društvenu klimu u kojoj se nasilje simbolički opravdava.

Zabrinjavajuće je što se negiranje genocida sve više prenosi na mlađe generacije kroz obrazovni sistem i popularnu kulturu. U školskim udžbenicima u Srbiji i Republici srpskoj Srebrenica se često spominje marginalno ili se interpretira u okviru "građanskog rata", bez jasnog imenovanja genocida i identifikacije žrtava. Time se proizvodi generacijski prekid u znanju, koji omogućava dugoročno održavanje revizionističkih narativa.

Reakcija međunarodne zajednice na ove procese bila je fragmentirana i često nedovoljna. Iako je 2021. godine visoki predstavnik u Bosni i Hercegovini uveo krivične sankcije za negiranje genocida, primjena tog zakona ostala je ograničena, dok su političke elite u Republici srpskoj iskoristile ovu mjeru kao povod za novu institucionalnu krizu i otvorene secesionističke prijetnje.[19] Time je još jednom potvrđeno da je negiranje genocida neodvojivo od šireg projekta destabilizacije postdejtonske Bosne i Hercegovine.

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[17] Milica Stojanović, "Football Fans Disrupt Match in Serbia with Srebrenica Chants", *Detektor*, 9. august 2021. Dostupno na: https://detektor.ba/2021/08/09/football-fans-disrupt-match-in-serbia-with-srebrenica-chants/?lang=en [12. mart 2026].

[18] Lamija Grebo, "Bosnia's Genocide Denial Law: Why Prosecutors Haven't Charged Anyone", *Balkan Insight*, 28. februar 2023. Dostupno na: https://balkaninsight.com/2023/02/28/bosnias-genocide-denial-law-why-prosecutors-havent-charged-anyone/ [12. mart 2026]; Jessie Barton Hronešová i Jasmin Hasić, "The 2021 Memory Law in Bosnia and Herzegovina – Reconciliation or Polarization?", *Journal of Genocide Research*, 26(4), Abingdon: Routledge, 2024, 399–417. Dostupno na: https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2023.2205687 [12. mart 2026].

[19] Diane Orentlicher, *Some Kind of Justice: The ICTY's Impact in Bosnia and Serbia*, Oxford University Press, 2018, 315.

U tom kontekstu, Rezolucija Generalne skupštine UN-a iz 2024. godine predstavlja direktan izazov institucionaliziranom revizionizmu u Srbiji i Republici srpskoj. Njena normativna snaga leži upravo u suprotstavljanju državnim politikama poricanja, reafirmaciji sudski utvrđene istine i međunarodnoj solidarnosti sa žrtvama. Međutim, da bi njen puni potencijal bio ostvaren, neophodno je razumjeti i međunarodnu dimenziju negiranja genocida, kao i prethodne neuspjehe UN-a u ovom području, što će biti razmotreno u narednom dijelu.

Međunarodna dimenzija negiranja genocida i neuspjeh Rezolucije UN-a iz 2015. godine

Negiranje genocida u Srebrenici ne može se razumjeti isključivo kao regionalni fenomen ograničen na Bosnu i Hercegovinu i Srbiju. Naprotiv, ono ima izraženu međunarodnu dimenziju koja se manifestira kroz diplomatske saveze, transnacionalne mreže revizionizma i političku instrumentalizaciju međunarodnih institucija. Ova dimenzija postaje naročito vidljiva u kontekstu ranijih pokušaja Ujedinjenih nacija da institucionalno komemoriraju genocid u Srebrenici, od kojih je najznačajniji – ali neuspješan – bio pokušaj usvajanja Rezolucije u Vijeću sigurnosti UN-a 2015. godine.

Odmah nakon završetka rata u Bosni i Hercegovini, međunarodna zajednica je kroz rad Međunarodnog krivičnog tribunala za bivšu Jugoslaviju (ICTY) nastojala uspostaviti sudski utemeljenu istinu o masovnim zločinima počinjenim tokom sukoba. Jedan od ključnih didaktičkih ciljeva Tribunala bio je da se putem individualne krivične odgovornosti spriječi kolektivna stigmatizacija naroda i istovremeno onemogući poricanje zločina.[20] Međutim, očekivanje da će sudske presude same po sebi delegitimirati negiranje genocida pokazalo se

[20] UN News, "Bosnian Leaders Must 'Seize This Moment' for Reforms, UN Envoy Says", 16. maj 2007. Dostupno na: https://news.un.org/en/story/2007/05/218942 [12. mart 2026].

preoptimističnim. Uprkos nizu presuda koje su jasno utvrdile da su masovna ubistva u Srebrenici predstavljala genocid, politički i društveni narativi poricanja nastavili su se razvijati i prilagođavati.

Svijest o toj činjenici potaknula je određene aktere unutar međunarodne zajednice da zagovaraju simboličke i normativne mjere sjećanja. Već 2007. godine, visoki predstavnik za Bosnu i Hercegovinu Christian Schwarz-Schilling pozvao je Ujedinjene nacije da uspostave međunarodni dan sjećanja na Srebrenicu, upozoravajući da kontinuirano negiranje genocida ozbiljno ugrožava političku stabilnost i proces pomirenja u zemlji.[21] Njegov apel uslijedio je neposredno nakon presude Međunarodnog suda pravde u predmetu Bosna i Hercegovina protiv Srbije i Crne Gore, kojom je potvrđeno da su zločini u Srebrenici predstavljali genocid i da je Srbija prekršila obavezu sprečavanja tog zločina.[22] Uprkos tome, UN tada nisu reagirale konkretnim memorijalnim mehanizmima.

Tek povodom dvadesete godišnjice genocida, 2015. godine, došlo je do ozbiljnijeg pokušaja institucionalne komemoracije na nivou UN-a. Ujedinjeno Kraljevstvo, uz podršku više država, predložilo je Rezoluciju S/2015/508 u Vijeću sigurnosti UN-a. Nacrt rezolucije imao je jasnu tranzicijskopravnu orijentaciju: priznavao je genocid u Srebrenici, osuđivao njegovo negiranje, naglašavao potrebu za obrazovanjem i isticao odgovornost UN-a da iz vlastitog neuspjeha izvuče pouke.[23] Posebno je važno da je Rezolucija eksplicitno naglašavala individualnu krivičnu odgovornost, nastojeći unaprijed neutralizirati optužbe o kolektivnoj krivici.

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[21] International Court of Justice (ICJ), *Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro), Presuda*, 26. februar 2007. Dostupno na: https://www.icj-cij.org/case/91/judgments [12. mart 2026].

[22] United Nations Security Council (UNSC), *Draft Resolution on Srebrenica*, S/2015/508, 8. juli 2015. Dostupno na: https://undocs.org/S/2015/508 [12. mart 2026].

[23] Milica Stojanović i Samir Kajošević, "In Serbia and Montenegro, Srebrenica is Still Politically Toxic", *Detektor*, 8. juli 2021. Dostupno na: https://detektor.ba/2021/07/08/in-serbia-and-montenegro-srebrenica-is-still-politically-toxic/?lang=en [12. mart 2026].

Ipak, politička reakcija Srbije i Republike srpske bila je gotovo identična onoj iz 2024. godine. Rezolucija je predstavljena kao pokušaj da se "srpski narod proglasi genocidnim", dok su njeni zagovornici optuženi za politizaciju historije i podrivanje regionalne stabilnosti.[24] Predsjednik Srbije Tomislav Nikolić uputio je lična pisma članicama Vijeća sigurnosti, pozivajući ih da glasaju protiv rezolucije, dok su vlasti u Banjoj Luci organizirale političku kampanju s ciljem njenog blokiranja. Argument o „nedostatku konsenzusa" i „potencijalnoj destabilizaciji" postao je centralni diskurzivni alat protivljenja.

Ključnu ulogu u neuspjehu Rezolucije iz 2015. godine odigrala je Ruska Federacija, koja je iskoristila svoje pravo veta kako bi spriječila njeno usvajanje. Ruski ambasador pri UN-u Vitalij Čurkin okarakterizirao je Nacrt rezolucije kao "konfrontacijski i politički motiviran", tvrdeći da bi njegovo usvajanje povećalo tenzije u regionu.[25] Ovakvo obrazloženje u potpunosti je zanemarilo činjenicu da je upravo negiranje genocida jedan od glavnih izvora političke nestabilnosti i etničke polarizacije u Bosni i Hercegovini. Ruski veto time je postao ne samo diplomatski čin već i aktivna intervencija u korist revizionističkih narativa.

Posljedice ovog veta imale su dugotrajan simbolički i politički učinak. U Srbiji i Republici srpskoj, veto je slavljen kao diplomatska pobjeda i dokaz međunarodne podrške narativu o nepostojanju genocida. Srpski politički lideri javno su zahvaljivali Rusiji što je "spriječila žigosanje srpskog naroda", dok je predsjednik Srbije posthumno odlikovao Vitalija Čurkina zbog njegove uloge u blokiranju Rezolucije.[26] Time je veto

[24] "Russia Vetoes UN Genocide Resolution on Srebrenica", *Al Jazeera*, 9. juli 2015. Dostupno na: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/7/9/russia-vetoes-un-genocide-resolution-on-srebrenica [12. mart 2026].

[25] Igor Mirosavljević, "The Myth of Russian Veto on the UN Resolution on Srebrenica: How Russia Saved the Serbs from Non-Existent Accusations of Being 'Genocidal People'", *European Western Balkans*, 13. juli 2023. Dostupno na: https://europeanwesternbalkans.com/2023/07/13/the-myth-of-russian-veto-on-the-un-resolution-on-srebrenica-how-russia-saved-the-serbs-from-non-existent-accusations-of-being-genocidal-people/ [12. mart 2026].

[26] Ruth Franklin, "Literature's Most Controversial Nobel Laureate", *The New Yorker*, 14. mart 2022. Dostupno na: https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/03/21/literatures-most-controversial-nobel-laureate [12. mart 2026].

retroaktivno pretvoren u element nacionalnog mita i dodatno integriran u domaću politiku negiranja.

Istovremeno, međunarodna dimenzija negiranja genocida ogleda se i u angažmanu pojedinih stranih intelektualaca i javnih ličnosti čiji su radovi instrumentalizirani u svrhu revizionizma. Određeni autori, uključujući i pojedine istraživače holokausta, korišteni su kao "autoriteti" za osporavanje pravne kvalifikacije genocida u Srebrenici, čime je lokalni nacionalistički diskurs dobio privid međunarodne legitimnosti.[27] Dodjela Nobelove nagrade Peteru Handkeu, uprkos njegovim javnim stavovima kojima relativizira ili negira zločine nad Bošnjacima, dodatno je ilustrirala ambivalentan odnos dijela međunarodne kulturne elite prema genocidu u Srebrenici.

Upravo u tom kontekstu treba razumjeti značaj Rezolucije Generalne skupštine UN-a iz 2024. godine. Za razliku od Vijeća sigurnosti, Generalna skupština nije podložna vetu, što je omogućilo da se, nakon gotovo tri decenije, uspostavi globalni konsenzus o potrebi institucionalnog sjećanja na genocid u Srebrenici. Rezolucija A/RES/78/282 time ne predstavlja samo ispravku neuspjeha iz 2015. godine, već i normativni odgovor na međunarodno umreženo negiranje genocida.

U narednom dijelu analize razmotrit će se sadržaj i normativni domet same Rezolucije iz 2024. godine, kao i razlozi zbog kojih je ona, uprkos pažljivo formuliranom jeziku, izazvala snažan politički otpor u Srbiji i Republici srpskoj.

[27] International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), IT-98-33-A, Tužilac protiv Radislava Krstića, Žalbena presuda, Den Haag, 19. april 2004. Dostupno na: https://www.icty.org/x/cases/Krstić/acjug/en/ [12. mart 2026]; International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT), MICT-13-55-A, Tužilac protiv Radovana Karadžića, Žalbena presuda, Den Haag, 20. mart 2019. Dostupno na: https://www.irmct.org/en/cases/mict-13-55 [12. mart 2026]; International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT), MICT-13-56-A, Tužilac protiv Ratka Mladića, Žalbena presuda, Den Haag, 8. juni 2021. Dostupno na: https://www.irmct.org/en/cases/mict-13-56 [12. mart 2026].

Sadržaj, normativni domet i političke implikacije Rezolucije A/RES/78/282 (2024)

Rezolucija Generalne skupštine Ujedinjenih nacija A/RES/78/282, usvojena u maju 2024. godine, predstavlja pažljivo koncipiran normativni dokument koji se oslanja na postojeće mehanizme međunarodnog prava, tranzicijske pravde i institucionaliziranog sjećanja. Njena struktura i jezik svjedoče o nastojanju da se afirmira sudski utvrđena istina o genocidu u Srebrenici, istovremeno neutralizirajući političke optužbe o kolektivnoj krivici i etničkoj stigmatizaciji. Upravo ta kombinacija pravne preciznosti i političke osjetljivosti čini Rezoluciju važnim instrumentom u globalnoj borbi protiv negiranja genocida.

U preambularnom dijelu, Rezolucija se poziva na temeljne principe Povelje Ujedinjenih nacija, Konvencije o sprečavanju i kažnjavanju zločina genocida, kao i na relevantne presude međunarodnih sudova. Posebno se ističe rad Međunarodnog krivičnog tribunala za bivšu Jugoslaviju (ICTY) i Međunarodnog rezidualnog mehanizma za krivične sudove (IRMCT), čije su presude nedvosmisleno utvrdile da su masovna ubistva Bošnjaka u Srebrenici predstavljala genocid.[28] Rezolucija također eksplicitno referira na presudu Međunarodnog suda pravde iz 2007. godine, kojom je potvrđena genocidna priroda zločina i odgovornost Srbije za nesprečavanje genocida.[29]

Jedan od najznačajnijih aspekata Rezolucije jeste način na koji definira sam zločin. Za razliku od nekih ranijih međunarodnih dokumenata koji su genocid opisivali isključivo prostorno ("genocid u Srebrenici"), Rezolucija A/RES/78/282 jasno navodi da je riječ o "genocidu nad Bošnjacima počinjenom u Srebrenici 1995. godine".[30] Ova formulacija ima važan normativni učinak, jer vraća identitet žrtava u središte memorijalnog diskursa i sprečava depersonalizaciju zločina, koja je često karakteristika revizionističkih narativa.

[28] ICJ, *Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro, Presuda*, 26. februar 2007.
[29] UNGA, *International Day of Reflection and Commemoration of the 1995 Genocide in Srebrenica*, A/RES/78/282, preambula.
[30] Ibid., operativni paragrafi 5–6.

Operativni dio Rezolucije dodatno razrađuje njen normativni domet. Pored proglašenja 11. jula Međunarodnim danom sjećanja i komemoracije, dokument bezrezervno osuđuje svako poricanje genocida kao historijske činjenice, kao i glorifikaciju osoba osuđenih za ratne zločine, zločine protiv čovječnosti i genocid.[31] Ova osuda nije deklarativne prirode, već je eksplicitno povezana s obavezom država članica da očuvaju sudski utvrđene činjenice i razvijaju obrazovne programe koji će se suprotstaviti politički motiviranom iskrivljavanju historije.

Rezolucija također poziva države članice, organizacije UN-a i civilno društvo da aktivno obilježavaju 11. juli, čime se sjećanje na genocid u Srebrenici internacionalizira i izvlači iz isključivo regionalnog okvira. Time se genocid u Srebrenici simbolički pozicionira kao univerzalna tragedija, relevantna za globalni poredak ljudskih prava, a ne kao "lokalni" ili "balkanski" problem. Ovaj aspekt Rezolucije posebno je značajan u kontekstu rastućih globalnih trendova negiranja i relativizacije masovnih zločina.

Važan element političkog kompromisa ugrađen je u amandman koji je, na inicijativu Crne Gore, usvojen neposredno prije glasanja. Tim amandmanom izričito se ponavlja da je krivična odgovornost za genocid individualna i da se ne može pripisivati bilo kojoj etničkoj, vjerskoj ili nacionalnoj grupi u cjelini. Iako je takva formulacija već implicitno sadržana u međunarodnom krivičnom pravu, njeno eksplicitno navođenje imalo je za cilj da oslabi argumente protivnika Rezolucije i spriječi njenu instrumentalizaciju u nacionalističke svrhe.

Uprkos tome, politička reakcija Srbije i Republike srpske pokazala je da otpor Rezoluciji nije bio motiviran njenim stvarnim sadržajem, već samim činom međunarodnog priznanja genocida. Kampanja protiv Rezolucije bila je obilježena intenzivnim diplomatskim pritiscima, mobilizacijom dijaspore i narativima koji su Rezoluciju predstavljali kao prijetnju nacionalnom identitetu i regionalnoj stabilnosti. Takva reakcija dodatno potvrđuje tezu da je negiranje genocida postalo ključni element savremenih nacionalističkih projekata u regionu.

[31] United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), *Usmeni amandman na nacrt rezolucije A/78/L.67/Rev.1* (prijedlog Crne Gore), A/78/PV.82, 23. maj 2024. Dostupno na: https://docs.un.org/en/A/78/PV.82 [12. mart 2026].

Normativni domet Rezolucije A/RES/78/282 ne treba precjenjivati u pravnom smislu, budući da rezolucije Generalne skupštine nemaju obavezujuću snagu poput presuda međunarodnih sudova. Ipak, njihov politički i simbolički značaj je izrazit. Rezolucija doprinosi konsolidaciji međunarodnog konsenzusa o genocidu u Srebrenici, pruža institucionalnu podršku žrtvama i preživjelima, te stvara referentni okvir za buduće obrazovne, memorijalne i političke inicijative.

U širem smislu, Rezolucija predstavlja pokušaj UN-a da preuzme dio moralne odgovornosti za vlastiti neuspjeh iz 1995. godine. Institucionaliziranjem sjećanja i jasnim suprotstavljanjem negiranju genocida, UN reafirmira svoju ulogu kao čuvara međunarodnih normi i kolektivnog pamćenja. Istovremeno, Rezolucija postavlja temelje za dugoročnu borbu protiv revizionizma koja ne može biti ograničena na sudske procese, već mora uključivati obrazovanje, javni diskurs i međunarodnu solidarnost.

U završnom dijelu ove skraćene analize razmotrit će se ukupni značaj Rezolucije A/RES/78/282 u kontekstu postkonfliktnog suočavanja s prošlošću, te izazovi i ograničenja s kojima se suočava borba protiv negiranja genocida u savremenom međunarodnom poretku.

Zaključak

Rezolucija Generalne skupštine Ujedinjenih nacija A/RES/78/282 predstavlja značajan normativni i simbolički iskorak u međunarodnoj borbi protiv negiranja genocida u Srebrenici. Iako sama po sebi ne proizvodi pravno obavezujuće posljedice, njena politička težina i moralni autoritet imaju potencijal da dugoročno oblikuju međunarodni diskurs o genocidu, odgovornosti i kulturi sjećanja. Usvajanjem Rezolucije, Ujedinjene nacije su, s višedecenijskim zakašnjenjem, afirmirale sudski utvrđenu istinu o genocidu nad Bošnjacima u julu 1995. godine i time jasno stale na stranu žrtava i preživjelih.

Analiza političkih reakcija na Rezoluciju pokazuje da je otpor njenom usvajanju bio vođen prije svega strahom od gubitka kontrole nad dominantnim nacionalističkim narativima, a ne stvarnim sadržajem samog dokumenta. Uprkos pažljivo formuliranom jeziku koji dosljedno individualizira krivičnu odgovornost i izbjegava kolektivizaciju krivice, vlasti u Srbiji i Republici srpskoj predstavile su Rezoluciju kao prijetnju kolektivnom identitetu. Takva reakcija potvrđuje tezu da je negiranje genocida postalo strukturni element savremenih političkih projekata u tim sredinama, te da svako međunarodno priznanje genocida nužno biva percipirano kao destabilizirajuće.

Rezolucija A/RES/78/282 dobija dodatni značaj kada se posmatra u kontekstu dugotrajnog neuspjeha međunarodne zajednice da spriječi genocid u Srebrenici i da se nakon toga adekvatno suoči s posljedicama tog neuspjeha. Usvajanje Rezolucije može se tumačiti i kao oblik institucionalne samorefleksije Ujedinjenih nacija, koje ovim činom implicitno priznaju da sudski procesi, koliko god bili nužni, nisu dovoljni za suzbijanje poricanja i revizionizma. Institucionalizirano sjećanje, obrazovanje i normativne osude negiranja predstavljaju neophodne dopune krivičnopravnim mehanizmima.

Istovremeno, Rezolucija razotkriva ograničenja međunarodnog poretka u borbi protiv politički organiziranog negiranja genocida. Iako je Generalna skupština uspjela zaobići blokadu Vijeća sigurnosti i ruski veto iz 2015. godine, činjenica da su značajni međunarodni akteri aktivno ili pasivno podržavali revizionističke narative ukazuje na krhkost globalnog konsenzusa o masovnim zločinima. U tom smislu, Srebrenica ostaje paradigmatski slučaj u kojem se sudski utvrđena istina sudara s geopolitičkim interesima i nacionalističkim politikama.

Za Bosnu i Hercegovinu, Rezolucija ima višestruki značaj. Ona pruža međunarodnu podršku žrtvama i njihovim porodicama, jača poziciju domaćih aktera koji se zalažu za suočavanje s prošlošću i reafirmira obavezu države da se suprotstavi negiranju genocida. Međutim, Rezolucija sama po sebi ne može zamijeniti unutrašnje političke procese niti riješiti duboko ukorijenjene podjele. Njena djelotvornost zavisit će od spremnosti domaćih i međunarodnih institucija da njene principe

pretoče u konkretne politike, posebno u oblasti obrazovanja, kulture sjećanja i vladavine prava.

U širem komparativnom okviru, Rezolucija A/RES/78/282 doprinosi razvoju globalnih normi protiv poricanja genocida, zajedno s ranijim rezolucijama o holokaustu i genocidu u Ruandi. Time se Srebrenica definitivno uključuje u univerzalni moralni i pravni narativ o genocidu, čime se osporavaju pokušaji da se taj zločin relativizira ili predstavi kao regionalni izuzetak. Ovakva univerzalizacija ima preventivni potencijal, jer jasno signalizira da međunarodna zajednica prepoznaje negiranje genocida kao oblik sekundarne viktimizacije i potencijalni uvod u novo nasilje.

Na kraju, borba protiv negiranja genocida u Srebrenici ostaje dugotrajan i politički zahtjevan proces. Rezolucija UN-a iz 2024. godine predstavlja važan korak, ali ne i konačno rješenje. Njena stvarna vrijednost mjerit će se prema tome hoće li postati referentna tačka za obrazovne programe, javne politike i međunarodnu solidarnost sa žrtvama ili će ostati simbolički čin bez dubljih društvenih posljedica. U tom smislu, Rezolucija ne zatvara pitanje Srebrenice, već ga iznova otvara kao trajni izazov međunarodnoj pravdi, sjećanju i odgovornosti.

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SREBRENICA: LESSONS LEARNED AND UNLEARNED

Abstract: This chapter reexamines the Srebrenica genocide as a key case for understanding mass atrocities in the post–Cold War era. Rather than offering a detailed narrative, it distills broader lessons and situates them within the wider context of 1990s conflicts, including the Rwandan genocide. Valentino argues that, despite advances in scholarship, these lessons have not been consistently applied in policy and prevention efforts. The chapter highlights four core insights: the persistent failure to anticipate atrocities; the integration of mass violence into wartime strategy, particularly in campaigns of "ethnic cleansing"; the limitations of "ancient hatreds" explanations in accounting for such violence; and the ineffectiveness of international measures such as sanctions, peacekeeping, and legal accountability when not backed by credible force.It concludes by emphasizing refugee protection as a crucial, though often overlooked, means of saving lives during mass violence. Overall, the chapter underscores the gap between knowledge and practice, showing how the lessons of Srebrenica remain only partially learned.
Keywords: *Srebrenica, mass atrocities, genocide, "ethnic cleansing", atrocity prevention, international intervention, refugee protection*

SREBRENICA: NAUČENE I NENAUČENE LEKCIJE

Sažetak: Ovo poglavlje ponovo razmatra genocid u Srebrenici kao ključni slučaj za razumijevanje masovnih zločina u razdoblju nakon hladnog rata. Umjesto detaljnog narativnog prikaza, ono izdvaja šire pouke i smješta ih u širi kontekst sukoba tokom 1990-ih godina, uključujući i genocid u Ruandi. Valentino tvrdi da, uprkos napretku u naučnim istraživanjima, ove lekcije nisu dosljedno primjenjivane u politikama i naporima usmjerenim na prevenciju. Poglavlje ističe četiri ključna uvida: trajni neuspjeh u predviđanju masovnih zločina; uključivanje masovnog nasilja u ratne strategije, posebno u kampanjama etničkog čišćenja; ograničenja objašnjenja zasnovanih na "drevnim mržnjama" u razumijevanju takvog nasilja; te nedjelotvornost međunarodnih mjera poput sankcija, mirovnih operacija i

pravne odgovornosti kada nisu podržane vjerodostojnom upotrebom sile. Poglavlje zaključuje naglašavanjem zaštite izbjeglica kao ključnog, iako često zanemarenog, sredstva za spašavanje života tokom masovnog nasilja. U cjelini, poglavlje ukazuje na jaz između znanja i prakse, pokazujući kako su lekcije iz Srebrenice ostale samo djelimično naučene.
Ključne riječi: *Srebrenica, masovni zločini, genocid, "etničko čišćenje", prevencija zločina, međunarodna intervencija, zaštita izbjeglica*

Thirty years after the fall of Srebrenica, the massacre remains the most notorious mass atrocity in post–Cold War Europe. In this chapter, I use Srebrenica as a starting point for reconsidering what the case reveals about the dynamics of mass atrocities. My aim in this chapter is not to offer a comprehensive historical account of the events of July 1995, but to identify lessons that bear on contemporary debates about the causes, consequences, and prevention of mass atrocities.

Three cautions are in order at the outset. First, I make no claim that the "lessons" I attempt to distill here are the only ones to be learned. Rather, they represent a selection of the insights I think may be most relevant to the anticipation and prevention of future atrocities. We remember the lives lost in Srebrenica because we believe that every life has value. The least we can do to ensure those lives were not lost in vain, however, is to try to learn what we can from them in the effort to prevent other episodes of mass atrocity.

Second, although these lessons are drawn from Srebrenica, they apply beyond what happened there or in the broader conflicts in the Balkans in the 1990s. Indeed, I cannot be certain that Srebrenica is where I learned these lessons. I am certain that I did not learn them only there. To understand why, we must locate Srebrenica in the historical moment in which the massacre occurred. The tragedy of Srebrenica unfolded not only amid the wider context of violence in the Balkans, but also during what was likely the most extensive global wave of mass atrocities the world had experienced since World War II. In the span of fewer than five years, from 1991 to 1995, conflicts in places as varied as Somalia, Haiti, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Rwanda, Algeria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and

several post-Soviet territories generated the intentional killing of tens of thousands, and in some cases hundreds of thousands, of civilians. Many of these crises and conflicts have left smaller marks on our collective memory than Srebrenica has. Yet, especially for scholars, together they contributed to a major shift in our understanding of mass atrocities. The lessons developed in this chapter, therefore, are shaped not only by Srebrenica itself, but also by the wider violence of the 1990s that reinforced them.

Finally, and regrettably, although these are lessons that I learned 30 years ago, I do not mean to imply that they have been widely learned, especially by those outside the academy. Indeed, one of the most troubling continuities in the study of atrocity prevention is the repeated failure of institutions and decision-makers to learn from past failures, or at least to translate what has been learned into new practices. Any account of the "lessons" of Srebrenica must therefore grapple not only with the insights the massacre revealed, but also with why such revelations so often fail to prevent the repetition of the same failures.

Below, I describe four lessons that I believe we can learn from the terror and tragedy of Srebrenica. The first is that even those in a position to know the most about a conflict often have difficulty believing that violence on the scale of Srebrenica is possible. As a result, they are often slow to react, making prevention difficult. Second, although almost all mass atrocities occur during war, they are not separate from it. War is not merely a convenient cover for mass violence; rather, atrocities are often directly connected to their perpetrators' broader military strategies. Third, although almost all committed mass atrocities take place between countries or within country with a long history of ethnic, racial, or religious groups hatred and bitterness, it is wrong to consider these attitudes as the primary causes of large-scale violence against civilian populations. Fourth, Srebrenica underscored a lesson that would be learned repeatedly during the 1990s: the mere presence of UN peacekeepers, economic sanctions, "naming and shaming," or threats to hold perpetrators accountable through international prosecution have also failed to achieve the most ambitious goals set by their proponents in the 1990s.

In the sections below, I discuss each of these lessons, linking them not only to the events in Srebrenica in 1995 but also to other mass atrocities before and since. I also discuss the extent to which these lessons have or have not been widely accepted and put into practice. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of a final lesson from Srebrenica: the importance of protecting refugees from mass atrocities, a lesson that the world has repeatedly learned and then unlearned, both before Srebrenica and again today.

Disbelief

Srebrenica was not the first episode of mass atrocities in the Bosnian war. On the contrary, and not coincidentally, although it was the largest single massacre of the war, it was also effectively the last major atrocity conducted by Serb forces against Bosniaks during the war. The massacre came after three years of remarkably similar atrocities elsewhere in Bosnia. Indeed, the pattern of Serb violence was so consistent that even early in the war, Samantha Power reported that American intelligence officials in Washington found it

> "spookily easy to predict… Bosnian Serb artillery would begin by unleashing a barrage on a given village; Serb paramilitaries would launch infantry assaults, killing armed men, rounding up unarmed men, and sending trembling women and children into flight. When most Serb forces moved to the next village, a cadre of paramilitaries and regulars stayed behind to "mop up."[1]

In the spring of 1992, the campaign against non-Serb civilians in Prijedor, where more than 3,500 people were killed, offered a clear precedent to what would occur three years later in Srebrenica. In both cases, Bosnian Muslims inhabited a geographically and politically exposed "pocket," a demographically distinct population center surrounded by

[1] Samantha Power, *A Problem From Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*, New York, Basic Books, 2002, 266.

Serb-majority territory. These populations were understood by Bosnian Serb authorities as an obstacle to territorial consolidation. Prijedor, like Srebrenica, mattered not only symbolically to the Serbs, but operationally. As in Srebrenica, Serbs believed that control of the city would protect their lines of communication and supply, secure strategically valuable corridors, and reduce the risks associated with leaving what they saw as a hostile civilian population in the rear.[2]

The operational sequence of events in both cases also shows striking parallels, although the violence in Prijedor unfolded over months, while in Srebrenica 1995 most of the killing was over within days. In Prijedor, as later around Srebrenica, Serb forces, including both regular units and paramilitary formations, first encircled population centers and then issued ultimatums that framed civilian flight as the only path to safety.

Most consequentially, Prijedor and Srebrenica share a common repertoire of selective killing and mass detention. In Prijedor, women and children were separated from men; many men were executed or transported to detention facilities where torture, starvation, and killing became routine features of a system designed to destroy the community's capacity to remain in place. The same underlying mechanism would reappear at Srebrenica: the separation of "military-aged" males from families, including boys and minors who were also singled out and killed,[3] the transformation of administrative sorting into a pipeline

[2] Damir Kovačević, "Visions of Greater Serbia: Local dynamics and the Prijedor genocide", *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 14, no. 1, 2020, 105-123.

[3] On the killing of minors during the genocide against Bosniaks in Srebrenica, see: Zilha Mastalić Košuta, "Genocid nad djecom u sigurnoj zoni Srebrenica jula 1995" ["Genocide against Children in the Srebrenica UN Safe Area in July 1995"], *Prilozi*, 2010, 123–143; Muamer Džananović, "Dijete i porodica u genocidu – S posebnim osvrtom na genocid nad Bošnjacima u i oko Srebrenice jula 1995. godine" ["The Child and the Family in Genocide: A Special Focus on the Genocide against Bosniaks in and around Srebrenica in July 1995"], *Monumenta Srebrenica*, no. 9, Tuzla–Srebrenica: Institute for the Protection and Use of Cultural-Historical and Natural Heritage of Tuzla Canton, 2020, 117–120; Zilha Mastalić Košuta, "Zločini nad djecom u Bosni i Hercegovini na primjerima Sarajeva, Mostara i Srebrenice (1992–1995)" ["Crimes against Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Examples from Sarajevo, Mostar and Srebrenica (1992–1995)"], in *Genocide against Bosniaks: Srebrenica 1995–2020: Causes, Scope and Consequences*, Sarajevo: Institute for

toward execution, and the use of detention and disappearance as tools of demographic engineering.

Finally, Prijedor and Srebrenica share a pattern of international constraint without enforcement, a lesson I will return to in more detail below. In 1992, Serb forces demonstrated in Prijedor that external condemnation, diplomatic warnings, and even the threat of international peacekeepers did not reliably translate into meaningful protection for threatened civilians. UNPROFOR had been authorized in February 1992, months before the main attacks on Prijedor commenced, and UN troops began deploying to Sarajevo in June, even as the "ethnic cleansing" in Prijedor continued. The UN Security Council banned all international trade with Serbia on May 30, and the US seized $200 million of its US-based assets. In this case, however, it was the Serbs who learned a lesson about how limited international leverage could be when mandates were narrow, political will was uncertain, and credible coercive threats were absent. By the time Srebrenica fell three years later, the lesson had effectively been reinforced: supposed red lines from the international community were not inviolable, and promises to protect civilians could be tested, bypassed, and ultimately ignored.

Yet even after Serb forces began the main assault on Srebrenica on July 6, 1995, many of those closest to the events did not foresee what would happen. The commander of the Dutch peacekeeping battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Thom Karremans, told his superiors that the attack was "a diversion and an attempt at intimidation," rather than an indication that a full-scale assault on the enclave had begun. David Rohde writes that "according to intelligence officials in both Washington and Zagreb at the time, their honest assessment was that, despite the Serb buildup, it would be illogical for the Serbs to risk provoking the West by taking an entire safe area" like Srebrenica.[4]

Research of Crimes against Humanity and International Law, 2021, 443–452; These studies document the persecution, suffering, and killing of children and minors as integral components of the genocidal operation in Srebrenica. Mastalić Košuta and Džananović estimate that approximately 800 children and minors were killed in the Srebrenica area between 1992 and 1995.

[4] David Rhode, *Endgame: The Betrayal and Fall of Srebrenica, Europe's Worst Massacre Since World War II*, New York, Penguin Books, 2012, 370.

Why is it so difficult for observers to accept that genocide is possible—even as evidence of escalating violence accumulates around them? Part of the answer is statistical. Mass atrocities are comparatively rare events, even in wartime. An analyst who consistently predicts that mass atrocities will not occur will be correct more often than one who consistently warns that they will. A degree of incredulity, in other words, is not necessarily denialism or simple thickheadedness.

Nevertheless, this rational skepticism does not fully explain how widespread such failures of imagination are. The difficulty in accepting that atrocities might occur also reflects a deeper inability to grasp how the mass killing of civilians can come to seem "rational" to perpetrators, even when they understand that doing so may provoke stronger international opposition. Understanding that kind of dreadful logic brings us to the second lesson of the Srebrenica massacre.

The Logic of Atrocity in War

In the early 1990s, political scientists who studied war understood that there were two main reasons civilians were killed in armed conflict. First, civilians might be killed unintentionally –caught in the crossfire between military forces. Second, they might be targeted deliberately, but instrumentally, as a means of coercing or deterring an adversary into taking some action that constituted the actual objective of the war. Violence against civilians, in other words, was understood as either incidental to fighting or a tool in pursuit of some other strategic end.

Srebrenica, and other mass killings of the 1990s, however, helped expose a second and deeper lesson. In some wars, civilian populations are not merely collateral victims or instruments of coercion. They are themselves the objective. Once we recognize that civilians can be the central target of wartime strategy, patterns of violence that otherwise appear excessive, irrational, or anomalous become more legible.

When atrocities occur, perpetrators' aims are often misunderstood as irreducibly genocidal—in the sense of seeking the total annihilation of every man, woman, and child in a group. But this understanding confuses

means with ends. More commonly, in wars like the one in Bosnia, the perpetrator's objective is the permanent displacement of a population from a territory—what is often called "ethnic cleansing".

"Ethnic cleansing" is not identical to annihilation, but it almost always produces extreme violence because people resist losing their homes, livelihoods, and communities. This is one reason why the vast majority of women and children in Srebrenica were expelled rather than killed, although children and other minors were also among those murdered during the genocidal operation.[5] Men of military age were the main threat that could stand in the way of the Serbs' plans for "ethnic cleansing".[6] In the years prior to the massacre, Serb forces had "cleansed" most of the Drina River valley.[7] Srebrenica was the last remaining major population center in the region.

We know what the aims of the Serb forces in Srebrenica were because they were never particularly secret. Radovan Karadžić explicitly enumerated his "Strategic Goals" to the 16th session of the Bosnian Serb Assembly in May 1992. The first of these was "separation from the other two national communities [Croatian and Bosniak]—separation of states. Separation from those who are our enemies and who have used every opportunity, especially in this century, to attack us, and who would continue with such practices if we were to stay together in the same state." Another goal was more specific, calling for the "elimination of the Drina as a border between two [Serb] worlds. We are on both sides of the Drina, and our strategic interest and our living space are there. We now see a possibility for some Muslim municipalities [including Srebrenica] to be set up along the Drina as enclaves, in order for them to achieve their rights, but that belt along the Drina must basically belong to Serbian Bosnia and Herzegovina."[8]

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[5] Mastalić Košuta, "Genocid nad djecom u sigurnoj zoni Srebrenica…", 2010; Džananović, "Dijete i porodica…", 2020; Mastalić Košuta, Zločini nad djecom…", 2021.

[6] See Jan Willem Honig, "Strategy and Genocide: Srebrenica as an Analytical Challenge" *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 7, no. 3, 2007, 399-416.

[7] Edina Bećirević, *Genocide on the Drina River*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2014.

[8] "Minutes of the 16th Session of the Assembly of the Serbian People in Bosnia and

Also in attendance at the Assembly was Ratko Mladić, who expressed concern about how publicly declaring Karadžić's goals would be perceived by the West and how it might provoke stronger resistance from Bosnian Muslims. "We cannot cleanse nor can we have a sieve to sift so that only Serbs would stay, or that the Serbs would fall through and the rest leave…," he told the assembly. "I do not know how… Mr. Karadžić would explain this to the world. People, that would be genocide."[9]

Understanding these goals also helps explain why the war ultimately ended when it did. By 1995, Bosnian Serb forces had achieved the core goals they had laid out in 1992. Although they had failed to seize control of Sarajevo and had lost some territory to Croatia, they increasingly understood that they lacked the military power to extend their gains further and were losing support from Belgrade, without which they could not continue. As Bridget Conley-Zilkic concludes, "Mass atrocities ended in Bosnia during the 1992–1995 war according to a military-political recipe that has not much changed in the past 100 years. Wars replete with atrocities are fought to create territorial states and end when those states are consolidated."[10]

Ancient Hatreds

Imagining genocide is hard, and imagining how it might be "rational," at least from the perspective of the perpetrators, is even harder. When we do allow ourselves to imagine these terrors, we often reach first for the Holocaust. That instinct is understandable. The Holocaust remains the central reference point for genocide in scholarship and culture. Yet the comparison can also mislead when it is deployed too simplistically.

Herzegovina" (Banja Luka, May 12, 1992), 13–14, English translation, Unified Court Records (UCR) database, International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, accessed February 28, 2026, https://ucr.irmct.org/LegalRef/CMSDocStore/Public/English/ Motions/NotIndexable/IT-03-67/MOT5868R0000360539.doc

[9] Ibid., 41.

[10] Bridget Conley-Zilkic, "Bosnia-Herzegovina Endings real and imagined", in Bridget Conley-Zilkic, ed. *How Mass Atrocities End: Studies from Guatemala, Burundi, Indonesia, the Sudans, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Iraq*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, 175.

In perhaps the most common understanding of the Holocaust, the genocide of Europe's Jews appears as something that occurred during the Second World War but was, in an important sense, analytically separate from the war itself—a radical ideological project motivated by widespread public hatred of Jews, for which war simply provided cover. Even for the Holocaust itself, this story is too simplistic, since Hitler was convinced that winning the war would not be possible without also eliminating the Jews, whom he blamed for Germany's defeat and capitulation in the First World War. But as a frame for understanding Srebrenica and most other atrocities, this simple story can be deeply misleading.

This leads to a third lesson of Srebrenica. If, as I have argued, the aim of Bosnian Serb forces in the war was to physically separate Muslim and Croatian populations from Serbs in the territories that Serbian nationalists claimed for their own, where did that objective come from, and how did it gain support?

For much of the early 1990s, public discussion of the Yugoslav wars was dominated by what would be called the "ancient hatreds" model. Yugoslavia's collapse was, in fact, the high-water mark of the claim that ethnic conflict and genocide arise from widely held primordial animosities—atavistic passions lying just beneath the surface of multiethnic societies, waiting for state authority to weaken. This view has a long pedigree, but in the Balkan context it was popularized less by historians than by journalists and public commentators.[11]

In that telling, the atrocities of the period were understood primarily as the eruption of ancient tribal grievances, driven by irrational hatred and a kind of civilizational regression. Violence, on this account, was the expression of the darkest and least rational dimensions of human behavior: uncivilized savagery, fueled by resentment toward those who look different, worship differently, or claim a different national identity. As Robert Kaplan saw it, "Bosnia is a morass of ethnically mixed villages in the mountains. Bosnia is rural, isolated, and full of suspicions and

[11] Marko Attila Hoare, "'Ancient Ethnic Hatreds' Is Poor Shorthand and Dangerous", *New Lines Magazine*, July 14, 2022.

hatreds … the villages all around were full of savage hatreds."[12]

This perspective was not confined to media commentary. Unfortunately, it also shaped how many policymakers in the United States and Europe interpreted events as they unfolded. One of the most revealing features of early Western responses to the Bosnian war was the extent to which key decision makers described the conflict as fundamentally irrational. President George H.W. Bush called the war a "complex, convoluted conflict that grows out of age-old animosities."[13] In 1992, Lawrence Eagleburger, the acting US Secretary of State who had served as the US ambassador to Yugoslavia, famously and bluntly said that the fighting in the Balkans was "not rational… it is gut, it is hatred; it's not for any common set of values or purposes."[14] Since blood feuds like this obviously could not be solved by outside intervention, it was also an easy excuse to avoid taking any action. Little could be done except contain the damage.

There is, of course, an element of truth embedded in the ancient hatreds account. It would be foolish to deny that tensions, fears, prejudices, and resentments existed among Serbs, Croats, and Bosnian Muslims long before the war. The problem with the "ancient hatreds" model is not that it identifies hatred as one ingredient in the story; it is that it massively exaggerates its extent and mistakes a permissive condition for a sufficient cause.

Many societies contain substantial intergroup distrust, discrimination, and historical grievance. Most do not produce a Srebrenica. In fact, the degree of ethnic animosity in Yugoslavia prior to the war was almost certainly less than in many other countries that avoided mass violence. Indeed, as Anthony Oberschall documents, "Most ordinary people [in Bosnia] were stunned by the violence that descended upon them,

[12] Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*, New York, Vintage Books, 1994.

[13] Don Oberdorfer. "Bush Shifts toward Force to Aid Bosnia." *Washington Post*, August 6, 1992.

[14] Quoted in Jon Western, "Sources of Humanitarian Intervention: Beliefs, Information, and Advocacy in the U.S. Decisions on Somalia and Bosnia," International Security 26, no. 4, Spring 2002, 131.

unexpectedly."[15] As one Muslim refugee from Prijedor recalled, "In Prijedor there were no conflicts between nationalities. We didn't make the distinctions. My colleague at work was an Orthodox Serb; we worked together. When we were children, we went to the Orthodox church or the mosque together . . . I don't understand. Before, there were never any problems between us. We lived together. My sister is married to a Serb, and a brother of my wife is married to a Croat…"[16]

Indeed, one of the most robust findings from comparative research on mass atrocities over the past several decades is that commonly cited structural indicators of ethnic tension—whether measures of ethnic diversity or even many measurable forms of discrimination—perform surprisingly poorly as predictors of where large-scale atrocities will occur.[17] This is not because ethnic and racial resentments are irrelevant or unimportant to understanding ethnic violence. It is because they are too common. Unfortunately, prejudice and exclusion are widespread features of social life in most countries. Fortunately, mass atrocities remain comparatively rare. The empirical challenge, then, is not to explain why hatred exists, but to explain why genocidal violence emerges only in a small subset of cases where hatred, fear, and discrimination are present.

What subsequent scholarship has made increasingly clear is that mass atrocities are rarely the product of neighbors suddenly and collectively falling on their neighbors in an uncoordinated eruption of violence.[18] Rather, political and military elites – often representative of the public – manipulate ethnic divisions and historical narratives in an effort to achieve their own ends, often relying on control of the media to exacerbate fears. Nationalist parties generated a reinforcing cycle of fear, pointing to the reactions of other nationalities as a rationale for further escalation. Ultimately, although few voters favored ethnic separatism in

[15] Anthony Oberschall, "The Manipulation of Ethnicity: From Ethnic Cooperation to Violence and War in Yugoslavia", Ethnic and Racial Studies 23, no. 6, 2000, 988.

[16] Ibid., 984-985.

[17] Benjamin A. Valentino, "Why we kill: The political science of political violence against civilians." *Annual Review of Political Science* 17, no. 1, 2014, 89-103.

[18] Human Rights Watch, *Slaughter Among Neighbors: The Political Origins of Communal Violence*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1995.

1990, many were convinced that voting for moderates would simply split their group's vote and leave them vulnerable to other national groups voting cohesively and consolidating power.

As Bogdan Denitch described the situation in 1991, "images in the media of the genocidal massacres of Serbs in Croatia during the Second World War traumatized people who had seemed immune to nationalism… Old personal ties and friendships crumbled as many intellectuals I knew, as well as friends and family members, rallied to the defense of their own nation. The pressure to do so was immense."[19] Considerable violence and repression was directed against co-ethics who were seen to oppose hyper-nationalist agenda. As V.P. Gangon noted, "the terror against and killing of Croats by the Croatian nationalist forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina – or the killing of Serbs by Serb forces in Krajina or Republika Srpska – is difficult to categorize if we use the framework of ethnic conflict."[20]

That is why Srebrenica remains so important for understanding contemporary mass atrocity risk. The case warns against explanations that treat genocide as the inevitable expression of deep social animosity. It directs us instead toward a more unsettling but more useful conclusion: mass atrocities are usually made, not merely unleashed. They are produced by actors with organizational capacity, strategic objectives, and political incentives – often in environments where outsiders, misled by the language of irrational hatred, fail to recognize the more proximate causes of the violence until it is too late.

The Limits of International Intervention

Srebrenica offers a fourth lesson, one reinforced by other atrocities of the 1990s: international efforts to prevent mass atrocities rarely succeed unless they are backed by credible coercive power to protect victim populations and defeat perpetrators. The 1990s ushered in an "age of humanitarian intervention," when the collapse of the Soviet Union

[19] Bogdan Denis Denitch, *Ethnic nationalism: The Tragic Death of Yugoslavia*, Minneapolis, Minnesota Press, 1996, 181.

[20] Valere Philip Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2004, 11.

convinced proponents of human rights that international institutions could prevent abuses that Cold War politics had previously allowed to escalate with impunity. This sentiment was advanced even by avowed realists like George H.W. Bush, who memorably vowed to "seize this opportunity to fulfill the long-held promise of a new world order, where brutality will go unrewarded and aggression will meet collective resistance."[21]

As described above, some who subscribed to the then-fashionable "ancient hatreds" school concluded that preventing atrocities was nearly impossible, since international institutions lacked the power to settle blood feuds in foreign lands. For others, ironically, the same theory led to the opposite conclusion: that convincing perpetrators to relent might be relatively easy. If perpetrators were motivated only by irrational hatreds, then economic or diplomatic sanctions, small contingents of lightly armed peacekeepers, limited airstrikes, "naming and shaming," or warnings of international prosecution might be sufficient to make them reconsider. If, by contrast, mass atrocities like the Srebrenica massacre were a central part of the military and political strategies that elites saw as critical to their survival and power, it is not surprising that these efforts failed.

What makes the Srebrenica massacre so instructive in this context is that it occurred even after all of these methods had already been brought to bear against the Serbs earlier in the conflict. Although the Bosnian conflict is remembered for the failure of Western intervention, in fact, international institutions tried almost every tool in their toolbox at some point during the war.

The leaders of Serbia and the Republika Srpska were the targets of international scorn from the earliest days of the conflict. As early as 1992, Secretary of State James A. Baker called for the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the UN and other international organizations because of the "outrageous, barbaric and inhuman" behavior of the government

[21] George Bush, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union", January 29, 1991, *The American Presidency Project*, https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-before-joint-session-the-congress-the-state-the-union-1.

in Belgrade.[22] Serbia and Republika Srpska faced ever-increasing international diplomatic and economic sanctions and military embargoes throughout the war. By 1996, the UN estimated that the sanctions had cost the former Yugoslavia almost 60 billion dollars—two-thirds of its annual GDP.[23]

The conflict also witnessed the first major international tribunals since the Second World War. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was established in 1993 and issued its first indictment against Dragan Nikolić, a Bosnian Serb concentration-camp commander, in 1994. Duško Tadić, who participated in beatings, torture, and abuse of detainees in the Omarska concentration camp and in the broader Prijedor campaign, was arrested in Germany in February 1994. His trial began in April 1995, as Bosnian Serb forces were busy planning the attack on Srebrenica.

As noted above, UN peacekeepers began deploying in Bosnia in 1992, and by 1995 there were almost 40,000 troops on the ground. Since 1993, those troops were authorized to use force to defend designated "safe areas." Indeed, Srebrenica was the first official safe area of the war. Also beginning in 1993, NATO enforced a UN-authorized no-fly zone over the country. NATO aircraft began conducting limited airstrikes on Bosnian Serb forces in April 1994.

None of these efforts averted the slaughter in 1995. The massacre in Srebrenica did not occur because the international community did nothing. It failed because what the international community was prepared to do was not enough to deter the Serbs or protect Muslim civilians when deterrence failed. Even the expanded NATO bombing campaign that commenced shortly after the massacre probably was not central to achieving peace. Rather, as Anthony Schinella concludes,

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[22] Norman Kempster, "Baker Seeks Yugoslavia's Expulsion From U.N.: Balkans: He Tells a Senate Committee That Military Action May Be the Only Way to Get Relief Supplies to Sarajevo", Los Angeles Times, June 24, 1992.

[23] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Humanitarian Risk Analysis No. 11: Federal Republic of Yugoslavia", *ReliefWeb*, July 7, 2000.

Although the coincident timing might easily suggest that the coercive power of NATO bombing is what brought the Serbs to the table, the more nuanced reality is that the NATO air campaign was only one of multiple concurrent factors at the time and, in truth, probably was not the most important pressure that forced the Bosnian Serbs' change of position… the NATO air campaign was a less important factor than the actions of the non-NATO forces shedding blood on the battlefield. The strategic campaign against fixed infrastructure targets was well-executed but failed to have any decisive effect. Little effort was directed tactically against Bosnian Serb–deployed weapons or equipment, and almost none were destroyed.[24]

The broader record of the early 1990s repeatedly confirmed this point. Small UN missions in places such as Somalia and Rwanda lacked the military capacity, political backing, or rules of engagement necessary to stop large-scale violence. Once peacekeepers themselves came under attack, domestic political support for these missions eroded rapidly, and withdrawal became more likely than escalation. Srebrenica fit this pattern. The Dutch battalion's presence inside the enclave created the appearance of deterrence and protection, but not protection itself. On the contrary, the small battalion made protecting the safe area more difficult by providing hostages that the Bosnian Serbs used to deter more effective intervention. The fact that only two NATO bombs were dropped before the operation was halted became another lesson to perpetrators about the limits of external resolve.

Perhaps the strongest evidence that limited interventions like sanctions, tribunals, and airstrikes could not deter determined perpetrators came four years later in Kosovo. By that time, Milošević had experienced what Western sanctions could do, and Serbia had faced a new round of arms embargoes and severe sanctions starting in 1998. Bosnian Serb leaders Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić had been indicted by the ICTY in 1995, and the ICTY's first judgment was handed down in 1996, demonstrating that the prospect of international justice for perpetrators

[24] Anthony M. Schinella, *Bombs without Boots: The Limits of Airpower*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2019, 11, 37.

of atrocities was real. The US had been explicitly threatening military action against Serbia since 1992 should Serbia escalate the conflict in Kosovo.[25] As the crisis escalated, Serbs had already seen the example of NATO airstrikes in Bosnia in 1995 and, to make the threat credible, NATO voted in October 1998 and again in January 1999 to authorize an air campaign against Serbia if it did not cease attacks on Kosovar Albanian civilians. None of these efforts ultimately prevented Milošević from launching the largest single "ethnic cleansing" operation of the Balkan wars.

Once again, the key failure was the mistaken belief on the part of Western leaders that the perpetrators could be easily coerced because outsiders could not appreciate how Serb leaders like Milošević could see "ethnic cleansing" as critical to Serbia's military and political interests. To Milošević, he was facing a major insurgency that was broadly supported by the local Kosovar Albanian population in the heart of what most Serbs saw as core Serbian territory. According to Stephen Hosmer, the "Serbian style of counterinsurgency operations was ethnic cleansing," which would not only deprive the Kosovar Liberation Army of support, but also "result in a permanent change in Kosovo's ethnic balance… a long-held goal of the extreme Serbian nationalists."[26]

Withdrawing Serbian forces or permitting a referendum that would have almost certainly resulted in Kosovo's independence was unacceptable. Milošević had accepted the loss of some Serb-dominated territories in Croatia and Bosnia in 1995, when Bosnian Serb military losses made it unavoidable, but as Duško Doder and Louise Branson conclude, "he could not relinquish Kosovo—which Serbs regarded as the heart of Serbia itself—and hope to survive."[27]

Srebrenica also offered a second bleak lesson about the limits of international justice. I have already described how the threat of

[25] Ivo H. Daalder and Michael E. O'Hanlon, *Winning Ugly: NATO's War to Save Kosovo,* New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004, 9.

[26] Stephen T. Hosmer, *The Conflict Over Kosovo: Why Milosevic Decided to Settle When He Did*, Washington, D.C., RAND, 2001, 27-29.

[27] Duško Doder and Louise Branson, *Milosevic: Portrait of a Tyrant*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1999, 8.

international prosecutions did not deter the massacres in Srebrenica or the atrocities that Milošević later visited on Kosovo. Proponents of international justice, however, hoped that institutions like the ICTY would at least establish an authoritative factual record, reducing denial, narrowing the space for revisionist mythmaking, satisfying victims' demands for justice, and ultimately reducing the chances that conflict would recur.

Here too the results are mixed, at best. The ICTY produced a vast evidentiary archive and judicial findings of immense historical value. Yet in Bosnia and the wider region, denial, conspiracy theories, and selective reinterpretations of the war remain widespread. Public opinion for years has shown deep distrust of the tribunal among many Serbs and Croats, who often view it as deeply partisan rather than impartial. For example, a 2017 poll found that 56 percent of Serbs described the ICTY as partial and biased, while only 6 percent saw it as impartial. Nearly half of respondents stated that the ICTY had not contributed in any way to establishing the truth about the wars, and only 11 percent thought it had made a considerable or major contribution. Only 12 percent believed that what happened in Srebrenica occurred in line with the accounts laid out in ICTY judgments.[28] Worse, Serbs who claimed to be most informed about the trials showed the most ethnic bias.

These attitudes are not limited to the public. Nationalist leaders in Serbia and Republika Srpska regularly deny the crimes committed by Serb forces during the conflict in Bosnia and Kosovo.[29] By 2025, analysts were asserting that "Bosnia is at greater risk of collapsing now than at any point in its young history, which means violence could quickly make a comeback."[30]

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[28] Srećko Mihailović, *Awareness of Serbian Citizens about the Wars of the 1990s, War Crimes, and Trials of Those Accused of War Crimes*, Belgrade, IIC Demostat, August 2017.

[29] Tallan Donine, "Genocide Denial, Rising Tensions, and Political Crisis in Bosnia", *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, February 18, 2022, https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/blog/genocide-denial-rising-tensions-and-political-crisis-in-bosnia.

[30] Ismet Fatih Čančar, "How Bosnia Could Break Europe: The Return of Serbian

Conclusion

The lessons of Srebrenica are, for the most part, grim. They reveal both the determination of perpetrators of mass atrocities to commit crimes and the limits of international will and capability when it comes to stopping them.

One lesson of Srebrenica, however, was learned quickly and may well have been the most important atrocity prevention tool in the war in Kosovo. That lesson was simple: providing refugee and care to those fleeing mass atrocities is ultimately among the most effective ways to save lives. In Srebrenica, as in most other parts of Bosnia, those who survived the atrocities were those who managed to escape – either to Muslim held territories or across an international border. By some estimates, more than 2 million people were displaced on all sides during the war, including two-thirds of all Bosnian Muslims and over 95 percent of the pre-war Bosnian-Croat and Bosnian-Muslim population of what would become Republika Srpska.[31] 700,000 refugees from the conflict (not all Bosnian Muslims) ended up outside of the Balkans, about half in Germany.[32] These refugees were victims of "ethnic cleansing" but they avoided becoming victims of genocide because they had somewhere to run.

The "ethnic cleansing" of Kosovo unfolded much faster. Within just over two months after the NATO airstrikes commenced, nearly 860,000 Kosovo Albanians fled, more than half across the border to Albania. It was the largest wave of refugees in Europe since the Second World War. As a UNHCR report concluded, however, "Despite the challenge, it is widely agreed that the basic needs of the refugees were met. There were no serious epidemics, [and] no deaths on a large scale."[33] These refugees

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Nationalism Could Start Another War on the Continent", *Foreign Affairs*, April 9, 2025.

[31] Eric Rosand, "The Right to Compensation in Bosnia: An Unfulfilled Promise and a Challenge to International Law", *Cornell International Law Journal* 33, no. 1, 2000, 120.

[32] Christopher S. Wren, "Resettling Refugees: U.N. Facing New Burden", *New York Times*, November 24, 1995, A15,

[33] Ibid.

were spared because of the unprecedented level of resources devoted to the crisis, including tent cities constructed and maintained by Western military forces in Albania and Macedonia.

To lessen the impact on neighboring countries, Europe, the United States, and other Western countries agreed to spend billions of dollars and instituted an unprecedented "Humanitarian Evacuation Program" that relocated almost 100,000 refugees to countries outside of the Balkans.[34] Polls showed that two-thirds of Americans supported the decision to bring up to 20,000 refugees to the United States, and over a third said they would open their home to a refugee if given the chance.[35] Fifty-nine percent of British citizens said they would support granting asylum to at least 5,000 refugees in the UK.[36]

Needless to say, Western public attitudes toward refugees, especially those seeking asylum from outside Europe, have changed dramatically in the years since the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo. A 2024 poll of 52 countries found that although substantial majorities in almost all countries agreed with the general principle that "people should be able to take refugee in other countries, including in my country, to escape from war or persecution," large numbers simultaneously agreed that "We must close our borders to refugees entirely—we can't accept any at this time," including pluralities (excluding respondents who answered "don't know" to this question) in most Western European countries and the United States.[37]

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[34] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Kosovo Emergency," in *UNHCR Global Report 1999* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2000), 345–47, https://www.unhcr.org/uk/sites/uk/files/legacy-pdf/3e2d4d5f7.pdf

[35] David W. Moore, "Americans Support Bringing Kosovar Refugees to United States," *Gallup News Service*, May 12, 1999, https://news.gallup.com/poll/3859/Americans-Support-Bringing-Kosovar-Refugees-United-States.aspx

[36] "Local Elections, Kosovo and the Tory Leadership", *Ipsos* (UK), May 2, 1999, https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/local-elections-kosovo-and-tory-leadership

[37] "World Refugee Day 2024: Global Attitudes Towards Refugees", *Ipsos* (UK), June 2024, https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2024-06/Ipsos-World-Refugee-Day-2024-Global-Report-PUBLIC.pdf.

The most effective tool for saving lives in mass atrocities has largely been taken off the table. The unlearning of that lesson is a failure that should offend all those who wish to remember what happened in Srebrenica.

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Dio IV: Sjećanje, svjedočenje i kulturne reprezentacije

Part IV: Memory, Testimony and Cultural Representations

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PISATI NAKON SREBRENICE: GRAMATIKA TUGE I ETIKA SVJEDOČENJA

Sažetak: Ovaj rad ispituje svjedočansku književnost nastalu nakon genocida u Srebrenici kao ključni prostor etičkog svjedočenja, moralnog otpora i oblikovanja kolektivnog sjećanja. Iako su svjedočenja preživjelih imala presudnu ulogu u pravnim i forenzičkim rekonstrukcijama genocida, rad pokazuje da književni i autobiografski oblici svjedočenja nadilaze strogo pravne okvire, zahvatajući dublje afektivne i etičke dimenzije masovnog nasilja. Polazeći od memoara, eseja i poezije koje su napisali preživjeli, analizira se način na koji se trauma prevodi u jezik kroz "gramatiku tuge" — fragmentiran, suzdržan i često nedorečen izraz koji artikulira gubitak i iskustvo preživljavanja bez konačnog razrješenja i zatvaranja u zaokruženu narativnu formu. Smještajući analizirane tekstove u šire rasprave o svjedočenju, sjećanju i etici nakon zločina, rad ukazuje na to da naracija ne djeluje samo kao sredstvo ličnog opstanka već i kao aktivna intervencija u osporavanim poljima historijske istine i kolektivnog pamćenja. Svjedočanska književnost nakon Srebrenice tako se pojavljuje u liminalnom prostoru između tišine i govora, činjenice i afekta, individualnog iskustva i kolektivne odgovornosti. U tom međuprostoru sjećanje se oblikuje kao kontinuirana etička praksa, a ne kao dovršeni i zatvoreni prikaz prošlosti. Isticanjem glasova preživjelih, rad naglašava njihovu *agensnost* – odnosno moć vlastitog djelovanja i otpora – u oblikovanju načina na koji se Srebrenica pamti kroz generacije, te argumentira da pisanje nakon Srebrenice predstavlja snažan oblik moralnog otpora poricanju i relativizaciji.

Ključne riječi: *genocid, svjedočenje, moralni otpor, etika svjedočenja*

WRITING AFTER SREBRENICA: THE GRAMMAR OF GRIEF AND THE ETHICS OF WITNESSING

Abstract: This paper examines testimonial literature produced after the genocide in Srebrenica as a crucial space of ethical witnessing, moral resistance, and the shaping of collective memory. While survivor testimonies have played a decisive role in legal and forensic reconstructions of the genocide, the paper demonstrates that literary and autobiographical forms of testimony transcend strictly legal frameworks, engaging deeper affective and ethical dimensions of mass violence. Drawing on memoirs, essays, and poetry written by survivors, the analysis explores how trauma is translated into language through a "grammar of grief" — a fragmented, restrained, and often incomplete mode of expression that articulates loss and the experience of survival without offering final resolution or closure within a coherent narrative form. Situating the analyzed texts within broader debates on testimony, memory, and ethics after atrocity, the paper argues that narration functions not only as a means of personal survival but also as an active intervention in contested fields of historical truth and collective remembrance. Testimonial literature after Srebrenica thus emerges in a liminal space between silence and speech, fact and affect, individual experience and collective responsibility. Within this in-between space, memory is shaped as a continuous ethical practice rather than a finished and closed representation of the past. By foregrounding the voices of survivors, the paper emphasizes their agency — that is, their capacity for action and resistance — in shaping how Srebrenica is remembered across generations, and argues that writing after Srebrenica constitutes a powerful form of moral resistance to denial and relativization.

Keywords: *genocide, testimony, moral resistance, ethics of witnessing*

Uvod

Osim forenzičkih dokaza o počinjenim zločinima, priče preživjelih i njihova lična svjedočanstva ostali su nezamjenjivi u artikuliranju onoga što se dogodilo u Srebrenici i oko nje u julu 1995. Mnoge od tih osobnih priča činile su okosnicu sudskih postupaka pred Međunarodnim krivičnim sudom za bivšu Jugoslaviju (MKSJ), služeći kao ključni dokazi protiv

onih koji su osmislili i proveli genocid. Ipak, jezik sudnice – ograničen pravnom procedurom i fokusom na materijalne dokaze – može samo djelomično prenijeti dubinu gubitka, patnje i moralne povrede koju su preživjeli doživjeli.

Kako primjećuje Aida Hozić[1], upravo ta svjedočanstva izgovorena s klupe za svjedoke "stvaraju temelj našeg zajedničkog razumijevanja onoga što se dogodilo u tim ekstremnim situacijama – intimnog nasilja kakvo su oni iskusili, ispunjenog strahom, zadahom smrti i banalnošću svega toga". U tom smislu, usmena i pisana svjedočanstva preživjelih čine svojevrsnu gramatiku tuge – pokušaj da se neizrecivim iskustvima, koja se opiru reprezentaciji, da jezički i emocionalni oblik. Kroz te fragmentirane, bolne i često poetske iskaze, preživjeli ponovno preuzimaju moć da definiraju vlastite povijesti izvan okvira pravnog arhiva.

Posljednjih godina Memorijalni centar Srebrenica sistematski bilježi i arhivira svjedočanstva preživjelih, osiguravajući da njihove priče budu sačuvane kao dio kolektivnog sjećanja Bosne i Hercegovine, ali i moralnog arhiva čovječanstva. Neka od tih usmenih svjedočanstava uključena su i u Vizualni arhiv Shoah fondacije, čime se Srebrenica smješta u širi, komparativni kontekst svjedočenja o genocidu.[2] Ove inicijative potvrđuju da sjećanje nije statično, već se neprestano nadopunjuje – kao proces u kojem preživjeli, svjedoci i kasnije generacije stupaju u odnos s etičkom i afektivnom težinom svjedočenja.

Unutar tog rastućeg korpusa sjećanja, svjedočanski i dokumentarni oblici pisanja zauzimaju posebno, ali i duboko etičko mjesto. Dok usmene historije i pravna svjedočenja dokumentiraju činjenične i dokazne dimenzije genocida, književni i autobiografski tekstovi proširuju taj rad u područje moralne imaginacije. Kroz memoare, eseje

[1] Aida Hozić, "Writing after the Genocide: Lessons from Srebrenica and the Meaning of Community after Violence", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 35(3), 2015, 423–427.

[2] Isabel Zarrow, "USC Shoah Foundation Partners with the Srebrenica Memorial Center, Adds Srebrenica Survivor Testimonies to Visual History Archive", *USC Shoah Foundation*, 2. oktobar 2022: https://sfi.usc.edu/news/2022/02/32576-srebrenica-memorial-center-partnership, (pristup: 15. 1. 2026).

i poeziju, autori koji su preživjeli genocid ne govore samo o onome što se dogodilo nego i o tome kako ti događaji nastavljaju odjekivati – kroz šutnju, jezik i nemogućnost potpunog artikuliranja iskustva. Pisati nakon Srebrenice stoga znači nositi i teret i etiku: govoriti u vlastito ime uz priznanje granica reprezentacije, svjedočiti i pamtiti bez svođenja patnje na narativno zatvaranje.

Ovaj rad razmatra izbor takvih djela objavljenih u posljednja tri desetljeća, analizirajući ih kroz prizmu različitih perspektiva i životnih putanja njihovih autora. Pored ukazivanja na postojanje i važnost ovog rastućeg opusa, cilj mi je pokazati kako testimonijalna literatura, odnosno književnost svjedočenja, obavlja dvostruki posao žalovanja i stvaranja značenja – pretvarajući tugu u svojevrsnu gramatiku, a sjećanje u moralni otpor – te kako time doprinosi trajnoj borbi za istinu i pravdu u postgenocidnoj Bosni i Hercegovini i šire.

Lična svjedočanstva u akademskim interpretacijama

Genocid u Srebrenici proizveo je opsežan i kontinuirano rastući korpus akademske literature. Istraživači iz područja historije, antropologije, politologije, sociologije i književnih studija sistematski su se bavili svjedočanstvima preživjelih, integrirajući ih u analize nasilja, sjećanja, pravde i pomirenja. Stotine diplomskih, magistarskih i doktorskih radova odbranjene su na univerzitetima širom svijeta, čime je Srebrenica postala trajni referentni okvir u globalnoj proizvodnji znanja o genocidu i postgenocidnim društvima.

Sveobuhvatna analiza tog znanstvenog korpusa sama bi po sebi predstavljala zaseban i zahtjevan istraživački projekt. U ovom radu stoga se fokusiram na manji, ali reprezentativan izbor akademskih studija koje u središte analize postavljaju glasove preživjelih. Zajedničko tim radovima je način na koji su lična svjedočanstva prikupljana, tumačena i uokvirena te kako cirkuliraju između akademskog, pravnog i javnog prostora.

Jedno od najcjelovitijih historiografskih istraživanja događaja koji su prethodili i pratili pad UN-ove "zaštićene zone" Srebrenice nudi njemački povjesničar Matthias Fink u knjizi *Srebrenica: Hronika jednog ratnog zločina ili* šta *se desilo s Mirnesom Osmanovićem.*[3] Oslanjajući se na svjedočenja očevidaca, intervjue s vojnim i političkim akterima te opsežno arhivsko i dokumentarno istraživanje, Fink rekonstruira lanac odluka, propusta i nasilja koji su doveli do genocida. Njegova analiza smješta svjedočanstva preživjelih u širi geopolitički i moralni kontekst, razotkrivajući odgovornost međunarodnih aktera i pogubne posljedice njihove pasivnosti.

Dok Finkova studija pokazuje kako svjedočanstva funkcioniraju unutar historiografskog i političkog okvira, antropološka istraživanja dodatno rasvjetljavaju njihove afektivne, etičke i svakodnevne dimenzije. Američka antropologinja Sarah Wagner bila je među prvim doktorskim istraživačima koji su proveli dugotrajan etnografski terenski rad u Srebrenici i u suradnji s Međunarodnom komisijom za nestale osobe (ICMP). Njezino pionirsko istraživanje razvijeno je u knjigu *To Know Where He Lies: DNA Technology and the Search for Srebrenica's Missing*, u kojoj prati majke, supruge i sestre nestalih muškaraca i dječaka dok prolaze kroz emocionalne, etičke i birokratske procese identifikacije posmrtnih ostataka putem DNK-analize[4]. Smještajući forenzičku znanost u širi društveni i politički kontekst postratne Bosne i Hercegovine, Wagner pokazuje kako se biomedicinske tehnologije identifikacije isprepliću s praksama žalovanja, sjećanja i ponovne afirmacije identiteta. Pronalaženje i imenovanje mrtvih u njezinoj analizi postaje čin koji nadilazi privatnu tugu i prerasta u politički i moralni otpor poricanju genocida.

Rodne dimenzije svjedočenja i sjećanja posebno su naglašene u radu Selme Leydesdorff, autorice knjige *Surviving the Bosnian Genocide: The Women of Srebrenica Speak*.[5] Kao povjesničarka usmene historije s

[3] Matthias Fink, *Srebrenica: Hronologija jednog genocida ili* šta *se desilo sa Mirnesom Osmanovićem*, Sarajevo, Dobra knjiga, 2020.

[4] Sarah Wagner, *To Know Where He Lies: DNA Technology and the Search for Srebrenica's Missing*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

[5] Selma Leydesdorff, *Surviving the Bosnian Genocide: The Women of Srebrenica Speak*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011.

Univerziteta u Amsterdamu, Leydesdorff se oslanja na dubinske intervjue s preživjelim ženama, ponajprije onima koje su u genocidu izgubile muževe, sinove i braću. Njena knjiga donosi njihove glasove s iznimnom etičkom osjetljivošću, čuvajući ne samo izgovorene riječi nego i šutnje koje ih prate. Time Leydesdorff uspostavlja važnu vezu između ličnog svjedočenja i znanstvene analize, ističući kako se trauma, preživljavanje i pamćenje oblikuju kroz rodno specifična iskustva.

Svjedočanstva preživjelih dobivaju dodatne slojeve značenja kada se prate izvan prostora Bosne i Hercegovine, u kontekstima prisilne migracije i dijaspore. Etnografsko istraživanje Patricka McCarthyja usmjereno je na preživjele Srebreničane i druge Bosance i Hercegovce koji su se nastanili u St. Louisu u Missouriju, danas jednom od najvećih središta bosanske dijaspore na svijetu. Kroz lične narative i priče zajednice, u knjizi *After the Fall: Srebrenica Survivors in St. Louis*[6] analizira dugoročne psihološke, kulturne i društvene posljedice genocida i raseljavanja. Njegov rad svjedočanstva smješta u transnacionalne okvire identiteta, pripadnosti i postkonfliktne rekonstrukcije života u egzilu.

Posebno snažan primjer susreta akademskog i iskustvenog znanja predstavlja dvojezička knjiga *Voices from Srebrenica: Survivor Narratives of the Bosnian Genocide*, koju su zajedno napisali američka profesorica socijalnog rada Ann Petrila i preživjeli Srebreničanin Hasan Hasanović.[7] Oslanjajući se na vlastito iskustvo preživljavanja genocida i gubitka članova porodice, Hasanović zbirci daje moralni autoritet i unutarnju perspektivu svjedoka. Zajedno, Petrila i Hasanović istražuju etiku svjedočenja, složenosti narativa preživjelih te međugeneracijski prijenos traume i sjećanja, naglašavajući važnost suradnje između akademskih istraživača i samih preživjelih.

Interdisciplinarni pristup dodatno razvijaju Lara Nettelfield i Sarah Wagner u knjizi *Srebrenica in the Aftermath of Genocide*.[8] Spajajući

[6] Patrick McCarthy, *After the Fall: Srebrenica Survivors in St. Louis*, Jefferson, NC, McFarland & Company, 2000.

[7] Ann Petrila i Hasan Hasanović, *Voices from Srebrenica: Survivor Narratives of the Bosnian Genocide*, Jefferson, NC, McFarland & Company, 2021.

[8] Lara Nettelfield i Sarah Wagner, *Srebrenica in the Aftermath of Genocide*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014.

politologiju i antropologiju, autorice analiziraju dugotrajne posljedice genocida u različitim sferama poslijeratnog života. Oslanjajući se na godine terenskog rada, intervjua i arhivskih istraživanja, one pokazuju kako su preživjeli osobnu tugu transformirali u kolektivno političko djelovanje – od svjedočenja pred sudovima u Haagu do komemorativnih praksi u Potočarima i dijasporskim zajednicama širom svijeta. U njihovoj analizi svjedočenje se pojavljuje ne samo kao zapis zločina nego i kao moralna i građanska praksa kojom preživjeli zahtijevaju odgovornost i aktivno sudjeluju u redefiniranju pravde nakon genocida.

Na kraju, osvrćem se na vlastitu knjigu, nastalu u dijalogu s pionirskim radovima mojih akademskih kolega i, prije svega, s preživjelima – od kojih sam s mnogima povezan srodstvom, prijateljstvom i zajedničkim iskustvima rata i progona. U knjizi *Places of Pain* (*Mjesta bola*)[9] nastojao sam analizirati kako bosanske zajednice razorene i raseljene ratom i genocidom, posebno iz Srebrenice i Prijedora, rekonstruiraju svoje uništene zavičaje kroz pripovijedanje, rituale i svakodnevne prakse sjećanja. Oslanjajući se na dugogodišnji etnografski terenski rad u BiH, Evropi, Sjevernoj Americi i Australiji, pratim kako se sjećanja na nasilje, gubitak i pripadnost prenose preko granica i ponovno oblikuju u novim društvenim i prostornim kontekstima. Posebnu pažnju posvetio sam načinima na koje preživjeli traumatska iskustva pretvaraju u ono što konceptualiziram kao translokalne oblike identiteta, povezujući sjećanja na uništena mjesta sa stvaranjem novih zajedničkih prostora u egzilu. Svjedočenje pritom tretiram ne samo kao dokumentarni dokaz zločina nego kao živ, kreativan i etički čin – sredstvo ponovne izgradnje moralnih geografija i afirmacije vlastitog djelovanja.

Zajedno, ovi akademski radovi svjedoče o trajnoj snazi narativa preživjelih – ne samo kao instrumenta pravde nego i kao temelja kulturnog, etičkog i historijskog razumijevanja genocida. Akademsko bavljenje tim svjedočanstvima i dalje oblikuje način na koji se Srebrenica pamti i razumije globalno, potvrđujući ključnu važnost slušanja onih koji

[9] Hariz Halilovich, *Places of Pain: Forced Displacement, Popular Memory and Trans-local Identities in Bosnian War-torn Communities*, Oxford–New York, Berghahn Books, 2013.

su genocid preživjeli i koji i dalje, kroz svoje priče, oblikuju kolektivnu moralnu svijest.

Testimonijalna etika, postgenocidno pamćenje i translokalne moralne geografije

Polazeći od istraživačkih uvida razvijenih u *Places of Pain*[10], ovaj rad svjedočanstva preživjelih genocida u Srebrenici razumije ne kao statične narative prošlosti, nego kao relacijske i translokalne prakse sjećanja koje proizvode ono što opisujem kao moralne geografije nakon nasilja. Svjedočenje je u tom okviru istovremeno čin pamćenja, oblik društvenog djelovanja i sredstvo prostorne reartikulacije: kroz govor o izgubljenim mjestima, preživjeli ne samo da opisuju uništene zavičaje nego ih iznova uspostavljaju u novim društvenim i afektivnim prostorima. Teorijska promišljanja svjedočenja u kontekstu genocida polaze od spoznaje da svjedočanstvo nije neutralan prijenos iskustva, nego duboko etički i relacijski čin.

U skladu s Felman i Laubovim[11] razumijevanjem svjedočenja kao relacijskog događaja, svjedočanstvo u postgenocidnom kontekstu ne postoji izvan čina govora i slušanja. Svjedočanstvo nastaje u susretu između preživjelog i drugoga – istraživača, arhivista, čitatelja – te time uvijek uključuje etički zahtjev za razumijevanjem i priznanjem. Svjedočiti stoga znači istovremeno pokušavati razumjeti vlastito iskustvo i povjeriti ga drugome, uz rizik nerazumijevanja, odbacivanja ili instrumentalizacije. Ova relacijska dimenzija svjedočenja direktno implicira testimonijalnu etiku – odgovornost istraživača, arhivista i čitatelja da ne zauzmu poziciju epistemološke nadmoći nad onima koji svjedoče. Testimonijalna etika stoga zahtijeva da se svjedočenje ne tretira kao puka sirovina ili materijal za analizu, već kao ranjivi govor ukorijenjen u iskustvu i traumi preživjelih.

[10] Ibid., 21-50.

[11] Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, New York–London, Routledge, 1992, 57-74.

Giorgio Agamben[12] dodatno radikalizira pitanje svjedočenja ukazujući na njegovu unutarnju *aporiju*. U *Remnants of Auschwitz* on tvrdi da "potpuni svjedok" genocida ne može govoriti, jer su oni koji su dosegli krajnju granicu dehumanizacije ubijeni. Preživjeli, prema Agambenu, svjedoče "u ime onih koji ne mogu svjedočiti", čime svjedočanstvo postaje nužno obilježeno manjkavošću, prazninom i posredovanjem. Ova perspektiva pomaže razumjeti zašto su šutnje, diskontinuiteti i fragmentiranost sastavni dio narativa o Srebrenici: oni nisu znak neuspjeha svjedočenja, nego njegov etički temelj. U postgenocidnom kontekstu, govoriti znači nositi teret odsutnih i mrtvih, što svjedočenje pretvara u čin moralnog posredovanja.

Paul Ricoeur u *Memory, History, Forgetting*[13] nudi dodatni analitički okvir za razumijevanje odnosa između individualnog sjećanja, kolektivne memorije i historiografije. Ricoeur upozorava na napetost između "vjernosti pamćenju" i "istine povijesti", naglašavajući da sjećanje uvijek ostaje ranjivo na zaborav, manipulaciju i poricanje. Svjedočanstva preživjelih stoga ne mogu biti reducirana na izvor koji historiografija "provjerava", već predstavljaju moralni zahtjev upućen sadašnjosti. U tom smislu, postgenocidno pamćenje nije puki rezervoar prošlih događaja, nego prostor etičke odgovornosti u kojem se odlučuje hoće li trauma biti priznata ili ponovno potisnuta.

Rad Aleide i Jana Assmanna dodatno pomaže konceptualizirati prijelaz između individualnog sjećanja i kulturnog pamćenja. Njihova distinkcija između komunikativne i kulturne memorije omogućuje razumijevanje načina na koje se svjedočanstva preživjelih institucionaliziraju kroz arhive, komemoracije, muzeje i obrazovne prakse.[14] Međutim, u kontekstu

[12] Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, New York, Zone Books, 2002, 15-39.

[13] Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2009.

[14] Aleida Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization: Functions, Media, Archives*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012; Jan Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory", u: *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ur. Astrid Erll i Ansgar Nünning, Berlin–New York, Brill, 2008, 109–118.

Srebrenice, taj prijelaz nije linearan ni neutralan: svjedočanstva se često selektivno preuzimaju, depolitiziraju ili nacionalno kodiraju. Upravo tu se otvara prostor za koncept moralnih geografija – načina na koje se sjećanje upisuje u mjesta, prostore i rituale, ali i kako se osporava, fragmentira i premješta.

Povezivanje testimonijalne etike s pojmom translokalnosti omogućuje daljnje teorijsko produbljivanje. Kroz prisilne migracije i raseljavanje, svjedočanstva o Srebrenici putuju zajedno s preživjelima, prelazeći granice država, jezika i memorijskih režima. U tim translokalnim kontekstima – od Potočara do St. Louisa, Melbournea ili Beča – svjedočenje funkcionira kao praksa ponovnog ukorjenjivanja, kojom se sjećanje na ubijena mjesta prenosi i reartikulira u novim društvenim prostorima. U tom smislu, svjedočanstvo ne samo da opisuje prošla mjesta bola (*places of pain*) nego aktivno proizvodi nove moralne topografije u egzilu, u kojima se sjećanje, pripadnost i etička odgovornost međusobno isprepliću. Svjedočenje u tim kontekstima postaje način ponovnog mapiranja svijeta nakon genocida.[15]

Stoga se postgenocidno pamćenje može razumjeti kao translokalni proces u kojem svjedočanstva preživjelih povezuju prostorno udaljene, ali moralno povezane zajednice. Ta pamćenja nisu statična niti zatvorena u nacionalne okvire, nego cirkuliraju kroz dijasporske mreže, akademske diskurse i kulturne prakse, stvarajući ono što se može opisati kao globalne moralne geografije genocida. Svjedočenje pritom postaje sredstvo ne samo očuvanja prošlosti nego i aktivnog oblikovanja etičkih odnosa u sadašnjosti – proces u kojem preživjeli, kroz govor i praksu, nastavljaju iznova stvarati mjesta, odnose i smisao ondje gdje je nasilje nastojalo proizvesti prazninu.

[15] Halilovich, *Places of Pain*, 55.

Liminalna svjedočanstva Emira Suljagića i Hasana Nuhanovića

U svjetlu prethodne rasprave o testimonijalnoj etici i postgenocidnom pamćenju kao translokalnim moralnim geografijama, svjedočanstva Emira Suljagića i Hasana Nuhanovića zauzimaju posebno važno mjesto. Njihova su pisanja paradigmatski primjeri svjedočenja koje nastaje u liminalnom prostoru između insajderske bliskosti i autsajderske distance, između pripadanja zajednici žrtava i prisilne uloge institucionalnih posrednika. Kao mladići zaposleni kao prevoditelji pri Holandskom bataljonu UN-a tokom pada Srebrenice u julu 1995, obojica su se zatekla u paradoksalnoj poziciji: istovremeneno zaštićeni i izloženi, unutra i izvana, živi svjedoci genocida koji se odvijao unutar struktura nominalne međunarodne zaštite.

Ta je pozicionalnost presudna za razumijevanje etičke snage njihovih svjedočanstava. U terminima testimonijalne etike, Suljagić i Nuhanović svjedoče iz prostora u kojem se iskustvo nasilja ne može u potpunosti artikulirati bez posredovanja institucija koje su u tom nasilju sudjelovale vlastitim nečinjenjem. Njihova svjedočanstva stoga nisu samo zapisi preživljavanja, nego i moralni dokumenti institucionalnog sloma, koji razotkrivaju kako je međunarodni poredak zaštite postao dio genocidne infrastrukture.

Razglednica iz groba Emira Suljagića[16] te *Pod zastavom UN-a* i *Zbjeg* Hasana Nuhanovića[17] zajedno čine snažno isprepleten korpus testimonijalne literature o genocidu u Srebrenici. Ova djela istovremeno funkcioniraju kao lična svjedočanstva, političke optužnice i ključni tekstovi postgenocidnog pamćenja. Suljagićevo djelo, pisano fragmentarnim i suzdržanim stilom, bilježi iskustvo preživljavanja unutar UN-ove "zaštićene" enklave, razotkrivajući moralni vakuum međunarodnih institucija paralelno s autorovom borbom da jeziku povjeri ono što se opire izricanju. Važno je naglasiti da je *Razglednica*

[16] Emir Suljagić, *Razglednica iz groba*, Sarajevo, Civitas, 2005.

[17] Hasan Nuhanović, *Zbjeg*, Zenica: Vrijeme, 2023; Hasan Nuhanović, *Pod zastavom UN-a: Međunarodna zajednica i zločin u Srebrenici*, Sarajevo, BKZ Preporod, 2005.

iz groba prvi prikaz genocida u Srebrenici na engleskom jeziku koji je napisao Bošnjak i neposredni preživjeli, čime se svjedočanstvo iz lokalnog moralnog prostora direktno upisuje u globalnu javnost.

U *Razglednici iz groba* Suljagić opisuje vrijeme provedeno unutar UN-ova kompleksa u Potočarima, bilježeći nepodnošljivu napetost, strah i osjećaj nevjerice koji su prethodili masovnim pogubljenjima. Njegova naracija oscilira između neposrednosti proživljenog iskustva i retrospektivne potrebe da se razumije potpuni slom ljudskosti kojem je svjedočio. Posebno je snažan motiv prisilnog prevođenja – doslovnog i simboličkog – između žrtava i njihovih navodnih zaštitnika. Taj čin prevođenja funkcionira kao paradoksalna etička praksa, smještena između jezika, moći i života, posredujući između onih koji mole za spas i onih koji odlučuju o njihovoj sudbini.

Hasan Nuhanović u knjizi *Pod zastavom UN-a* [18] razvija srodnu, ali dokumentarno precizniju naraciju, fokusiranu na izdaju i moralni slom međunarodne zajednice. Kao i Suljagića, njegova pozicija prevoditelja pri Dutchbatu učinila ga je i svjedokom i nevoljnim sudionikom birokratskih procedura "evakuacije" koje su zapečatile sudbinu njegove porodice i hiljada drugih civila. U jednoj od najpotresnijih epizoda literature o genocidu, Nuhanović opisuje vlastite bezuspješne pokušaje da roditeljima i bratu osigura ostanak u UN-ovoj bazi – prizor koji sažima kako institucionalna neutralnost postaje oblik aktivnog saučesništva u zločinu. *Pod zastavom UN-a* stoga funkcionira kao svjedočanstvo koje raskrinkava pretvaranje birokratske procedure u mehanizam smrti.

Više od deceniju kasnije, u knjizi *Zbjeg*, Nuhanović[19] se vraća vlastitom iskustvu s novim fokusom na svakodnevni život pod opsadom i dugotrajne obrasce nasilja u Srebrenici i širem području Podrinja između 1992. i 1995. godine. Ova kasnija naracija proširuje vremenski i prostorni okvir svjedočenja, pokazujući da genocidna namjera nije bila iznenadni ishod, već proces koji se razvijao kroz sistematsku izolaciju, gladovanje i teror. Istovremeno, *Zbjeg* prati Nuhanovićevu transformaciju iz preživjelog u aktivnog svjedoka i građanskog aktera, dokumentirajući

[18] Nuhanović, *Pod zastavom UN-a.*
[19] Nuhanović, *Zbjeg*.

kako se lična tuga postupno preobražava u trajni angažman protiv poricanja i zaborava. Time se svjedočenje jasno pozicionira kao praksa postgenocidnog pamćenja i političkog djelovanja.

Zajedno, djela Suljagića i Nuhanovića predstavljaju duboko paradoksalnu svjedočansku pozicionalnost. Njihove jezičke kompetencije i profesionalne uloge stvorile su prisilnu distancu, ali su njihove priče istovremeno duboko *emičke* (insajderske) – ukorijenjene u kulturni, moralni i emocionalni svijet zajednice koja je uništena.[20] Napetost između institucionalne bliskosti s pasivnim strukturama UN-a i egzistencijalne bliskosti sa žrtvama proizvodi svjedočanstva koja razotkrivaju i intimnu ljudsku cijenu genocida i strukturne neuspjehe međunarodnog poretka i sistema navodno osmišljenih da ga spriječe.

Dajući glas tom liminalnom iskustvu, Suljagić i Nuhanović potvrđuju temeljni etički imperativ svjedočenja nakon genocida: govoriti iz prostora između pripadanja i isključenosti, preživljavanja i gubitka, lokalnog bola i globalne odgovornosti. Njihova svjedočanstva time ne samo da dokumentiraju genocid u Srebrenici nego aktivno sudjeluju u stvaranju translokalnih moralnih geografija – prostora u kojima se sjećanje, pravda i etička obaveza neprestano iznova uspostavljaju.

Autori koji su se "vratili iz mrtvih"

U okviru testimonijalne literature i postgenocidnog pamćenja, posebno mjesto zauzimaju svjedočanstva onih preživjelih čije iskustvo stoji na samoj granici između života i smrti. U tom ekstremnom prostoru, gdje je genocidna namjera gotovo u potpunosti realizirana, svjedočenje poprima dodatnu moralnu težinu: ono dolazi iz zone za koju je smrt bila predviđeni ishod. Upravo u tom smislu, svjedočanstva Nedžada Avdića,

[20] Hariz Halilovich, "Behind the Emic Lines: Ethics and Politics of Insiders' Ethnography", u: *Insider Research on Migration and Mobility: International Perspectives on Researcher Positioning*, ur. Lejla Voloder i Liudmila Kirpitchenko, Farnham, Ashgate, 2013, 87–102.

Kadira Habibovića i Emira Bektića zauzimaju jedinstveno i potresno mjesto u literaturi o genocidu u Srebrenici.

Za razliku od mnogih drugih narativa preživjelih, njihove priče pripadaju muškarcima i dječacima koje su u julu 1995. godine zarobile srpske snage nakon pada tzv. "UN-zaštićene zone". Kao rijetki preživjeli očevici masovnih strijeljanja, oni zauzimaju posebno mjesto u testimonijalnoj literaturi genocida i predstavljaju one koje Agamben[21] naziva "potpunim svjedocima" genocida.

Avdić, Habibović i Bektić preživjeli su u okolnostima koje se mogu opisati jedino kao krajnje granične, izmaknuvši smrti uprkos gotovo nemogućim izgledima. Njihove priče ne razotkrivaju samo neposredne strahote zarobljavanja i egzekucije, već i složen put od pukog biološkog opstanka prema svjesnom svjedočenju – proces u kojem se individualna trauma postupno preobražava u etički čin pamćenja, preuzimanja odgovornosti i artikulacije zahtjeva za pravdom.

Nedžad Avdić, zajedno sa svojom sestrom Amelom, koautor je knjige *Ja, haški svjedok*[22]. Njegovo svjedočanstvo predstavlja jedan od najupečatljivijih prikaza preživljavanja unutar samog mehanizma masovnih egzekucija bošnjačkih muškaraca i dječaka nakon pada Srebrenice. Sa svega sedamnaest godina, Avdića su zarobile srpske snage i odvele u školu u selu Petkovci, u općini Zvornik, gdje su zatočenici bili prisiljeni skinuti odjeću, zatim su, svezanih ruku iza leđa, izvođeni u grupama na strijeljanje. Avdić je pogođen s četiri metka i ostavljen među tijelima ubijenih. Nakon što su se egzekutori povukli, došao je svijesti, shvativši da je još uvijek živ. Uz pomoć drugog preživjelog uspio je, nadljudskim naporima, pobjeći s mjesta pogubljenja te, uprkos teškim ozljedama i iznemoglosti, pješice stići na teritorij pod kontrolom Armije Republike Bosne i Hercegovine, gdje se naposljetku ponovno susreo s majkom i sestrom.

Avdićevo preživljavanje nije bilo samo rezultat slučaja, nego i izraz iznimne prisebnosti i odlučnosti u krajnje opasnim okolnostima. Trauma

[21] Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, 33.
[22] Nedžad Avdić i Amela Avdić, *Ja, Haški svjedok*, Sarajevo, Samizdat, 2020.

svjedočenja sistemskom ubijanju vršnjaka ostavila je neizbrisiv trag, ali ga je također pozicionirala kao ključnog aktera u dokumentiranju genocida. U poratnom razdoblju Avdić je postao jedan od važnih svjedoka pred Haškim tribunalom (MKSJ), gdje su njegova direktna svjedočenja bila presudna za rekonstruiranje procesa egzekucija, identifikaciju počinitelja i dokazivanje genocidne namjere. U tom smislu, Avdić utjelovljuje dvostruku ulogu preživjelog i svjedoka: živog dokaza zločina i aktivnog sudionika u borbi za pravdom.

Slična sudbina zadesila je i Kadira Habibovića, iako se mjesto njegova planiranog pogubljenja nalazilo na drugoj lokaciji. Tada u ranim tridesetim godinama života, Habibović je zarobljen tokom pokušaja proboja iz opkoljene enklave. Nakon pritvaranja, ispitivanja i mučenja, svjedočio je brojnim egzekucijama koje su jasno nagovještavale njegovu vlastitu skoru smrt. Ruke su mu bile vezane žicom prije nego što je s drugim zatočenicima ukrcan na kamion i odvezen na mjesto pogubljenja. U trenutku kada je započela pucnjava, Habibović je – vođen snažnim instinktom za preživljavanje – iskočio iz vozila i pobjegao u noć, izbjegavši sudbinu onih koji su ubijeni oko njega.

U autobiografskoj knjizi Život *protiv smrti – Srebrenica*, Habibović[23] opisuje svoj bliski susret sa smrću i neumoljivu volju za preživljavanjem usred genocidnog nasilja. Teško ranjen i progonjen, autor svjedoči o tome kako su želja za životom, slobodom i ponovni susret sa svojim voljenima nadjačale očaj, omogućivši mu da ustraje u gotovo nemogućim okolnostima. Ni njegovo pisanje ne ostaje na razini individualnog iskustva; Habibović se u tekstu također suočava s pitanjima krivice, odgovornosti i institucionalnog poraza UN-a, pretvarajući lično sjećanje u etički apel za priznanje, pamćenje i pravdu. Njegovo svjedočanstvo time jasno ulazi u prostor postgenocidne moralne geografije, u kojoj individualni glas preživjelog osporava poricanje i zaborav.

Treći među autorima "povratnicima iz mrtvih" je Emir Bektić, koji je imao šesnaest godina kada je Srebrenica pala 11. jula 1995. Tokom haotičnog bijega kroz okolne šume, Bektić i njegova porodica

[23] Kadir Habibović, *Život protiv smrti – Srebrenica*, Sarajevo, Dobra knjiga, 2014.

bili su prisiljeni razdvojiti se; njega i njegova oca ubrzo su zarobili srpski vojnici. Bektić u svojim sjećanjima evocira posljednje trenutke provedene s ocem – zagrljaj koji je označio njihov konačni oproštaj prije nego što je izgubio svijest usred noćnog nasilja. U zoru se probudio sam, okružen tijelima mrtvih. Njegov je otac tokom noći pogubljen, a njegovi posmrtni ostaci kasnije su ekshumirani iz masovne grobnice u blizini Zvornika i ukopani u Memorijalnom centru u Potočarima.

U autobiografskom djelu *Kad osvaneš sam*[24] Bektić rekonstruira iskustvo preživljavanja nakon zarobljavanja i bijega, opisujući prolazak kroz blato, šume i neprijateljski teren, izložen granatiranju i potjerama. Njegova knjiga je i posveta ocu – čiji je posljednji čin zaštite spasio njegov život – i duboko svjedočanstvo o fizičkim i psihološkim dimenzijama preživljavanja: gladi, iscrpljenosti, strahu i instinktivnoj volji za životom. Poput Avdića i Habibovića, Bektić svoje preživljavanje pretvara u oblik etičkog svjedočenja, smještajući individualni gubitak unutar kolektivne traume Srebrenice.

Zajedno, ova tri autorstva čine snažan testimonijalni korpus koji svjedoči iz same unutrašnjosti genocidnog nasilja, iz pozicije "potpunog svjedoka" genocida.[25] Njihove priče ne govore samo o smrti i preživljavanju, nego i o transformaciji preživjelog u nositelja pamćenja i moralne odgovornosti. Kao takve, one potvrđuju da je svjedočenje ne samo čin sjećanja nego i oblik otpora – protiv poricanja, protiv zaborava i protiv ponavljanja zla koje je već jednom gotovo uspjelo izbrisati njihove živote.

Čuvari sjećanja: Hasan Hasanović i Azir Osmanović

Među preživjelima koji utjelovljuju živo sjećanje na Srebrenicu, Hasan Hasanović i Azir Osmanović zauzimaju jedinstveno mjesto kao istovremeno svjedoci i kustosi sjećanja. Kao dugogodišnji uposlenici

[24] Emir Bektić, *Kad osvaneš sam*, Tešanj, Štamparija-S, 2017.
[25] Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, 33.

Memorijalnog centra, svoja lična iskustva gubitka i preživljavanja pretvorili su u javno svjedočenje, vodeći hiljade posjetitelja – uključujući međunarodne dužnosnike, naučnike i studente – kroz krajolike zločina i sjećanja. Njihov rad premošćuje jaz između proživljenog iskustva i institucionalne memorije, dajući glas zajednici čije je samo postojanje bilo ciljano za uništenje.

Pored koautorstva knjige *Voices from Srebrenica: Survivor Narratives of the Bosnian Genocide*, koju je napisao s Ann Petrila, Hasan Hasanović je i autor memoarske knjige *Surviving Srebrenica*[26], jednog od značajnijih svjedočanskih zapisa o genocidu u Srebrenici. U tim memoarima Hasanović nudi duboko lično, ali istovremeno historijski utemeljeno svjedočanstvo o genocidu, u kojem se individualno iskustvo preživljavanja neprestano prepliće s kolektivnim uništenjem. Njegova naracija prati "Marš smrti" kroz šume i zasjede između Srebrenice i Tuzle, tokom kojeg je izgubio brata blizanca i oca, kao i mnoge druge bliske rođake.

Posebna snaga Hasanovićevog svjedočenja leži u njegovoj suzdržanoj, gotovo dokumentarističkoj naraciji, koja izbjegava patetiku, ali upravo tom etičkom ekonomijom jezika snažno artikulira razmjere nasilja i gubitka. Hasanovićevo svjedočanstvo istovremeno je elegija i optužnica: čin sjećanja i principijelno odbijanje zaborava. Dokumentirajući naizgled sitne detalje gubitka, straha i izdržljivosti, on privatnu tugu prevodi u kolektivno pamćenje, smještajući vlastitu priču u širi etički i politički okvir borbe protiv poricanja i historijskog brisanja.

Njegova dvostruka uloga autora i kustosa Memorijalnog centra dodatno naglašava intimnu povezanost između svjedočenja i memorijalizacije. Govoreći svakodnevno posjetiteljima Memorijalnog centra, Hasanović utjelovljuje ono što se može opisati kao živo svjedočanstvo – trajno pregovaranje između traume, sjećanja i edukacije, u kojem se prošlo nasilje neprestano prevodi u moralni zahtjev upućen sadašnjosti.

[26] Hasan Hasanović, *Surviving Srebrenica*, Aberdeenshire, Lumphanan Press, 2016.

Slično njemu, Azir Osmanović u autorskoj knjizi *Od Srebrenice do svjetla na kraju tunela: Sjećanja*[27] svoja iskustva preživljavanja pretvara u narativ žalovanja i moralne otpornosti. Sa svega trinaest godina, koliko je imao kada je Srebrenica pala, Osmanoviću je život nepovratno promijenjen; gotovo svi muški članovi njegove porodice ubijeni su u genocidu, uključujući mnogobrojne rođake, djeda i braću. Njegovo svjedočanstvo prati dugu sjenu te traume, pripovijedajući ne samo o samom genocidu nego i o njegovim trajnim posljedicama: samoubojstvu mlađeg brata, očevim cjeloživotnim borbama s PTSP-om te svakodnevnoj prisutnosti tuge i odsutnosti članova porodice.

Ipak, Osmanovićev rad – kao pisca i kustosa Memorijalnog centra – vođen je nastojanjem da se iz traume i gubitka ponovno izgradi smisao. U obraćanju Ujedinjenim nacijama, 19. aprila 2024, Azir Osmanović se opisao kao "čuvar kulture sjećanja" te pozvao međunarodnu zajednicu da 11. juli bude priznat kao Međunarodni dan sjećanja na genocid u Srebrenici.[28] Njegov apel pokazuje da preživjeli nikada nisu prihvatili status pasivnih žrtava, nego su ostali aktivni čuvari historijske istine.

Zajedno, Hasanović i Osmanović čine ključnu nit u slojevitoj matrici sjećanja na Srebrenicu. Njihova svjedočanstva – ukorijenjena u ličnoj traumi, ali usmjerena prema kolektivnom pamćenju – usidruju postgenocidni narativ u proživljenom iskustvu. Kao kustosi, autori i edukatori, oni održavaju kontinuitet između preživljavanja i komemoracije, osiguravajući da Srebrenica ne ostane tek mjesto žalovanja, nego i moralni arhiv opomene i svjedočenja.

U dijalogu s djelima Avdića, Habibovića i Bektića – autora "povratnika iz mrtvih" – knjige Hasanovića i Osmanovića proširuju svjedočanski kontinuitet od neposrednog preživljavanja prema institucionalnom radu sjećanja. Zajedno, ova isprepletena svjedočanstva čine višedimenzionalni arhiv izdržljivosti i moralne odgovornosti koji i dalje oblikuje način na koji se Srebrenica pamti, tumači i proučava.

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[27] Memorijalni centar Srebrenica, "Azir Osmanović Addressing at the UN", 19. april 2024, Dostupno na: https://srebrenicamemorial.org/en/news/azir-osmanovic-addressing-at-the-un/200. (pristup: 15. 1. 2026).

[28] Ibid.

Politička, duhovna i lična svjedočanstva o Srebrenici

Kao što iznad opisana djela preživjelih svjedoka potvrđuju, svjedočanstva o Srebrenici ne nastaju samo u prostoru privatne traume; ona se razvijaju na sjecištu politike, etike i intimnog sjećanja. Upravo na tom raskršću stoje djela Ćamila Durakovića, Mevludina Hrnjića, Hasana Hasanovića[29] i Esnefe Smajlović Muhić, čiji se narativi nadopunjuju i zajedno tvore slojevitu mapu postgenocidnog pamćenja. Premda različiti po tonu i fokusu, njihovi tekstovi dijele zajedničku težnju: pretvoriti iskustvo preživljavanja u trajni moralni i historijski zahtjev za istinom, pravdom i dostojanstvom.

Ćamil Duraković[30], autor knjige *Srebrenica: Zaboravljeno obećanje*, utjelovljuje političku dimenziju tog svjedočanskog kontinuuma. Rođen u Srebrenici, genocid 1995. preživio je kao tinejdžer, nakon čega je život nastavio u Sjedinjenim Američkim Državama, gdje je stekao obrazovanje koje će kasnije oblikovati njegov javni i analitički glas. Povratkom u BiH 2005. godine započinje njegovo političko djelovanje u lokalnoj upravi, koje kulminira mandatom gradonačelnika Srebrenice (2012–2016) te izborom za potpredsjednika Republike srpske 2022. godine. Njegova politička karijera nije odvojena od iskustva genocida; naprotiv, ona iz njega izrasta, kao trajna borba za prava bošnjačkih povratnika i priznanje nepravdi ugrađenih u postgenocidni poredak.

Ta nerazdvojivost politike i ličnog iskustva posebno dolazi do izražaja u njegovoj autorskoj knjizi *Srebrenica: Zaboravljeno obećanje*, u kojoj Duraković promišlja kolektivnu sudbinu preživjelih kroz tri faze "zaborava". Od zanemarivanja ranih ratnih zločina u istočnoj Bosni, preko moralnog sloma međunarodne zajednice 1995. godine, do poslijeratnog razdoblja obilježenog neispunjenim političkim obećanjima, autor razotkriva strukturalnu prirodu zaborava kao političkog procesa. Njegov refleksivni, esejistički stil spaja analizu s autobiografskim

[29] Napomena: ovaj autor ima isto ime i prezime kao i ranije spominjani Hasan Hasanović, kustos u MC Srebrenica.

[30] Ćamil Duraković, *Srebrenica: Zaboravljeno obećanje*, Sarajevo, Samizdat, 2021.

uvidima, pretvarajući lično svjedočenje u optužnicu protiv ravnodušnosti i institucionalnog poricanja.

Ako Durakovićev tekst nudi politički okvir sjećanja, Mevludin Hrnjić[31], autor knjige *Svjedok srebreničkog genocida: Kronologija sjećanja*, produbljuje ga duhovnom i moralnom perspektivom preživjelog. Kao lokalni imam i svjedok genocida, Hrnjić piše iz pozicije koja povezuje ličnu traumu s etičkom odgovornošću svjedočenja. Njegova priča prati početak genocida, posljednji oproštaj s majkom 11. jula 1995. te iscrpljujuće osamdesetodnevno preživljavanje u šumama i planinama pod kontrolom srpskih snaga. Opisi gladi, halucinacija, bolesti i iscrpljenosti ne služe senzacionalizmu, nego razotkrivaju dubinu ljudskog sloma koji je genocid svjesno proizvodio.

U tom smislu, Hrnjićevo svjedočanstvo nadilazi dokumentarnu vrijednost i prerasta u duhovno-etičko promišljanje o preživljavanju i gubitku. Poput memoara preživjelih holokausta, uključujući djelo Viktora Frankla[32], njegov tekst bilježi trajnu napetost između potrebe za smislom i tereta sjećanja. Povratak u spaljeni dom, gubitak oca i braće te stalna prisutnost odsutnih članova porodice svjedoče o dubokom raskidu između sjećanja i svakodnevice u postgenocidnom životu. Hrnjićevo upozorenje da se "druga Bosna" ne smije dopustiti drugdje upisuje njegovo svjedočanstvo u univerzalni etički horizont odgovornosti.

Autor istog imena i gotovo identične sudbine kao i njegov ranije spominjani imenjak i prezimenjak, Hasan Hasanović, svoj je memoarski zapis naslovio *Srebrenica: Zaboraviti ne smijem, halaliti neću*.[33] U tom svjedočanstvu rekonstruira iskustvo proboja iz Srebrenice kao golgotu koja je istovremeno bila kolektivna i duboko personalna, obilježena nizom nemogućih moralnih izbora. Tokom marša smrti bio je svjedok ubistva devetnaestogodišnjeg brata u blizini Srebrenice, dok mu je godinu dana stariji brat kasnije teško ranjen. Hasanović je starijeg brata nosio na

[31] Mevludin Hrnjić, *Svjedok srebreničkog genocida: Hronologija sjećanja*, Sarajevo, Institut za društvena i religijska istraživanja, 2022.

[32] Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1946.

[33] Hasan Hasanović, *Srebrenica: Zaboraviti ne smijem, halaliti neću*, Sarajevo, Udruženje građana Pravda, 2020.

leđima više od dvadeset kilometara, nastavljajući čak i nakon što je on prestao davati znakove života, sve do dolaska na slobodni teritorij. Autor knjigu posvećuje svojoj majci koja je izgubila sve muške članove svoje porodice, osim njega.

Slika jednog brata kojeg nosi i drugoga koji ostaje na putu ne funkcionira samo kao autobiografski detalj, već kao snažna etička figura svjedočenja: ona sažima nepodnošljiv moralni i emocionalni teret koji preživjeli genocida nose do danas – teret nemogućnosti izbora, prekinutog srodstva i trajne odgovornosti prema mrtvima.

Na toj istoj liniji intimnog, ali kolektivno relevantnog sjećanja, stoji i memoar Esnefe Smajlović Muhić[34], naslovljen Život *prije i poslije Srebrenice*. Za razliku od političke refleksije i duhovne meditacije, njezin tekst nudi snažno ličnu perspektivu, u kojoj se genocid promatra kroz sudbinu jedne porodice. U središtu narativa nalazi se stravično putovanje njezina mlađeg brata Damira, koji je sa sedamnaest godina preživio sedmodnevni proboj kroz šume, zasjede i polja smrti u julu 1995. godine. Kroz ovu priču autorica ne bilježi samo izdržljivost pojedinca, nego i kolektivnu traumu zajednice čiji su životi trajno obilježeni gubitkom.

Evokativnim i suptilnim stilom, Smajlović Muhić isprepliće sjećanje, žalovanje i preživljavanje, stvarajući tekst koji funkcionira kao intimni odjek iste matrice moralne odgovornosti prisutne u djelima Durakovića, Hrnjića i Hasanovića. Njezin memoarski zapis pokazuje kako se sjećanje ne prenosi samo kroz političke zahtjeve ili etičke apela, nego i kroz porodične priče, tišine i fragmente svakodnevice koji čuvaju istinu o genocidu.

Zajedno, ova četiri djela grade koherentan svjedočanski luk: od političke borbe za priznanje i prava, preko duhovnog i etičkog suočavanja s preživljavanjem, do intimnog pamćenja koje se prenosi unutar porodice i zajednice. Njihovi tekstovi potvrđuju da sjećanje na Srebrenicu nije statična prošlost, nego živi proces u kojem se politika, etika i lična bol neprestano isprepliću – kao trajni poziv na odgovornost, otpor poricanju i očuvanje ljudskog dostojanstva.

[34] Esnefa Smajlović Muhić, *Život prije i poslije Srebrenice*, Sarajevo, Samizdat, 2019.

Dječiji memoari o Srebrenici

Ako politička, duhovna i lična svjedočanstva odraslih preživjelih oblikuju okvire javnog i etičkog pamćenja Srebrenice, dječiji memoari unose u taj narativ posebnu, nenadomjestivu dimenziju. Posljednjih godina sve veći broj autora i autorica, koji su tokom genocida bili djeca, počinje bilježiti svoja iskustva u formi memoara, ugrađujući ličnu traumu u kolektivno svjedočanstvo vlastite generacije. Pišući iz perspektive onih koji su nasilje gledali očima djece, njihovi tekstovi prenose i neposrednost straha i trajnu težinu gubitka – nestanak očeva, braće, djedova i čitavih porodičnih loza. Ovi zapisi ne svjedoče samo o uništenju dječije nevinosti, nego i o dugoročnim posljedicama genocida na generaciju koja je odrastala u sjeni nasilja i prisilnog raseljavanja, osiguravajući da njihova sjećanja postanu sastavni dio historijskog i moralnog zapisa o Srebrenici.

Jedno od najupečatljivijih svjedočanstava djece-preživjelih donosi historičar i novinar Adem Mehmedović u knjizi *Srebrenica: Ožiljci*.[35] U julu 1995. godine, s tek osam godina, Mehmedović je s majkom i mlađom sestrom napustio porodični dom u blizini Srebrenice i, poput hiljada drugih, potražio utočište u bazi UN-a u Potočarima. Njegova sjećanja – na autobuse i kamione, haos i paniku, te pokušaje srpskih vojnika da ga odvoje od majke tokom sistematskog razdvajanja muškaraca i dječaka – oblikovana su zbunjenošću i užasom dječije perspektive. Upravo ta perspektiva razotkriva i krhkost samog preživljavanja i razmjere gubitka koji su obilježili dane genocida.

Međutim, Mehmedovićev memoar ne ostaje zatvoren u okvir ličnog iskustva. Poput drugih autora razmatranih u ovom radu, on svjesno širi svoj narativ kako bi ispričao i priče onih čiji su glasovi nasilno utišani – ubijene djece, žena i čitavih porodica čije su loze izbrisane. Oslanjajući se na opsežnu dokumentaciju i svjedočanstva preživjelih, *Srebrenica: Ožiljci* bilježi sudbinu više od šest stotina ubijene maloljetne

[35] Adem Mehmedović, *Srebrenica: Ožiljci*, Zavidovići: Kulturno-sportski centar, 2025.

djece te najmanje šezdeset žena i djevojčica, smještajući njihove priče u širi historijski kontekst genocida. Mehmedovićeva posvećenost sjećanju nadilazi pisanje: kao dugogodišnji novinar RTV Srebrenica i član Organizacijskog odbora godišnje komemoracije, on kontinuirano ispreplićе svjedočenje i otpor. Njegova knjiga tako funkcionira i kao lični obračun s prošlošću i kao dio kolektivnog arhiva pamćenja.

Dok Mehmedović piše iz perspektive djeteta koje je svjedočilo neposrednim događajima genocida, Bekir Huseinović donosi priču adolescenata koji su preživjeli njegovu dugotrajnu strahotu. U knjizi *Dječak sa rukama starca*[36], Huseinović, tada šesnaestogodišnjak, opisuje devet mjeseci – 270 dana – skrivanja i bijega kroz šume, pećine i improvizirana skloništa nakon pada Srebrenice. Glad, strah i beznađe obilježili su to iskustvo, kao i gubitak oca i sedamnaestogodišnjeg brata. Njegova priča svjedoči o preživljavanju koje se ne događa u jednom trenutku, nego se proteže u iscrpljujućem vremenu neizvjesnosti i stalne izloženosti smrti.

Nastala kao lično svjedočanstvo namijenjeno porodičnom arhivu, a javno objavljena tek 2019. godine, Huseinovićeva knjiga prati put od 11. jula 1995. do 6. aprila 1996. godine. Autor opisuje ne samo fizičku borbu za opstanak nego i emocionalne i moralne granice ljudske izdržljivosti. Objavljivanjem rukopisa Huseinović svjesno ulazi u javni prostor pamćenja, shvatajući pisanje kao čin moralnog otpora poricanju genocida i kao način odavanja počasti žrtvama. *Dječak sa rukama starca* stoga stoji kao lični memoar i snažan etički dokument kolektivne memorije.

Sličan prijelaz iz dječije perspektive u zrelu refleksiju prisutan je i u memoarima Jasmina Jusufa Jusufovića *Crvena jakna s kapuljačom*.[37] Rođen 1986. godine u Zvorniku, Jusufović je kao dijete doživio ratni progon i bijeg u Srebrenicu, gdje provodi godine oskudice i straha prije nego što preživljava genocid u julu 1995, tokom kojeg su ubijeni njegov otac i brojni rođaci. Njegov tekst rekonstruira iskustva progona, privremenog utočišta i gubitka iz perspektive djeteta-preživjelog,

[36] Bekir Huseinović, *Dječak sa rukama starca*, Sarajevo, Udruženje Pravda, 2019.

[37] Jasmin Jusuf Jusufović, *Crvena jakna s kapuljačom,* Vogošća, JU Kulturno-sportski centar Vogošća, 2008.

pretvarajući privatno sjećanje u dokument javnog svjedočenja. Prevođena na više jezika, knjiga istovremeno funkcionira kao zapis o preživljavanju i kao sredstvo borbe protiv poricanja genocida.

Još radikalniji susret dječije ranjivosti i genocidne realnosti donosi Hasib Suljić u memoarima *Maloljetnik na putu smrti*.[38] Rođen 1980. godine, Suljić započinje svoju pripovijest idiličnim sjećanjima na djetinjstvo prekinuto ratom, da bi je postupno vodio prema tragičnoj odluci iz jula 1995. godine: hoće li petnaestogodišnjak krenuti prema Potočarima ili se pridružiti koloni muškaraca u pokušaju proboja. Očeva procjena – da je bio "previsok za Potočare i preslab za šumu" – sažima brutalnu logiku genocida koja je djecu pretvarala u mete. Odvojen od oca već na prvoj zasjedi, Suljić više nikada nije vidio ni njega ni svoje amidže. Njegovo autobiografsko djelo prati prizore lova na ljude, masakra i konačnog dolaska na slobodni teritorij, ali i bolnu spoznaju da gotovo niko od njegove porodice nije preživio. Završni popis trideset i osam ubijenih članova uže familije pretvara knjigu u etički čin pamćenja i memorijalizacije.

Uz ove memoare muških autora, svjedočanstva autorica koje su genocid preživjele kao djevojčice dodatno proširuju i produbljuju narativ dječijeg pamćenja. Njihovi tekstovi rasvjetljuju rodno obilježena iskustva progona, razdvajanja i gubitka, ali i načine na koje su djevojčice kasnije artikulirale svoju traumu kroz pisanje i javno svjedočenje. Ova memorijska proza stoji kao pisani spomenik ženama i djevojčicama koje su vlastitu bol pretvorile u snagu moralnog otpora.

U knjizi *Moj osmijeh je moja osveta* Dževa Avdić[39] piše o iskustvu preživljavanja genocida iz perspektive devetogodišnje djevojčice. Opisuje bijeg iz opkoljene Srebrenice, razdvajanje porodice i strah koji je obilježio dane deportacije. Iako se porodica kasnije ponovno ujedinila, djetinjstvo njezine generacije nepovratno je izgubljeno. Avdić promišlja kako su godine koje su trebale biti obilježene igrom i bezbrižnošću bile ispunjene glađu, progonom i slikama nasilja. U tom kontekstu, sam čin

[38] Hasib Suljić, *Maloljetnik na putu smrti*, Sarajevo, Dobra knjiga, 2022.
[39] Dževa Avdić, *Moj osmijeh je moja osveta*, Sarajevo, UNSA, 2017.

preživljavanja – smijeh, izgradnja života i porodice – postaje oblik tihog prkosa i moralnog otpora.

Srodnu, ali još intimniju formu svjedočenja nudi Sabina Hodžić-Mehmedović[40] koja je kao devetogodišnjakinja izgubila trinaest najbližih članova porodice, uključujući oca Sabita. Njezine knjige *Mom srebreničkom heroju* i *Srčana vena* započele su kao pisma nestalom ocu – pokušaj komunikacije s onim koji se nikada nije vratio, tj. "nije prešao". Pisanje je za Sabinu postalo način da ličnu tugu preobrazi u svjedočanstvo, a privatnu bol u javni čin pamćenja. Kada su posmrtni ostaci njezina oca identificirani i ukopani 2004. godine, njezine riječi postale su trajni zapis sjećanja i otpora zaboravu.

Na kraju ovog svjedočanskog niza stoje memoari Mirsade Alemić-Helać[41] *Through the Eyes of an Innocent Child*, koji nude rijedak prikaz odrastanja u opkoljenoj Srebrenici iz perspektive djeteta. Rođena 1987. godine, Mirsada opisuje svakodnevicu granatiranja, gladi i straha, svijet u kojem su djeca učila živjeti s nasiljem kao normom. U genocidu je izgubila četrdeset članova porodice, a posmrtni ostaci mnogih od njih još uvijek nisu pronađeni. Danas, živeći u Sydneyju kao majka i učiteljica, njezina refleksija povezuje izgubljeno djetinjstvo s nadom da nijedno dijete više nikada neće proživjeti sličnu sudbinu.

Zajedno, dječiji memoari o Srebrenici čine snažan i nezamjenjiv korpus svjedočenja. Oni ne dopunjuju samo političke, duhovne i lične narative odraslih preživjelih, nego ih produbljuju, pokazujući kako se genocid upisuje u živote onih koji su ga doživjeli u najranijoj dobi. Kao takvi, ovi tekstovi stoje kao trajni moralni arhiv – svjedočanstvo o izgubljenom djetinjstvu, ali i o izdržljivosti sjećanja koje odbija biti izbrisano.

[40] Sabina Hodžić-Mehmedović, *Mom srebreničkom heroju* (Sarajevo: Fondacija F.H., 2016); Sabina Hodžić-Mehmedović, *Srčana vena*, Tešanj, Štamparija S, 2022.

[41] Mirsada Alemić-Helać, *Through the Eyes of an Innocent Child*, Sydney: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016.

Svjedočanska književnost i poetika dokumentarne fikcije

Među svim umjetničkim oblicima, književnost – kroz romane, pripovijetke i poeziju – možda se najupornije suočava s pitanjima koja proizlaze iz postgenocidnog društva u Bosni i Hercegovini. Upravo književni jezik pokazao se posebno sposobnim da individualno sjećanje prevede u kolektivno pamćenje, a fragmentiranu traumu u zajedničko značenje. Transformativna snaga fikcije leži u njezinoj uzajamnosti: dok pisci prošlost pretaču u priču, čitatelji te priče koriste kako bi iznova promišljali i reinterpretirali vlastita iskustva i sjećanja.[42] U toj dinamičnoj razmjeni fikcija postaje prostor pregovaranja o gubitku i oporavku, čežnji, pripadanju i rekreiranju identiteta. U samom središtu tih procesa stoji pojam doma – čak i kada je reduciran ili uzdignut na razinu ideje i imaginacije – kao simbolično sidro oko kojega se neprestano oblikuju i redefiniraju narativi identiteta, pamćenja i povratka.

Takva isprepletenost fikcije i stvarnosti nije antagonistična. Naprotiv, kako je primijetio Mirko Kovač: "stvarnost u potpunosti dobiva smisao tek kada se pretvori u fikciju."[43] U tom smislu, fikcija brojnih bosanskih poslijeratnih autora – poput Faruka Šehića[44] i Damira Ovčine[45] – djeluje gotovo etnografski: ona ne bježi od stvarnosti, nego je pažljivo promatra i rekonstruira, stvarajući protusjećanje koje nadopunjuje fragmentiranu i često iskrivljenu službenu sliku prošlosti. Kroz takve književne postupke poslijeratno pisanje postaje prostor otpora, dijaloga i moralne refleksije, suprotstavljen šutnji oficijelne historije te komodifikaciji i politizaciji patnje.

U tom širem književnom opusu posebno mjesto zauzima tema genocida u Srebrenici. Brojni pisci, iz BiH i izvan nje, bavili su se tom neiscrpnom i teškom temom, stvarajući raznolik i ponekad proturječan korpus

[42] Hariz Halilovich, "Writing Home: Bosnian Writers in Diaspora", u: *Bosnian Studies: Perspectives from an Emerging Field*, ur. Dženeta Karabegović i Adna Karamehic-Oates, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2023, 205–230.
[43] Mirko Kovač, *Grad u zrcalu*, Beograd, Samizdat B92, 2008, 176.
[44] Faruk Šehić, *Knjiga o Uni*, Sarajevo, Buybook, 2011.
[45] Damir Ovčina, *Kad sam bio hodža*, Sarajevo, Buybook, 2016.

književnih djela. Kroz fikciju neki su pisci uspjeli dokučiti razmjere zla zvanog genocid, istovremeno prepoznajući i priznajući *agensnost*, tj. otpornost i sposobnost vlastitog djelovanja preživjelih (onog što se na engleskom zove *agency*), koristeći kreativnu naraciju kao oblik etičkog svjedočenja i kolektivnog pamćenja. Neki drugi pisci, međutim, zapali su u patos i orijentalizaciju žrtava, reducirajući iskustvo preživjelih na sentimentalni spektakl. Upravo sam te suprotne tendencije – empatičnu i eksploatatorsku – kritički razmatrao u knjizi *Kako opisati Srebrenicu / Writing after Srebrenica*, u kojoj tvrdim da književne reprezentacije genocida zahtijevaju ne samo estetsku senzibilnost nego i jasnu moralnu odgovornost.[46]

Na tom teorijskom i etičkom okviru zasniva se i završni dio ovog rada, u kojem se osvrćem na djela triju suvremenih autorica porijeklom iz Srebrenice – Elvire Mujčić, Nirhe Efendić i Amele Mustafić. Njihove književne prakse artikuliraju različite, ali međusobno povezane odgovore na naslijeđe genocida. Pišući iz pozicija oblikovanih rodno obilježenim iskustvima rata, egzila i sjećanja, one isprepliću intimne i kolektivne historije u narative koji se opiru stereotipima o pasivnim žrtvama. Iako su im životne putanje, profesionalni pravci i žanrovski izbori različiti, povezuje ih zajednička geografija porijekla i pamćenja: Srebrenica i njezina poslijeratna sudbina. Njihova djela prelaze granice između svjedočenja i fikcije, pamćenja i imaginacije, lične pripovijesti i kolektivne povijesti, otvarajući pitanje kako pisati nakon Srebrenice i kako književnost može svjedočiti o životima obilježenima izbjeglištvom, preživljavanjem i trajnom prisutnošću gubitka.

U tom kontekstu, iskustvo Elvire Mujčić predstavlja paradigmatičan primjer transnacionalnog i translingvalnog pisanja nakon genocida. U razgovoru s piscem Farukom Šehićem, Mujčić se osvrnula na isprepletena iskustva pisanja, rata i egzila koja oblikuju njezin književni svijet.[47] Kao četrnaestogodišnjakinja napustila je Srebrenicu i stigla u Italiju, gdje je

[46] Hariz Halilović, *Kako opisati Srebrenicu*, Sarajevo, Buybook, 2017, 5-26.

[47] Faruk Šehić, "One-on-one: Elvira Mujčić – Have You Ever Seen Bosnia through the Eyes of a Woman?", *Kosovo 2.0*, 24. decembar 2020. Dostupno na: https://kosovotwopointzero.com/en/elvira-mujcic-have-you-ever-seen-bosnia-through-the-eyes-of-a-woman/ (pristup: 15. 1. 2026).

kasnije izgradila autorsku karijeru pišući na talijanskom jeziku. Nedavni prijevod jedne od njezinih knjiga na bosanski simbolično označava povratak glasa i jezika u mjesto porijekla. Rođena 1980. u Srebrenici, gdje je živjela do izbijanja rata, Mujčić genocid u rodnom gradu ne nosi samo kao biografsku činjenicu, nego kao trajni okvir vlastitog književnog promišljanja, što se jasno očituje u romanu *Deset šljiva za fašiste*.[48]

U svojim tekstovima Mujčić dosljedno naglašava etičku odgovornost književnosti prema čitatelju. Taj je princip vidljiv ne samo u spomenutom romanu nego i u njezinu širem opusu, koji se često bavi paradoksom istine i fikcije u izbjegličkim narativima. Polazeći od vlastitog iskustva egzila, autorica povezuje svoju priču s pričama drugih migranata i izbjeglica čije preživljavanje često ovisi o "pričama koje funkcioniraju" unutar evropskih azilantskih sistema.[49] Na tom sjecištu stvarnog i imaginarnog razotkriva se apsurd birokratski definiranog života u egzilu, u kojem *objektivna* dokumentacija potiskuje *subjektivno* proživljenu stvarnost, a vrijeme poprima obrise stagnacije.

Deset šljiva za fašiste ujedno je roman puta i roman sjećanja, pri čemu potonja dimenzija nosi posebnu težinu. Sjećanje se u romanu razotkriva kroz rekonstrukciju svijeta izgubljenog u vihoru rata – lica i mjesta koja više ne postoje, ali i dalje oblikuju živote preživjelih. Pripovijest prati bosansku porodicu čiji je život nepovratno izmijenjen genocidom: raspršeni između Bosne i Italije, njezini članovi ostaju povezani zajedničkim iskustvom gubitka i trajnom potrebom prilagođavanja. Smrt nane, koja je željela biti pokopana u Bosni, postaje simbolična tačka povratka i suočavanja s kontinuitetom tuge. Jednostavnom ali snažnom prozom, Mujčić ispripliće lijepo i tragično, komično i bolno, oslanjajući se na prepoznatljiv bosanski pripovjedni registar.

Razmišljajući o žalosti kao neprevodivom stanju, Mujčić primjećuje da "postoji riječ za udovicu, ali ne i za majku koja je izgubila dijete".

[48] Elvira Mujčić, *Deset šljiva za fašiste*, Sarajevo, Buybook, 2020.

[49] Nicole Corritore, "A Long and Harsh Path to Citizenship: Interview with Elvira Mujčić", *OBC Transeuropa*, 29. maj 2024, Dostupno na: https://www.europeandatajournalism.eu/cp_data_news/the-long-and-harsh-path-to-citizenship-interview-with-elvira-mujcic/ (pristup: 15. 1. 2026).

Njezino se pisanje stoga usmjerava prema onome što izmiče jeziku, koristeći suzdržanost i metaforu kako bi se sačuvalo dostojanstvo gubitka. Pisati nakon Srebrenice, za Mujčić, znači davati oblik neizrecivom – gramatici tuge oblikovanoj sjećanjem, šutnjom i ustrajnom željom za životom unatoč nepodnošljivim povijestima.

Upravo taj neimenovani prostor gubitka dodatno proširuje djelo Nirhe Efendić[50], koja u središte svoje književnosti postavlja iskustva sestrinstva i kćerinstva prekinutih genocidom. Ako, kako Mujčić sugerira, ne postoji riječ za majku koja je izgubila dijete, još manje postoji za sestru koja je izgubila brata ili kćer koja je izgubila oca – a Efendić je izgubila oboje. Njezina knjiga *Kopča* izdvaja se kao jedno od najsuptilnijih i najpromišljenijih djela suvremene bosanske književnosti, spajajući autobiografsku prozu, dokumentarnu naraciju i (post)ratnu hroniku u hibridni oblik nužan za artikulaciju traume.

Ispričana toplim i suzdržanim glasom, *Kopča* smješta individualnu bol u širi kontekst genocida, urbicida i kulturicida, pokazujući kako je uništenje stanovnika Srebrenice ujedno i napad na njezin moralni i kulturni krajolik. Kroz četiri pripovjedna glasa Efendić briše granice između činjenica i fikcije, potvrđujući da se te granice neminovno gube u suočenju s traumom. Uprkos prizorima smrti i uništenja, knjiga vraća Srebrenici njezin prijeratni život – teksturu svakodnevice i krhku idilu koja je prethodila genocidu. Dokumentarno-umjetnički pristup svjedočanstvo pretvara u čin stvaranja, dajući glas utišanima i otvarajući prostor za moralni otpor i obnovu.

U tom smislu *Kopča* nadilazi lokalni kontekst i progovara o univerzalnom iskustvu gubitka i pamćenja. Uplićući lična svjedočanstva u kolektivnu naraciju, Efendić pokazuje kako individualna tuga postaje dijelom šire ljudske borbe za artikulaciju historijske traume.[51] Književnost se ovdje potvrđuje kao medij koji može dosegnuti ondje

[50] Nirha Efendić, *Kopča*, Sarajevo, Buybook, 2023.

[51] Šeherzada Džafić, "Narativna trauma od individualnog do kolektivnog identiteta: Glas živih svjedoka", *Preporod*, 2024. Dostupno na: https://preporod.info/bs/article/51343/narativna-trauma-od-individualnog-do-kolektivnog-identiteta-glas-zivih-svjedoka (pristup: 15. 1. 2026).

gdje historiografija ne može – u neizrečeno, unutarnje i krhko. U *Kopči* umjetnost postaje i prostor žalovanja i gesta prema iscjeljenju, potvrđujući da ljudski glas opstaje i nakon zločina.

Ako proza Mujčić i Efendić nudi narativne odgovore na neizrecivo, poezija Amele Mustafić predstavlja lirski, kondenzirani nastavak iste borbe. Njezini stihovi napuštaju pripovjednu rekonstrukciju i ulaze u prostor šutnje i sažimanja, gdje riječi ne opisuju nego označavaju granice izraza. U tom kontekstu ponovno se otvara Adornovo pitanje o mogućnosti poezije nakon Auschwitza: kako govoriti o zlu koje je razorilo samu metaforu, a da se ne proizvede nova nepravda?

Za Mustafić poezija ostaje nužan odgovor na ta pitanja. Rođena u Srebrenici 1994. godine, premala da bi se sjećala genocida, ona nosi naslijeđena sjećanja svojih roditelja i zajednice, pretvarajući ih u transgeneracijsku priču. Objavila je tri zbirke poezije – *Umiranje djetinjstva*[52], *Umiranje imena*[53] i *Mostovi praznine*[54] – u kojima se gubitak, bol i volja za opstankom ispisuju jezikom koji je istovremeno mladenački i zreo, jednostavan i svečan.[55]

U njezinoj poeziji sjećanje se ne estetizira nego izgovara gotovo etnografski, bez uljepšavanja. Opisi kolektivnih dženaza 11. jula i ponovljenih ukopa, fragmentiranih tijela (*dokopavanje*) postaju poetski materijal upravo zato što su već opterećeni značenjem. U pjesmi *Putem moga doma* Mustafić tu stvarnost pretače u surovu, ali preciznu lirsku izjavu, u kojoj se dom pojavljuje kao prostor ponavljanja, odsutnosti i trajne nepotpunosti. Time se pojam doma širi izvan geografije u biografsko i genealogijsko polje, potvrđujući da genocid ne završava ubijanjem, nego se nastavlja u identitetima onih koji dolaze poslije.

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[52] Amela Mustafić, *Umiranje djetinjstva*, Zagreb–Beograd, Kultura snova–Rrom produkcija, 2017.

[53] Amela Mustafić, *Umiranje imena*, Tuzla, Lijepa riječ, 2018.

[54] Amela Mustafić, *Mostovi praznine*, Tuzla, Lijepa riječ, 2023.

[55] Dženeta Rovčanin, O zbirci pjesama "Umiranje djetinjstva" Amele Mustafić, *Avlija: Portal za kulturu, književnost i društvene teme*, 2020 Dostupno na: https://avlija.me/dzeneta-rovcanin-diskurs-ratne-realije-intimisticke-poezije-i-filozofije-tijela-u-zbirci-pjesama-umiranje-djetinjstva-amele-mustafic/ (pristup: 15. 1. 2026).

U tom lirsko-dokumentarnom govoru sjećanje postaje i svjedočanstvo i nastavak – potvrda da se dom ne obnavlja u potpunosti, nego da se njegovi ožiljci prenose dalje, oblikujući pamćenje, pripadnost i etičku odgovornost kroz vrijeme.

Zaključak: Bez tačke nakon Srebrenice

Sagledana iz perspektive testimonijalne etike i translokalnih moralnih geografija, svjedočanska književnost o genocidu u Srebrenici potvrđuje se kao mnogo više od zbirke ličnih memoara ili zapisa o prošloj patnji. Poput svjedočanstava o holokaustu koja su joj prethodila, ona se neprestano suočava s granicama jezika i s moralnim imperativom da se govori čak i onda kada riječi djeluju nedostatno. Upravo u toj napetosti između nemogućnosti i nužnosti govora leži njezina snaga: u odbijanju šutnje, poricanja i zaborava.

Kako je u ovom radu pokazano, djela preživjelih istovremeno funkcioniraju kao lično žalovanje, historijsko svjedočanstvo, potencijalni pravni trag te oblik političkog i moralnog otpora. Smještena u relacijski prostor između onoga koji svjedoči i onoga koji sluša ili čita, ona pretvaraju privatnu traumu u javni etički zahtjev. Svjedočanstvo se pritom ne iscrpljuje u prijenosu iskustva, nego djeluje kao čin moralnog posredovanja – govorenje u ime mrtvih, odsutnih i utišanih.

Upravo ta relacijska dimenzija, na koju upozoravaju Felman i Laub[56], objašnjava zašto su fragmentarnost, šutnja i diskontinuiteti trajna obilježja pisanja o Srebrenici. Kako nas podsjeća Agamben[57], preživjeli uvijek svjedoče i za one koji su ubijeni. Manjkavost jezika stoga nije slabost svjedočanstva, nego njegov etički temelj. Pisanje u ovom korpusu ne nastoji zatvoriti ranu, nego je održati vidljivom – kao trajni izazov historiji, pravu i kolektivnom pamćenju.

[56] Felman & Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, 57-74.

[57] Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, 11-39.

Kroz različite žanrove – od memoara i dokumentarne (ne)fikcije do poezije – analizirani autori oblikuju ono što se može opisati kao "gramatika tuge": jezik koji imenuje gubitak, ali se istovremeno opire njegovoj redukciji na statistiku, sudske presude ili ritualizirane oblike komemoracije. U tom smislu, testimonijalna književnost postaje prostor u kojem se, Ricoeurovim rječnikom, pregovara napetost između vjernosti pamćenju i historijske istine. Svjedočanstva se ne nude kao materijal koji historiografija tek treba "provjeriti", nego kao moralni zahtjev upućen sadašnjosti – pitanje hoće li trauma biti priznata ili ponovno potisnuta.

Na toj osnovi, pisanje se u analiziranim tekstovima potvrđuje kao čin preživljavanja i reafirmacije ljudskosti nakon brutalne dehumanizacije. Pretvarajući traumu u svjedočanstvo, autori čine vidljivim upravo ono što je genocid nastojao izbrisati: lica, glasove i unutarnje svjetove ljudi svedenih na brojeve, popise i kolektivne kategorije. Na taj način njihovi tekstovi humaniziraju statistiku nasilja, vraćaju dostojanstvo mrtvima i priznaju sposobnost djelovanja preživjelima (agensnost, *agency*).

Međutim, značenje ovih djela ne iscrpljuje se u njihovoj dokumentarnoj ili svjedočanskoj vrijednosti. Ona djeluju i kao trajne intervencije u kulturi sjećanja, osporavajući revizionističke narative i oblike historijske amnezije koji i dalje oblikuju poslijeratnu Bosnu i Hercegovinu. U tom procesu sjećanje na Srebrenicu izlazi iz okvira lokalnog i nacionalnog te se obraća globalnoj publici. Naslijeđe genocida tako ne ostaje zatvoreno u masovnim grobnicama, sudnicama ili godišnjim komemoracijama, nego nastavlja živjeti u jeziku – u promjenjivim i otvorenim oblicima svjedočenja koji održavaju kolektivnu savjest budnom.

Pisati nakon Srebrenice stoga znači prihvatiti temeljni paradoks svjedočenja: govoriti ono što se ne može u potpunosti izreći i pamtiti ono što se opire zaboravu. Riječ je o etičkom radu koji zahtijeva osjetljivost, preciznost i moralnu imaginaciju. Kako ovi autori jasno pokazuju, književnost nije bijeg od historije, nego jedan od njezinih najzahtjevnijih oblika suočavanja – čin otpora protiv brisanja patnje i ravnodušnosti vremena.

Iz toga slijedi da sjećanje na Srebrenicu nije isključiva odgovornost preživjelih niti samo Bosne i Hercegovine; ono predstavlja univerzalnu

obavezu. Svako novo čitanje i svako novo pripovijedanje proširuje moralnu zajednicu svjedoka i podsjeća da značenje genocida nikada nije konačno niti zatvoreno, nego se neprestano iznova oblikuje kroz činove pamćenja i pisanja.

Kako nas podsjeća Faruk Šehić: "Moramo pisati o Srebrenici, jer nijedna pjesma, priča ili roman o njoj nikada ne može biti potpun. Ne možete staviti tačku nakon Srebrenice, jer takva bol nema kraja."[58]

U tom odbijanju završne tačke – u kontinuiranom svjedočenju koje se kreće kroz mjesta, jezike i generacije – leži trajna snaga pisanja nakon Srebrenice. To je pisanje koje ne zatvara prošlost, nego je drži otvorenom: kao prostor tuge, otpornosti i trajne etičke odgovornosti prema onima kojih više nema.

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OD ŠUTNJE DO SJEĆANJA: ULOGA KULTURE U ODRŽAVANJU SJEĆANJA NA GENOCID U SREBRENICI I OKO NJE

Sažetak: Genocid u Srebrenici i oko nje ostaje jedan od najtežih i najtragičnijih događaja u novijoj historiji Evrope. Ipak, uprkos njegovom neupitnom historijskom značaju, borba za očuvanje sjećanja i dalje je opterećena političkim, društvenim i kulturnim izazovima. U Bosni i Hercegovini, gdje su etničke podjele duboko ukorijenjene, komemoracija žrtava genocida u Srebrenici i oko nje nije samo čin sjećanja, već i borbeno polje na kojem se oblikuju kolektivni identitet i historijska istina. Uloga kulture u očuvanju sjećanja višestruka je: ona istovremeno predstavlja sredstvo ličnog i kolektivnog iscjeljenja te moćan alat protiv politike poricanja i iskrivljavanja činjenica.

Uprkos širokom međunarodnom priznanju genocida u Srebrenici i oko nje, napori da se sjećanje očuva neprestano su ugroženi ukorijenjenom kulturom negiranja i političke manipulacije. Ovaj rad ima za cilj da potvrdi ključnu ulogu kulture u procesima sjećanja i očuvanja pamćenja u postkonfliktnom bosanskohercegovačkom društvu. Analizom kulturnih praksi poput umjetnosti, književnosti, muzike, memorijalizacije i obrazovanja ispituje se kako kulturni izrazi oblikuju kolektivno pamćenje, osporavaju negiranje i doprinose dugotrajnom i složenom procesu povjerenja i pomirenja. Kroz analizu načina na koji se preživjeli i lokalne zajednice uključuju u ove kulturne forme, autorica naglašava da kultura služi i kao sredstvo iscjeljenja i kao okvir za formiranje kolektivnog identiteta.

Nadalje, rad ističe važnost kulture u suprotstavljanju nacionalističkim narativima koji nastoje zamagliti ili umanjiti razmjere i značaj genocida u Srebrenici i oko nje.

Ključne riječi: *genocid u Srebrenici, uloga kulture, kulturne prakse, kolektivno pamćenje, otpor, nacionalistički narativi*

FROM SILENCE TO REMEMBRANCE: THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN SUSTAINING THE MEMORY OF THE GENOCIDE IN AND AROUND SREBRENICA

Abstract: The genocide in and around Srebrenica remains a serious and devastating event in the history of Europe. Yet, despite its undeniable historical significance, the struggle to preserve its memory continues to be fraught with political, social, and cultural challenges. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, where ethnic divisions are deeply entrenched, the commemoration of Srebrenica's victims is not merely an act of remembrance but a battlefield for shaping collective identity and historical truth. The role of culture in keeping the memory of Srebrenica alive is multifaceted, serving as both a means of personal and collective healing and as a powerful tool against the politics of denial and distortion.

Despite widespread international recognition of this atrocity, efforts to preserve its memory face continuous challenges, including the already created culture of denial and political manipulation. This article explores the crucial role of culture in the process of memory-keeping and remembrance in post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina. Through an examination of cultural practices such as art, literature, music, memorials, and education, this study investigates how cultural expressions shape collective memory, challenge denial, and contribute to the long-term and challenging process of reconciliation. By analysing how survivors and local communities engage with these cultural forms, the author underscores how culture serves as a tool for both personal healing and collective identity formation. Furthermore, it addresses the importance of culture in countering nationalist narratives that seek to obscure or diminish the scale of the Srebrenica Genocide.

Keywords: *Srebrenica Genocide, role of culture, active participation, cultural practices, culture countering nationalist narratives*

Uvod

Istraživati kulturu sjećanja u Bosni i Hercegovini sa stanovišta društvenog pamćenja genocida u Srebrenici i oko nje znači stavljati u prvi plan ovaj najveći zločin nad Bošnjacima, koji predstavlja, sagledavali ga subjektivno ili objektivno, jedan od najsnažnijih zajedničkih imenitelja naših života. Međutim, kako vrijeme neumitno prolazi, odnos između kulture sjećanja i kulture negiranja predstavlja veliki rascjep između ličnih i kolektivnih sjećanja, društvenog pamćenja, praksi kulture sjećanja, odnosa prema počinjenom genocidu, društvu i državi.

Kuljić[1] upozorava da se u svim društvenim kontekstima suočavamo s grubim oblicima instrumentalizacije, banalizacije i neutralizacije prošlosti. Zato je važno naglasiti da historija ne smije biti shvaćena isključivo kao pogled unazad, kao nepovratna i zatvorena cjelina, već kao kompleksna veza između prošlih događaja, sadašnjeg trenutka i budućnosti. Potrebno je prevazići stroge vremenske granice i razumjeti da prošlost nije ni statična ni završena, te da ono što sociolozima i sociologinjama kulture daje za pravo da govore o prošlosti jeste uvjerenje da ona nije nepomična niti definitivna. Iako se ne može svesti ni na potpuno subjektivni doživljaj, prošlost predstavlja dinamičan izvor značenja koji oblikuje naše razumijevanje svijeta i društvene stvarnosti.[2]

Kultura, naročito umjetnost, ima ključnu ulogu u oblikovanju kolektivnog sjećanja na genocid u Srebrenici i oko nje, jer upravo kroz umjetničke prakse, rituale, jezik, simbole i prostore sjećanja društvo artikulira bol, traumu i istinu. U društvu u kojem se istina osporava, a zločin negira, kultura postaje jedan od najvažnijih prostora borbe za pamćenje. Kroz umjetnost, film, pozorište, slikarstvo, fotografiju, književnost, performans i memorijalne prakse, kultura čuva glasove onih koji su ubijeni – i onih koji genocid još uvijek preživljavaju. Umjetnost ovdje postaje prostor u kojem se gradi sjećanje koje nije neutralno ni

[1] Todor Kuljić, *Kultura sjećanja: Teorijska objašnjenja upotrebe prošlosti*, Beograd, Čigoja, 2006, 30.

[2] Ibid., 34.

pasivno, već je aktivno, politički i moralno obojeno.[3] Drugim riječima, borba za istinito sjećanje i afirmaciju kulture pamćenja zapravo jeste borba za društvenu pravdu.

Genocid počinjen u julu 1995. godine pred očima cijelog svijeta predstavlja najmračniju tačku novije evropske historije. Iako međunarodni sudovi i brojna svjedočenja jasno potvrđuju da je riječ o sistematski planiranom zločinu, trideset godina kasnije sjećanje na Srebrenicu nije zajedničko niti priznato u cijelom bosanskohercegovačkom društvu. Naprotiv, ono je fragmentirano, osporavano i često prešućeno. U Bosni i Hercegovini, gdje su etničke podjele još uvijek duboko ukorijenjene, sjećanje na genocid u Srebrenici i oko nje nije samo čin individualne i kolektivne tuge; ono je i čin političke borbe, borbe za ljudska prava. U ovom kontekstu, uloga umjetnosti posebno dolazi do izražaja baš u bosanskohercegovačkom društvu, umjetnost i umjetničke intervencije postaju više od estetskih izraza, postaju prostor identifikacije sa žrtvama, emocionalne artikulacije i, kako vrijeme prolazi, unose ljudsku dimenziju u ono što najčešće ostaje u statistikama. One služe kao simbolički mostovi između prošlosti i sadašnjosti, kao i između ličnih i kolektivnih iskustava. Umjetnost na taj način ima moć da transformira individualnu traumu u zajednički prostor pamćenja te ostaje jedan od najvažnijih oblika otpora zaboravu i poziva na odgovornost.

U širem sociološkom kontekstu, riječ je o društveno-integrativnoj viziji i takvom pristupu prošlosti koju pojedinci na različit, ali ipak sličan način, tumače, mijenjaju i saobražavaju samoviđenju sebe, svoje grupe i drugih. Kultura sjećanja kao proces, kao integracija različitih ličnih prošlosti u jednu kompaktnu zajedničku prošlost, konstantno se konstituira u nekoj vrsti tjeskobe između službenih politika i privatnih, ličnih sjećanja i iskustava. Individualno i kolektivno sjećanje sve se manje shvataju kao spontani, prirodni ili sakrosanktni činovi, a sve više kao socijalne i kulturne konstrukcije koje se s vremenom mijenjaju i imaju vlastitu historiju.[4] Sjećanje i njegova kultura nisu samo pasivni odraz kulture i politike, nego i tvorci kulture, vjerovanja i vrijednosnog

[3] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London, Routledge, 1994, 12.
[4] Aleida Asman, *Duga senka prošlosti*, Beograd, Biblioteka XX vek, 2011, 23.

sistema javnog i privatnog života. Drugim riječima, sjećanje i njegova kultura mogu kreirati čak i društveni smisao.

Kultura sjećanja kao kontinuitet 'društvenih slika o sebi'

Pregled organiziranog njegovanja kulture sjećanja jednog društva najčešće se prati kroz idejne i institucionalne načine njenog prenošenja. Iako je po svom sadržaju obimnija, kultura sjećanja određuje historijsku kulturu, odnosno, način na koji društvo gleda na vlastitu prošlost. U pitanju je stalno promjenjiva cjelina koja se formira pod utjecajem mnogobrojnih faktora.

Maurice Halbwachs piše da upravo u društvu ljudi stječu svoja sjećanja, odnosno da se upravo u društvu ljudi sjećaju, prepoznaju i lokaliziraju svoja sjećanja. On smatra da, ako uzmemo u obzir broj naših prisjećanja samo u jednom danu tokom naših direktnih i indirektnih susreta s drugim ljudima, uvidjet ćemo da se prema našim sjećanjima najčešće odnosimo tako što odgovaramo na pitanja koja nam drugi ljudi postavljaju ili pretpostavljamo šta će nas pitati. Nadalje, znamo da, kako bismo im pružili odgovore, stavljamo i sebe u njihov položaj i na taj način sebe posmatramo i postavljamo kao člana iste grupe.[5] U tom smislu, sjećanja ne samo da su skupljena, organizirana i lokalizirana unutar društva u kojemu pojedinac djeluje nego je taj proces skupljanja, organiziranja i lokaliziranja uveliko uvjetovan i usmjeren konkretno tim društvom, odnosno, pojedinim društvenim grupama kojima pojedinac pripada.

Ovome možemo pridodati i promišljanja Aleide Assmann da lična sjećanja ne postoje samo u određenom društvenom miljeu već i u specifičnom vremenskom okviru koji je u suštini određen smjenom

[5] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* [Edited, Translated, and with an Introduction by Lewis A. Coser], Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1992, 38.

generacija.[6] Prema njenim tvrdnjama, poslije osamdeset do sto godina dolazi do jasne diferencijacije jer je to period u kojem različite generacije, po pravilu, riječ je o tri do pet generacija, postoje istovremeno i zahvaljujući ličnoj razmjeni te obrazuju zajednicu iskustava, sjećanja i naracije. Slušanjem, pripovijedanjem, postavljanjem pitanja i daljim pripovijedanjem širi se opseg vlastitih sjećanja. U svoju riznicu sjećanja djeca i unuci primaju i dio sjećanja starijih članova porodice, tako da se u njoj lično doživljeno i ono što se slušalo međusobno isprepliću. Ovakvo pamćenje u okviru tri generacije predstavlja egzistencijalni horizont ličnih sjećanja i presudno je za vlastito snalaženje u vremenu. Poslije osamdeset ili sto godina ono prirodno nestaje kako bi u tekućoj smjeni dalo mjesta sjećanjima narednih generacija. Zbog toga se smatra da ovaj tip sjećanja, komunikacijsko sjećanje, predstavlja kratkoročno pamćenje jednog društva.

Dakle, jasno je da su u svojoj suštini i sjećanje i pamćenje kolektivni procesi te da je jedna od njihovih najvažnijih uloga, a u skladu sa zajednicom kojoj se pripada, ne samo "čuvati" neke važne događaje ili ličnosti već i graditi i osnaživati društvenu koheziju. Kada govorimo o generacijama, potrebno je uzeti u obzir da postoje kako historijske tako i socijalne generacije koje definiraju ritam vremenskog, ali i kulturnog iskustva jednog društva. U ovom slučaju ne mogu se zaobići sociološka promišljanja Karla Mannheima[7] o socijalnom i generacijskom pamćenju uzimajući u obzir njegovu pretpostavku da pojedinci u svom životnom razdoblju od 12. do 25. godine imaju posebno izraženu sposobnost da primaju životna iskustva u formativnom smislu i da ono što je u tom konkretnom periodu doživljeno ostaje za cijeli njihov život. Mannheim generaciju određuje prvenstveno kao društvenu pojavu zasnovanu na biološkom ritmu života i smrti kojoj pripadaju osobe otprilike iste dobi, ali koju bitno obilježava identičnost položaja njezinih pripadnika unutar zajedničkog i važnog društveno-historijskog iskustva[8] te

[6] Asman, *Duga senka prošlosti*, 25.

[7] Njegovo djelo *Problem generacija* iz 1928. godine jeste nanovo aktualizirano i veliki je doprinos u izučavanju kulture sjećanja u 21. stoljeću.

[8] Karl Mannheim, *The problem of generations*, u: Karl Mannheim. Essays in Sociology of Knowledge. London, Routledge & KeganPaul, 1952, 276–322.

naglašava važnost primarne socijalizacije u obliku generacijske svijesti odnosno u društvenoj konstrukciji stvarnosti.[9] Svaki pojedinac, kako tvrdi Mannheim, rano u djetinjstvu stječe elemente svog pogleda na svijet, a značenje iskustava djece i adolescenata leži u činjenici da se prožimaju sa zajedničkim kulturnim i društveno-historijskim iskustvima te učestvuju u istom segmentu kolektivnih događanja što je imanentno nastajanju kolektivnog pamćenja. Također, kolektivno pamćenje, osim što njeguje i čuva određene važne događaje, istovremeno počiva na tim događajima, učvršćeno je u njima; što su oni bolje procesuirani logikom kolektivnog pamćenja, to je samo pamćenje konzistentnije i jače. Može se zaključiti da su i sjećanje i pamćenje diskursi, odnosno, društveno i kulturno omeđeni prostori konstrukcije historije i pridavanja značenja pojedinim njenim elementima i njenoj cjelini. Upravo u toj činjenici leži relevantnost Halbwachsovog teorijskog mišljenja. Halbwachs je naglašavao da je historija ne samo kao skup historiografskih i biografskih podataka skupljenih prema određenim kriterijima i interesima nego i skup simboličkih i ritualnih praksi koje imaju svoja pravila i zakonitosti.[10]

Prema Kuljiću, za sociologe je važno, u kontekstu izučavanja kulture sjećanja, da generacije vide kao kategorije "istovremenosti neistovremenog", čije središte nije porodica, već društvo, zato što je generacija obrazac šireg društvenog, a ne samo pojedinačnog samoopisa[11]. Generacije su isto tako važne i kao zajednice iskustva, ali koje ne počivaju na realnom zajedničkom iskustvu već je, kako Kuljić naglašava, riječ o prihvaćenim markantnim iskustvima koja su kadra da šarolikim i protivrječnim doživljajima nametnu generacijsku signaturu istovremenosti i osjećaja zajednice. U sociološkom smislu važne odrednice generacije jesu kolektiv, samoopis, djelanje, iskustvo i njihova obrada.

[9] Pojam društvena konstrukcija stvarnosti u sociološkom smislu dalje razrađuju teoretičari Berger i Luckmann.

[10] U tom smislu, ljudski jezik je zasigurno najelementarniji okvir kolektivnog pamćenja, međutim jezik sam nije dovoljan da rekonstruira i izrazi svu širinu i dubinu ljudskog pamćenja (Halbwachs, 1992:24). Utoliko je pri svakoj analizi konstrukcije historije potrebno u analizu i istraživanje uključiti i ostale semiološke modalitete kao i sve njihove specifičnosti.

[11] Kuljić, *Kultura sjećanja: Teorijska objašnjenja upotrebe prošlosti*, 243.

Na osnovu do sada rečenog, u kontekstu osnovnih teorijskih polazišta za izučavanje kulture sjećanja, važno je izdvojiti dva tipa sjećanja: komunikacijsko sjećanje, koje se odnosi na prenošenje sjećanja u svakodnevnom životu te kulturu sjećanja koja je objektivizirana i institucionalizirana te se na taj način prenosi i reinkorporira kroz generacije. Posmatrano u širem smislu, kada istražujemo kulturu sjećanja, prema Kuljiću ukrštaju se dvije perspektive: jedna u čijem je centru pojedinac koji se pita o motivima i kontekstima vlastitog sjećanja, te druga, makrološka, koja istražuje institucionalne obrasce formiranja i čuvanja kulture sjećanja.[12]

Kultura sjećanja formira se simboličkim naslijeđem uobličenim u tekstovima, spomenicima, ceremonijama, običajima, objektima i drugim medijima koji služe kao mnemonički okidači za iniciranje značenja o tome šta se desilo.[13] Nadalje, kultura sjećanja "vraća vrijeme", kristalizira kolektivno iskustvo prošlosti te pretpostavlja znanje, a ne pretpostavke. Ona čini niz kulturnih sadržaja i praktičnih obrazaca koje ljudi uče da bi ih dekodirali i smjestili u vlastiti identitet. Sociološki kazano, riječ je o društvenoj i integrativnoj viziji prošlosti koju pojedinci na različit, ali ipak sličan način tumače, mijenjaju i saobražavaju samoviđenju sebe i vlastite grupe.[14] Ona nije samo pasivni odraz kulture i politike, nego i tvorac kulture, vjerovanja i vrijednosti javnog i privatnog života.

Kultura sjećanja proučava mehanizme društvenog prenošenja, oblikovanja, održavanja i prerade prošlosti i razvija pristupe za proučavanje kolektivnih i individualnih slika prošlosti. Njih ljudi i grupe u određenim situacijama stvaraju da bi uz pomoć prošlosti rastumačili sadašnjost i stvorili konstruktivni karakter budućeg razvoja. Drugim riječima, kultura sjećanja jeste dio jedne opće kulture svakog društva i usko je povezana s društveno-integrativnim, kohezionim i praktično-tehničkim znanjima, umijećima i raznovrsnim oblicima njihovog umjetničkog uobličavanja.

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[12] Ibid., 245.

[13] Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilisation*, Cambridge University Press, 2012, 67.

[14] Kuljić, *Kultura sjećanja: Teorijska objašnjenja upotrebe prošlosti*, 9.

Participativna dimenzija umjetnosti u kontekstu kulture sjećanja

U odnosu na navedeno, posebno je važna participativna dimenzija umjetnosti, projekti koji uključuju zajednice, svjedoke, preživjele i mlađe generacije omogućavaju dijalog i prijenos sjećanja. Uključivanje ljudi, naročito mladih, u umjetničke procese memorijalizacije doprinosi intergeneracijskom učenju i razvoju empatije, čineći sjećanje relevantnim i za one koji rat nisu doživjeli. Osim što djeluje protiv zaborava, umjetnost ima i iscjeljujuću funkciju. Kroz simboličku artikulaciju bola, gubitka i nade, ona pomaže pojedincima da procesuiraju traumu i pronađu novi jezik za priče koje su dugo bile potisnute ili neizrečene. Istovremeno, umjetnost se često suprotstavlja zvaničnim narativima i nudi alternativne vizije pravednijeg društva, u kojem je sjećanje osnova za povjerenje koje vodi ka pomirenju, a ne izvor ponovne traume i strahova.

Kao najbolji primjer u ovom radu ističu se izložbene aktivnosti[15] Memorijalnog centra Srebrenica, koje se okvirno mogu podijeliti na izložbe oralne historije, poput izložbe "Srebrenica: Naša priča" koja sadrži lična videosvjedočanstva osoba koje su preživjele genocid u Srebrenici, te predstavljanje prikupljenih ličnih predmeta koji su pripadali žrtvama genocida ili one koji su pronađeni u masovnim grobnicama, poput izložbe "Koracima onih koji (ni)su prešli". Pored prezentiranih izložbenih materijala i videomaterijala koji se mogu pogledati, gosti imaju priliku i pročitati izložene tekstove te se informirati o genocidu prilikom posjete Centru.

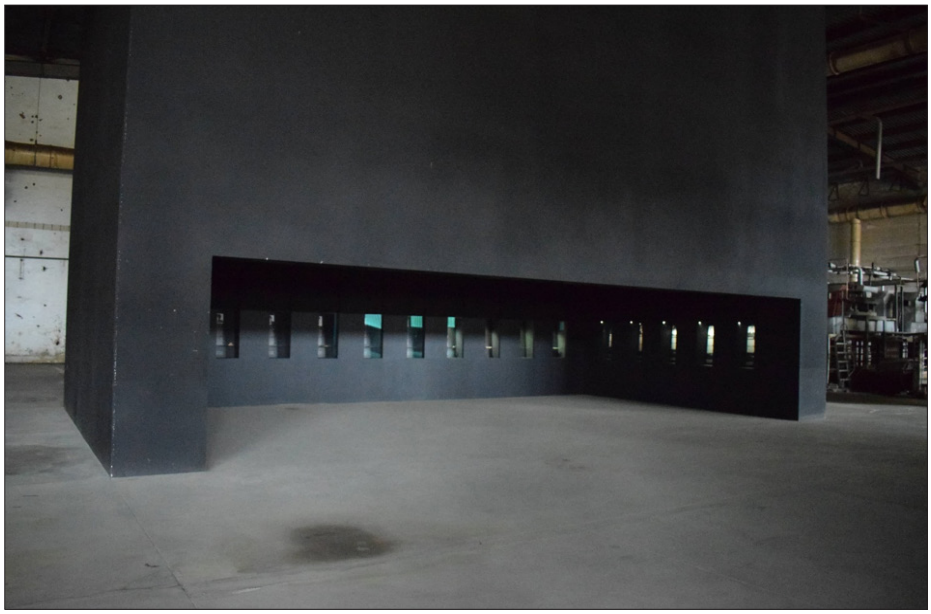
[15] Ipak, od analize koja bi bila sasvim teorijski intonirana i kulturološki utemeljena (a ticala bi se institucija kulture, umjetnika i umjetnica i njihovog rada), korisnije je u ovom radu, barem kratko, napomenuti i usmjeriti pažnju na ostvarivanje prava na kulturu u uvjetima današnjeg političkog sistema i političke krize u bosanskohercegovačkom društvu, ali i kakvo-takvog tržišno organiziranog kulturnog života. Ovi faktori veoma su značajni za dalje organiziranje kulturnih djelatnosti vezanih za njegovanje sjećanja na genocid u Srebrenici i oko nje, stvaralačkih procesa, za difuziju i recepciju umjetničkih djela, dakle za sve one prakse koje već oblikuju našu svakodnevnicu u kulturi.



Izložba “Koracima onih koji (ni)su prešli”[16]

U Memorijalnom centru postoji nekoliko stalnih izložbenih postavki. Jedna od njih je postavka “Crna soba – lične priče” koja se nalazi u spomen-sobi i sadrži lične predmete koji su pronađeni u masovnim grobnicama i koji su pripadali žrtvama genocida.

[16] Autorica fotografije: Sarina Bakić.



Postavka “Crna soba – lične priče”[17]

Druga stalna postavka nosi naziv “Neuspjeh međunarodne zajednice” i obuhvata rekonstruirane prostorije i kancelarije koje je koristio Holandski bataljon UNPROFOR-a, informacije o tim prostorijama te ličnu priču žrtve genocida dječaka Rijada Fejzića.

[17] Slika preuzeta s web-stranice Memorijalnog centra: Memorijalni centar Srebrenica, “Spomen soba – Lične priče”, Dostupno na: https://srebrenicamemorial.org/bs/izlozbe/spomen-soba-licne-price/1.



Rekonstruirana kancelarija u okviru izložbe “Neuspjeh međunarodne zajednice”[18]

Stalna postavka “Memento” kombinira usmenu historiju, fotografije i predmete žrtava genocida. Izloženi predmeti praćeni su fotografijom i pisanim svjedočanstvom osobe koja je predmet donirala Memorijalnom centru.

[18] Slika preuzeta s web-stranice Memorijalnog centra: Memorijalni centar Srebrenica, “Neuspjeh međunarodne zajednice”. Dostupno na: https://srebrenicamemorial.org/bs/izlozbe/neuspjeh-medunarodne-zajednice/2



Izložba “Memento”[19]

U Memorijalnom centru također su izložene fotografije Tarika Samaraha koje “svjedoče o genocidu, posljedicama genocida i traumi nestanka, traženja, identificiranja i ukopa ubijenih Srebreničana”.[20]

Još jedna stalna postavka je izložba fotografija i videosnimaka o genocidu u Srebrenici koju je Memorijalni centar pripremio u saradnji s Fondacijom VII.

[19] Slika preuzeta s web-stranice Memorijalnog centra: Memorijalni centar Srebrenica, “Memento”. Dostupno na: https://srebrenicamemorial.org/bs/izlozbe/memento/3

[20] Memorijalni centar Srebrenica, “Tarik Samarah: 11/07/1995”. Dostupno na: https://srebrenicamemorial.org/bs/izlozbe/tarik-samarah-11071995/4



"Fondacija VII: Izložba fotografija"[21]

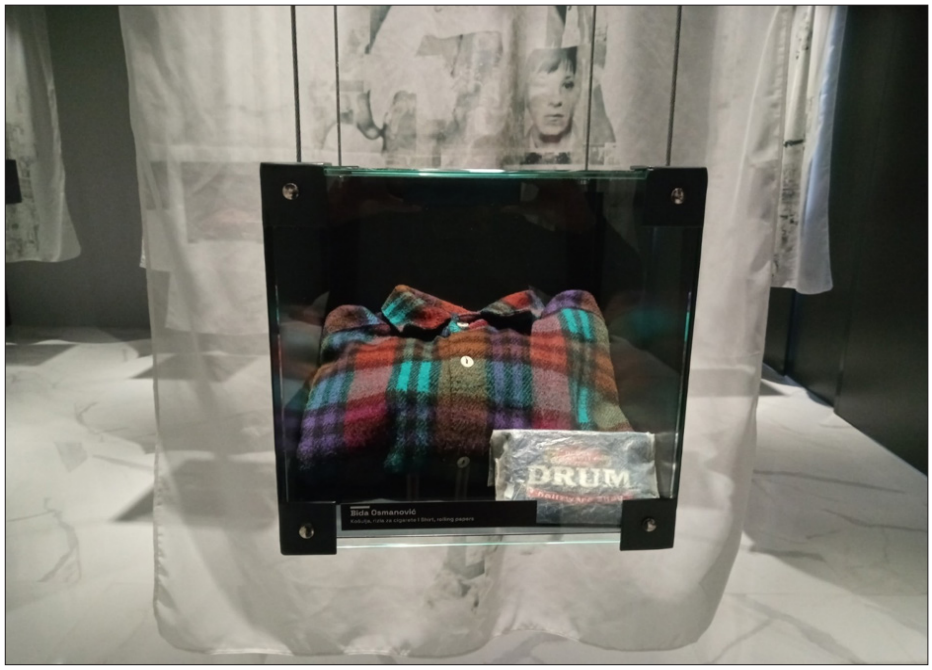
Zatim, projekt s ciljem očuvanja individualnih identiteta žrtava, kako ne bi bili svedeni na brojeve i historijske činjenice, jeste virtuelna izložba "Čitanje za Srebrenicu", u kojoj učesnici – osobe iz javne sfere poput umjetnika i novinara, te svjedoci genocida i članovi porodica žrtava – čitaju imena 8.372 žrtve genocida u Srebrenici.[22]

Najzad, u okviru projekta "Životi iza polja smrti" Memorijalnog centra Srebrenica i Balkanske istraživačke mreže Bosne i Hercegovine (BIRN BiH) napravljena je i stalna izložba Memorijalnog centra koja sadrži lične predmete i videosvjedočanstva onih koji su preživjeli genocid u Srebrenici.[23]

[21] Slika preuzeta s web-stranice Memorijalnog centra: Memorijalni centar Srebrenica, "Fondacija VII – izložba fotografija". Dostupno na: https://srebrenicamemorial.org/bs/izlozbe/fondacija-vii-izlozba-fotografija/5

[22] Memorijalni centar Srebrenica, "Virtuelna izložba 'Čitanje za Srebrenicu'". Dostupno na: https://srebrenicamemorial.org/bs/izlozbe/virtuelna-izlozba-citanje-za-srebrenicu/6 (pristup: 25. mart 2026).

[23] Memorijalni centar Srebrenica, "About". Dostupno na: https://zivotiizapoljasmrti.srebrenicamemorial.org/about



Postavka "Životi iza polja smrti"[24]

Pored stalnih, u Memorijalnom centru organiziraju se i privremene postavke i izložbe. Neke od privremenih izložbi Centra su izložba slikarskih djela "Exodus" umjetnika Safeta Zeca, izložba putujućeg spomenika "Što te nema" umjetnice Aide Šehović s 8.372 fildžana kafe, koji se postavlja godišnje na Dan sjećanja na genocid u Srebrenici, te izložba teretnog vozila DAF YAD 4442 kojim je Holandski bataljon raspolagao i koje je koristio za različite svrhe u Srebrenici.[25]

U teorijskom smislu, ovi primjeri potvrđuju koliko je važno funkcionalno pamćenje (Assmann, 2011) pri čemu funkcionalno pamćenje označava ono koje je aktivno prisutno u društvenom i političkom životu. Kultura i predočeni samo neki umjetnički sadržaji omogućavaju da se genocid u Srebrenici i oko nje ne relegira u arhivu, već da ostane prisutan

[24] Autorica fotografije: Sarina Bakić.

[25] Memorijalni centar Srebrenica, "Privremene postavke i izložbe". Dostupno na: https://srebrenicamemorial.org/bs/izlozbe/privremene-postavke-i-izlozbe/7

u svakodnevnom, javnom, institucionalnom i afektivnom prostoru, te je stoga dinamičan proces interpretacije, konstrukcije i, što je najvažnije, prenošenja značenja.

Posebnu važnost ima intergeneracijska transmisija sjećanja jer u društvu kao što je naše, u kojem je institucionalna edukacija o genocidu fragmentirana ili cenzurirana, kultura, naročito umjetnički artefakti, preuzimaju ulogu neformalne obrazovne platforme. Na taj način kultura djeluje kao most između prošlosti i budućnosti, oblikujući nove generacije koje će znati, osjećati i razumjeti šta se desilo. U konačnici, uloga kulture u pamćenju genocida u Srebrenici može se sagledati i kroz prizmu teorije agonističkog pamćenja[26], koje ne teži pomirenju kroz zaborav, već kroz priznavanje zločina kao nužnog koraka ka društvenoj pravdi.

Umjesto zaključka

Jedno od najurgentnijih pitanja vezanih za genocid u Srebrenici i oko nje jeste kontinuirano poricanje i iskrivljavanje događaja. Poricanje genocida, naročito u Srbiji i unutar entiteta Republika srpska, predstavlja smišljenu strategiju kojom se nastoji prikriti istina, izbjeći svaka odgovornost s ciljem daljnjeg jačanja nacionalističkih ideologija. U takvom ambijentu, kulturno pamćenje jeste oblik otpora protiv historijskog revizionizma i kulture negiranja genocida, a istovremeno postavlja temelje za buduće povjerenje i pomirenje.

S tim u vezi, nastojanja korištenja kulturnog pamćenja u svrhu izgradnje pomirenja trebaju se suočiti s izrazito kompleksnim odnosom između sjećanja i oprosta, posebno u regiji gdje je međuetničko povjerenje duboko narušeno. Kulturne intervencije, poput zajedničkih komemoracija ili interkulturnih dijaloga posredovanih putem umjetnosti, mogu itekako doprinijeti prevazilaženju podjela. Ipak, takvi pokušaji još uvijek nailaze na otpor. I ostaje šutnja. Međutim, preći iz šutnje u sjećanje znači izaći iz zone udobnosti i ući u prostor odgovornosti. To je politički i moralni

[26] Chantal Mouffe, *O političkom*, Zagreb, Politička kultura, 2016, 42.

čin kojim zajednice pokazuju da ne pristaju na poricanje, revizionizam i normalizaciju nasilja. U kontekstu genocida u Srebrenici i oko nje, to je čin koji od individualne traume gradi kolektivnu svijest, zato što je dobro poznato da sjećanje nije samo prošlost, već uvjet mogućnosti pravednije budućnosti.

U društvima koja su preživjela rat, nasilje i genocid, šutnja često postaje dominantna norma. Ona djeluje kao prividni mir, kao strategija "okretanja stranice" u ime budućnosti. Međutim, kada je riječ o zločinima poput genocida u Srebrenici i oko nje, šutnja nije neutralna. Ona nije praznina, ona je poricanje, potiskivanje, saučesništvo. Zato je važno postaviti ključno pitanje: Zašto je uistinu neophodno preći iz šutnje u sjećanje?

Neophodno je jer sjećanje potvrđuje dostojanstvo žrtava. Šutnja ih briše iz kolektivne svijesti, dok sjećanje vraća njihova imena, njihove živote i njihovu ljudskost u centar društvenog pamćenja. Pamćenje je čin priznavanja da su postojali i da su stradali zbog nečije politike mržnje. Također, sjećanje omogućava istinu i pravdu. U relevantnijim teorijskim gledištima, osnovni tj. ključni princip etike sjećanja je priznavanje patnje žrtava i osiguravanje da njihove priče budu ispričane na dostojanstven način.[27] U tom smislu, Margalit naglašava da je sposobnost sjećanja ključna za ljudskost i moralnu odgovornost. Zaboravljanje, naročito kada je namjerno, može značiti dehumanizaciju ne samo pojedinaca već i cjelokupnog društva.

U kontekstu sistematskog negiranja genocida, naročito u Bosni i Hercegovini i Srbiji, pamćenje nije samo komemoracija. To je mogućnost da se borimo protiv revizionizma svake vrste i da ne dozvolimo da zločin bude prepravljen, relativiziran ili izbrisan jer je sjećanje i temelj izgradnje povjerenja i pomirenja. Bez priznanja prošlih zločina, nema stvarnog dijaloga dok šutnja cementira podjele. Sjećanje, iako bolno, otvara prostor za istinski susret, i to ne kroz zaborav, već kroz suočavanje.[28]

[27] Avishai Margalit, *The Ethics of Memory*, Harvard University Press, 2004, 12.
[28] Ibid., 7.

Nadalje, sjećanjem štitimo i budućnost društva. Jer zaborav ne čuva društvo, zaborav ga izlaže riziku ponavljanja prošlosti. Mladi koji ne znaju šta se dogodilo u Srebrenici i oko nje ili koji uče iskrivljene verzije prošlosti, lako postaju plodno tlo za nove ideologije mržnje. Sjećanje je, u tom smislu, i važan obrazovni alat i naša etička obaveza. I na kraju, sjećanje osnažuje preživjele. Njihova iskustva, kada ih društvo prizna i uvažava, prestaju biti samo lična trauma i postaju kolektivna istina. To je proces koji iscjeljuje, ne brišući bol, već dajući joj smisao, ako je to uopće moguće. Zato nije dovoljno govoriti o Srebrenici samo u julu. Nije dovoljno praviti memorijale i komemoracije ako se istovremeno šuti u školama, medijima i institucijama. Osim što sjećanje mora postati svakodnevna etička praksa, potrebno je uvijek govoriti, stvarati, pisati, napominjati i reagirati.

Šutnja nikada nije neutralna te je i ona izbor. A kultura nas uči da ipak možemo izabrati sjećanje i to kao prostor dostojanstva čovjeka i što je najvažnije, odgovornosti.

U društvu koje se i dalje suočava s vlastitom podijeljenom i iskrivljenom prošlošću, autorica smatra da kultura ne samo da čuva historiju već i djeluje kao oblik otpora, osiguravajući da žrtve nikada ne budu zaboravljene i da svjedočenja preživjelih nastave osporavati odavno prisutnu kulturu poricanja i negiranja. U kontekstu genocida u Srebrenici i oko nje sjećanje nije pasivan čin već je stalan proces oblikovanja kolektivne svijesti, zalaganja za pravdu i nastojanja da se strahote prošlosti nikada više ne ponove. U tome najviše može pridonijeti umjetnost i umjetničke prakse.

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Fotografije

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A MEMORY JOURNEY: ROAD TOUR FROM SARAJEVO TO SREBRENICA

Abstract: This paper offers a personal and ethnographic account of traveling the Romanija route from the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo to Srebrenica—a road imbued with layers of trauma, memory, and post-genocide silence. Through an autobiographical lens, the author reconstructs a "memory journey" that intertwines personal grief and loss with the collective memory of Bosniak survivors, many of whom were displaced or otherwise affected by the atrocities committed during the Bosnian war (1992–1995). As the journey moves through towns and village on this route, the paper documents specific sites of massacres, disappearances, and war crimes—places that remain largely invisible or unacknowledged by the local Serb population and broader public.

Drawing on theoretical insights from memory studies, the narrative emphasizes how landscapes become repositories of pain and remembrance, and how acts of silent or selective forgetting perpetuate the divisions of Bosnia's postwar society. The journey, while practical in function, becomes a ritual of mourning, resistance, and remembrance. It explores how survivors navigate physical and symbolic spaces of trauma, grappling with the enduring presence of the past in everyday geographies. Ultimately, the paper illustrates that for many Bosniak survivors, the simple act of driving from Sarajevo to Srebrenica becomes a deeply embodied, political act of memory work—where time becomes place, and landscapes speak of lives lost and justice deferred.

Keywords: *Bosnia, Genocide, Srebrenica, Memory, Mass graves*

PUT SJEĆANJA: PUTOVANJE CESTOM OD SARAJEVA DO SREBRENICE

Sažetak: Ovaj rad donosi lični i etnografski prikaz putovanja romanijskom rutom od glavnog grada Bosne i Hercegovine, Sarajeva, do Srebrenice – puta prožetog slojevima traume, sjećanja i postgenocidne tišine. Kroz autobiografsku perspektivu autor rekonstruira "putovanje sjećanja" koje povezuje ličnu tugu i gubitak s kolektivnim sjećanjem preživjelih Bošnjaka, od kojih su mnogi bili raseljeni ili na druge načine pogođeni zločinima počinjenim tokom rata u Bosni i Hercegovini (1992–1995). Dok se putovanje odvija kroz gradove i sela duž ove rute, rad dokumentira konkretna mjesta masakara, nestanaka i ratnih zločina – mjesta koja uglavnom ostaju nevidljiva ili nepriznata među lokalnim srpskim stanovništvom i u široj javnosti.

Oslanjajući se na teorijske uvide iz studija sjećanja, narativ naglašava kako krajolici postaju nositelji bola i sjećanja te kako činovi prešućivanja ili selektivnog zaborava doprinose održavanju podjela u poslijeratnom bosanskohercegovačkom društvu. Putovanje, iako praktično u svojoj funkciji, poprima karakter rituala žalovanja, otpora i sjećanja. Rad istražuje načine na koje preživjeli prolaze kroz fizičke i simboličke prostore traume, suočavajući se s trajnim prisustvom prošlosti u svakodnevnim geografijama. Konačno, rad pokazuje da za mnoge preživjele Bošnjake jednostavan čin vožnje od Sarajeva do Srebrenice postaje duboko utjelovljen politički čin rada na sjećanju – proces u kojem prostor postaje nositelj vremena, a pejzaži svjedoče o izgubljenim životima i odgođenoj pravdi.

Ključne riječi: *Bosna, genocid, Srebrenica, sjećanje, masovne grobnice*

“Welcome to (the) Republic of Srpska”

The two existing driving routes from Sarajevo to Srebrenica are colloquially referred to as the Kladanj route and the Romanija route.[a] Like many other survivors, I regularly travel both routes but I prefer the Romanija route. It is a bit shorter, but it can get difficult in winter season as you have to cross Romanija Mountain. The Romanija route is part of Road M19, connecting Sarajevo and Belgrade via Zvornik. It was of strategic importance to the Serb forces during the war. As the main road

through the region, it is considered to be the communication backbone of the eastern part of "RS".[b]

However, no matter what route you choose, you have to cross the IEBL (Inter-Entity Boundary Line) into the Bosnian entity of Republika Srpska, where you will be greeted by a road sign bearing the words: "*Dobro došli u Republiku Srpsku – Welcome to Republic of Srpska*." As Wagner and Nettelfield note, this is "a hollow or even distressing greeting for survivors of the genocide and for returnees expelled from their homes during earlier episodes of ethnic violence".[1]

In addition to the contested use of the word *Republika* [Republic] in the entity's name[c], the word *Srpska* straightforwardly and unambiguously implies a relationship of possession between Serbs and that part of the country. As Bosnian-American political analyst Jasmin Mujanović notes about this Bosnian entity's name:

> "it is a grammatically bizarre construction which does not easily translate to English and barely makes sense in our language. In Western media it's often incorrectly glossed as 'Serb Republic'. In terms of its intended meaning, it is perhaps more accurate to refer to it as Serbland. But the result is the same: it is a chauvinist term, meant to erase non-Serbs from the area's politics, society, and history."[2]

Referring to the Bosnian Serb leadership as "Pale" (after their seat during the war in the hills above Sarajevo) Richard Holbrooke, a U.S. diplomat and the chief negotiator and architect of the Dayton Peace Accords, wrote in his book several years later: "I regret that we did not make a stronger effort to drop the name Republika Srpska. We underestimated the value to Pale of retaining their blood-soaked name".[3]

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[1] Lara J. Nettelfield and Sarah Wagner, *Srebrenica in the Aftermath of Genocide*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, 31.

[2] Jasmin Mujanović, [Twitter] 1 September 2021. Available at: https://twitter.com/JasminMuj/status/1432892028631728130 [Accessed 05 October 2022]

[3] Richard Holbrooke, *To End a War: The Conflict in Yugoslavia--America's Inside Story--Negotiating with Milosevic*, New York, Modern Library, 1999, 135.

Memoryscape of the Romanija route

The Romanija route gets very busy on 11 July when thousands of people drive to Srebrenica to attend the main commemoration event at Potočari.

Even well-informed outsiders, including Bosnians from other parts of the country, are unfamiliar with the history of many locations on this route and instead focus exclusively on their destination —Potočari and Srebrenica. On their way to the Croatian and Montenegrin coast, tourists—most numerous during summer—coming from Serbia, but also from the countries of central Europe, enjoy the picturesque landscape unaware of the events that occurred at multiple sites along the route in the 1990s.

However, many Bosniak survivors from the region can identify with places and their related narratives on the Romanija route. Even though the travelogue below describes the trip from my own perspective, using my subjective experience as a form of data, it reflects the experience shared by other Bosniaks from the Bosnian Mid-Podrinje region who survived the war, "ethnic cleansing" and genocide.[4] According to Davies, autobiography can be used in ethnography at various levels of involvement.[5] As the author notes, the inclusion of autobiographical elements in data analysis and the reporting of findings—both in terms of the researcher's past and their experiences during fieldwork—"may also be more intimately a part of the research process when ethnographers are members of the collectivity they are researching".[6]

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[4] As part of my doctoral thesis, I conducted fieldwork using qualitative narrative research methods, incorporating multi-sited ethnography and elements of participatory action research for both data collection and data generation. This included research in Srebrenica and other locations within the Bosnian Mid-Podrinje region.

For more information see Hasan Nuhanović, *"Missing people, missing stories in the aftermath of genocide and "ethnic cleansing"* in Srebrenica and Prijedor." PhD diss., RMIT University, 2024.

[5] Charlotte Aull Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Self and Others,* London and New York: Routledge, 1999.

[6] Charlotte Aull, Davies, *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Self and Others,* 1999, 189.

Using the Romanija route as a geographically distinct feature, my aim has been to demonstrate how this journey reveals the interconnected and co-constitutive nature of both individual memory and communal, shared—yet divided—knowledge of the history behind these places.

Addressing the relationship between memory and place, De Nardi et al note that "memory permeates places and attaches itself onto things, big and small".[7] I find that my „memory journey" resonates very much with Portelli's observation that „in memory, time becomes place"[8] and with Frisch's observation that memory is „living history, the remembered past that exists in the present".[9] Similarly, Buturović notes that the landscape is "allowed to travel through time as our attempts to make sense of its different components link the past and the present".[10]

It would be important to know how this landscape is experienced by perpetrators and accessories of the crimes committed there, or by the local Serb population in general, but I have not collected that kind of data as part of my field work. However, in post war-Bosnia the choice not to know, not to talk about, not to recall, or to selectively remember past events makes things visible to the members of one ethnic group seemingly invisible and non-existent to the members of the other. In their joint article, Eastmond and Mannergren Selimovic describe how silence is chosen as a possibility in postwar everyday life in local community settings in Bosnia and Herzegovina.[11]

Many survivors experience driving on this route as a "memory journey", a travel through both space and time, even when intended only as a mundane act of moving from point A to point B.

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[7] Sarah De Nardi, Hilary Orange, Steven High, Eerika Koskinen-Koivisto, *The Routledge Handbook of Memory and Place*, London and New York, Routledge, 2020, 2.

[8] Alessandro Portelli, *The battle of Valle Giulia: Oral history and the art of dialogue*. Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1997, 32.

[9] Michael Frisch, *A shared authority: Essays on the craft and meaning of oral and public history*, Suny Press, 1990, 23.

[10] Amila Buturović, *Carved in Stone, Etched in Memory: Death, Tombstones and Commemoration in Bosnian Islam since c. 1500*, London and New York, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016, 114.

[11] Marita Eastmond and Johanna Mannergren Selimovic, "Silence as Possibility in Postwar Everyday Life," *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, *6*(3), 2012, pp. 502-524.

For those starting their trip from Sarajevo, the Romanija route[12] begins only several kilometers past Baščaršija, Sarajevo's famous old town quarters, when you leave the Federation territory and cross the IEBL[13] into Republika Srpska. Past the intersection leading to Pale, the wartime Bosnian Serb headquarters and a place name that still causes uneasy feelings among Sarajevans, and after you cross the main elevation of Romanija Mountain, the village of Novoseoci appears in the distance on your right-hand side. On 21 September 1992, the Serb military raided the undefended village and killed forty-four Bosniak civilians.[14] As if it marks the beginning of a ritual that accompanies the journey, to honor the victims I switch off the stereo in my car before I reach this point, and I keep it off until I return to the Federation—because places of atrocities are located one after another as you continue driving towards Srebrenica.

Some ten kilometers after you pass the town of Sokolac, the village of Mičivode appears on the right side of the road and the village of Kute on the left side. The villages were undefended and were both raided by the Serb military on 20 September 1992. All inhabitants who did not manage to flee were killed on the spot. As Merdan Murtić, a survivor, stated on the 24th commemoration of the massacre marked in 2016 at Mičivode: "They killed my father, mother, my underage brother, my uncle, my aunt and my ninety-year old grandmother […] Remains of some victims haven't been found yet and no one wants to help us find them."[15]

Just there, between the two villages, is a spot on the road which the Bosniak men and boys crossed in large or small groups in August 1995, attempting to reach free territory after the fall of the Žepa UN

[12] Sarajevans also refer to it as the Pale route as its first section runs through the area of Pale, which served as the Bosnian Serb headquarters during the war.

[13] Inter-Entity Boundary Line

[14] Tužilastvo Bosne i Hercegovine, *Podignuta optužnica protiv devet osoba za zločin Protiv čovječnosti u Novoseocima opština Sokolac 1992 [electronic source]*, 2020. Available at: http://tuzilastvobih.gov.ba/index.php?id=4724&jezik=b [Accessed 4 August 2025].

[15] *Dnevni Avaz, Obilježena godišnjica stradanja Bošnjaka u selu Mičivode [electronic source]*, 2016.
Available at https://avaz.ba/vijesti/bih/254981/obiljezena-godisnjica-stradanja-bosnjaka-u-selu-micivode [Accessed 4 August 2025].

safe area. Most made it, but some were ambushed and captured. Some of the detainees were killed and others released upon the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords. The road then passes through Han Pijesak, a little town in whose vicinity was the headquarters of the Bosnian Serb Army during the war. The local people always talked about the nearby underground military installation and Yugoslav President Tito's bunker that could sustain a nuclear explosion. It was turned into General Mladić's headquarters in 1992. Having been indicted by the ICTY, General Mladić reportedly stayed at Han Pijesak after the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords, for some time enjoying full protection there until he relocated to Serbia.

Vlasenica is the next town en route to Srebrenica; a place where I lived with my parents and brother until we had to flee in April 1992, and where my mother was imprisoned and murdered in July 1995 after the fall of Srebrenica. A broad view from the location called Han Pogled (Pogled translates as "view") reaches across Mid-Podrinje region all the way to the hills around Srebrenica, and further on to Serbia. Ružina Voda and a dozen other locations down the winding road were places which hundreds of Bosniaks from Srebrenica tried to cross in their attempt to reach free territory during the war. Many disappeared there. Before you approach the outskirts of Vlasenica you pass by the junction from which a mountain road leads to the nearby location called Debelo Brdo—a site at which many Bosniak prison camp detainees from Vlasenica were murdered. According to the ICTY Dragan Nikolić judgement of 2003, "on 30 September 1992 a group of about 40 people was taken to Debelo Brdo and was liquidated there."[16] There are still unrecovered human remains in that area.

It is well before descent to the town that I start reciting verses of Al-Fatihah, the opening chapter of the Koran, which Bosnian Muslims offer as a prayer for the dead. I memorized it at one point during the war, when violent death became a daily occurrence. I was not raised as an observant Muslim. My parents viewed their Bosnian Muslim background in the

[16] ICTY, IT-94-2-S, In the Trial Chamber, Prosecutor v. *Dragan Nikolić,* The Hague, December 18, 2003, 63.

context of their ethnic rather than religious identity—a characteristic shared by many Bosnian Muslims before the war. A prayer is the most solemn and the only appropriate act I can think of performing while driving down that hill. I repeat the prayer over and over until I pass Vlasenica.

As I drive and pray, my eyes are locked on the location beyond the town where forensic experts exhumed my mother's remains, found under a huge pile of garbage in 2009 along with remains of several male victims. I never went there to see the place and I probably never will. Just beyond the road sign with the town's name, concealed by dense vegetation, lies the valley where the Serb wartime authorities set up the notorious Sušica camp in 1992. It is only a kilometer away from Vlasenica's secondary school. Despite the fact that hundreds of victims were tortured, raped and murdered at this prison camp, to date only three individuals were convicted for these crimes: Dragan Nikolić, Predrag Bastah and Goran Visković. All three are local Serbs from Vlasenica and knew many of their victims personally. Many others involved, including their higher-ups, have not been convicted. Several war-crimes suspects have recently been indicted, including Miroslav Kraljević, the current Mayor of Vlasenica and his sister Višnja Aćimović, who has been charged with killing 37 prisoners.[17] While the Mayor is currently standing trial in the Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina, his sister fled to Serbia, out of reach of the Bosnian authorities. The survivors from Vlasenica gather at Sušica once a year on 25 September to mark the day when the prison camp was officially closed in 1992. Most of them come from the Federation, to where they return on the same day.

I almost always take the shortest possible route towards Srebrenica, leaving the town behind me. This way, I do not drive by the town's Muslim graveyard called Rakita located right next to the football pitch. Another graveyard, the site at which mortal remains of Bosniak victims from Vlasenica are buried after exhumation and identification, was built

[17] Sud Bosne i Hercegovine, *Potvđena optužnica u predmetu Višnja Aćimović [electronic source], 2017,* Available at https://sudbih.gov.ba/Court/Case/1122 [Accessed 4 August 2025].

there after the war as an extension to the existing one. A collective burial is organized every year on 24 April. As of 2021, the remains of 460 victims were buried there after the war, while more than a thousand of Vlasenica's Bosniaks are still missing.[d] The victims from Vlasenica killed in July 1995 after the fall of the Srebrenica UN safe area, where they ended up as refugees during the war, are not buried there. Instead, they are buried at the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery. Of about 1,000 Bosniaks from Vlasenica municipality killed in July 1995, around 500 have been buried at the Srebrenica-Potočari graveyard so far. This includes my parents and my brother.

At a later stage, a memorial called Memorijalni centar Rakita [Rakita Memorial Centre] was built next to the new graveyard in Vlasenica. The names of 2,463 Bosniaks from Vlasenica killed during the war at various locations in the country are engraved in the marble blocks, arranged in a circular shape. The monument has a roof construction of modest design made of metal beams and plastic. The design of the cornerstone at the Vlasenica Memorial, as its central figure, is almost identical to the cornerstone at Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial: a white marble block of one cubic meter. The inscription engraved on the corner stone is also almost identical. *Vlasenica 1992-1995* is all it says.

Ten minutes down the road en route to Srebrenica is the village of Zaklopača. A cemetery and a small monument with the victims' names, located next to the road, remind one of 16 May 1992 when sixty Bosniak civilians, including women and children, were murdered by the Serb military and police[18]. Around twenty minutes later you arrive to Nova Kasaba—a small town with an almost 100% Bosniak population before the war. Against all odds, Bosniaks held their town for a year, fending off countless attacks by Serb infantry and tanks. The town fell in March 1993, and most of its residents fled towards Srebrenica. The Serb

[18] ICTY, *IT-95-5/18-T,* In the Trial Chamber*,* Prosecutor v. Radovan Karadžić*, Public Redacted Version of Judgement Issued on 24 March 2016*, Volume I of IV, The Hague, March, 2016, 463.

Husein Omerović, *Žrtve genocida na području Vlasenice 1992.-1995,* Sarajevo, Univerzitet u Sarajevu - Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava, 2016.

authorities changed the town's name to Dušanovo [Dušan is a Serb male name] but its original name was reinstated after the war by intervention of the OHR.[19] A small community of Bosniak returnees lives there today. One of the oldest and, many agree, most beautiful mosques in Bosnia, Musa-pašina Mosque built in 1643, sits just across the road from a kafana (a sort of café) called *Uranak* where I almost always stop for a break. The mosque was leveled to the ground by the Serb forces but was fully reconstructed after the war, through fundraising activity of the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina. While the cafe's owner and his wife tell me about the hardships which they and other Bosniaks face, having returned to live there twenty years ago, I watch the mosque, contemplating the contrast between its reincarnated beauty and the irreparable loss of human life.

I had the same kind of hollow feeling while driving through Prijedor, at the other end of the country, where the minarets of mosques, all leveled to the ground in 1992, today again form an inseparable part of the town's skyline, or the village of Kozarac, whose mosques with their fancy facades that shine in the night, and hundreds of beautifully (re) constructed Bosniak houses, may trick a casual observer into thinking that the place hasn't seen total destruction, death camps and mass murder three decades ago.[20]

The Serb forces committed several atrocities at Nova Kasaba in 1992, of which the first was on 21 May 1992, when a bus arrived from Vlasenica and stopped at the town's edge, at the location called Bent. The Serb soldiers took thirty-two Bosniak civilians off the bus, lined them up and machine-gunned them all.[21] The most massive atrocity at Nova Kasaba, however, was perpetrated in July 1995 following the fall of Srebrenica. At least several hundred men and boys fleeing from Srebrenica were

[19] Office of the High Representative. For more information see: www.ohr.int

[20] ICTY, IT-00-39-T, In the Trial Chamber, Prosecutor v. Momčilo Krajišnik, The Hague, September 27, 2006, 179.

[21] Omerović, *Žrtve genocida na području Vlasenice 1992.-1995,* 140. ICTY, *IT-95-5/18-T,* In the Trial Chamber*,* Prosecutor v. Radovan Karadžić*, Public Redacted Version of Judgement Issued on 24 March 2016*, Volume I of IV, The Hague, March, 2016, 468.

brought to the football pitch at Nova Kasaba.[22] They were all executed, and their bodies were dumped in a clandestine mass grave. Until recently there was no monument or anything else at the football pitch that would inform a casual observer about the events of July 1995. Several years ago, a memorial stone was placed at the corner of the football pitch. All the inscription on the stone says is: *13 Juli 1995*.

As you continue your trip towards Konjević Polje, you pass the spot at which the column of men and boys crossed the road on their trek towards Tuzla in July 1995. Many from the column were killed there, surrendered or were captured and were executed later. As the ICTY Karadžić judgement of 2016 states:

> ”Hundreds of Bosnian Muslims were killed; the mutilated bodies of those killed lay on the ground. Men cried and screamed, asking for help […] On the morning of 13 July, the Bosnian Serb forces began calling into the woods with a loudspeaker for the members of the column to surrender, telling them that they would be safe, and promising to comply with the Geneva Conventions […] In particular, along the Bratunac–Konjević Polje Road, members of the Bosnian Serb Forces drove a stolen UNPROFOR APC with a UN flag back and forth, and called on the column to surrender; the Bosnian Serb soldiers wore UN uniforms to deceive the Bosnian Muslims into thinking that they would be provided security upon their capture. A Bosnian Muslim man was ordered to call out to the Bosnian Muslim men in the woods that it was ‘safe to come to the Serbs.”[23]
>
> The man that the judgement refers to was most likely Ramo

Osmanović, the husband of Saliha Osmanović, a participant in my research. On 6 July 1995 Saliha’s younger son Edin was killed by a shell launched from the Serb positions, while her husband Ramo and her elder son Nermin “disappeared” in an attempt to reach the free territory. But Ramo and Nermin reappeared in video footage filmed by a Serb journalist

[22] ICTY, *IT-95-5/18-T,* In the Trial Chamber*,* Prosecutor v. Radovan Karadžić*,* Volume I of IV, The Hague, March 24, 2016.

[23] ICTY, *IT-95-5/18-T,* In the Trial Chamber*,* Prosecutor v. Radovan Karadžić*,* Volume I of IV, The Hague, March 24, 2016, 2134.

on 13 July 1995 at a location the ICTY judgements refer to as *Sandići meadow*—next to the main road between Konjević Polje and Bratunac. The Serb soldiers forced Ramo to call his son Nermin and other men and boys still hiding in the woods to surrender. The video footage, in which Ramo shouts to his son, is perhaps the most dramatic part of the documentary *A Cry from the Grave*.[24] Ramo and his son Nermin did not survive. Ramo Osmanović became one of the most emblematic symbols of the Srebrenica genocide. In the museum at the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Centre, opened in February 2017, one room with multimedia content is dedicated to Ramo and his son Nermin. A life-size statue of Ramo Osmanović was installed at a park in the center of Sarajevo in 2015 for the 20th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide.

Several hundred meters down the road towards the town of Bratunac is a location the ICTY judgements refer to as *Kravica Warehouse*, in the Serb village of Kravica. On 13 July 1995, following the fall of Srebrenica UN safe area, the Serb military and police murdered more than 1,300 Bosniak men and boys at that warehouse.[25] Earlier that day, Hakija Huseinović came out of the woods and surrendered to the Serb soldiers at Sandići meadow. Here is how Hakija describes the moment of the execution at Kravica Warehouse in a recently published book of the Srebrenica genocide survivor narratives:

> "We got on the ground and tried to protect our heads. They were shooting and throwing grenades until the dark fell […] Then they said that anyone who is wounded should come out and they would be taken to a hospital. Some wounded people went out. They killed them right away […] Inside it was total silence. Outside the soldiers were laughing around the building. I took two dead bodies and put them on top of me."[26]

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[24] Leslie Woodhead, *A Cry from the Grave* [Film], United Kingdom, Antelope Films BBC, 1999.

[25] ICTY, *IT-95-5/18-T,* In the Trial Chamber*,* Prosecutor v. Radovan Karadžić*,* Volume I of IV, The Hague, March 24, 2016, 2164.

[26] Ann Petrila and Hasan Hasanović, *Voices from Srebrenica: Survivor Narratives of the Bosnian Genocide*, Jefferson, North Carolina, McFarland, 2021, 47.

On the second night Hakija and another survivor sneaked out and escaped to the woods. Hakija made it to free territory two months later.

The warehouse is still standing today. Until 2022, it remained in almost the same condition as in July 1995, with its walls dotted with hundreds of bullet holes, both inside and out. But in 2022, the Serb-dominated authorities of the Bratunac municipality conducted extensive reconstruction works on the building. The walls, both inside and outside, were repainted, and a brand new façade was added to the exterior. Today, there are no visible traces that a casual visitor could connect to the massacre of July 1995.

There is no monument for the murdered Bosniak men and boys at Kravica. When compared to the events commemorating atrocities perpetrated at some other locations, it was relatively late that the mothers of Srebrenica from several different associations started visiting Kravica Warehouse to lay flowers and offer a prayer. Their first attempt to do that, on 13 July 2013, was met with force when several dozen of them arrived in a bus. A cordon of Republika Srpska Police equipped with batons and riot shields waited in front of the sealed gate. As the women tried to enter the premises, the police pushed them away. Several women were hurt. Hatidža Mehmedović, President of the Srebrenica Mothers Association, took pliers out of her bag and removed the wire with which the gate was sealed. As she recounted,

> "The day before on 12 July I bought pliers just in case. I didn't know the gate would be closed because we did not come there to fight or quarrel but only to offer a prayer to God for the souls of our loved ones. But it turned out we had to cut that wire to get in. We laid flowers, recited Al-Fatihah and went back".[27e]

Several hundred meters down the road, next to a bus stop at Kravica, there is a monument erected by the Serb authorities. The first lines of the inscription on the monument read:

[27] *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, [electromic source], 2013. Available at https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/25047959.html [Accessed 5 October 2025]

> "The monument marks the combatants killed and civilian victims who died defending their homeland and the Serb victims of the Second World War of the Birač and central Podrinje region of Republika Srpska; Between 1992 and 1995 3,267 Serb victims; Between 1941 and 1945 6,469 Serb victims" [English translation of the inscription]

According to Mirsad Tokača, Director of Sarajevo-based Research and Documentation Centre (RDC), the Serb casualties resulting from the Bosnian Muslim attack on Kravica village on 7 January 1993 were 11 civilians and 35 soldiers.[28] Noting that the narrative of the Serb victimhood of the World War II is conjoined and placed side by side with the narrative of the 1990s, Nettelfield and Wagner argue that the monument is aimed at supporting the narrative of equal numbers of casualties which "carried with it the insinuation that the crimes in Srebrenica were part of a civil war of equally equipped forces."[29] They further note that by extension this narrative diminishes the culpability of the Serb forces in the war and that, unlike the memorial for the victims of July 1995 genocide at Potočari, there is no list of verifiable names accompanying the figure of 3,267 Serbs killed from 1992 to 1995 (or the figure 6,469 killed in World War II). Pointing out that the numbers have become a part of another battle—that over commensurability, Nettelfield and Wagner also note that: "[…] the stated numbers match no graves, as those at the memorial in Potočari do. Etched in stone, they tabulate rather than embody human loss."[30]

As Munira Subašić[f], President of the Association Movement of the Mothers of Srebrenica and Žepa Enclaves, stresses, the mothers' associations of the Srebrenica genocide victims have publicly condemned all war crimes regardless of the victims' ethnicity. Subašić says the

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[28] *Deutsche Welle,* [electronic source] 2019. Available at: https://www.dw.com/hr/ubijeni-na-ku%C4%87nom-pragu/a-47208075 [Accessed 1 October 2025].

Mirsad Tokača, *Bosanska knjiga mrtvih: Ljudski gubici u Bosni i Hercegovini 1991-1995 / The Bosnian Book of the Dead: Human Losses in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1991-95,* Sarajevo, Istraživačko dokumentacioni centar, 2012.

[29] Nettelfield and Wagner, 271.

[30] Nettelfield and Wagner, 272.

mothers keep repeating that the death of every innocent victim is a tragedy, that every loss must be acknowledged, and that the perpetrators must be brought to justice. However, Mrs. Subašić and other members of the mothers' associations also point out that the myth about thousands of Serb civilian victims killed in the region between 1992 and 1995 has been constructed with the aim of relativizing "ethnic cleansing" and genocide against the Bosniak population. This revisionist narrative has become the mainstream public discourse both in the Serb-dominant Bosnian entity of Republika Srpska and in Serbia, and has to a large extent been institutionalized.

Further on towards Srebrenica, only several kilometers from Kravica, the road passes through Glogova—a village at which Serb forces murdered at least 65 Bosniak civilians on 9 May 1992.[31] Several kilometers further is the village of Hranča. According to the ICTY Krajišnik judgement, at the beginning of May 1992 the Serb forces torched 43 Bosniak houses and killed 17 villagers, after which 250 of Hranča's inhabitants were brought to Bratunac. Of them, 60 men were taken to Vuk Karadžić school where hundreds of victims were tortured and murdered.[32]

The town sign "Bratunac" appears several minutes after you pass Hranča. That is where you can leave the main road, making a sharp left turn, and several hundred meters further you will arrive at Veljaci Memorial and Cemetery. But on 11 May 2000, when a convoy of four buses, driving members of the Association Women of Podrinje, and women from several other survivors' associations reached that spot, Veljaci Memorial and Cemetery did not exist—nor did any other memorial, graveyard or monument for the victims of "ethnic cleansing" and genocide in the Podrinje region, including Srebrenica and Potočari. The women wanted to lay flowers and offer a prayer at the entrance of Vuk Karadžić school[33] in honor of the Bosniak victims murdered there and at multiple other locations in Bratunac municipality in May 1992.

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[31] ICTY, *IT-95-5/18-T,* In the Trial Chamber*,* Prosecutor v. Radovan Karadžić*,* Volume I of IV, The Hague, March 24, 2016, 290.

[32] ICTY, IT-00-39-T, In the Trial Chamber, Prosecutor v. Momčilo Krajišnik, The Hague, September 27, 2006, 119.

[33] The school's name was changed to *Branko Radičević* after the war.

As Šuhra Sinanović[g], President of the Association Women of Podrinje and participant in my research, explains, the UN IPTF[34] and SFOR[35] were not happy about this visit but formally supported it and committed to provide escort and secure the route, nevertheless. Šuhra was in the first bus together with Munira Subašić, Kada Hotić and Hatidža Mehmedović. As the buses driving from the Federation reached the Bratunac town sign, the women could see members of Republika Srpska Police standing on both sides of the road. Several members of UN IPTF were standing next to them. A huge crowd of local Serbs was behind the police, and the windows and balconies of the houses lined up along the road were crammed with people. Then rocks started flying at the buses from all sides. The buses came to a halt. Volleys of rocks and stones came one after another, crashing through the windows. The women squatted between the seats. All windows on the first two buses were smashed. As the people in the crowd ran out of rocks they went around searching for more and the attack continued incessantly. Then suddenly the crowd dispersed in all directions when a deafening noise and strong wind seemed to appear from nowhere, raising a cloud of dust. An American SFOR helicopter descended, hovering right above the buses. The buses turned around and drove back. The women who sustained injuries were treated at a hospital in Kladanj, on the Federation side. Šuhra Sinanović had scratches and bruises on her head and her knee. Many other women were hurt too, but none seemed to have sustained serious injuries.

As you continue driving towards the main intersection at the town's center, you pass by the Bratunac football pitch that thousands of Bosnian Muslims from Bratunac and the surrounding villages were herded into in May 1992. The same scenario was repeated in July 1995, when several thousand Bosniak men and boys were brought there—both those separated from their families at Potočari and those from the column who surrendered to the Serb forces on the Bratunac – Konjević Polje road. Bratunac is probably the only town in Bosnia in which mass murder was

[34] United Nations International Police Task Force.

[35] NATO-led multinational Stabilization Force, tasked with implementing the military aspect of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

perpetrated two times at the same locations—the football pitch and Vuk Karadžić school—first in May 1992 and then again in July 1995.[36]

While waiting for the green light at the town's main intersection, I can't help but cast a look at the Hotel Fontana, where Serb General Mladić met with the Dutch Colonel Karremans and three representatives of the refugees from Potočari on 12 July 1995, my father among them. The video clip from that meeting, recorded by a Serb cameraman, has long since become an indelible part of collective memory about the Srebrenica genocide. It is yet another example that corresponds to the concept of Confino's "vehicles of memory"[37] and to Landsberg's concept of "prosthetic memory" which is transferred through media and which represents a new form of public cultural memory that "emerges at the interface between a person and a historical narrative about the past."[38] The same applies to the photograph of Fikret Alić and images of the other emaciated, bone-thin prisoners behind barbed wire in the video footage recorded by British journalists at Trnopolje prison camp outside the town of Prijedor in August 1992, for example.[39] However in my research I focused on sites (graveyards, monuments, memorials) and commemoration events which too may act as "vehicles of memory" but whose defining characteristic is the fixed points they occupy in physical space and the memoryscape they create together.

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[36] ICTY, *IT-95-5/18-T,* In the Trial Chamber*,* Prosecutor v. Radovan Karadžić*,* Volume I of IV, The Hague, March 24, 2016.

[37] Anna Green, *Individual Remembering and 'Collective Memory': Theoretical Presuppositions and Contemporary Debates*, in *Oral History*, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 35-44, 2004. Alon Confino, "Collective memory and cultural history: Problems of method," *The American historical review 102, no. 5, 1997, pp. 1386-1403.*

[38] Alson Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

[39] *Washington Post Magazine*, In the Shadow of the Holocaust [electronic source], 25 September.
Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/maga- zine/1994/09/25/in-the-shadow-of-the-holocaust/8a08e0b4-c929-4694-9f68-7597b5e254dc/ [Accessed 30 September 2025].
Admira Fazlić, *Čovjek i fotografija – čovjek iza žice logora Trnopolje*, Sarajevo: Dobra Knjiga, 2017.

From Bratunac, it takes another five minutes to reach Potočari. The first thing you see on your right-hand side is endless rows of white marble tombstones. I park my car and walk across the graveyard toward an apple tree growing just outside the fence, its branches reaching over into the cemetery. Placed at the bottom of a slightly elevated hillside are four graves—my uncle's, my father's, my mother's and my brother's, from left to right. I raise my hands and offer a prayer for each one of them. I sometimes touch the tombstones and stay for another moment before I walk away. Occasionally there are a few other survivors praying at the graves of their murdered relatives.

Between July 1995 and March 2003, when the first burial at Potočari was convened, an overgrown field was all a casual visitor could see there. It took years of struggle by the survivors to have a proper cemetery and memorial constructed, so that the world could see the scale of the July 1995 massacre.

Conclusion

In Podrinje, including the area surrounding Srebrenica, the view across the region is obstructed by its dramatic topographic structure, its hilly and mountainous terrain, its deep valleys and ravines. A casual observer would be able to grasp little about the wartime events on the other side of a hill or a mountain by standing at a fixed point.

In addition to other circumstances, such as historical, social and political ones, the topography of the landscape often dictates the form of memorialization. Buturović underscores the importance of material culture, specifically gravestones, funerary inscriptions and images in understanding Bosnia's religious and memory landscape. Describing the triad relationship between memory, identity and space, Buturović refers to John R. Gillis who argues that the relationship between memory and identity is historical but it is also geographical, meaning it is built

into the physical, spatial, and material world around us "enshrined in commemorative practices, landscape and memorial objects".[40]

Some of the atrocity sites on the Sarajevo-Srebrenica route are marked and some are not – but the juncture between individual and collective memory exists at both marked and unmarked sites. Marking both the sites of mass graves from which the victims' remains have been exhumed and the places of mass executions may be the next stage in the process of memorialization to unfold in the future – to be carried out by the survivors who remember those atrocities or by the next generation, to whom collective memory has been transferred.

Notes:

[a]According to Google Route Planner, the distance from Sarajevo to Srebrenica via the Romanija route is 133 km, or approximately 2 hours and 27 minutes, but the trip can take longer depending on weather and traffic conditions, while the Kladanj route is 157 km long.

[b] Instead of using the entity's full name of the entity's full name, most Bosniaks refer to it by the abbreviation "RS" in everyday communication. It is used by most media outlets in the Federation and by politicians of Bosniak ethnicity including high-ranking officials at both the state and entity levels. Bosniak politicians also often employ the euphemism "*manji entitet*" [the smaller entity]—a rhetorical devise aimed at downplaying the fact that Republika Srpska occupies almost 49% of Bosnia's territory. The Federation covers around 50% of the country's territory, whereas the the Brčko District accounts for the remaining 1%.

[c]The English part of the inscription contains a translation of the name of his Bosnian entity, which should not be translated. In the original version of the Dayton Peace Accords, written in the English language, the entity's name appears throughout as *Republika Srpska,* emphasizing

[40] Amila Buturović, *Carved in Stone, Etched in Memory: Death, Tombstones and Commemoration in Bosnian Islam since c. 1500*, London and New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2016, 111. John R. Gillis, *Commemorations: The politics of national identity*. Princeton University Press, 1994.

that it is not a republic but a constitutive part of the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Attributes of a republic were not to be accorded to either entity while the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina— admitted under that name as Member State of the United Nations on 22 May 1992—was stripped of its "Republic" designation, becoming simply Bosnia and Herzegovina. As Article 3 of Dayton Peace Accords states: "The Parties welcome and endorse the arrangements that have been made concerning the boundary demarcation between the two Entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska, as set forth in the Agreement at Annex 2." For more information see: http://www.ohr.int/dayton-peace-agreement/

[d]I conducted multiple interviews with Mujo Hadžiomerović, former President of the Vlasenica's Municipal Board of the Islamic Community [Medžlis Islamske zajednice Vlasenica] who has been actively involved in the construction of Rakita Memorial Centre. Since September 2021, Mr. Hadžiomerović has also served as a member of the tripartite Board of Directors of the Missing Persons Institute (MPI) of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

[e]Following the event Hatidža Mehmedović was interrogated at the Srebrenica Police Station, and charges were filed against her.

[f]I also conducted multiple interviews with Munira Subašić as part of my research.

[g]Although I personally witnessed the event, I chose to describe it from the perspective of Šuhra Sinanović and other participants in my doctoral research.

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SREBRENICA, NEVER AGAIN TO NO-ONE AND NOWHERE: AN ACTION-ORIENTED APPROACH TO GENOCIDE EDUCATION

Abstract: Genocide education is intended to be a transformative experience, encouraging visitors to prevent its reoccurrence. However, it rarely focuses on 'Never Again' but rather emphasises memorialisation, or 'Never Forget'. This paper explores the experiences of visitors to, and guide-educators in, two memorial museums. It considers differing pedagogical approaches and suggests ways visitors can be empowered to take a more 'activist' position and work towards 'Never Again'.

Keywords: *Genocide education, pedagogy, memorial museums, Srebrenica, action-oriented, empowerment*

SREBRENICA: NIKADA VIŠE NIKOME I NIGDJE: AKCIJSKI PRISTUP OBRAZOVANJU O GENOCIDU

Sažetak: Obrazovanje o genocidu ima za cilj da bude transformativno iskustvo koje podstiče posjetioce da spriječe njegovo ponavljanje. Međutim, ono se rijetko usmjerava na koncept "Nikada više", već se uglavnom naglašava memorijalizacija, odnosno princip "Nikada ne zaboraviti". Ovaj rad istražuje iskustva posjetilaca i edukatora-vodiča u dva memorijalna muzeja. Analiziraju se različiti pedagoški pristupi te se predlažu načini na koje se posjetioci mogu osnažiti da zauzmu aktivniju poziciju i djeluju u pravcu ostvarivanja principa "Nikada više".

Ključne riječi: *obrazovanje o genocidu, pedagogija, memorijalni muzeji, Srebrenica, djelovanjem usmjeren pristup, osnaživanje*

Introduction

Memorial museums claim to be places focused on remembrance and memorialisation 'Never Forget'[1] providing a moral education, with visitors obligated to act in the present, and on the future, to prevent further atrocities, 'Never Again'.[2] To achieve this, it is purported that memorial museums, particularly those situated in former sites of mass atrocities, contain 'inherent pedagogies'[3] that focus on the experiential[4] and affective/emotional learning that occurs.[5] Such learning experiences are envisaged to elicit some visceral response that motivates visitors to take action.[6] And yet, guide-educators in these settings have highlighted the struggle they face in continuously educating visitors with little/no evidence of personal or social change.[7] The author suggests that current practices in most memorial museums do not provide visitors with a complete experience, time for reflection or the skills and confidence to

[1] Alasdair Richardson, "We too find it difficult: A consideration of site-based Holocaust education as emotional labour," *History Education Research Journal*, 18 (2), London, University College London, 2021.

[2] Alicja Bartuś, "On how to react to evil: A visit to Auschwitz and attitude shaping," In Piotr Trojański, ed, *Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust at authentic memorial sites: Current status and future prospects,* Oświęcim, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2019, 92-109

[3] Roger Simon, *A Pedagogy of Witnessing: Curatorial Practice and the Pursuit of Social Justice*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2014.

[4] Emma Waterton, "A more-than-representational understanding of heritage? The 'Past' and the politics of affect," *Geography Compass*, 8 (11), Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 2014

[5] Jacque Micieli-Voutsinas, "An Absent Presence: Affective Heritage at the National September 11th Memorial and Museum, *Emotion," Space and Society*, 24, Amsterdam, Elsevier, 2017

[6] Joanna Podolska, "What do the stones tell us? Education and memory of the place: The example of the bałuty district and the Łódz Ghetto in the Activity of the Dialogue Centre," In Piotr Trojański, ed, *Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust at authentic memorial sites: Current status and future prospects*. Oświęcim, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2019, 39-59

[7] Bartosz Bartyzel, "Educational challenges at the authentic Auschwitz memorial site," In Piotr Trojański, ed, *Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust at authentic memorial sites: Current status and future prospects.* Oświęcim, Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2019, 11-18

take action.[8] In fact, it is argued that they prioritise 'Never Forget,' using a discourse of remembrance that tends to overlay the emotional register of learning about genocide which at best leads to 'remembering'.[9]

Carter emphasizes the determination of educators to 'develop ways for visitors to take concrete actions and transcend the traditional commemorative parameters'[10] of the memorial museum. The challenge lies in moving visitors through encounters with the suffering of others toward taking action. Merely becoming aware of past injustices does not automatically create the necessary connections for visitors between the past and present to prevent the recurrence of atrocities such as genocide.[11] One of the main issues is that visitors experience an information overload in these spaces which can lead to an 'ethical impasse' where, although visitors are no longer ignorant of historical events, they have not been granted 'the power to do something decisive'.[12] This paper is a contribution to the conference: "Srebrenica 30 Years After the Genocide: Memory, Responsibility, and the Challenges of Denial". Therefore, the question is, can memorial museum guided tours/educational programmes educate and empower visitors to a point, as suggested by the Srebrenica Prayer, where 'Srebrenica, never happens again, to no one and nowhere'?[13]

This paper explores this question through the reconstructed experiences of visitors and those providing guiding or educational

[8] Kim Sadique, *Learning from Genocide: A narrative study of guiding experiences at sites of mass atrocities in Poland and Bosnia*, PhD Thesis, Leicester, De Montfort University, 2024.

[9] Rachel Baum, "What I Have Learned to Feel: The Pedagogical Emotions of Holocaust Education", *College Literature*, 23(3), Baltimore, John Hopkins University, 1996.

[10] Jennifer Carter, "The Museology of Human Rights," In *The Idea of a Human Rights Museum*, Karen Busby, Adam Muller, and Andrew Woolford, eds, Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Press, 2015, 219

[11] Roger Simon, A shock to thought: Curatorial judgment and the public exhibition of 'difficult knowledge', *Memory Studies* 4(4), London, Sage Publishing, 2011, 432–449

[12] Geoffrey Hartman, *The Longest Shadow: In the Aftermath of the Holocaust,* Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1996, 103

[13] Remembering Srebrenica, The Srebrenica Prayer. https://srebrenica.org.uk/the-srebrenica-prayer. Accessed 03/01/2025.

programmes in two memorial museums situated in former sites of mass atrocities (authentic sites), namely Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, Poland and Srebrenica Memorial Centre, Bosnia. Distinction is made between guide-educators, those who have received training but do not have lived experience of genocide, and survivor-educators whose knowledge is from direct lived experience. Understanding the practices employed by educators in, and experiences of visitors to, these two sites have elucidated gaps in current models as well as areas of good practice. This paper will therefore consider current mechanisms used to articulate, transmit and attach memories of historical traumas in authentic sites and conclude with a pedagogically underpinned comprehensive model of genocide education, namely 'A Pedagogy for Social Change'.

'Difficult knowledge' is the term used to describe representations of history which are uncomfortable and unsettling, often traumatic, and which challenge our understanding of self (beliefs, values and identity).[14] Memorial museums use a range of methods to articulate and/or transmit 'difficult knowledge' including; historical narratives and the formation of collective memories[15] and affect and emotion.[16] However, unlike traditional museums, memorial museums in authentic sites have the benefit of using More-than-Representational Space where the static place (built environment) tells the story or becomes part of the story being told.[17] Such places are inherently imbued with meaning and also have meaning projected on to them. Through navigating (movement in/around) and narrating these places, they become spaces for embodied encounters.

[14] Deborah Britzman, *Lost Subjects, Contested Objects: Toward a Psychoanalytic Inquiry of Learning*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1998.

[15] Magdalena Gross and Luke Terra, *Teaching and Learning the Difficult Past: Comparative Perspectives*, New York: Routledge, 2018.

[16] Sara Levy and Maia Sheppard, Difficult Knowledge and the Holocaust in History Education, *The Wiley International Handbook of History Teaching and Learning*, Scott Metzger and Lauren Harris, New York, Wiley-Blackwell, 2018, 365–387

[17] Dvora Yanow, "Space stories: studying museum buildings as organized spaces while reflecting on interpretive methods and their narration," *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 7 (3), California, Sage Publishing, 1998.

Most memorial museums use narration as a means to articulate and transmit knowledge, including the two examined in this study. Narration is a form of story-telling using victim/survivor testimonies, or other verbally presented evidence, to explain the buildings, artefacts and therefore the historical traumas linked to the space. Narration of the authentic site is performative although it often remains mediated by organisational guidelines. As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett explains, narration of the site is part of museum theatre incorporating the dramatic (the narrative and emotional encounters) alongside the mise-en-scène, the more-than-representational space.[18]

It is asserted that narrative representations of historical trauma are often incomplete and this is probably more so in the memorial museum, owing to time constraints associated with short guided tours and educational programmes[19]. The tendency in most of these sites is to take a victim-oriented approach to narratives, with little if any attention paid to the motives or actions of perpetrators or the wider socio-political context in which crimes of the state/powerful occur.[20] Similarly, little attention is paid to rescuer narratives.

As noted above, memorial museums have tended to focus on victim narratives for the creation of collective memory. In our contemporary understanding, collective memory refers to 'social consciousness', through learning from historical trauma and considering our collective responsibilities to society. But these memories are not ours, we have only experienced them in our imagination through the stories of others. Landsberg explains that such memories can be attached to us, in a similar fashion to a prosthetic limb, contributing to our sense of both individual and collective identity, as well as becoming a functional part of who we

[18] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "The museum as catalyst," Keynote address, Museums 2000: Confirmation or Challenge. ICOM Sweden, the Swedish Museum Association and the Swedish Travelling Exhibition/ Riksutställningar in Vadstena, 2000.

[19] Sadique, *Learning from Genocide: A narrative study of guiding experiences at sites of mass atrocities in Poland and Bosnia*, PhD Thesis.

[20] Jeremy Stoddard, "Difficult knowledge and history education," *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 30 (3), London, Taylor-Francis, 2022.

are. Once attached, these 'prosthetic memories' can potentially motivate us to act in accordance with learned collective societal responsibilities.[21]

It is the affective dimension of the place and narrative that facilitates the attachment of 'prosthetic memories'. The affective dimension is said to be generated through meanings attributed to a particular situation and its context - the more it means, the more heightened our affective/emotional response. How much the experience means to the visitor will depend on the real or perceived distance (temporal, geographical, socio-political) between the visitor and the event (and current world events), the place, and/or the victim/survivor or perpetrator group.[22] It is through bridging this distance in the tour or educational programme, that the feeling of solidarity can be fostered. It does not require us to have shared another's trauma but obliges us to join together in a shared commitment to work towards 'Never Again.[23]

In managing the affective context and attaching memories, visitors need time for both personal and dialogic reflection. This reflection should firstly be understood as reflection-in-action, which takes place during the affective experience and secondly, reflection-on-action, which takes place afterwards.[24] In particular, visitors need to reflect on the social and political affects of historical trauma which are understood through exploring shared vulnerability to loss and suffering and complicity in the loss and suffering of others.[25] It is important to recognise that this is not about forming a shared identity with victims/survivors as we have not lived through their experiences with them, but about building 'empathy for caring'.[26] Reflecting on our vulnerabilities and complicities 'returns

[21] Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American memory in the Age of Mass Culture*. New York, Columbia University Press, 2004.

[22] Stoddard, "Difficult knowledge and history education," *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 30 (3), London, Taylor-Francis, 2022.

[23] Sally Scholz, *Political Solidarity*, University Park, PA, Pennsylvania State University Press., 2008.

[24] Donald Schon, *The Reflective Practitioner: How professionals think in action*, Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 1991.

[25] Judith Butler, *Precarious life: The powers of mourning and violence*, London, Verso, 2004.

[26] Keith Barton and Linda Levstik, *Teaching History for the Common Good*, New York, Routledge, 2004.

us to a sense of human vulnerability, to our collective responsibility for the physical lives of one another'.[27] Failure to take time to reflect means that visitors are likely to only achieve 'empty empathy'[28] or be left feeling affectively disempowered, because they 'have been moved but not moved to action'.[29]

The research was conducted through face-to-face narrative interviews with twenty-one undergraduate student visitors and eight educators (four guide-educators and four survivor-educators). For student visitors the interviews focused on their expectations of and reflections on learning in an authentic site (before and after a visit to one of the two sites) and for educators, the interviews focused on their guiding/educational practices and expectations they had of visitors. Ethical approval was granted by the De Montfort University's Research Ethics Committee.

DISCUSSION

More-than-Representational Space of the 'authentic site'

Memorial museums are in a privileged position because not only can they utilise the buildings and spaces of authentic historic sites or otherwise, they can also exhibit physical remnants of the past, much like the displays of shoes, prosthetics and hair in Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, and impart knowledge and understanding through the telling of stories. Working within, or visiting, an authentic 'more-

[27] Butler, *Precarious life: The powers of mourning and violence*, 30

[28] Michalinos Zembylas, "Post-truth as difficult knowledge: fostering affective solidarity in anti-racist education," *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 30(3), London, Taylor-Francis, 2022.

[29] Babak Dadvand, Helen Cahill and Michalinos Zembylas, "Engaging with difficult knowledge in teaching in post-truth era: from theory to practice within diverse disciplinary areas," *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 30 (3), London, Taylor-Francis, 2022.

than-representational' space[30] emerged as an important theme for all participants. More-than-representational space was stated to be the primary mechanism employed by educators to aid visitor understanding as it made the abstract concept of genocide tangible through being able to show 'where it happened'.[31]

Guide-educators discussed the usefulness of museum guidelines[32] (Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2022) in establishing the buildings and artefacts to be presented, which supported the provision of a consistent narrative addressing 'human evil',[33] but some felt it hindered their sense of individuality and creativity.

GE4 *"[A]ll of us receive guidelines…all of the guides visit the same exhibition, and the same places…we receive information where we should stop and what we should show"*

For visitors to Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, such controlled navigation around the camp spaces was argued to limit their individual agency in being able to choose what they saw or experienced. However, a number of visitors discussed the affective impact of the authentic site, where they were able to get a sense of what it might 'feel' like to have been there. The visitors here described the visceral feeling of evil across the camps, with one stating:

S11. *"The spaces in between the places are just as bad as the places themselves… they are just as evil and malicious as the actual gas chambers".*

[30] Micieli-Voutsinas, "An Absent Presence: Affective Heritage at the National September 11th Memorial and Museum," *Emotion, Space and Society*, 24, Amsterdam, Elsevier, 2017.

[31] Paul Slovic, "Psychic numbing and genocide," Judgment and Decision Making, 2 (2), 2007.

[32] Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 'Visiting'. https://www.auschwitz.org/en/visiting/. Accessed 12/06/2023.

[33] Tomasz Mikalik, People with DisABILITIES at the Museum: From Cognitive and Ethical Challenges to Hope for a New Version of History, In Piotr Trojański, ed, *Education about Auschwitz and the Holocaust at authentic memorial sites: Current status and future prospects*. Oświęcim: Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, 2019, 152-166

Narration *in* rather than *of* the Space

As eloquently stated by one of the survivor-educators, "*The Twentieth Century was the age of information; the Twenty-First Century is the age of narration*" and this was clearly demonstrated in this study. The use of narrative allows us to structure our experience(s), enabling us to make sense of them in terms of our values, beliefs and identity in relation to others.[34] Guide-educators highlighted practices that focused on narration *of* the space and what happened there, explicating what visitors were seeing as a means for them to understand.[35] Both guide-educators and survivor-educators referred to the importance of drawing connections between the past and present. However, survivor-educators were more likely to incorporate 'the future' and the potential for atrocity prevention in their narratives.

To address the constraints placed on guide-educators through institutional guidelines, the testimonies chosen to 'explain' the space were seen as a means to express their creativity. Testimonies were selected on the basis of their connection with, and relatability to, the victim/survivor. One of the Polish guide-educators noted,

GE4 *"I really like to talk about Halina Birenbaum…this is very important for me to tell about her as she was a Polish Jew".*

For survivor-educators, there was no need to consider the relatability of testimony given, as it was drawn from their own experiences or of those close to them. There was a broader repertoire of lived experience to refer to and this allowed a more adaptable approach that could be tailored to the specific visitor group.

Most importantly, it was the differential use of narration at these authentic sites that was felt to facilitate or hinder agentic participation and meaning-making for visitors. Referring to a guide-educators narration of the site at Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, one student visitor noted:

[34] Laura Bieger, "No place like home; or, dwelling in narrative," *New Literary History*, 46 (1), Baltimore, John Hopkins University, 2015.

[35] Sadique, *Learning from Genocide: A narrative study of guiding experiences at sites of mass atrocities in Poland and Bosnia*, PhD Thesis

S13. *"…it felt like we missed a lot…because she was taking us to the ones [buildings] she wanted…rather than giving us the chance to walk around".*

In Srebrenica Memorial Centre, agentic participation of visitors was seen as central to deepening understanding.

SE3. "*I tell them about before the refugees got to Potočari, as men and boys started to head to the forest, I get to that point then I leave them to see the film and to visit the exhibition… they can make their own conclusions and understand the rest of the story… and of course, they are free to ask questions".*

Rather than navigating and narrating the buildings and artefacts to give them meaning (narrating of), survivor-educators considered that testimonies and other information were best shared in-place and that artefacts were of secondary importance or not required at all (narrating in). One survivor-educator stated that *"we have living human beings that have actually gone through all of that…which is more powerful than any artefact…"*.

Fundamentally, for all participants the power of the educational experience was not only the 'more-than-representational' space but the narratives *in* or *of* that space.

Affectivity

Affective modalities established within the memorial museum setting can hinder or facilitate the formation of particular affective relations,[36] and as a result, visitors' learning. Most guide-educators stated that they did not 'use' emotions in tours or educational programmes because it was not right to do so. Moreover, they emphasised that such matters as affect and emotions were inextricably intertwined with socio-cultural

[36] Kim Sadique and James Tangen, "I feel like I can't do a lot: Affectivity, Reflection and Action in 'Transformative' Genocide Education", *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, 28 (2), London, Sage Publishing, 2021.

contexts. In particular, they perceived that the expression of emotions and feelings in the learning process was more likely to be observed when working with visitors from western Europe and especially those from the UK. They went on to explain that the educational systems in most eastern European countries were knowledge or fact-based, rather than focused on emotions or reflection. Because of the international nature of those who visit, it was important for them as guide-educators, to share information dispassionately.

GE2. *"[P]eople in Poland are not used to using emotions as a kind of tool, it's not the way we work"*

One guide-educator who did think emotions should feature in the delivery of guided tours or educational programmes expressed regret that there wasn't enough time to do so.

GE2. *"Sometimes I think we are missing something… it's a shame that in many programmes we don't have enough time to have some open discussions and to feel good enough to work with emotions".*

One guide-educator acknowledged that they chose to use a detached delivery style which they felt was an important mechanism to foreground the victim narratives.

GE1. *"[M]any people they usually say my voice is very cold (and this is good), I'm not very emotional with my narrative ... it's not about me, it's about the person I'm taking about".*

This reflected comments by one of the student visitors who discussed not wanting to show how upset they were because it was not about them, it was about the victims.

S6. *"I shouldn't be feeling like this, it's not about me".*

However, a lack of working with and through emotions appeared to leave some visitors emotionally overwhelmed and struggling to deal with their feelings. This appears to have impeded visitor learning by disrupting the ideal conditions for the full realisation of transformation.[37]

[37] Jack Mezirow, "Transformative Learning: Theory to Practice," *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 74, Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 1997.

S1. *"It was numbing, you don't know how to react… your emotions are saying 'Well, I don't know what to do here, I haven't experienced anything like this'".*

In Bosnia, survivor-educators acknowledged the emotionally overwhelming experience for some visitors brought about by being in an authentic site and hearing survivor testimony directly. Although they stated that they did not intentionally utilise emotions, they did recognise the emotional impact on visitors encountering such difficult knowledge. To 'make things easier' for visitors to truly comprehend what they were seeing and hearing, survivor-educators believed working with and through emotions was important.

SE3. *"[P]eople get emotionally overwhelmed here… you know it's a normal human feeling that you feel sadness and sorrow after seeing all of this… I try to comfort everybody… when people are crying, I talk to them to make things easier for them".*

Encountering difficult knowledge can lead to affective disempowerment[38] with overwhelming negative affects such as guilt, anger, sadness or helplessness being experienced. These affects may prevent visitors from being able to remember or take action as they can bring about a loss of certainty in terms of understanding of self or others which needs to be worked through.[39] A number of survivor-educators stated that providing emotional support to visitors who became upset or felt overwhelmed was central to preventing affective disempowerment. This helped visitors come to terms with the affective power of the experience and furthermore, allowed a personal connection to be established between educator and visitor.

[38] Lynn Worsham, Going postal: Pedagogic violence and the schooling of emotion. In Henry Giroux and Kostas Myrsiades, eds, *Beyond the corporate university*, New York, NY, Rowman and Littlefield, 2001, 229-265.

[39] Lisa Farley, "Radical hope: Or, the problem of uncertainty in history education," *Curriculum Inquiry*, 39 (4), London, Taylor-Francis, 2009.

Incomplete Experiences

Although all participants, both educators and visitors, suggested that the experience was 'potentially transformative', how transformation was construed varied from a vague 'change in personal perspective', the way visitors perceived the world in which they lived, to a more clearly defined transformation in terms of visitors considering what they could do to build a more cohesive and just society. Survivor-educators noted the importance of creating connections with visitors as allies, friends, advocates, conveyors of information, and activists,[40] establishing well-defined 'ways for visitors to take concrete actions'.[41]

SE3 *"I expect them [visitors] to convey what they have heard and seen here…put something in the school curriculum…educate others… as decision-makers, make good decisions regarding other peoples' fates around the world".*

Stoddard[42] argues that the systematic nature of state-level violence and its perpetration, as well as the socio-cultural context in which it occurred[43], should be incorporated into educational programmes. However, this would mean providing an experience that demonstrated 'genocide' was something that could happen again. Owing to an incomplete learning experience, partly down to time constraints, this was not fully realised in all educational encounters in the museums. Guide-educators however, stated *"We don't talk a lot about the perpetrators and about bystanders, usually it is the perspective of the victims"* suggesting the concept of state crime was too abstract/complex and that *"people feel somehow safer with this [victim] perspective"*. Therefore, visitors were not fully able to

[40] Sadique*, Learning from Genocide: A narrative study of guiding experiences at sites of mass atrocities in Poland and Bosnia*, PhD Thesis.

[41] Carter, "The Museology of Human Rights.", *The Idea of a Human Rights Museum*, edited by Karen Busby, Adam Muller and Andrew Woolford, eds, Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015, 219.

[42] Stoddard, "Difficult knowledge and history education", *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 30 (3), London, Taylor-Francis, 2022.

[43] Gross and Terra, *Teaching and Learning the Difficult Past: Comparative Perspectives*.

recognise what the conditions for genocide were and thus what to guard against. Conversely, survivor-educators provided a more comprehensive understanding for visitors through drawing links between the Ten Stages of Genocide[44] and evidence of state-level violence, perpetrator narratives and action/inaction of those witnessing the events unfold.

Most educators acknowledged that a good deal of the internalisation of learning through reflection could not be facilitated during the guided tours or educational programmes and therefore the process of reflection was also incomplete. For survivor-educators, it was crucial that visitors reflected on their learning even after they had returned home, with one survivor-educator recounting how they told visitors, *"I need you to take the time to reflect on the lessons that if it happened here, to us…we know it can happen anywhere"*.

For guide-educators, capturing evidence of the impact from the learning experience was difficult owing to the lack of formal mechanisms for collecting this information post-visit. However, two stated that they had seen anecdotal evidence of perspective change through the social media posts of those who had visited. For survivor-educators, the establishment of strong personal connections with visitors meant that evidence of individual actions post-visit was shared more routinely with those working at, or with, the museum.

A Pedagogy for Social Change: An Action-Oriented Model

To address the disconnect between the aims of 'Never Again' and current praxis, a Pedagogy for Social Change model is proposed. This model enhances current memorial museum practices with the aim of moving visitors toward a more action-oriented position. It focuses on acknowledging both the epistemic and affective challenges inherent in confronting difficult knowledge.[45]

[44] Gregory Stanton, *Ten Stages of Genocide*, Genocide Watch, https://www.genocidewatch.com/tenstages Accessed 05/06/2023

[45] Dadvand, Cahill and Zembylas, "Engaging with difficult knowledge in teaching in

The model asserts that movement toward action requires the successful combination of five core pedagogical features: Evidentiary Epistemologies, Affective Modalities, Memory Traces, Reflective Spaces, and Empowered Solidarities.

1. Evidentiary Epistemologies

While memorial museums provide evidence of historical trauma through artifacts, spaces, and narratives, this must be broadened to include the systematic nature of state violence and the socio-political context in which it occurred. The model requires addressing perpetrator motivations, bystander actions, and victim agency/resistance, and using frameworks like Stanton's Ten Stages of Genocide to contextualize state-level violence. Crucially, evidentiary epistemologies must also include clear examples of actions that visitors can take.

2. Affective Modalities

The affective dimension must be managed to facilitate, rather than impede, learning. Guide-educators must acknowledge the affective dimension of the space and share narratives in a way that allows for understanding of shared vulnerability/complicity.[46] Cold, unemotional delivery distances the guide-educator and fails to reach visitors. Working with and through emotions is necessary to prevent visitors from becoming affectively disempowered by despair or hopelessness.

3. Memory Traces

The goal is to create exemplary memories of historical social trauma, which attach themselves to the visitor. This is not about creating a shared identity, but fostering empathy for caring by helping visitors experience loss through the eyes of the victim/survivor. This builds on the idea of prosthetic memory where remembering the suffering of others is considered the right thing to do.

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post-truth era: from theory to practice within diverse disciplinary areas," *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, 30 (3), London, Taylor-Francis, 2022.

[46] Butler, *Precarious life: The powers of mourning and violence*.

4. Reflective Spaces

The model emphasises the necessity of facilitating time for critical reflection, particularly reflection-in-action (processing during the visit), and reflection-on-action (considering subsequent steps).[47] Critical reflection requires time to revise meaning perspectives based on new, difficult knowledge. Reflection must therefore be personal, to facilitate meaning-making on an individual level, and dialogic, to cement these new frames of reference/new understandings in dialogue with those who shared the same experience.[48] This would also go some way to facilitating the creation of 'empowered solidarities'.

5. Empowered Solidarities

This component seeks to radicalise solidarity, moving beyond passive remembrance to active commitment. It relies on recognising a shared vulnerability to loss and grief, which promotes collective responsibility. A radicalised solidarity must also acknowledge shared complicities—the capacity to wound others or failing to stand up and speak out against injustice.

To foster a radicalised, empowered solidarity, empowerment must be actively embedded in the learning experience. Visitors need concrete examples of what they can do, however minor, within their own sphere of influence. Furthermore, creating an empowered community of visitors with a shared commitment for social change (e.g., "Community Champions" or "Messengers of Peace") can provide support for long-term commitment to action and serve as a mechanism for gathering evidence of actions taken.

[47] Schon, *The Reflective Practitioner: How professionals think in action*.

[48] Jack Mezirow, "Transformative learning as discourse," *Journal of Transformative Education*, 1 (1), 2003.

Conclusion

Memorial museums promise a situational affective context for learning about genocide, aiming to inspire concrete action. This paper confirms the importance of the authentic, more-than-representational space and the centrality of personal narratives for creating empathic connections. However, it highlights the challenge posed by incomplete experiences, specifically the lack of time for emotional processing and reflection, and the failure to contextualise genocide within state-level violence and perpetrator actions.

To fulfil the obligation to remember and act, a pedagogy for social change is necessary. By embracing a flexible approach, working with and through emotions, exploring the conditions in which genocide occurs, and empowering visitors to act, the educational experience can maximize learning. This shift moves solidarity from passive commemorative acts to active engagement, realizing the possibility of moving from 'Never Forget' to 'Never Again'.

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WE WISH YOU TO KNOW[1] THAT OUR FUTURE IS NOT FROZEN IN DESTRUCTION[2]

Abstract: This piece of experimental writing[3] illustrates the collapsing time

[1] This title echoes Philip Gourevitch's impactful work (See Gourevitch, Philip, *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families,* Picador, 2015) and aims to offer hope in the wake of documenting trauma.

[2] Amanda Nyamarembo Larsen, my eldest daughter, strengthened an earlier draft by proposing adding the word 'frozen' to the title and clarifying what I mean by 'reinventing reality'. Her suggestions, including the idea to end this piece with 'reinventing everyday life', gave this writing sharper meaning. I am grateful for her insight and willingness to engage with my writing.

[3] Yes, I am aware that I am adding a footnote to an abstract. I once told a friend that surviving genocide and writing about it is like inserting a footnote in a text, taking a break to pursue justice, and then coming back to write the second footnote. For genocide survivors and descendants of other mass crimes committed by humans against each other, there is a lot of work to be done in the time and space between the two footnotes. This experimental writing contributes to the creative fusions that are evident across Rwanda's literary genres. Particularly, I am practising the multilayering of messages typical of traditional Rwandan music and dance. Here I am acknowledging the ways in which this piece came about, that it reflects the African wisdom of *Ubuntu*, *I am because we are*. Also, I am reflecting on vital conversations that are taking place during my doctoral courses at the Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University. I would like to thank my colleagues and teachers for their generosity and support. Special thanks go to Dr Douglas Irvin-Erickson, Dr Leslie Dwyer, Dr Solon Simmons and Dr Charles L. Chavis Jr. for giving me the opportunity to write creatively in their doctoral classes. I am also grateful to Dr Daniel Rothbart for our ongoing conversations about the need for the field of Peace and Conflict Studies to develop systems of emotions as a response to the systems of domination and humiliation (see Rothbart, Daniel (ed.) *State Domination and the Psychopolitics of Conflict: Power, Conflict and Humiliation,* Routledge. 2019). I would like to thank Dr Kathleen Barta and Dr Samuel Totten, emeritus professors at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, for reading an earlier version of this text and providing invaluable comments. Dr. Helen Hintjens is a constant source of inspiration and support. Dr. Audrey Williams and I share the passion for music in peacebuilding and storying the world for peace. However, I would not have been able to write

and space between the stories of memory and loss among the survivors of the genocides against the Tutsi in Rwanda and Bosniaks in the former Yugoslavia. It provocatively comments on the destruction of cultural symbolism at the heart of those debates about the work of memory after genocide. Indeed, it problematizes the work of memory in post-genocide peacebuilding. Ultimately, it is a piece of experimental writing that pays attention to the resolve and resilience of survivors of genocide. This resilience may take different shapes in different situations, but it is observable across the cases.
Keywords: *memory, peace, future, genocide, destruction, survivors, cows, time, space, peacebuilding*

ŽELIMO DA ZNATE DA NAŠA BUDUĆNOST NIJE ZAROBLJENA U RAZARANJU

Sažetak: Ovaj eksperimentalni tekst prikazuje urušavanje granica vremena i prostora između priča o sjećanju i gubitku među preživjelima genocida nad Tutsijima u Ruandi i Bošnjacima u bivšoj Jugoslaviji. Na provokativan način komentira uništavanje kulturne simbolike koja se nalazi u središtu rasprava o radu na sjećanju nakon genocida. Naime, tekst problematizira ulogu sjećanja u procesima izgradnje mira nakon genocida. Konačno, riječ je o eksperimentalnom tekstu koji posvećuje pažnju odlučnosti i otpornosti preživjelih genocida. Ova otpornost može poprimiti različite oblike u različitim okolnostima, ali je uočljiva u oba slučaja.

this without the renewed inspiration I found after the reunion my friend Hasan Nuhanović in Sarajevo in the summer of 2025. I am indebted to him for finding the time to join me for coffee before my journey back home. Special thanks to the University of Sarajevo and the Institute for the Investigation of Crimes Against Humanity and International Law for giving me the chance to return to Bosnia after my first visit in 2005. Furthermore, this writing delves into the imagery and symbolism of cows in Rwandan culture. I first wrote about this in *A Past in Waiting*, which was translated by Patrik Svensson from Sydsvenskan Daily Newspaper as *I väntan på vårt förflutna – 25 år sedan folkmordet i Rwanda* and published in the issue of April 7, 2019 (https://www.sydsvenskan.se/kultur/i-vantan-pa-vart-forflutna-25-ar-sedan-folkmordet-i-rwanda/). Special thanks to Patrik Svensson and Rakel Chukri for bringing back wonderful memories every time they published something I wrote. I would also like to thank the international scholars I met at the International Conference to mark 30 years since the genocide in Bosnia. Their company made my stay easier. Finally, and most importantly, I would like to thank Genocide Survivors in Bosnia, such as Azir Osmanović, who kindly agreed to speak to me during the 30th commemoration of the genocide in Srebrenica.

Ključne riječi: *sjećanje, mir, budućnost, genocid, uništenje, preživjeli, krave, vrijeme, prostor, izgradnja mira*

Genocide survivors are always alone. Genocide survivors are never alone. Memories of genocide survivors are born out of stories that the world can neither reject definitively, nor accept completely.[4] Loved ones perished in the genocide—death was not natural, it was the murder of individuals, and a failed attempt to erase their collective selves. Survivors live with the horrible experience of escaping death during the genocide while living with incurably wounded post-genocide surroundings. There is a tacit expectation to forget. The demands for peace require that we put the past behind—that is forgetting some parts of what happened to us. That is the "luxury" of moving forward.

But the world keeps asking questions of *how could this happen*? Survivors too must answer that question. And when they have no answer, they must seriously try to bring it to the fore of their minds. The need for peace and the pledge of *never again* demand such an effort and contribution. That effort meets the demands of peacebuilding after genocide: *trying to explain to the world your tormentors' state of mind at the time of their insidious and brutal actions.*" Always alone. Never alone.

In the aftermath of genocide, survivors are often told what to do, who to become, and what to embrace now and into the future. Hasan Nuhanović only knows too well this awkward and complex configuration and set of demands. "At some point between 1991 and 1992, the term Bosniak was introduced into official use, instead of Muslim, and it has been enshrined in the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina since Dayton, up to the time of writing this. I have got used to the term and now consider it a rather better and more just fit for the identity of the people I belong to. Still, I have no desire retroactively to change the terms used to designate our identity during wartime, just as I have no desire retroactively to

[4] Here I am borrowing from Macek, Ivana, *Sarajevo under Siege: Anthropology in Wartime,* University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009.

change history or the truth, and so I use the terms Muslim and Bosniak interchangeably in this book."[5]

Post-genocide Rwanda is no different. Survivors, perpetrators, and everyone else need to choose between the past and the future to know which present to embrace. Hutu and Tutsi are identities of the past, but they have not passed. We still use them when we travel back to the corners of our hearts where painful memories are buried.

The post-genocide surroundings are never bad—how could anything be bad after genocide? But post-genocide surroundings are never good. How could anything be good after genocide? The post-genocide surroundings are a grey zone of *back-and-forth and confused negotiations to reinvent reality.* It is in this zone that survivors in Rwanda and Bosnia exist while attempting to find 'the ordinary' again. The world tells them that through justice, memory, healing, and reconciliation they will find a shared future with their immediate surroundings and the world at large. Never alone. But always alone—they must say *Yes* to peacebuilding and return to the backyards of their geographies of suffering to nurse wounds of the past. Wounds that are still bleeding, in private and silently. It is from these geographies and spaces of pain, suffering, healing, and recovering that the echoes of survivors' silent work resonate.

Hello and peace be with You. Unless you forget that this crime was not just about *us*, you know that our lives will never be like what they were before our destruction. Define *us*. Define *we*. Only we, the destroyed, cannot escape the horrible task of defining who we were before the end of life as we knew it. So, let us help you.

We were not just our individual *persons*, our mother and fathers, our brothers and sisters, our cousins, aunties, uncles, in-laws, friends, and acquaintances. *Us* and *We* included *the cattle* we owned.[6] Our cows were

[5] See Nuhanović, Hasan, *The last refuge: A journey to Srebrenica, Centre for Advanced Studies,* 2018. pg. 413

[6] Rwandans love their cattle. Dr Samuel Totten recalls that, upon his first visit to Rwanda, he realised that Rwandans speak of their cattle in the same way they speak of their extended family (telephone conversation, 5 November 2025). I was also pleased to read in Hasan Nuhanović's memoir that he made a joke about cows during a conversation with a friend shortly before the 1990s war.

chased, tortured, killed the same way we were chased, tortured, and killed. And sometimes our cows died a doubly horrible death because the machine of death was angry it had not caught their owners in good time. We all were destined to die our own deaths. And thus, our beloved cows died the death of their owners who were not there to die their own death. We do remember and that makes *us* different! Who could have imagined that a time would come when we would mourn and remember dead cows the same way we do people? Our lives have been destroyed irreparably.

Do you ever consider that the mountains and the forests where we used to walk, picnic, hike, and camp during summertime became our sanctuaries before turning into the traps of our destruction? What do you think they represent for us now? Define *them*. Victims, perpetrators, bystanders? Tell *us*. No, let's help you. We do not know the answer either, but we would not like to put another human being in such a dilemma.

Today *we* go back to these forests and mountains not to walk, picnic, hike, or camp during summertime. We go there to hunt for the body parts of our relatives who perished there. They died of hunger, thirst, and exhaustion, after long hours running away from killers. Countless numbers got killed after they were tricked into coming out of hiding, having been promised safe passage to life. These tangled forests did not help our people. But we do not blame nature for giving us shelter and yet refusing us a shield against human madness. Sometimes the lacerated memories of this past get us carried away, and we find ourselves transgressing and blaming these forests and mountains for human destructive creativity.

This story does not end, I tell you. Can you imagine that the crime against *us* was also against the beauty of our language, our music, and the storytelling that used to bind us with neighboring communities? The merchants of death turned pleasant words into deadly weapons. *Akazi*, work, became synonymous with killing people. *Interahamwe*, which denotes strong and positive cooperation was twisted to mean organized slaughter. Songs and dances that traditionally celebrated the joy of farming and harvesting were remodeled and used to mobilize common people for killings. You understand that, in short, this was the end of storytelling as we knew it. The art of the day was to spare no one who

could tell the tale of our destruction. We could go on telling you what this crime was until you got tired of listening.

Once our destruction was apparently over, we discovered this crime did not end there. It shed its skin and revealed a side we had not thought about before. How could we think about anything about this crime until it descended onto us? As if the trauma it caused was not enough, this crime transformed into a project of forgetting and remembering. Forgetting and remembering at the same time. How does one do that? Some survivors' pain was so great all they wanted to do was forget. But how could they? Something, somewhere, today, or tomorrow, will come to remind them of the horrors they went through. They have no control over it. This crime takes away the sense that you control and recover who you were! Other survivors think it is existential that we do not forget. We could not let the killers win without a fight, they thought. Some of us wonder: *did we fight in a war? Did we win or lose?* No one knows. Do you? It does not matter. We are always alone, and never alone. Even when left alone to be among ourselves, we remain alone and never alone! Time and space collapse into a new thing, a new being.

Now you will tell us that the world has not abandoned us. There was failed and recovered Arusha,[7] and there was Dayton.[8] But those are the aftermaths, as always. You will persist and urge us to think that life is back as we knew it. You will tell us that widows have now chosen to think about the present and the future. You encourage us to see that the present is exciting, and the future is possible. We cannot deny that many families have now received help to rebuild their destroyed homes. And it is true that neighbouring villages came and are still coming to help.

Rebuilding happens in no time, and it happens in an atmosphere of grand pomp for some and great silence for us. Neighbours who help

[7] Here I am referring to the Arusha Peace Accords, signed in Arusha, Tanzania, in August 1993, to end the conflict in Rwanda and bring peace to the country. However, the accords failed to prevent the 1994 genocide. However, in the aftermath of the genocide, Rwandans adopted some of the principles of the Arusha Accords to guide their efforts to rebuild the country.

[8] In November 1995, Bosnia and Herzegovina witnessed its own General Framework Agreement for Peace, also known as the Dayton Accords.

rebuild our homes do not say what they did in our absence. Yes, everyone knows that houses were destroyed in our absence. That is why we are rebuilding. But *who* destroyed them? Yes, someone had looted our belongings, destroyed our crops, occupied our land, and slaughtered our cows, but no one is willing to tell us *who* is ultimately responsible for this conundrum. It looks like secrets will be kept forever. No one knows if neighbours wished to see us return home. They say nothing, and we do not ask. So, we must move on. The past is past, you say! Silently, we say, the past about the past has not passed. Should we not know *who* we were before we start the conversation about *who* we have become? Remember, despite relative peace, everything is still raw.

We cannot forget[9] to tell you that we blame ourselves—we also torture ourselves—for our destruction. The situation was so extreme we imagine there was a reason we were being hunted, humiliated, and killed. Kids begged for mercy and elders begged for forgiveness for any wrongs our people may have done in the past. Our lives have been written in ruined letters, and it now feels like the world throws all its energy behind rebuilding *us* and rewriting our history in the hope that we will never ask questions.

We rebuild material things; we regain some small control of our lives and then, and only then do we begin asking. A tacit *one thing at a time strategy*: "rebuild the homes you destroyed, and we will talk about the past later," or something to that effect. That is the status quo no one wants to be upset. But we have no illusions about the future. No one will help us repair the universe we lived in before our world was destroyed. We wish you to remember that our lives have been ruined.

We used to spend long nights discussing names of newly born calves, scrutinizing their unique colours and guessing if they would blend and shape the beauty of the skin once it was an adult. That way we decided which names to give them hoping to read what their future selves would

[9] Coincidentally, 'We Cannot Forget' is the title of an edited volume in which genocide survivors in rural Rwanda recount their experiences during the genocide. See Totten, Samuel and Ubaldo, Rafiki, (eds.), *We cannot forget. Interviews with Survivors of the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda*, Rutgers University Press, 2011.

look like. That is gone. We cannot go back to that day when "Hans and I had been silently watching through the window for quite a while," and I said "Hans, if this starts, we are screwed. Look at this massive army! Who could fight against all this?" And Hans answered "Yeah, I see what you mean, but our people have obtained some guns for themselves. […] You know how it is, you sell a cow, get 1500 German Marks for it, and buy automatic rifle." And me to think out loud "Yeah, but what if you don't have a cow or don't want to sell it?"[10] That was before our destruction.

Now is the post-destruction period we live in. We may never hold cow naming ceremonies again. We may cry when we walk, picnic, hike and camp in forests and mountains that fed on the broken bones of our loved ones. And we may keep irrigating crops with water from the rivers where our loves ones were pushed and left to drown after being tortured. And we may no longer be Muslim, or Christian, or Tutsi, or anything else in your definition of us then and now. And our work of memory will keep puzzling you as you muse: *"Goodness, how long will these people whine about a past that went wrong. We suffered too."* That may be so. That is so. Superiority and glory are as humiliating as inferiority and obscurity.

We were destroyed then, our souls were wounded, but something about us remains strangely unbroken. Deeply wounded, but unbroken. That is why, while we reinvent everyday life, we wish you to remember that our future is not frozen in destruction.

[10] I am borrowing the following conversation from Nuhanović, Hasan. (ibid., p. 11). The conversation in Hasan's book reflects the mood in the lead-up to the war and genocide in Bosnia. When wars start, people still hope that things will not be as bad as they later realize. Consequently, they innocently express their concerns through humour. And when destruction is over, survivors often find themselves using humour to cope with the devastation in front of them.

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