

## Epilogue: Beyond 1992

**Abstract** The empirical example was to show just the initial years of the war, but a few things can be said of the last years of the war, without being conclusive on the matter. As war went on the violence escalated and the escalation gave way for even more violence. The logic of practice continued to change as the structuring field continued to be restructured. Without going into details it is worth mentioning that Milošević, who already had lost Serbian support, lost even more as he tried to balance between the international and national arenas at the same time. At the same time less international prolific actors could go full out on the national arena in support of Serbian interest.

**Keywords** The logic of practice · Milošević · Serbia

Vance-Owen had a plan which included keeping the Serbs separated. Mainly, Serbia represented by Milošević and Karadžić and Mladić on the other hand, representing the Republica Serpska, the Serbian part of Bosnia.<sup>1</sup> There was some success in this too, in August 1994, Owen noted that Karadžić and Milošević competed about being the foremost

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<sup>1</sup>Owen (1995, pp. 105, 134,135, 143, 155, 158, 296 & 302. Especially, 155, 158, 296 & 302) show cracks between the leaders of Republica Serpska and Milosevic.

proponent for the Serbs.<sup>2</sup> This has similarities with the theoretical idea presented here. What the theory suggests is a stronger emphasis on identification of actors with capacity to political action without violence, and by that also identifies those lacking in that capacity. Trying to get Mladić away from the political field should then have been paramount, probably at the expense of giving both Milošević and Karadžićs more influence in the peace process than they had.<sup>3</sup> But in hindsight occurrences as the drawn-out siege of Sarajevo could have been shortened and the genocide in Srebrenica could have been avoided.

In addition to Bosnia's internal problems, one must also consider the situation in Yugoslavia as a whole. Despite the fact that the various ethnic groups in Bosnia appeared to get on well together—at least there had been no outbreaks of violence—the two leaders of Serbia and Croatia, Milošević and Tudjman had, as has been mentioned, met in 1991 and decided to split Bosnia between them. The agreement was thus struck two months after Croatia and Serbia had declared an armistice, showing that it was calculating statesmanship rather than irreconcilable nationalism that was guiding the two politicians. The two had already taken steps to prepare for military operations in Bosnia.<sup>4</sup> In addition, small elements of the Serbian and Croatian forces in Bosnia had moved on from the initial phase of murders committed by just small elite groups

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<sup>2</sup>Owen (1995, p. 302). See also Sell (2002, p. 230).

<sup>3</sup>I am not saying that efforts were not made to separate Karadic and Mladić, but apparently they did not succeed that well. Owen (1995, p. 352).

<sup>4</sup>Donia and Fine (1994, p. 227). The authors highlight the infiltration of both Serbian troops from Krajina and Croat internal forces. Their views on another matter are unclear, because they are somewhat ambiguous. They refer to the fact that the Yugoslav Army used Bosnia for their operations in Croatia. Firstly, the war with Croatia was already over by the time of the Bosnian crisis, secondly—if they still claim that there were activities during the Croatian War which affected things in some uncertain way—the Yugoslav Army was for quite natural reasons and fully legitimately in Bosnia. It is difficult to imagine that the Yugoslav Army could have acted in any other way, but it is clear that the tension in Bosnia could have been increased as a result of all this, regardless of the right of the Yugoslav Army to be in Bosnia in 1991. This is particularly relevant considering that the Brioni Agreement made the idea of a united Yugoslavia an untenable strategy for the Yugoslav Army to align itself with. It was thus a time of uncertainty for the Yugoslav Army, not knowing to which country they belonged or whose army they were.

of paramilitaries and were now more readily disposed to carry out ethnic cleansing. For example, Vojislav Šešelj's party SRS had troops in Bosnia.<sup>5</sup> The stage was set for an exceptionally brutal and bloody war that could well have been avoided. In the end, the Serbs in Croatia did pay a severe price, or as Rupert Smith puts it:

The ethnic cleansing of the Croatian Serbs from Croatia was a prime example of the dynamics of the “theatre of war”. While recorded and displayed at the time, the act was never attacked in the media for what it really was: the expulsion of a minority by a state from their homes on the basis of their ethnicity, and the failure of the UN to protect them, particularly as this, was the original purpose of the UN deployment.<sup>6</sup>

The very occurrence of starvation, ethnic cleansing and other active efforts of the participants also became a tool not only to rewrite the ethnic map of Yugoslavia, but also to affect the international community. “So ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia was old, but neither ancient nor continuous; and though it intensified in the 20th century, it did so unevenly”.<sup>7</sup> Rupert Smith became aware of that during his stint as a commander in Bosnia and he confirms that the researchers Jan Willem Honig and Norbert Both were right in their statement:

The Muslim pockets were used by the [Bosniac] Sarajevo government in November (1992) as pressure points on the international community for firmer action. The longer that aid convoys were unable to reach them, the greater the pressure on the mandate. When convoys did succeed, calls for firmer action were unwarranted. Two weeks after the first successful delivery Muslims [Bosniacs] launched an offensive towards Bratunac [a Serb-held town just outside the besieged Srebrenica]. Thus the integrity of UNHCR and UNPROFOR was undermined, further convoys were impossible, and the pressure for firmer action resumed.<sup>8</sup>

What one can see from this is that—apart from the ruthlessness from the involved local parts—the violence was politicised and that prestige could

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<sup>5</sup>Gagnon (2004, p. 50).

<sup>6</sup>Smith (2005, p. 362).

<sup>7</sup>Mann (2005, p. 359).

<sup>8</sup>Honig and Both (1996, p. 80), quoted in Smith (2005, p. 337). Owen notes that UN “knew” that Mladić would not honour any safe areas which were not demilitarised. Owen (1995, p. 67).

be won for all parts, even the international community, both through suffering but also through violence. Noteworthy is that the Commander in Chief of the Bosnian Serbian Drina Corps, General Krstić, said that none of the officers refused the orders in the Srebrenica massacre later on in the war in 1995.<sup>9</sup> By being a perpetrator one could also show that one was an important political player on the violent political field. This was especially important for actors like general Mladić, who had little political credibility beyond the political violence he could wield.

Rupert Smith has stated that “There was no strategic direction, there was no strategic military goal to achieve, there was no military campaign and there were no theatre-level military objectives: all acts were tactical”.<sup>10</sup> That was a description of the planning for the international forces. If they had used a theoretical model similar to the one presented in this text, they might have been able to forge their tactical acts into some kind of operational and finally tactical pattern. The local factions were not equally unaware of the game which they all were involved in. Finally, NATO decided to act against Milošević and the Bosnian Serbian leaders and the UNPROFOR soldiers changed helmets from their blue to green—morphing into IFOR—while the bomb war started. This also gave the green light for the ethnic cleansing in Croatia of the Krajina. In early August 1995, about 150,000 Serbs were ethnically cleansed from Krajina, the largest single cleansing during the war.<sup>11</sup> The escalated use of violence as a legitimate political tool struck back at the Croatian Serbs, as the whole political field transformed into a social field where violence became the most effective way to wage politics—the Croatian state was no exception. One can compare it with the war related deaths in Bosnia during the war, 67,630 (minimum) or an estimate of 102,622 individuals.<sup>12</sup> The emigration from Bosnia (for whatever reason) as a result of the war is approximately 1.2 million individuals (27% of the population).<sup>13</sup>

The events following in Kosovo 1999 were also a major stroke against Serbia. It can serve as an example of how much symbolic capital

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<sup>9</sup>Mann (2005, p. 396).

<sup>10</sup>Smith (2005, p. 336).

<sup>11</sup>Owen (1995, p. 329 & 353).

<sup>12</sup>Tabeau and Bijak (2005, pp. 203 & 207).

<sup>13</sup>Tabeau and Bijak (2005, p. 209).

Milošević's Serbia had lost internationally during the process of war. At that point, Serbia lacked so much symbolic capital that anything could pass as legitimate in order to weaken the state of Serbia. As the Independent International Commission on Kosovo states, "the NATO military intervention was illegal but legitimate" [sic].<sup>14</sup> In other words, there was enough symbolic value mustered to act against Serbia to make it legitimate despite formal writings. Russia was also weak during the bombings. Albeit they opposed the separations of Kosovo from Serbia, it did not mean much more at the time than spreading the symbolic violence to Russia as well. As we will see in the next chapter, Russia took notes in a way which the commission did not foresee in its conclusions.

Media deserves a special comment as media is powerful when it comes to affecting a social field in a society which is used to gather information by accessing media. Previously media has been mentioned as a means to affect diaspora or the population. The media and war have been interconnected as long as legitimacy has been a term of relevance. Modern thinkers such as Paul Virilio have taken the relationship of the media with war a stage further.<sup>15</sup> This will not be examined here, but it is just one more example of how theory can provide a perspective on and a valued explanation of war in empirical terms. In November 1994 when the war in Bosnia was creating bad will for Milošević, he shut down the newspaper *Borba* after it was critical of Milošević.<sup>16</sup> Repression against autonomous media is not unheard of and there are reasons for it as it affects the discourse on the events in a way not always benevolent to those in power. Another example of Milošević's awareness of the use of media was when he asked Carl Bildt for permission to use television against Karadžić, at the time when an agreement between Bildt and Milošević was made and a rift between the former and Karadžić was created.<sup>17</sup> Another example of the media war was when the authorities were still sending TV propaganda as late as March 1996 when the Serbs were driven out of Sarajevo.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>The Independent International Commission on Kosovo (2000, p. 4).

<sup>15</sup>See in particular Paul Virilio's book on the Gulf War: *Desert Screen*.

<sup>16</sup>Pavlaković (2005, p. 21).

<sup>17</sup>Sell (2002, p. 229).

<sup>18</sup>Udovicki and Stitkovac (1997, p. 200).

Television is an excellent means for the conduct of PSYOPS, especially if the warring parties and the local population both produce and watch TV. Clumsy efforts to conduct a media war were occasionally made by the international forces, for example by the USA through IFOR. This comment refers specifically to the fact that the TV media was not utilised constructively to any great degree by IFOR; that not much control of programme content was exercised, and that undesirable programmes could have been cut out when they appeared. In the case of 1996 above, IFOR was present on the ground and had the ability to act, at least in the media field. Instead, at first, IFOR concentrated on radio channels. The conclusion later was that most people watched TV and were not influenced by radio to any great degree. This was a badly judged strategy, which could have been changed to another by some doing some HUMINT.<sup>19</sup> The situation was also not helped by the fact that the Americans, true to practice at home in the USA, broadcast on AM radio, when the Yugoslavs in general—just like in other countries with only FM channels—hardly ever had any cause to switch from their FM radio settings.<sup>20</sup> A border was breached—which resulted in NATO troops confiscating Serb TV transmitters—when clips of SFOR (Stabilisation Force) troops were mixed with old clips of German Nazi troops in the programs.<sup>21</sup> Throughout the whole process, from the start of the war to the midst of it, television was used effectively as a weapon of war by all parties. The purpose of the media campaign was to legitimise the international presence actions in the local Bosnian arena, a strategy that to a great extent focused on the struggle for symbolic capital on the political social field.

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<sup>19</sup>The Americans who are themselves a people geared to television ought to have realised the importance of the television media. Evidently, the opinion was that the more primitive media of radio was better suited for Yugoslavia.

<sup>20</sup>Wentz (1997, p. 66).

<sup>21</sup>Allin (2002, p. 43).

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