



Towards an Explanation for the Bosnian Genocide of 1992–1995

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Scholarly interest in genocide has grown exponentially over the past two decades, due largely to two high-profile genocides during the first half of the 1990s: the genocide in Rwanda of 1994 and, in particular, the genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina of 1992–95. Yet, paradoxically, the Bosnian genocide has inspired relatively little original research from scholars outside of Bosnia-Herzegovina itself. This article will examine the existing literature while suggesting a theoretical and historical framework by which the genocide might be understood. It will examine how far the genocide can be explained through internal versus external causes, ideological determination versus contingency, and short-term versus long-term factors.

The claim that the organized mass violence carried out by Serb authorities and forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992–95 constituted ‘genocide’ has divided genocide scholars, but received strong support from some. For example, in reference to the 1990s, Eric D. Weitz (2003:235) writes: ‘as an eminently twentieth-century dictatorship, Serbia made ethnic cleansing and genocide a cause not only of the state but also of the population as well’. Norman M. Naimark (2001:160) writes of the ‘genocidal treatment of the Muslim population in the first months of the war [in Bosnia]’. Adam Jones (2006:212–27) applies the term ‘genocidal’ to Serb atrocities in Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo, and Martin Shaw (2007:48–62, 130, 148) argues that ethnic cleansing must be categorized as ‘genocide’, a term he applies to Serb atrocities in both Kosovo and Bosnia. Other genocide scholars challenge this categorization (Mann 2005; Semelin 2007). Nevertheless, detailed scholarly studies of the mass violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina by Smail Čekić (2004), Edina Bećirević (2014), and Norman Cigar (1995), among others, have supported the view that this was, indeed, a case of genocide.

The international courts have been unanimous in declaring the Srebrenica massacre of July 1995 a case of genocide, with both the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) ruling that it was.¹ But the verdict regarding other acts of mass violence perpetrated in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992–95 has been ambiguous. In its

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February 2007 verdict in the case of *Bosnia-Herzegovina v. Serbia*, the ICJ ruled against recognizing the atrocities as genocide, stating that although the mass violence displayed almost all the attributes of genocide, the element of genocidal intent was absent. This conclusion is unsatisfactory, for reasons I have explained elsewhere; above all, the ICJ's ruling confused genocidal intent with the motive for genocide (Hoare 2007b:37–44; Hoare 2010:1193–1214).

Since this verdict, other international judicial rulings have contradicted or modified the ICJ's conclusions. In 1997, the Higher Regional Court of Düsseldorf convicted Serb paramilitary-leader Nikola Jorgić for genocide in Bosnia's Dobož region in 1992. Jorgić brought his case all the way to the European Court of Human Rights, which in July 2007 rejected his appeal.² Although no war crimes suspects have successfully been prosecuted for genocide-related offences at the ICTY other than over Srebrenica, some such trials are still ongoing, notably those of Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić. In 2012, the ICTY convicted Zdravko Tolimir, Assistant Commander of Intelligence and Security of the Army of Republika Srpska, of genocide, ruling that the Muslims of East Bosnia as a whole, not just of Srebrenica, were targeted for destruction, and that the genocide had extended to killings in the Žepa enclave.³

If, instead of the definition of genocide contained in the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, we use the broader concept originally favoured by Raphael Lemkin, encompassing the deliberate destruction of the historical/cultural/religious heritage of the victim group (Moses 2010:36–38), then there is less ambiguity: the ICJ deemed this to have occurred in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992–95, including through the shelling of the National Library and Institute for Oriental Studies during the Sarajevo siege.⁴

I believe that the campaign of mass violence orchestrated in Bosnia-Herzegovina by Serb authorities and forces, in which their Croat counterparts at times participated, indeed constituted genocide. However, this essay's purpose is not to prove that it did, but rather to contribute to explaining *why* the mass violence occurred at the time and in the form that it did. Whether or not the mass violence is categorized as genocide, the essay's conclusions are unaffected.

According to the survey of war losses conducted by the Research and Documentation Centre in Sarajevo, over one hundred thousand Bosnians were killed between 1991 and 1995. Just over two-fifths of these were civilians, of whom over 80% were Muslims/Bosniaks. Overall, 33,070 Muslim, 4,075 Serb, 2,163 Croat, and 376 other civilians were killed. Over five-sixths of the civilians killed were so by Serb forces (Hoare 2008). Suspects from all three principal sides have been convicted of war crimes by the ICTY, but not to a remotely equivalent degree (Hoare 2011:81–97).

The full-scale Serb assault on Bosnia-Herzegovina beginning in the spring of 1992 targeted a largely defenceless civilian population, primarily Muslims but also Croats, dissident Serbs, and others. The principal perpetrators were the 'Yugoslav People's Army' (JNA), Bosnian Serb 'Territorial Defence', Serb militias based in Serbia, and the Bosnian Serb civilian authorities headed by the Serb Democratic Party (SDS). The forces involved were initially controlled by the regime in Belgrade, via the JNA, including militias based in Serbia led by warlords like Vojislav Šešelj

and Željko Raznatović-Arkan, who played a central role in the ‘ethnic-cleansing’ operations. By 19 May 1992, the roughly fourteen thousand Yugoslav troops from Serbia-Montenegro were withdrawn from Bosnia-Herzegovina and the remaining eighty thousand Bosnian Serb troops transferred to the Army of Republika Srpska, established under the self-proclaimed ‘Republika Srpska’, which Belgrade continued to finance and supply (Hoare 2004:31–42, 68–71).

The genocide followed a consistent pattern across Bosnia-Herzegovina, involving the systematic, organized killing and expulsion of the non-Serb population from Serb-held areas; the establishment of concentration camps; the destruction of non-Serb cultural-religious heritage (e.g. mosques, Catholic churches, and libraries); the siege of the capital Sarajevo; the destruction of central organs of Bosnian statehood (including the Bosnian parliament and government buildings); and the establishment of a new Bosnian Serb ‘state’ from which all traces of the Muslim and Croat presence were expunged (see Cigar and Williams 2002; Gow 2003; Suljagić 2010; Tretter et al. 1998). The epicentres of the killing were, primarily, the Podrinje region, adjacent to Serbia and where military units from Serbia were particularly involved, and the Prijedor municipality in the north-west, serviced by the Omarska, Keraterm, and Trnopolje concentration camps (see Bećirević 2014; Wesselingh and Vaulerin 2005).

Parallel to this, but unfolding more quietly and slowly, was a Bosnian-Croat project to establish a Croat entity on Bosnian territory, organized by Franjo Tuđman’s regime in Zagreb. This grew into a full-scale Croatian assault on Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Muslims during 1993, involving mass killing and expulsion resembling that of the Serb perpetrators, though on a much smaller scale. Croat massacres of Muslims occurred at Ahmići and Stupni Do in April and October 1993, respectively (see Hoare 1997:121–38; Hoare 2004:81–87, 94–97; Shrader 2003). The U.S.-brokered Washington Agreement brought an end to this conflict in March 1994, after which Croat forces resumed cooperation with the Bosnian army and the war continued for a further year-and-a-half.

The war’s biggest massacre occurred in Srebrenica in July 1995 when Serb forces systematically murdered over eight thousand Bosniaks – mostly men and boys, but including some women (see Honig and Both 1997; Nuhanović 2007; Rohde 1997). Although Srebrenica has come to dominate the outside world’s memory of the Bosnian genocide, it was actually the smaller of the three principal instances of mass killing during the war: the first being the initial Serb genocidal assault across Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992 – more Bosniaks from Podrinje alone were killed in that year than in 1995 – and the second being the Sarajevo siege (Hoare 2008). Following heavy Serb battlefield defeats and NATO air-strikes in summer–autumn 1995, fighting ceased in October 1995, and the conflict was formally ended by the Dayton and Paris Peace Accords in November–December 1995, marking a partial victory for the Serb perpetrators: Republika Srpska was recognized as an almost completely autonomous entity within a weak common-Bosnian state; its population had an overwhelming Serb majority resulting from the mass killings and expulsions.

The Bosnian genocide was the culminating event of the break-up of Yugoslavia, of which it formed an integral part. The break-up took most foreign historians of

the country by surprise. The federation headed by Josip Broz Tito until 1980 and by the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (SKJ), had been widely admired in the West, due to its relatively liberal form of Communist rule, apparently enlightened nationalities policy, and independence from the Soviet Union. This admiration was naturally strongest on the left, but extended to conservatives and senior establishment figures.⁵ Others of a more anti-Communist orientation were more critical, but remained committed to Yugoslavia's unity (e.g. Beloff 1985; Pavlowitch 1971). Consequently, the catastrophe was largely unexpected.⁶

The unfolding tragedy demanded explanation, and books by investigative journalists came to dominate the literature on the Bosnian war. Their quality varied greatly, but they generally tended to suffer from typically journalistic shortfalls: a short-term analytical timeframe; the absence of long-term historical explanation; an overemphasis on graphic events and prominent individuals; and a tendency towards oversimplification and cliché. At their worst, journalists and other non-academics promoted the notorious theory of 'ancient ethnic hatreds'.⁷ The best general study of the break-up and war remains, two decades after its publication, 'Death of Yugoslavia' by investigative journalists Laura Silber and Allan Little. Yet its account begins only in the 1980s (Silber and Little 1996).

Another quirk of the literature is that Bosnia-Herzegovina barely features in accounts of the break-up pertaining to the period before 1992. These generally follow the trajectory of conflict – from Slobodan Milošević's effective seizure of power in Serbia in 1987, through the conflict over Kosovo and the Serbian-Slovenian struggle up to the conflict in Croatia of 1990–91. The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina consequently appears as an epilogue and side effect.

Opinion over the war has roughly divided three ways along political lines. First, there has been the position of those who campaigned against the genocide, or who identified with this campaign, for whom the war was caused by Serbia's expansionist policies, amounting to aggression and genocide, with Tudjman's Croatia as a secondary culprit. Second, there was the position of the policy-makers who dominated the Western-led international community's response to the crisis, and of their supporters: the war was a civil war, not a war of aggression; it involved 'ethnic cleansing' but not necessarily genocide (except perhaps at Srebrenica); and the blame was assigned to 'all sides' – painted as equally guilty at least qualitatively if not quantitatively. Third, the position of Serb nationalists and those who have followed their narrative have attributed primary blame to the separatism of the non-Serb peoples of Yugoslavia and its alleged support from the West, viewing Serbia and the Serbs as the principal victims; according to these, there was no genocide, and Serb atrocities were systematically exaggerated by the Western media while Croat and Bosniak atrocities were downplayed.⁸

The aforementioned are political positions, not intellectual interpretations, but politics has dominated the discourse on the Bosnian war to the detriment of objective intellectual enquiry. Those discussing the topic have often prioritized political correctness over intellectual enquiry, while younger scholars tend to avoid such controversies and pick safer research topics, such as post-1995 'reconciliation'. Genocide scholars seeking secondary sources for their Bosnia case studies have been left with meagre pickings. Scholars attempting actually to explain the

war have ranged from essentializing the Serb nation as historically violence-prone,⁹ in a manner reminiscent of Daniel Goldhagen's (1996) model of 'Hitler's willing executioners', to hard-line 'functionalist' interpretations absolving the Serbian leadership of planning the break-up, war, and mass killings, instead treating these as unintended by-products (e.g. Gordy 2008:281–99; Jović 2009). The ICTY's verdicts provide a more nuanced record, though scholars often simply reject those that contradict their version of events.¹⁰

In reality, the Bosnian war was *both* a war of aggression *and* a civil war: the military assault on Bosnia-Herzegovina of spring 1992 was planned and organized by the political and military leadership in Belgrade, using forces that were initially both *de jure* and *de facto* under its command and control. But most of the manpower involved comprised Bosnian Serbs, not Serbs from Serbia; and the Bosnian Serb nationalist political leadership was a genuinely autonomous element to which Belgrade rapidly devolved control of Serb forces on Bosnian territory. Thus, any explanation for the genocide must take into account the internal-Bosnian, external-Serbian, and all-Yugoslav dimensions, as well as the international context.

The 'ancient ethnic hatreds' model is a crude cliché ignoring the fundamentally modern nature of the Bosnian genocide. Bosnia-Herzegovina's diverse ethno-religious groups had enjoyed centuries of coexistence, which, if not quite the idyll imagined by some partisans of the Bosnian cause, were nevertheless far from a history of eternal strife (see Donia and Fine 1994; Hoare 2007a; Malcolm 2002). Yet a proper analysis of the Bosnian genocide must take into account its long-term causes. The country in its modern form was the product of centuries of Ottoman rule, which was established during the fifteenth century and lasted until 1878. This rule involved Muslim supremacy over Christians and Jews, and particularly over Orthodox Christians: the landlord class in Bosnia-Herzegovina, formed in the Ottoman era and surviving until the establishment of Yugoslavia, was Muslim; most Orthodox were peasants legally subordinate to Muslim landlords. However, Christians and Jews enjoyed degrees of autonomy within the Ottoman framework (Hoare 2007a:33–99).

This combination of institutionalized administrative religious segregation and class difference was the origin of the development of Bosnian Muslims, Orthodox, and Catholics into separate nationalities, despite their shared homeland and language, and also of the antagonism of Serb Orthodox peasants towards the Muslim landlords. While this antagonism did not determine the genocide, it was a precondition for it. The Serbian Orthodox Church, as the only 'national' institution permitted to the Bosnian Orthodox under the Ottomans, became the institutional underpinning for the Bosnian Serb nationality that emerged from the Ottoman framework, while the memory of the Serbian medieval state and of the historic Serb struggle against the Ottoman conquerors was preserved by the church, folklore, and epic poetry (see Sells 1996; Žanić 2007).

This long-term Ottoman context of the Bosnian genocide must be understood as part of a wider pattern of mass killing and expulsion arising from Ottoman imperial decay. As Justin McCarthy has explained, the establishment of the independent states of Serbia, Greece, Montenegro, and Bulgaria during the nineteenth

and early twentieth centuries; their destruction of the remains of the Ottoman Empire in Europe in the Balkan Wars of 1912–13; and the attempts by Greece and Armenian nationalists to carve out territories in Anatolia during the 1920s, all involved mass killings and expulsions, in varying degrees and forms, of Ottoman Muslims (McCarthy 1995). Serbia's First Uprising against the Ottomans (1804–13) involved large-scale atrocities against Serbian Muslims, after which the Muslim population of Serbia was almost entirely removed from the country, primarily on the basis of agreement with the Ottoman Sultan, during the nineteenth century. The Bosnian genocide must be set in this wider post-Ottoman context.

Nevertheless, over a century elapsed between the end of Ottoman rule in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1878 and the start of the Bosnian genocide in 1992. In the interval there were forty years of Austro-Hungarian rule (1878–1918), followed by seventy-four years of incorporation in Yugoslavia – first the Yugoslav kingdom (1918–1941), then the Yugoslav federation (1943–1992). Understanding the Bosnian genocide therefore requires an understanding of the Yugoslav context. An extreme 'intentionalist' interpretation may assume that Serbia's leaders had 'always' harboured genocidal intentions towards non-Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina, but this is not supported by the evidence. The (in)famous 'plan' of Serbian interior minister Ilija Garašanin of 1844, usually taken as marking the start of Great Serbian expansionism, indeed directed the latter towards Bosnia but did not express murderous or chauvinistic sentiments towards the non-Orthodox there (see MacKenzie 1985). The roots of the post-Yugoslav genocides must be sought in structural factors within the Yugoslav framework.

Garašanin's plan presaged subsequent, more ambitious expansionist plans on the part of Serbian leaders. As with twentieth-century Germany, Serbia's expansionism did not necessarily imply genocide or mass killings, but those mass killings that occurred cannot be understood outside of the context of expansionism. Serbia secured modest territorial gains in its 1878 war against the Ottomans. Its larger gains in the 1912–13 Balkan Wars almost doubled its territory, but with land predominantly inhabited by non-Serbs – ethnic Albanians, Macedonians, Turks, and others. The massacres that this involved have been portrayed in genocidal terms by some authors, including Leon Trotsky (1981; see also Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 1993; McCarthy 1995:135–77). Nevertheless, there is no automatic correlation between official Serbia's brutal treatment of non-Serb peoples in the Balkan Wars and its subsequent genocides of Bosnian Muslims. Eminent contemporary Bosniak scholar Mustafa Imamović (1997:458) notes the correct treatment by the Serbian Army of the Bosniak/Muslim population of newly conquered Sanjak in 1912. It was not until eighty years later that the government of a sovereign Serbia pursued overtly genocidal policies towards the Bosnian Muslims. This must be explained by developments that took place during the interval.

Following the outbreak of war with Austria-Hungary in July 1914, the Serbian government announced its war aims as the 'liberation and unification of all our captive brethren Serbs, Croats and Slovenes' – understood to include Bosnians of all religious denominations (Petrovich 1976:630). The boundary between this exalted aim and outright Serbian expansionism was blurry; Serbian politics would

thenceforth be divided between currents favouring Yugoslav unification and those favouring a narrower, exclusively Serb, enlarged state ('Great Serbia') (see Banac 1984). Proponents of both currents, both before and after Yugoslav unification in 1918, would oppose any federative or autonomous arrangement that would subject Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina to non-Serb governments in Zagreb and Sarajevo. Immediately prior to Yugoslav unification in December 1918, Serbia succeeded in annexing Montenegro, but not Bosnia-Herzegovina (Hoare 2007a:92–112). Following the imposition of a unitarist, centralist constitution on Yugoslavia by the principal Serbian-dominated parties in 1921, Croat, Bosnian-Muslim, and Slovene resistance to Serbian hegemony pushed Serbian leaders and politicians towards increasingly radical solutions.

The long-standing agrarian conflict between Muslim landlords and predominantly Serb tenants in Bosnia had exploded at the war's end into a full-scale peasant revolt claiming the lives of about two thousand Muslims in two years (Imamović 1997:490). The issue was then resolved on the basis of land reform that impoverished many Muslim families but failed to satisfy more militant Bosnian Serb elements. The resulting tension and bitterness was a major factor contributing to the parallel genocides carried out in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1941–45, on the one hand by the Ustasha movement against the Serbs, and on the other by the Chetnik movement against the Muslims, and to a lesser extent Croats (see Dulić 2005:185–228; Hoare 2006).

A second major factor was the power struggle for control of Bosnia-Herzegovina between Serb, Muslim, and Croat parties at the local level, intersecting with the larger power struggle between Serb-dominated and non-Serb parties for the constitutional ordering of Yugoslavia. The power struggles culminated in two partitions of Bosnia-Herzegovina by Belgrade. The first, under the dictatorship of King Aleksandar in October 1929, divided Bosnia-Herzegovina between four provinces ('banovinas') in order to break the power of the principal Muslim party. The second, under the regency of Prince Pavle in August 1939, was a more straightforward two-way partition between Serbia and Croatia (Hoare 2007a:112–22). These partitions created the precedent for the attempted dismemberment of Bosnia-Herzegovina by Serbian and Croatian leaders in the 1990s.

The 1939 partition catalysed conflicts among Serb, Muslim, and Croat elements that set Bosnia-Herzegovina on the path to the mass violence that would erupt following the Axis occupation of Yugoslavia in April 1941. The wartime Chetnik movement was in part the product of these conflicts, and sought to re-establish Yugoslavia and, within it, an enlarged Serbia, consolidated through the killing and expulsion of non-Serbs and the complete eradication of Bosnia-Herzegovina (ibid.:128–45). The Ustasha genocide of Serbs, for its part, cannot explain the Bosnian genocide of the 1990s in terms of a supposed Serb desire for 'revenge', as is sometimes claimed. But it undoubtedly contributed to a mindset among Serb perpetrators in the 1990s, whereby they rationalized their acts as pre-empting a repetition of the 1940s.

The victory of the Communist-led Partisans under Tito in 1944–45 established a six-republic federal Yugoslavia, including a reunified Bosnia-Herzegovina as the common homeland of Serbs, Croats, and Muslims (see Hoare 2013). Serbia was

re-established within borders amounting to a defeat for traditional Serbian national politics: shorn of Macedonia and Montenegro, deprived of any part of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and with Vojvodina and Kosovo-Metohija granted autonomy within its borders, its territorial size was roughly what it had been before 1918. This mattered less while the federation remained centralized under the Yugoslav government in Belgrade, thereby resembling the Serbian-dominated Yugoslavia that Serbian politicians had traditionally sought.

However, the decentralization of Yugoslavia – begun in the early 1960s, accelerating with the fall of Serbian Communist strongman Aleksandar Ranković in 1966, and culminating in the Yugoslav constitution of 1974 – transformed Yugoslavia along lines traditionally favoured by Croatian and Slovenian statesmen. The federal centre was weakened and power concentrated in the republics. The Socialist Autonomous Provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo were effectively freed from Serbia's control, winning competencies virtually equivalent to the republics. This involved an effective transition to ethnic-Albanian control in Kosovo – a decisive grievance for turning mainstream opinion in Serbia against the Titoist order. The consequent rebellion united the League of Communists of Serbia (SKS), ultimately under Milošević; the intelligentsia; the Orthodox Church; and ultimately the anti-Communist Serbian nationalist opposition, with Serbia's intelligence services providing the lynchpin (see Dragović-Soso 2002; Magaš 1993).

In this period, there was a shift among the Serbian intelligentsia towards discussing themes that conditioned the Serbian population for the coming conflict by arousing its resentment against other Yugoslav peoples. These included a reawakening interest in the Ustasha genocide of the 1940s; the supposed Islamic and Catholic threats to Yugoslavia and the Serbs; and the demographic threat supposedly posed by the high Muslim and particularly Albanian birth rates (see Cigar 1995:22–37; Magaš 1993:61–73). The drafting of the Memorandum of the Academy of Sciences and Arts, excerpts of which were published in September 1986, arguably marked the start of the intellectual establishment's rebellion, while Milošević's visit to Kosovo Polje in April 1987 is taken by most scholars to mark his conversion to the nationalist cause. His defeat of his more conservative fellow Communists at the 8th Session of the Central Committee of the SKS in September 1987 then established the Serbian Communist regime under his leadership at the head of the movement (e.g. LeBor 2002:75–99; Silber and Little 1996:37–47).

Ivan Stambolić (1995:19) has claimed, perhaps rightly, that the 8th Session inevitably led to war. But this does not mean that the early Milošević period, from September 1987 until January 1990, represented Serbian nationalism's adoption of its 'essential' form and the conscious march to war. In this phase, Milošević sought to overturn the Yugoslav order established between 1962 and 1974, in order to restore Serbia's control over Kosovo and Vojvodina and leadership over a recentralized Yugoslavia (Sell 2002:65–107; Silber and Little 1996:37–81). There were indications that Milošević was considering war, including his reference to possible armed struggle in his June 1989 speech at Gazimestan (Silber and Little 1996:71–73). But it was only in January 1990, with his defeat at the 14th Extraordinary Congress of the SKJ, followed by the electoral victories that spring of the non-Communist opposition in Slovenia and Croatia, that his regime shifted

its goals to encompass the rejection of Yugoslavia's unity, internal and external borders, and the shared statehood of Serbs and other Yugoslavs altogether. This marked a shift on the part of Milošević's leadership from one traditional Serbian policy – support for a centralized Yugoslavia – to the other: support for a *de facto* enlarged ('Greater') Serbia as an exclusively Serb state. This meant, in the ICTY's terminology, a 'Joint Criminal Enterprise' for the conquest of large areas of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina and forcible removal of non-Serbs from them.

Following these events, Milošević and his leaders took steps to dismantle Yugoslavia and prepare Serbia for war. On 14 May 1990, the JNA General Staff ordered the Territorial Defence forces of Croatia and Slovenia to disarm. Milošević, Yugoslav Defence Secretary Veljko Kadijević, and Borisav Jović, Serbia's representative in the federal presidency, took the decision on 27–28 June 1990, to 'expel [Slovenia and Croatia] forcibly from Yugoslavia, by simply drawing borders and declaring that they had brought this upon themselves through their decisions' (Jović 1995:160). On 28 September 1990, Serbia promulgated a new constitution, according to which: 'The Republic of Serbia determines and guarantees: 1) the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia and its international position and relations with other states and international organisations; . . .'¹¹

It is sometimes claimed that Milošević was not really a Serb nationalist, but merely an opportunist solely interested in power (e.g. Sell 2002:169–71). This reductionist approach assumes that Serb nationalism is represented by a single 'ideal type'. In fact, Milošević's regime drew upon the native socialist tradition in Serbia, as founded by Svetozar Marković, that had embodied a revolutionary form of nationalism.¹² He relied upon mass popular mobilizations engineered by the Serbian official media and security services – an 'anti-bureaucratic revolution'. While it would be an exaggeration to present this as a genuinely bottom-up popular phenomenon (Vladislavjević 2008), it undoubtedly created a momentum the regime could not then brake, ultimately culminating in war. The regime has been described both as a 'soft dictatorship' (Cohen 2002:xiv–xv) and as the 'functional equivalent' of a fascist regime (Paxton 2004:190). The projected 'new Yugoslav state' comprising 'Serbia, Montenegro and a united Bosnian and Knin krajina',¹³ announced by Mihailo Marković, vice-president of the ruling Socialist Party of Serbia, in October 1991, represented a synthesis between Great Serb nationalism and Titoist federalism. Thus, Milošević's regime drew deeply upon Serbia's political and nationalist traditions.

Writers sympathetic to what might be called the 'Serb cause' in the 1990s war frequently attribute the actions of the Milošević regime to a reaction against hostile Western policies. In fact, the pattern under which the mass killings occurred was established in Croatia, long before the latter's independence had achieved international recognition in late 1991 and still longer before serious military action was undertaken by NATO against Serb forces in summer 1995. Josip Glaurdić's research suggests the Serb perpetrators went to war in 1990–91 in relatively favourable international circumstances, with the NATO powers unwilling to intervene militarily, and unsympathetic to 'secessionist' Croatia and Slovenia (Glaurdić 2011).

The pattern involved using Serbia's security services to orchestrate a rebellion among the Serb minority in Croatia and to arm and train a rebel army from within its ranks; the use of the JNA, first to provide a military umbrella for this rebellion, then to wage war on its behalf, providing the military muscle to conquer nearly one-third of Croatia; and the mass killings and forced removal of the non-Serb population from these territories. This model of conquest was then transferred to Bosnia-Herzegovina in the spring of 1992. Nevertheless, the worsening of Serbia's international position in late 1991, culminating in the international recognition that Yugoslavia was in a 'process of dissolution' and of Croatia's and Slovenia's independence, prompted Serbia's leadership to fight in Bosnia-Herzegovina via nominally independent Bosnian Serb structures (Hoare 2004:31–42).

That Belgrade succeeded in mobilizing the Bosnian Serb population to wage war against Bosnia-Herzegovina was a product of long-term internal Bosnian factors. The 'People's Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina' was established in 1946 on the basis of effective leadership by Bosnian Serbs, who had dominated the Bosnian Partisan movement both numerically and at the leadership level. Paradoxically, although the Partisan victory represented a defeat for traditional Serbian national politics and the curtailing of Serbia itself, it simultaneously handed the Bosnian Serbs control of the common Bosnian state. In 1945–46, when this state was established, its president, prime minister, and Communist-organization secretary were all Serbs. The Muslims were denied national recognition and treated instead as a religious group. The Bosnian Croats had participated in relatively small numbers in the Partisan movement, and would carry the stigma of collaboration and support for the Ustasas for many years. Furthermore, in 1945, the Serbs were still the most numerous nationality in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Hoare 2007a:309–28).

Nevertheless, just as power shifted further away from Serbia within Yugoslavia in the Titoist period, so it shifted away from the Bosnian Serbs within Bosnia-Herzegovina. Large-scale Serb emigration to Serbia combined with a higher birth rate meant that the Muslims overtook the Serbs to become the largest Bosnian nationality by 1971. Political liberalization reduced Serb domination; the Muslims were formally recognized as the sixth Yugoslav nation in 1968, ending definitively any pretence that they might 'be' or 'become' Serbs (or Croats), while the Bosnian Croats were effectively rehabilitated and reintegrated into public life. The 1960s and 70s witnessed a renaissance of Muslim national and cultural life under Communist rule (Filandra 1998:229–344).

The Bosnian Communist regime in the later Tito years was dominated by Branko Mikulić and Hamdija Pozderac, a Croat and a Muslim respectively. Their regime was illiberal even by Communist standards, persecuting nationalists and anti-Communists of all three nationalities and setting the scene for the emergence of Serb, Croat, and Muslim nationalist opposition movements. The death or retirement of the Partisan generation of Communist leaders during the 1980s deprived Bosnia-Herzegovina of a Serb elite genuinely committed to Bosnian unity and statehood. The fall of the Communist regime and the assumption of the Bosnian presidency by the overtly Islamic Alija Izetbegović in 1990 (albeit in collaboration with the SDS), and the assumption of power across Bosnia-

Hercegovina of local authorities dominated by his Muslim-nationalist ‘Party of Democratic Action’ or the Croat-nationalist ‘Croat Democratic Community’ (HDZ), catalysed Bosnian Serb alienation from the common Bosnian homeland (Hoare 2007a:328–47).

Bosnia-Hercegovina had rapidly industrialized during the Communist era, and this too begat the crisis of the 1990s. The cities and towns of Bosnia-Hercegovina had traditionally been dominated by the Muslims, who still comprised a slight overall urban majority as late as 1931 (Hoare 2006:48–49). The large-scale, rapid uprooting of Serb and Croat peasants and their emigration to the traditionally alien cities after 1945 further alienated them from the world of the Bosnian republic, contributing to the ‘urbicide’ of 1992–95, when Serb and Croat nationalists largely destroyed Sarajevo and Mostar, respectively, and devastated other towns. Likewise, Bosnian women had traditionally been kept out of politics; their emancipation under the Communists and appointment to senior positions in public life amounted to a social revolution. The organized mass rape of Muslim women in particular carried out during the genocide was partly a violent reaction against this, and given demographic decline and the higher Muslim birth rate, also an attempt to reassert Serb ‘virility’ (see Allen 1996; Stiglmayer 1994; Vranić 1996).

These factors explain why it was possible for the greater part of the Bosnian Serb elite and population to turn against the Bosnian republic that had been established by their parents and grandparents, and to participate in its genocidal destruction. But they did not determine that they would; for this, the agency of political decision-makers was decisive. The SDS, which won the overwhelming majority of Bosnian Serb votes in the elections of 1990, did so while remaining formally committed to Bosnian unity and statehood; the decision of its leadership to set about dismantling Bosnia-Hercegovina, and ultimately to participate in a war to destroy it, reflected not a popular mandate but decisions taken. This meant participating in Milošević’s ‘Joint Criminal Enterprise’ for ‘the forcible and permanent removal of the majority of non-Serbs, principally Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats, from large areas of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina . . . through the commission of crimes’ – as alleged by the ICTY prosecution.¹⁴

In areas that fell to it following the fall of Communism in 1990, the SDS took control of the local Territorial Defence forces of the Bosnian republic and other Communist-era security organs; in areas that fell to Muslim and/or Croat control, the SDS frequently seceded from the common Bosnian organs to establish their own, parallel Serb ones; thus, a Bosnian Serb ‘state’ was established under the umbrella of the JNA (Hoare 2007a:347–59). Serb civilian authorities then played a central role in mobilizing the Bosnian Serb population for war and in administering the removal of the non-Serb population.

Although the genocide across Bosnia-Hercegovina followed a consistent pattern, it was also localized, with victims in concentration camps, for example, frequently personally acquainted with the guards and commanders as friends, neighbours, or workmates from pre-war days (see Hukanović 1997; Pervanić 1999). The demonizing of Croats as ‘Ustasas’ and Muslims as ‘Turks’, drawing

upon personal or family memories of World War II and folk memories of the Ottoman period, provided the necessary self-justification for the Serb nationalists' own crimes. Thus, the Bosnian genocide was a 'bottom-up' as well as a 'top-down' genocide.

The policies of the international community, involving an unwillingness to intervene militarily to halt the killing and readiness to accommodate Serb and Croat war aims, and symbolized by the UN arms embargo that hampered Bosnian efforts at self-defence, facilitated the genocide. The Lisbon Agreement of March 1992, offering a three-way partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina, catalysed the Serb assault. The subsequent 'Vance-Owen Peace Plan' finalized in January 1993, which offered to divide Bosnia-Herzegovina into ten provinces dominated by the respective nationalities, similarly catalysed the Croat assault on the common state and enabled the outbreak of full-scale fighting between Croat and Bosnian forces (Glaudić 2011:295; Hoare 1997:132–33).

Bosnia-Herzegovina came close to disappearing altogether with the Owen-Stoltenberg Peace Plan of August 1993, which offered a three-way partition with the right of the Serb and Croat entities to secede, but this was rejected by the Bosnian leadership. Although the Western powers under U.S. leadership eventually shifted in favour of military force, they remained committed to partition. The ultimate result was the Dayton Accords legitimizing Republika Srpska, albeit within a loose Bosnian framework, thereby underpinning the results of the genocide (see Almond 1994; Power 2003, chapters 9, 11; Rieff 1996; Simms 2002).

The Croat assault on Bosnia-Herzegovina involved collaboration between Tudjman's regime in Zagreb and Bosnian-Croat nationalists (HDZ and Croat Council of Defence). It revealed itself with the Croat forces' expulsion of the Muslim population from Prozor in October 1992, and then evolved into full-scale participation in the destruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina and dispossession of the Muslims. As with its Serb counterpart, this Croat assault was not a manifestation of Croat nationalism's 'essence'; it reversed the Usthas's policy of rejecting a Serbo-Croat partition of Bosnia-Herzegovina and of co-opting the Muslims against the Serbs. Research on the Croat mass killings of the 1990s is also in its infancy, but it may help to view them not as parallel to the Serb mass killings, but as a subsidiary of the same, Serb-led killing process. This relationship arose structurally from the Yugoslav arrangement, whereby Serb and Croat Communists and military and intelligence officers had collaborated within a common state. Tudjman himself had been a Partisan general and Communist functionary who had long resided in Belgrade (Hoare 2004:81–87, 94–97).

The Srebrenica massacre of July 1995 is sometimes viewed as an aberration from the wider pattern of the Bosnian war. It occurred years after the principal killing wave in 1992. Its much greater scale than previous Serb massacres, and its principal targeting of men and boys, marks it as distinct; it occurred at a time when the military tide was turning against the Serb forces, when greater Muslim military numbers were increasingly making themselves felt, and when the total extermination of Muslim combat-age males therefore appeared as a necessary war aim. Yet as Edina Bećirević's research has shown, the Srebrenica massacre followed on

seamlessly from the earlier massacres and expulsions in East Bosnia in the spring of 1992. The Serb forces had been unable to conquer Srebrenica at that time, so had attempted in subsequent years to strangle the enclave through siege and shelling. The final massacre of July 1995 was therefore the culmination of a long-genocidal process that had begun over three years earlier (Bećirević, 2014).

The Bosnian genocide of 1992–95 represented the confluence of long-term and short-term trends and of structural factors and leadership decisions in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. It is for new generations of Bosnian genocide scholars to carry out the research necessary to provide a fuller explanation.

Notes

¹ See ‘Case Concerning Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro)’, Judgement of 26 February 2007’, pp. 116–27, available at: <http://www.icj-cij.org/docket/files/91/13685.pdf>.

² ‘Case of Jorgić vs Germany’, European Court of Human Rights, Fifth Section, Application no. 74613/01, Strasbourg, 12 July 2007.

³ ‘Prosecutor v. Zdravko Tolimir’, International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991, United Nations, 12 December 2012, pp. 331–44.

⁴ ‘Case Concerning Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro)’, Judgement of 26 February 2007’, pp. 143–47.

⁵ For example, see sometime Conservative minister Sir Fitzroy Maclean (1957) and former British ambassador to Yugoslavia, Duncan Wilson (1979). For a sympathetic account from a more left-wing perspective, see Fred Singleton (1976).

⁶ For example, Stevan K. Pavlowitch entitled his book about Yugoslavia, *The Improbable Survivor: Yugoslavia and Its Problems 1918–1988* (Pavlowitch 1988).

⁷ Two of the most influential books that widely used negative stereotypes about the former Yugoslavs were Kaplan (1993) and Glenny (1992).

⁸ For examples of the last of these, see Gibbs (2009), Hudson (2003), Johnstone (2002), and Parenti (2002).

⁹ In particular, Anzulovic (1999).

¹⁰ For example, as regards Naser Orić, see Mojzes (2011:169, 178–81); as regards Ante Gotovina and Mladen Markač, see Gordy (2012).

¹¹ *Službeni glasnik Republike Srbije*, yr 46, no. 1, 28 September 1990, p. 5.

¹² Marković wrote, ‘there is no other path for the solution of the Eastern Question, but a war of life and death between the Christians and the Muslims. What role does Serbia have in this struggle? We ask you this, Serbian government! You are silent’ (Svetozar Marković, ‘[rešenje istočnog pitanja]’, *Celokupna dela*, vol. 1, Narodnja knjiga, Belgrade, 1987, pp. 31–34); and ‘The idea: Serb unity, that is the most revolutionary idea that exists on the whole of the Balkan peninsula from Istanbul to Vienna’ (Svetozar Marković, ‘Slovenska Austrija i Srpsko jedinstvo’, *Celokupna dela*, vol. 5, pp. 96–101).

¹³ *Tanjug*, 9 October 1991.

¹⁴ ‘International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia – The Prosecutor of the Tribunal against Slobodan Milošević – Amended Indictment’, International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, 22 November 2002.

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