

THE POWER OF MEMORY:
THE IMPLEMENTATION AND EFFECTS OF POST-WAR
MEMORIALIZATION EFFORTS IN BOSNIA AND
HERZEGOVINA

by

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A THESIS

Presented to the Department of International Studies
and the Robert D. Clark Honors College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts

June 2021

An Abstract of the Thesis of

Sarah Barr for the degree of Bachelor of Arts
in the Department of International Studies to be taken June 2021

Title: The Power of Memory: The Implementation and Effects of Post-War
Memorialization Efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina

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Memorialization is a tool of transitional justice that utilizes the power of memory to recognize a society's painful history to cultivate a new understanding of past and present injustices. In post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina, the establishment of memorialization efforts are highly contested, as they are implemented by local communities, political elites, and the international community in an ethno-nationalist society with a unique memoryscape that widely functions on ethnic division rather than unification. This thesis utilizes the case studies of the Slana Banja memorial complex in Tuzla and the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery in Potočari to analyze and contrast the forms, functions, successes, and limitations of memorialization efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Through my research, I am to highlight the power of memory as a tool to alter societies, demonstrating that history is never confined to the past and it utilized to adjust the present and influence the future.

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my primary thesis advisor Professor Will Johnson, my second reader Professor Erin Beck, and my Clark Honors College representative Professor Monique Balbuena for their participation on my thesis committee. This process would not be complete without your support, and I am extremely thankful for the time you have spent reading my thesis and providing me with further guidance.

I would like to acknowledge the role of Professor Will Johnson and Emina Bužinkić in providing an incredible study abroad experience in which I was able to travel with a group of fellow University of Oregon students to Bosnia and Herzegovina, which inspired my thesis topic. I am forever grateful for all that I learned while travelling through the Western Balkans, and for your unwavering support.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family and friends for their words of encouragement throughout this whole thesis process. Specifically, I would like to thank my dad Lewis and my sister Jessica for giving me unconditional love and always pushing me to explore the world and savor new experiences. Finally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my late mother Annie, who I know would be extremely proud of me. Your love and light will forever shine through me.

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Introduction

Purpose of Study

There are few places that I have traveled to that illicit such a wonderful emotional response comparable to that I felt while visiting Bosnia and Herzegovina in the summer of 2019. The topography itself is breathtaking, full of beautiful mountainous terrain and lush valleys. However, I was particularly struck by the rich history of the country and the fluidity and resilience of identity throughout its many trials and tribulations. I remember standing in front of the plaque in Sarajevo designating the spot where Archduke Franz Ferdinand was shot in 1914, while down the block, there stood a building severely damaged from artillery used during the 1992-1996 siege of Sarajevo in the Bosnian war. In that moment, I began to understand the significance of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a historical centerpiece of Europe and the Western Balkans and develop an interest in the politics of memory.

I traveled to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) with fellow students from the University of Oregon on a study abroad trip titled “Human Rights and Peace Studies in the Balkans,” led by University of Oregon faculty Will Johnson and Balkan human rights activist Emina Bužinkić.¹ During the program, we met with various activists and non-governmental organizations in Croatia, Serbia, Kosovo, and BiH to discuss international and domestic transitional justice and peacebuilding mechanisms implemented during the aftermath of the breakup of the former Yugoslavia and the subsequent wars in the Western Balkans. I had not previously learned about the Bosnian

¹ Throughout my paper, I will use the abbreviation BiH when referring to Bosnia and Herzegovina. BiH is the International Organization for Standardization’s (ISO) country code for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

war, and I was overwhelmed trying to grapple with the atrocities that occurred in the region while similarly feeling inspired by the work of incredible individuals and organizations working to promote human rights and reconciliation.

During my time in the Western Balkans, I was fascinated to learn about transitional justice mechanisms implemented in BiH, precisely memorialization as a tool to address the past. Similar to the various ways people can discuss the past, there is no singular blueprint for memorialization efforts. Essentially, memorialization takes many forms, and each step is dependent on the needs and priorities of each community and may acknowledge an individual, group, or event to document past events.² Although varied in form and function, the process of using public spaces to encourage a dialogue about the past has emerged in all regions of the world.³ Because they are unique to the community they serve, not everyone will accept every memorialization effort, nor do all memorials function to promote reconciliation. However, researching the implementation and effects of memorialization efforts helps form an understanding of how societies try to recover in the aftermath of conflict and trauma and explore how documenting the past can be a unifying or divisive process.

I chose to focus my thesis on post-war memorialization efforts in BiH because the country was at the epicenter of ethnic conflict during the 1992-1995 Bosnian war. When the Bosnian war began in 1992, the country's ethnic breakdown was the most diverse of the countries in the former Yugoslavia. The 1990 census in BiH demonstrated that before the war, 17% of Bosnian citizens identified as Croats, 31%

² Kelli Muddell and Sibley Hawkins, "Gender and Transitional Justice: A Training Module Series," October 2018, 13.

³ Muddell and Hawkins, "Gender and Transitional Justice: A Training Module Series," 13.

identified as Serbs, and 44% identified as Bosniaks, with 5.5% of the population identifying as Yugoslav and 2.5% identifying as either Roma, Jewish, or Sinti.⁴ Each of the primary ethnic groups has different religious practices, as the majority of Croats are Roman Catholic, Serbs identify as Eastern Orthodox, and Bosniaks practice Islam. Before the Bosnian war, nearly 27% of all marriages in BiH were ethnically diverse.⁵ However, the beginning of the war challenged BiH's diversity and interethnic relations, and ethnic tensions between Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats, and Bosniaks in BiH escalated into extreme violence and genocide.⁶ Today in BiH, there are vastly different politicized conceptions of history, which frame the future of the country. Ethno-nationalist tensions remain at the forefront of BiH's political and social landscape and manifests into the establishment of memorialization efforts in the region.

Research Questions

Before I visited the Western Balkans, I had seen many memorial sites. Still, I had never profoundly questioned the process of their construction or purpose as a tool for societies to address the past. However, after visiting memorial sites throughout the Western Balkans, I knew that I wanted to explore further the implementation and effects of memorialization in post-war BiH. My thesis aims to answer the following questions:

⁴ "Bosnia and Herzegovina - History Background," StateUniversity.com, accessed April 29, 2021, <https://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/174/Bosnia-Herzegovina-history-background.html>

⁵ "Bosnia and Herzegovina - History Background."

⁶ Bosniaks and Muslim Bosnians are used interchangeably in literature discussing this subject. Prior to 1993, the world Muslim was used to describe any Slavic-speaking Muslim living in Bosnia. In 1993, the Bosnian Assembly declared Bosniak as the official term for Muslim Bosnians. For more information, see Xavier Bougarel, Elissa Helms, and Ger Duijzings, "The New Bosnian Mosaic: Identities, Memories and Moral Claims in a Post-War Society," in *The New Bosnian Mosaic: Identities, Memories and Moral Claims in a Post-War Society* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 2-35, 2.

1. What forms of memorialization exist in Bosnia and Herzegovina?
2. How do different forms of memorialization pursue or elicit different objectives?
3. What factors limit memorialization processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina?
4. How are memorialization efforts evaluated as successful or unsuccessful?

This thesis begins with an overview of the 1992-1995 Bosnian war to contextualize memorialization efforts within the post-war landscape of BiH. Next, I provide a literature review of the forms and functions of transitional justice and memorialization before exploring why transitional mechanisms are necessary to implement in BiH. Within this section, I specifically examine data on memorialization efforts in BiH and discuss the political limitations to their establishment.

Following my literature review, I contrast the case studies of the Slana Banja memorial complex in Tuzla to the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery in Potočari. I note how civilians, political officials, and the international community all play a role in establishing memorials throughout different political landscapes in BiH. Additionally, I use these case studies to analyze and contrast the construction, objectives, successes, and limitations of memorialization efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina. To determine if a memorialization effort is considered successful or unsuccessful, I will contrast the goals of memorialization outlined in my literature review with the reflections of people who either constructed the memorial or are represented or impacted by the memorial. For the purpose of my analysis as an outsider to the region, I will put more weight on the perceptions of people living in BiH to determine whether a memorialization effort is successful rather than whether it

completes the outlined goals of transitional justice and memorialization present in my literature review. Lastly, my thesis will conclude with a final analysis of what I was able to accomplish through my research and suggestions for further study.

Challenges and Limitations to My Research

The primary challenge and subsequent limitation to my research is that I do not read or speak Bosnian; thus, my sources were limited to those that were translated into English or initially written in English. For example, in the case study of the Slana Banja memorial complex, I primarily relied on the work of Dr. Ioannis Armakolas, who researched the Slana Banja memorial complex through an EU-funded project titled ‘Cultural Heritage and the Re-construction of Identities after Conflict’ (CRIC).⁷ His research was one of the only sources I found in English that discusses the history of the Slana Banja memorial complex and its evolution as a memorialization site; other sources I found on the topic always cited his work. Therefore, I wrote my thesis using sources from researchers, political scientists, sociologists, activists, and legal scholars reporting on research that they conducted themselves in BiH or culminated from primary sources written in Bosnian. However, I prioritized using sources written by Bosnian scholars and journalists working in the Western Balkans to gather holistic data to form my thesis, albeit not representative of all the research on my topic.

Additionally, I only analyzed two case studies in my thesis; therefore, the conclusions I have drawn about the successes and limitations of memorialization efforts from these case studies are not representative of the region as a whole. Choosing only

⁷ “CRIC’s Research on Bosnia,” ELIAMEP (Hellenic Foundation for European and Former Policy, April 27, 2012), <https://www.eliamep.gr/en/activity/%CE%BF%CE%BB%CF%8C%CE%BA%CE>.

two case studies inherently limits the scope of my conclusions and analysis. Still, I wanted to ensure that I presented the case studies with sufficient detail to adequately analyze the implementation and effects of these memorialization efforts.

Another limitation to my research is that I am not native to the region. As an American, any conclusions I have drawn from my research are not representative of the perspectives of Bosnian citizens. I must acknowledge my privilege in researching and analyzing these transitional justice and memorialization initiatives in the region as someone who has not experienced the atrocities of the Bosnian war and has not lived through the effects of regional trauma. As an outsider, there are inherent limitations to the extent that I can perceive and analyze these topics. Regardless, I believe that cross-cultural learning and understanding are essential to creating a more compassionate world, and I hope that my work reflects the importance of having empathy towards others.

A Brief Overview of the Bosnian War

The catalyst for the Bosnian war was the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, but the conflict over the territory of BiH has deeper roots. Throughout history, Serbs and Croats have continually contested the land of BiH, with tension especially building between the two ethnic groups throughout the 20th century.⁸ In 1939, the Kingdom of Yugoslavia partitioned BiH in response to a growing rivalry between Serbs and Croats, where both groups set their territorial ambitions on acquiring the land of BiH.⁹ At the start of WWII, the Independent State of Croatia annexed BiH with direction from the Croat fascist group known as the *ustaše*, who based their ideology on the beliefs of the Nazis.¹⁰ After WWII, BiH was reestablished by the new socialist Yugoslavia in 1945 as a republic within its boundaries, temporarily dousing the rivalry between Serbs and Croats for the territory.¹¹ Yet, after the death of Yugoslavia's socialist President Josip Tito in 1980, whose vision of a multi-ethnic Yugoslavia functioned to suppress nationalism, rising nationalism plagued the region and destabilized inter-state cooperation within Yugoslavia.¹²

In 1990, three ethnically divided parties won the first free elections in Yugoslavia: the Muslim Party of Democratic Action (SDA), the Serb Democratic Party (SDS), and the Croat Democratic Union (HDZ).¹³ This rising nationalism from various

⁸ Xavier Bougarel, Elissa Helms, and Ger Duijzings, "Introduction" in *The New Bosnian Mosaic: Identities, Memories and Moral Claims in a Post-War Society* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 2-35, 4.

⁹ Bougarel et. al, "Introduction," 4.

In my thesis, I use the terms Serb and Croat to signify the citizens of Serbia and Croatia. When I use Bosnian Serb or Bosnian Croat, I refer to people of Serb or Croat ethnicity that currently reside in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid,

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

ethnic groups in the region contributed to different states seeking independence from Yugoslavia.¹⁴ In 1991, Slovenia declared independence after a brief 10-day war, and Macedonia followed suit.¹⁵ When Croatia declared independence shortly after, the Serb-backed Yugoslav People's Army and other Serb-paramilitary groups seized nearly one-third of Croatia's territory.¹⁶ In response, both Croatian President Franjo Tudman and Serbian President Slobodan Milošević once again turned to the land of BiH as a territorial goal to assert dominance over the region.¹⁷

By late 1991, the SDS and the HDZ declared multiple autonomous regions in BiH where Serb and Croat populations were most concentrated.¹⁸ In 1992, the SDS created the self-proclaimed Serb Republic within BiH, called the Republika Srpska (RS).

¹⁴ John R. Lampe, "Bosnian War: European History (1992-1995)," Encyclopædia Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed March 30, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Bosnian-War>.

¹⁵ Lampe, "Bosnian War: European History (1992-1995)".

¹⁶ Bougarel et. al, 4.

¹⁷ Bougarel et. al, 4.

¹⁸ Lampe, "Bosnian War: European History (1992-1995)".



Figure 1: The territorial bounds of Yugoslavia: 1946 vs.1992.

Source: Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc.¹⁹

In 1992, the European Community (which later became the European Union) proposed breaking up BiH into different cantons divided by ethnic majorities, but Bosnian Serbs, Bosnian Croats, and Bosniaks did not accept the proposed divisions.²⁰ When the United States and European Community recognized BiH's independence in April of 1992, Serb-paramilitaries and branches of the Yugoslav People's Army invaded the capital city of Sarajevo.²¹ The city was under siege by Bosnian Serb paramilitaries and the Yugoslav Army for nearly four years from April of 1992 to February of 1996.²² Soon, BiH became the epicenter of ethnic genocide in the region.²³ An estimated 100,000-150,000 people died in rural and urban areas across the country during the Bosnian war, marking the deadliest European conflict since WWII.²⁴

In December of 1995, the United States helped to implement the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement by the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of

¹⁹ Lampe.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Bougarel et. al, 5.

Croatia, and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to officially end the war in BiH (although Bosnian Serb occupation of Sarajevo continued until February of 1996).²⁵ However, as stated by the former British ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina Charles Crawford, “the Dayton accords stopped the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina without ending it.”²⁶ While the Dayton Peace agreement successfully confirmed the existence of an independent Bosnian state, it also codified the existence of both the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska, endorsing the division of BiH into separate ethnic entities.²⁷

Jelena Subotić notes that while the creators of the Dayton Accords have used the partition of BiH as an example of a successful constitutional model that ended the war, the Dayton Accords solidified the ethnic divisions that were at the core of the Bosnian war, creating a framework within which transitional justice mechanisms are not easily implemented.²⁸ Moll explains that within this framework, each ethnic group’s nationalist ideals dominate the political space while competing with each other, resulting in very different, antagonistic, and politicized public memories and representations of history.²⁹

²⁵ Crawford, Charles, "The Balkan Chill: The Intrinsic Weakness of the Dayton Accords," *Harvard International Review* 21, no. 1 (1998): 84-83. Accessed February 18, 2021. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42762506>, 82.

²⁶ Crawford, "The Balkan Chill: The Intrinsic Weakness of the Dayton Accords," 82.

²⁷ Bougarel et. al, 6.

²⁸ Jelena Subotić, *Hijacked Justice: Dealing with the Past in the Balkans* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2016), 164.

²⁹ Nicolas Moll, “Division and Denial and Nothing Else? Culture of History and Memory Politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” *Cultures of History Forum*, December 4, 2015, pp. 1-13, <https://doi.org/10.25626/0036>, 3.

Unlike any other European country, BiH contains the “parallel co-existence” of three ethnonational identities codified into law.³⁰ Although the presence of ethnic division does not automatically lead to nationalism (or vice-versa), BiH’s political divides outlined by the Dayton accords were expressly driven by a linkage of ethnicity with a particular political identity, leading to ethno-nationalism. At the national level, three rotating presidents govern BiH, representing the major ethnic (and therefore religious) groups that often contradict each other in promoting their political agendas.³¹ The Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia have separate prime ministers, while the Federation of Bosnia contains ten cantons, each with its own administrative government.³² Continuous ethnic tensions between Bosnian Croats, Bosnian Serbs, and Bosniaks in BiH manifests into conflict over the realities of each ethnic group’s experience during the Bosnian war and challenges transitional justice and memorialization efforts in the region. Therefore, transitional justice and memorialization efforts in BiH stand as a form of resilience within themselves.

³⁰ Moll, “Division and Denial and Nothing Else? Culture of History and Memory Politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” 3.

³¹ Nardelli et. al, “Bosnia and Herzegovina: the World’s Most Complicated System of Government?”

³² Nardelli, Alberto, Denis Dzidic, and Elvira Jukic, “Bosnia and Herzegovina: the World’s Most Complicated System of Government?” *The Guardian*, October 8, 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2014/oct/08/bosnia-herzegovina-elections-the-worlds-most-complicated-system-of-government>.

Transitional Justice and Memorialization: Literature Review

The past is gone, it is already de-termin(at)ed; it cannot be changed. The future, by contrast, is open, uncertain, indeterminate. What can change about the past is its meaning, which is subject to reinterpretations anchored in intentions and expectations toward the future. . . Actors and activities 'use' the past, bringing their understandings and interpretations about it into the public sphere of debate. Their intention is to establish/convince/transmit their narrative, so that others will accept it.³³

-Elizabeth Jelin

Conceptualizing Transitional Justice

Transitional justice is defined as mechanisms and processes that a society can implement to better acknowledge the legacy of large-scale human rights abuses to ensure accountability, deliver justice to victims, and achieve community reconciliation.³⁴ Pablo De Greiff notes a 2004 UN Secretary General Report titled "The Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict and Post-Conflict Societies" which highlights the importance of criminal justice, truth-telling, reparations, and memorialization as part of transitional justice mechanisms.³⁵ De Greiff argues that although these measures would be most effective when executed holistically, no country can claim legitimate success in implementing all of these mechanisms to an equal degree.³⁶

Martha Minow argues that the desire for transitional justice mechanisms in post-conflict societies relies on the assumption that traditional court procedures are

³³ Elizabeth Jelin, Judy Rein, and Marcial Godoy-Anatavia, *State Repression and the Labors of Memory* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 27

³⁴ Pablo De Greiff, "Theorizing Transitional Justice," *Transitional Justice* 51 (2012): pp. 31-77, <https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9780814794661.003.0002>, 31.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid, 35.

inadequate to address all of the needs of citizens in the aftermath of regional trauma.³⁷ Amy Sodaro notes that the implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Genocide Convention in 1948, and the subsequent Nuremberg trials in the aftermath of WWII set a precedent for international justice.³⁸ However, the goal of traditional court procedures is to operate under the guise of formal justice, where closure is symbolized by a final verdict or a sentence.³⁹ Yet, Minow argues that reconciliation is not a primary goal of the court system, as “reconstruction of a relationship, seeking to heal the accused, or indeed, healing the rest of the community,” are not the aim of formal justice mechanisms in any direct sense.⁴⁰

According to Paige Arthur, the central goal of international human rights movements until the 1980s was to shame governments into justly treating their citizens, without focusing on accountability for human rights violations.⁴¹ However, the end of oppressive Latin American regimes throughout the 1980s, most notably in Argentina, created a new space for human rights activists and organizations to question how to address past human rights issues in transitioning governments.⁴²

A report from the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) explains that the term transitional justice emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the wake

³⁷ Martha Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence*. (Beacon Press, 1998), 26.

³⁸ Amy Sodaro, “Memorial Museums: The Emergence of a New Form,” in *Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2018), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1v2xskk.5>, 18-19.

³⁹ Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence*, 26.

⁴⁰ Minow, 26.

⁴¹ Paige Arthur, “How ‘Transitions’ Reshaped Human Rights: A Conceptual History of Transitional Justice,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (2009): pp. 321-367, <https://doi.org/10.1353/hrq.0.0069>, 328.

⁴² Arthur, “How ‘Transitions’ Reshaped Human Rights: A Conceptual History of Transitional Justice,” 335.

of multiple instances of regional trauma when human rights activists wanted to address systematic abuses by former regimes without disrupting political transformations already underway.⁴³ Although post-war reconciliation and transitional justice efforts may have taken shape as early as the creation of the Nuremberg trials, it wasn't until the end of oppressive Latin American regimes that the terms and processes of transitional justice were regarded as a positive transitional effort tied to concepts of liberal democracy.⁴⁴ Kris Brown notes that research of social memory and the process of memorialization has drastically increased with the introduction of the term transitional justice.⁴⁵ Brown explains that this coincides with a global "memory boom," as societies worldwide have assigned a higher social and political value in acknowledging the past and formulating collective memories.⁴⁶ As many countries recovering from conflict were transitioning from dictatorship or state-sponsored terrorism to democracy, community and governmental response to systematic human rights abuses were coined as mechanisms of transitional justice.⁴⁷

Minow argues that the efficacy of transitional justice initiatives within a post-conflict society depends on accountability from perpetrators of harm, in addition to victim willingness and participation in addressing past atrocities and their present-day consequences.⁴⁸ Without accountability, De Greiff suggests that transitional justice is

⁴³ "What Is Transitional Justice?" (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2009), <https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Global-Transitional-Justice-2009-English.pdf>, 1.

⁴⁴ "What is Transitional Justice?", 1.

⁴⁵ Kris Brown, "Commemoration as Symbolic Reparation: New Narratives or Spaces of Conflict?," *Human Rights Review* 14, no. 3 (2013): pp. 273-289, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12142-013-0277-z>, 275.

⁴⁶ Brown, "Commemoration as Symbolic Reparation: New Narratives or Spaces of Conflict?", 275.

⁴⁷ "What is Transitional Justice?", 1.

⁴⁸ Minow, 9.

somewhat performative rather than a catalyst for real systemic change.⁴⁹ De Greiff emphasizes that there must be ‘bi-directional relations’ between different forms of transitional justice to significantly impact society.⁵⁰ He writes, “just as reparations call for truth-telling if the benefits are to be interpreted as a justice measure, truth-telling seems to call for reparations if words are to be seen, in the end, as more than inconsequential chatter.”⁵¹

Erik Meyer adds that transitional justice mechanisms are most effective when they occur during the lifetime of both the victims and perpetrators, a concept that he labels as ‘temporal proximity.’⁵² Meyer emphasizes the necessity of confronting the past for future political systems to function and highlights that it is in a country’s best interest to engage in transitional justice mechanisms to establish its standing within the international community.⁵³ Essentially, acknowledging the past has little societal consequence if there are no further policy reforms or transitional justice initiatives that directly address the aftermath of the conflict, the victims, and the effects on the community.

The failure of more formal institutional responses to adequately address war crimes has inspired alternative efforts of addressing the past, such as memorialization. Although memorialization has similar goals to other transitional justice efforts, it takes a unique form and seeks to fill the gaps left by other efforts. Focusing on history to process collective memory of a nation’s experience with trauma, aided through

⁴⁹ De Greiff, 37.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Erik Meyer, “Memory and Politics,” in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook* (New York, NY: De Gruyter, Inc., 2008), pp. 173-180, 173-174.

⁵³ Meyer, 174.

transitional justice efforts such as memorialization, can assist ethnically divided societies like BiH in reconciliation efforts. However, not all memorialization efforts function to promote reconciliation. Implementing memorialization efforts in an ethnically divided society is difficult, as civilian and political actors that experienced the war have multiple narratives and different experiences of trauma. Complex “truths” of each ethnic group exist but are not necessarily in agreement with each other. Hassan Mneimneh states that memorialization efforts often blur the line between remembrance and actively promoting a political agenda.⁵⁴ Mneimneh argues that “remembering is by necessity refashioning the past, through the selective highlight of elements of subjective relevance,” indicating that memorialization efforts demonstrate a selective perspective of the group that helped to implement it.⁵⁵ Regardless of the form and intended function, memorialization sites are often contested, especially in ethnically divided societies.⁵⁶

Forms and Functions of Memorialization

Documenting the past can be done in various ways, so the forms of memorialization are vast. In a report published by the U.S. Institute of Peace, Judy Barsalou and Victoria Baxter outline the main forms of memorialization, categorized through constructed sites, found sites, and activities.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ De Greiff, 37.

⁵⁵ De Greiff, 37.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Judy Barsalou and Victoria Baxter, “The Urge to Remember: The Role of Memorials in Social Reconstruction and Transitional Justice” (The United States Institute of Peace, January 2007), <https://www.usip.org/publications/2007/01/urge-remember-role-memorials-social-reconstruction-and-transitional-justice>, 5.

Constructed Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museums and commemorative libraries • Monuments • Walls of names of victims • Virtual memorials on the World Wide Web
Found Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graves • Locations of mass killings or genocide • Former torture centers/concentration camps
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anniversaries of coups, battles, or other actions related to the conflict • Temporary exhibits • Renaming or rededicating streets, buildings, or infrastructure • Walking tours or parades • Demonstrations and vigils • Public apologies

Table 1: Forms of Memorialization.

Source: Louis Bickford, International Center for Transitional Justice.

This table demonstrates that memorialization tactics do not have a specific blueprint, and their forms vary depending on the context. These forms are not mutually exclusive, and larger memorialization efforts often include multiple memorialization tactics, including a combination of constructed sites, found sites, and activities.

Roberta Villalón writes that in El Salvador, the Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen (Museum of the Word and the Image) archives documents, belongings, and oral history of activists to preserve the memory of Salvadorian guerrillas and leftist activists in the

Salvadorian civil war.⁵⁸ Along with this constructed site, the Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen has commemorative activities, leading educational programs and community engagement projects to promote memory preservation and identity building.⁵⁹ Open to the public, the Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen is committed to a culture of peace but has a limited structural impact within El Salvador, as its government actively weakens liberal mobilizations.⁶⁰

While some forms of memorialization are more abstract (such as sculptures or art installations to commemorate victims), others utilize direct evidence of systematic human rights abuses to bring the past into the present. Rémi Korman describes an example of a ‘found site’ memorial in Nyamata, Rwanda, to honor victims of the Rwandan genocide (primarily of the Tutsi ethnic group).⁶¹ Inside the memorial museum, visitors can view the remains of victims alongside a description of the tools used during the genocide.⁶² Korman explains that showing the bones to demonstrate the treatment of victims is a “conscious museological decision” that aims to “highlight the meaning placed by the killers on the destruction of these bodies . . . By dismembering the corpses, by destroying them, they attacked their very humanity.”⁶³ At the Nyamata memorial site, the display of skeletons serves as a stark reminder of the past and a warning for the future.

⁵⁸ Roberta Villalón, “The Resilience of Memory, Truth, and Justice Processes,” *Latin American Perspectives* 43, no. 6 (2016): pp. 3-7, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582x16663895>, 4.

⁵⁹ Villalón, “The Resilience of Memory, Truth, and Justice Processes,” 4.

⁶⁰ Villalón, 4.

⁶¹ Rémi Korman, “The Tutsi Body in the 1994 Genocide: Ideology, Physical Destruction, and Memory,” in *Destruction and Human Remains: Disposal and Concealment in Genocide and Mass Violence* (Manchester University Press, 2014), pp. 226-242, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1wn0s3n.14>, 235.

⁶² Korman, “The Tutsi Body in the 1994 Genocide: Ideology, Physical Destruction, and Memory,” 235.

⁶³ Korman, 235.

Memorialization takes many forms, implemented at constructed sites, found sites, and through activities that engage the affected community.⁶⁴ To the extent that memorialization tactics vary in form, they vary in function. Barsalou and Baxter outline the primary functions of memorialization, listed below.

Functions of Memorialization
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Truth-telling or documenting specific human rights violations • Creating a specific place for the immediate family and/or the larger society to mourn victims • Offering symbolic reparations to honor the victims of violence and reinstate their reputations • Symbolizing a community's or nation's commitment to values such as democracy and human rights • Promoting reconciliation by recasting the national identity or repairing damaged relations among groups • Encouraging civic engagement and education programs to engage the wider community in a dialogue about the past and promote discussions of a peaceful future based on coexistence • Advancing educational purposes, including the retelling of history for future generations • Facilitating historic preservation of a specific era in a country's or community's history

Table 2: Functions of Memorialization.

Source: U.S. Institute of Peace.⁶⁵

The functions of memorialization presented by Barsalou and Baxter have positive connotations, and in an ideal world, all memorialization efforts would promote peace and dissuade future conflict. Without reflecting on the past, societies will not be

⁶⁴ Barsalou and Baxter, 4.

⁶⁵ Barsalou and Baxter, 4.

able to address the necessary systemic changes needed to promote a better future for its citizens.⁶⁶ Sodaro writes that confronting the past through a method of remembrance contributes to our understanding of the promotion of human rights.⁶⁷ Additionally, Brown suggests that symbolic reparations like memorialization can improve the chances of reconciliation through the simple acknowledgment of perpetrator harm and responsibility.⁶⁸

Although Barsalou and Baxter examine the functions of memorialization through the framework of transitional justice, not all memorialization efforts operate under this framework and are often hindered by political and social factors. For example, Villalón explains that the Dirección Nacional contra el Terrorismo (National Directorate against Terrorism) museum in Lima, Peru welcomes viewers to the exhibit only under the guidance of a military officer, presenting Peruvian history through a militaristic lens.⁶⁹ Villanón questions the museum's form as a site that preserves solely the memory of soldiers, noting that denying certain groups the status of victimhood inherently questions different group's legitimacy, negatively contributing to the field of memory, truth, and justice processes in Peru.⁷⁰

Although the two case studies of the Slana Banja memorial complex and the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery in BiH that I will discuss embody most of the functions listed in the above table, they are implemented in a political realm that limits their effects in promoting reconciliation. While utilizing memory to promote

⁶⁶ Sodaro, "Memorial Museums: The Emergence of a New Form," 16.

⁶⁷ Sodaro, 16.

⁶⁸ Brown, 275.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

transitional justice is a utopic ideal, Sodaro argues that “the motives of memory are never pure.”⁷¹ Sodaro describes that memory is often misused, distorted, or co-opted by political actors at the local, state, or international levels to promote reconciliation or further ingrain ethnic divisions.⁷²

Barsalou and Baxter note that “the past can be reinterpreted to address a wide range of political or social needs—recasting ‘subversives’ as martyrs or innocent victims, for instance, or consolidating a new national identity.”⁷³ Barsalou and Baxter give the example of politicians building a new national identity by noting the stark transformation of South Africa as an apartheid state to being recognized as the “Rainbow Nation”, a coin termed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu in 1994 to encourage a national identity of unity rather than division.⁷⁴ In contrast to this specific example from South Africa of promoting a new national identity, Barsalou and Baxter give an example from Cuba, where politicians constructed a memorial of young Cuban refugee Elian Gonzalez to push a political goal that the United States would return him to Cuba.⁷⁵ This demonstrates that memorialization is not only about remembering the past, but also shaping the future, as politicians frequently use memorialization tactics to push specific political agendas. Similar to the examples above, memorialization efforts are highly contested as ingrained ethno-nationalist divisions formulate the country’s topography, political realm, and social structures.

⁷¹ Sodaro, 20.

⁷² Sodaro, 20.

⁷³ Barsalou and Baxter, 4.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Beyond the ICTY:

A Need for Transitional Justice in Bosnia and Herzegovina

In 1993, the United Nations Security Council established the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in the Hague to hold top war criminals accountable for the war crimes committed during the Bosnian war and throughout the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s.⁷⁶ The location of the court was chosen on foreign ground so that it could move forward despite local political opposition throughout the Balkans. Due to international political resources and will, the ICTY has successfully convicted over 160 individuals for partaking in war crimes in the former Yugoslavia.⁷⁷ Ajla Škrbić writes that the ICTY has contributed various positive precedences to future ad hoc courts, such as the rule on “the obligation to distinguish between civilians and combatants” and “the rule to distinguish civilian from military facilities,” as well as being the first international court to recognize rape as a form of torture and a crime against humanity.⁷⁸ Despite its successes, there is a lack of victim satisfaction regarding the work of the ICTY which helps explain why there is a need for further transitional justice mechanisms in the Balkans.

This top-down, international approach is capable of achieving justice in a traditional sense through sentencing war criminals and encouraging victim participation in these trials, yet, the actions of the ICTY left many victims feeling unfulfilled by the

⁷⁶ Ajla Škrbić, “The Legacy of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia,” *SEER* 18, no. 2 (2015): pp. 241-250, <https://doi.org/10.5771/1435-2869-2015-2-97>, 248.

⁷⁷ Ajla Škrbić, “The Legacy of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia,” *SEER* 18, no. 2 (2015): pp. 241-250, <https://doi.org/10.5771/1435-2869-2015-2-97>, 248.

⁷⁸ Ajla Škrbić, “The Legacy of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia,” 248.

court's actions.⁷⁹ As stated by the first lead prosecutor for the International Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, “the success of the international tribunals will be tested by whether the trials were fair” rather than the amount of convictions and persecutions by the court.⁸⁰ The ICTY could only prosecute a small portion of those charged with violations, focusing on those most responsible for the most severe offenses.⁸¹ Minow explains that many Bosnian war criminals “elude arrest and prosecution by escaping, or dying, or concealing their identities, their conduct, or the evidence implicating them.”⁸² Others avoid arrest because their political party or ethnic group is in ruling power in parts of BiH, such as Bosnian Serbs in the Republika Srpska.⁸³ Minow argues that as a result, the individuals who do face prosecution in a timely manner are unlikely to reflect the actual urgency to convict those most wanted for committing war crimes.⁸⁴

Therefore, one critique of the ICTY is that it is inherently politicized, despite being an institution that is supposed to rely on objectivity and function under the regulations of international norms.⁸⁵ As the establishment of the ICTY occurred during the Bosnian war, many procedural elements of the tribunal occurred when war criminals still held positions of political power in BiH.⁸⁶ Although tribunals should function as independent institutions separate from political pressure, Minow argues that the very construction and implementation of the tribunal during the ongoing war is inherently

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Minow, *Between Vengeance and Forgiveness: Facing History after Genocide and Mass Violence*, 30.

⁸² Minow, 30.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Minow, 37.

⁸⁶ Minow, 37.

political and is “understood as symbolic international efforts undertaken after no nation indicated a willingness to risk the loss of its own soldiers to stop the massacres.”⁸⁷

Minow references the minimal resources given to those suffering during the war, alongside the failure of the international community to generate a sufficient response to ethnic cleansing, torture, and genocide occurring parallel to the creation of the tribunal to demonstrate how critics of the ICTY believe the tribunal functioned more as a performative political response rather than an expression of the rule of law.⁸⁸

Although the ICTY embodies restorative functions by establishing facts, encouraging victim participation, and ensuring perpetrator accountability through prosecutions, it was not established to bring complete justice to victims or act as the primary tool for dealing with the past in the former Yugoslavia.⁸⁹ Škrbić notes that when it comes to individual criminal responsibility, “the ICTY is authorized to prosecute crimes, but it has no opportunity to adjudicate the question of adequate compensation for victims of those crimes.”⁹⁰ Therefore, other transitional justice mechanisms are necessary to help fill the gaps of justice left from traditional court procedures.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Škrbić, 248.

⁹⁰ Škrbić, 248.

Memorialization Efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina

In BiH, memorialization efforts have become a way for individuals, organizations, and communities to document important events or experiences of the Bosnian war. A significant organization in BiH dedicated to the research and documentation of memorials constructed after the Bosnian war is the Sarajevo-Belgrade Centre for Nonviolent Action. In 2016, the organization published “War of Memories: Places of suffering and remembrance of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina” to research “memorialization policies and cultures of remembrance in Bosnia and Herzegovina for all three warring sides, viewing it primarily in terms of the potential to bring lasting peace and reconciliation.”⁹¹ With a focus on ethnic models of memory, the publication investigates the national narratives present in BiH through analyzing various ethnically-centered memorials.⁹² The Centre for Nonviolent action compiled data on 85 memorials in BiH, all of which were monuments relating to the 1992-1995 Bosnian war. The research highlighted the dedication of the memorials, either to civilian or military victims, and the location of the memorials compared to the surrounding ethnic demographic.⁹³

The Centre for Nonviolent Action determined that out of 85 studied monuments, 53% honor Bosniaks, 25% are dedicated to Serbs, and 14% honor Croats.⁹⁴ Significantly, only 8% of monuments surveyed honored all ethnic groups, all of which

⁹¹ “War of Memories: Places of Suffering and Remembrance of War in Bosnia-Herzegovina” (Centre for Nonviolent Action, 2016), https://nenasilje.org/publikacije/pdf/War_of_Memories.pdf, 9.

⁹² “War of Memories: Places of Suffering and Remembrance of War in Bosnia-Herzegovina,” 9.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Ivana Franović, “Remembrance and Reconciliation: Research on Monuments from the War in Bosnia Herzegovina” (Sarajevo-Belgrade: Centre for Nonviolent Action, 2016), pp. 204-229, 209.

were located in places with a majority Bosniak population.⁹⁵ This demonstrates that Bosniak-dominated spaces experienced a higher level of inter-ethnic tolerance through memorialization efforts.⁹⁶ My case study of the Slana Banja memorial complex in Tuzla demonstrates this finding, as Tuzla is a majority Bosniak city with political elites that promote ideas of inter-ethnic tolerance and unity.

The percentages of monuments erected for various ethnic groups somewhat reflect the percentage of war victims killed by ethnic group during the Bosnian war. The Research and Documentation Centre in Sarajevo reports that 64.64% of war victims were Bosniak, 26% of war victims were Serb, and 8% of war victims were Croat.⁹⁷ Bosniak victims are slightly underrepresented in memorials compared to the percentage of Bosniaks killed during the war.⁹⁸ In contrast, Serbs are adequately represented and Croats are slightly overrepresented in memorialization efforts, respectively.⁹⁹ It is significant to note that 42% of surveyed memorials were dedicated to the memories of soldiers, 25% were to honor civilians, and 33% honored both.¹⁰⁰ The Research and Documentation Centre in Sarajevo reported that 60.14% of Bosnian war victims were soldiers, whereas 39.86% were civilians, suggesting that the surveyed memorials adequately reflect the percentage of soldier and civilian victims.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ Franović, "Remembrance and Reconciliation: Research on Monuments from the War in Bosnia Herzegovina," 209.

⁹⁶ Franović, 209.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ To view exact percentages and other data collected by the Centre for Nonviolent Action, you can view their report at https://nenasilje.org/publikacije/pdf/War_of_Memories.pdf.

⁹⁹ Franović, 209.

¹⁰⁰ Franović, 209.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 209.

The Centre for Nonviolent Action found that most monuments are in “central places in the town/village,” “authentic sites (sites of atrocity, camps, sites where mass graves were discovered” and “cemeteries or the premises of places of worship.”¹⁰² This demonstrates that public accessibility to memorials is an important part of memorial design and construction, and is essential to their function.

Political Limitations to Memorialization Efforts in BiH

As ethnic divisions are ingrained within existing political institutions in BiH, implementing memorialization efforts rely heavily on which ethnic group is in power in the location of the memorial.¹⁰³ Throughout most of BiH, local authorities are in charge of issuing construction permits for memorials.¹⁰⁴ The Centre for Nonviolent Action documented that in locations with many members of one ethnic group with few members of another ethnic group, it is difficult for the ethnic minority members to implement memorials honoring the lives lost belonging to their particular ethnic group.¹⁰⁵ The obstruction of various memorialization efforts by local authorities demonstrates BiH’s internal struggle of preserving distinct ethnic narratives while refusing to recognize others.

Lea David describes prominent political actors and government officials aim to provide a “securitization of memory” to preserve their national identity in

¹⁰² Ibid., 215

⁹¹ Lea David, “Policing Memory in Bosnia: Ontological Security and International Administration of Memorialization Policies,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 32, no. 2 (August 2018): pp. 211-225, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10767-018-9305-y>, 212.

¹⁰⁴ Franović, 209.

¹⁰⁵ Franović, 209.

memorialization processes.¹⁰⁶ She writes that securitization of memory “refers to the need of a political elite governing a sovereign polity to have a secure identity by maintaining distinctiveness and routinizing their relationships with other groups.”¹⁰⁷

This securitization of memory by political elite leads to certain historical events being honored and remembered, while others are delegitimized.¹⁰⁸ In this way, securitization of memory “is generally used by the political elite to secure state’s own national identity.”¹⁰⁹ In BiH, each ethnic group implements memorialization efforts to secure their own identities and memorialize their distinct wartime experiences within the context of one country.¹¹⁰

Dzana Brkanic notes that in the Federation of Bosnia, there are no laws that restrict the implementation of memorials. However, in the Republika Srpska, a memorial can be installed only if it is considered important to a local council.¹¹¹

Brkanic explains that any Bosniak living in Republika Srpska has to seek approval from the Serb council to implement any memorials centering Bosniak civilians of war.¹¹²

Brkanic reports that over 90% of war memorials are implemented illegally, as many ethnic minorities living among a separate ethnic group construct memorials without permission from local authorities.¹¹³

¹⁰⁶ David, “Policing Memory in Bosnia: Ontological Security and International Administration of Memorialization Policies,” 212.

¹⁰⁷ David, 212.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Brkanic, 2018.

¹¹² Brkanic 2018.

¹¹³ Ibid.

Balkan Insight reports that this lack of implementational oversight further encourages the construction of memorials that promote division, rather than unification, between different ethnic groups.¹¹⁴ The Centre for Nonviolent Action documents this disparity by reporting that 69% of monuments in BiH are designated to the majority ethnic group residing around the monument.¹¹⁵ In comparison, only 22% of the monuments are dedicated to a minority group separate from the ethnic majority in the area.¹¹⁶

David adds that the existing ethno-nationalistic governmental structure established by the Dayton accords contributes to the divisive discourse around memorialization efforts and the fluidity of “truth” among different ethnic groups.¹¹⁷ When approaching memorialization efforts through a nationalist ideology, memory defines boundaries across ethnic and geographic lines.¹¹⁸ Dženeta Karabegović recognizes that BiH has a “distinct memoryscape,” as it is a country that juggles three national narratives from Bosnian Croats, Bosnian Serbs, and Bosniaks and their varied experiences during the war.¹¹⁹ Karabegović argues that the nuances among each distinct national narrative, and their respective truths and individual wartime successes or failures, hinders the potential for future positive interactions among Bosnian Croats, Bosnian Serbs, and Bosniaks in BiH.¹²⁰ Furthermore, the stagnancy of political

¹¹⁴ Sinisa Jakov Marusic et al., “Ethnic Divisions Set in Stone,” *Balkan Insight*, May 28, 2018, <https://balkaninsight.com/2013/06/25/ethnic-divisions-set-in-stone/>.

¹¹⁵ Franović, 209.

¹¹⁶ Franović, 209.

¹¹⁷ David, 212.

¹¹⁸ David, 214.

¹¹⁹ Dženeta Karabegović, “Who Chooses to Remember? Diaspora Participation in Memorialization Initiatives,” *Ethnic And Racial Studies*, vol. 42, no. 11, 2019, pp. 1911–1929, 1912.

¹²⁰ Karabegović, “Who Chooses to Remember? Diaspora Participation in Memorialization Initiatives,” 1912.

institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina has created a context in which it is extremely difficult to accurately assess who is funding or building memorials, and if they reflect a truth about the conflict or instead function to deepen ethnic prejudice.¹²¹

An Introduction to the Slana Banja Memorial Complex and Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery

In the following sections, I will discuss the Slana Banja memorial complex in Tuzla and the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Complex in Potočari. I chose these two case studies because the sites were implemented in vastly different historical contexts, contrast in their design and functions, and offer room for reflection on the successes and limitations of memorialization efforts in different locations in BiH.

The Slana Banja memorial complex in Tuzla, a city within the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is an example of a constructed site memorial, originally utilized to share the history of the Socialist regime in Tuzla.¹²² After the Bosnian war, the site was repurposed following the construction of a civilian cemetery to victims of the Kapija massacre, and subsequent commemoration memorials for the Bosnian war were implemented in the complex.¹²³ Local authorities in Tuzla were affiliated with non-nationalist parties before and during the Bosnian war, and carry that legacy of non-nationalism through the construction and maintenance of the complex.¹²⁴ Local Tuzlans

¹²¹ Sinisa Jakov Marusic et al., “Ethnic Divisions Set in Stone.”

¹²² “Tuzla: a Changing Memorial Culture for a New Vision of Bosnia,” CRICResearchProject, March 12, 2012, Youtube video, 10:47, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SAQAMgVBBiY>.

¹²³ Ioannis Armakalos, “Imagining Community in Bosnia: Constructing and Reconstructing the Slana Banja Memorial Complex in Tuzla,” in *War and Cultural Heritage: Biographies of Place* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 225-250, 237.

¹²⁴ Goran Filic, “Rejection of Radical Nationalism in Wartime Yugoslavia: The Case of Tuzla (1990–1995),” *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development* 13, no. 3 (2018): pp. 55-69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2018.1516158>, 57.

consider the use of the complex as one of the most important wartime collaborations in the city.¹²⁵ However, ethno-nationalist politicians and civilians in BiH are unlikely to see it as such.¹²⁶

In contrast, the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery in Potočari is an example of a memorialization effort that utilizes constructed sites, found sites, and activities to memorialize the Srebrenica genocide. The site commemorates the genocide of 8,000 Muslim men and boys killed by Bosnian Serb forces in July of 1995, and functions as a place of healing for survivors and family of victims. The local Bosniak community and the international community worked together to implement the complex within the Republika Srpska in response to the failure of UN Dutch Peacekeepers to protect Bosniaks from Bosnian Serb forces during the war.¹²⁷ However, the site remains a place of contention for surrounding Bosnian Serbs, as it is a site dedicated solely to Bosniak victims within the Bosnian Serb dominated Republika Srpska.¹²⁸

These two cases illustrate examples of memorialization efforts that are considered successful by some but a distortion of “truth” by others. Through studying these cases, I aim to examine the successes and limitations of these specific memorialization efforts in BiH while demonstrating their various forms and functions.

¹²⁵ Ioannis Armakalos, “Imagining Community in Bosnia: Constructing and Reconstructing the Slana Banja Memorial Complex in Tuzla,” 160.

¹²⁶ Armakalos, 160.

¹²⁷ Ger Duijzings, “Commemorating Srebrenica: Histories of Violence and the Politics of Memory in Eastern Bosnia,” in *The New Bosnian Mosaic: Identities, Memories and Moral Claims in a Post-War Society* (London: Routledge, 2016), pp. 141-166, 145.

¹²⁸ Duijzings, “Commemorating Srebrenica: Histories of Violence and the Politics of Memory in Eastern Bosnia,” 162.

Case Study: The Slana Banja Memorial Complex in Tuzla

History gives life, meaning and direction to contemporary resistance.¹²⁹
-Tony Samphier

Tuzla's History of Non-Nationalist Policies

Located in northeast Bosnia, Tuzla is one of the largest cities in BiH and is considered a thriving industrial center that holds political importance as the administrative center of the Tuzla canton within the Federation of Bosnia.¹³⁰ The city has a unique history of promoting ethnic tolerance and unity throughout the various regime changes in the former Yugoslavia, which translated into the city's policies during the Bosnian war. As the only municipality in BiH that outwardly rejected nationalism within its wartime policies, Tuzla's encouragement of ethnic unification was labeled paradoxical to the nationalist approach seen across the former Yugoslavia, like Srebrenica.¹³¹

Tuzla's non-nationalist present is shaped by its ethnically diverse past, as its thriving mining industry encouraged the immigration of working-class citizens from across the Austro-Hungarian empire.¹³² As a result, Tuzla has a history of religious and ethnic diversity, as religious minorities accounted for 36% of Tuzla's population before WWI.¹³³ In contrast to Srebrenica, Tuzla was a city that functioned on inter-ethnic cooperation rather than division. While conducting interviews with residents of Tuzla in

¹²⁹ Tony Samphier. "Springs of hope: ... Western assumptions about the conflict in Bosnia and ... some lessons for the future ..." in *New Internationalist*, (March 1996), pp. 28-30.

¹³⁰ Armakalos, "Imagining Community in Bosnia: Constructing and Reconstructing the Slana Banja Memorial Complex in Tuzla," 226.

¹³¹ Goran Filic, "Rejection of Radical Nationalism in Wartime Yugoslavia: The Case of Tuzla (1990–1995)," 57.

¹³² Filic, "Rejection of Radical Nationalism in Wartime Yugoslavia: The Case of Tuzla (1990–1995)," 57.

¹³³ Filic, 57.

2015, Goran Filic noted that “most people knew how Tuzla’s tolerance was formed, citing phrases and themes such as ‘Austro-Hungary, ‘industrialisation’, ‘emigration of workers’ . . . and subsequently ‘blending’ with the local miners.”¹³⁴

After WWI Tuzla entered an economic depression, as many industrial workers suffered in the war.¹³⁵ When industrial workers went on strike for better working conditions, leadership in Belgrade sent hundreds of Slovenian miners to support the industry, and ordered the imprisonment of all striking workers.¹³⁶ In response, Tuzla residents opened their homes to Slovenian workers, inciting the 1920 Husin Revolt where over 7,000 multi-ethnic workers in Tuzla led a fully armed rebellion against the national army.¹³⁷ This history of rebellion, socialism, and anti-fascist ideology continued during WWII, where Muslim civilians in Tuzla protected Serb and Jewish populations against the Croatian Ustaše, allies of the Nazi party.¹³⁸ In 1943, after leading resistance to Nazi occupation, Tuzla was recognized as the largest free town in Europe.¹³⁹

After the establishment of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1945, Tuzla witnessed a dramatic increase of industrialization and infrastructure, leading to further migration into the city reinforcing Tuzla’s multicultural identity.¹⁴⁰ In the 1991 census, Tuzla recorded the highest number of citizens who identified as Yugoslav, rather than by an ethno-nationalist moniker (e.g. Croat, Serb, or Bosniak),

¹³⁴ Ibid., 60

¹³⁵ Ibid., 61.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 63.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Samphier, "Springs of hope: ... Western assumptions about the conflict in Bosnia and ... some lessons for the future ...", 28.

¹³⁹ Samphier, 28.

¹⁴⁰ Filic, 64.

demonstrating that Tuzla's citizens felt unified as one entity rather than separated by nationalist ideologies present throughout most of the region.¹⁴¹ While rural populations in BiH tended to be pro-nationalist, Tuzla's rural population was well integrated with the industrial sector.¹⁴² This influenced traditional rural nationalist ideas of ethnic division to one of socialist values and ideals.¹⁴³

In Filic's 2015 interview with Tuzla's former wartime Mayor Selim Bešliagić, Bešliagić notes that Tuzla's citizens and local authorities fought for "'human' rights . . . not for national or ethnic rights, but for 'human' rights and that is if I may say, the precedence of the democracy in the world."¹⁴⁴ In the 1990 elections, Tuzla was one of two municipalities in BiH in which leftist non-nationalists won political power.¹⁴⁵ Bešliagić explains that in other majority Bosniak cities, "nationalist parties won because they started from the assumption that our ethnic people are in danger and we have to save them. We, however were saving human affairs [rights] and we succeeded in this."¹⁴⁶ The political leadership in Tuzla remained the same throughout the Bosnian war as in the direct post-war period when local authorities implemented memorials pertaining to the Bosnian war within the Slana Banja Memorial Complex.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 66.

¹⁴² Ibid., 58.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 58.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 66.

¹⁴⁵ Armakalos, "Imagining Community in Bosnia: Constructing and Reconstructing the Slana Banja Memorial Complex in Tuzla," 226.

¹⁴⁶ Filic, 61.

Tuzla During the Bosnian War

In 1990, the population of Tuzla was 44% Muslim, 16% Croat, 16% Serb, with 24% of citizens self-identifying as ‘other’[i.e. Yugoslav, Roma, Jewish, etc].¹⁴⁷ Additionally, between 25% to 40% of marriages in Tuzla were classified as inter-ethnic.¹⁴⁸ While Tuzla’s political elite advocated for inter-ethnic unity among the city’s residents, radical and ethnic nationalists in other Bosnian cities like Srebrenica promoted ethno-nationalist policies that discouraged ethnic integration.¹⁴⁹ This strain between moderates and radicals only heightened as the war continued, but Tuzla’s officials maintained their moderate stance, opposing multiple proposals to divide BiH into ethno-nationalist states.¹⁵⁰ In 1992, Tuzla’s local newspaper *Front Slobode* reported that members of the civilian committee stated ““We are convinced that we are united, and with trust in each other we can and we will get through this difficult trial for all people and nationalities that live in this town.””¹⁵¹

However, Tuzla’s political focus on ethnic unity made the city susceptible to radical attacks during the war.

Although Tuzla’s government promoted inter-ethnic tolerance during the war, many Bosnian Serbs living in Tuzla felt a sense of insecurity; as Bosnian Serb paramilitaries attacked the city numerous times.¹⁵² Tuzla’s Bosnian Serb population

¹⁴⁷ Samphier, 30.

¹⁴⁸ Samphier, 30.

¹⁴⁹ Armakolas, 226.

¹⁵⁰ Armakolas, 227.

¹⁵¹ Anna Calori, “Salt and Socialism: A Deconstruction of Tuzla’s Political Identity in the Context of the Bosnian Conflict,” *Ethnopolitics Papers*, no. 35 (May 2015): pp. 2-29, 13.

¹⁵² Calori, “Salt and Socialism: A Deconstruction of Tuzla’s Political Identity in the Context of the Bosnian Conflict,” 18.

feared that Bosniaks would not trust them.¹⁵³ However, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in the former Yugoslavia, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, stated that ““Serbs and Croats in Tuzla were not subjected to harassment as levels comparable to other groups in Bosnia.””¹⁵⁴ Although some Serbs fled to more densely populated Serb cities in BiH, most Bosnian Serbs living in Tuzla during the time stayed and participated in protecting the city and its civilians against potential threats.¹⁵⁵ Ultimately, Tuzla’s security measures focused on protecting all of its civilians, regardless of ethnicity.¹⁵⁶ Additionally, politicians relied on local news outlets and religious institutions to dispel ethnic and pro-nationalist propaganda to create an environment of tolerance.¹⁵⁷

During the Bosnian war, Tuzla became a center of migration for internally displaced refugees, as nearly 50,000 sought refuge in the city.¹⁵⁸ As victims of inter-ethnic violence, many refugees criticized the ethnic unity present in Tuzla.¹⁵⁹ This concern was further ingrained when on May 25, 1995, nearly six months before the end of the war, Bosnian Serb paramilitaries fired artillery rounds into the pedestrian center of the city, killing seventy-one and wounding over two hundred civilians.¹⁶⁰ The attack explicitly targeted young people, as civilians gathered in Kapija square to celebrate the former Yugoslavia’s Day of Youth to demonstrate the strength of future Yugoslav generations. In response to the attack, Tuzla’s local authorities planned a funeral to bury the victims at the existing Slana Banja memorial complex, beginning a new

¹⁵³ Calori, 18.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 19.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 18.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 16.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Joshua N. Weiss, “Tuzla, The Third Side, and the Bosnian War,” n.d., pp. 1-25, 5.

¹⁵⁹ Weiss, “Tuzla, The Third Side, and the Bosnian War,” 5.

¹⁶⁰ Armakolas, 236.

memorialization process of the Bosnian war within the existing complex. In the post-war period, local authorities expanded the Slana Banja memorial complex into a modern memorial space for community grieving and healing to commemorate the Kapija massacre and the Tuzlan civilians and soldiers lost during the Bosnian war.¹⁶¹

Memorialization of the Bosnian War in the Existing Slana Banja Memorial Complex

The Slana Banja memorial complex is located on Grandina hill, overlooking the city center of Tuzla.¹⁶² Meaning “salt spa”, the Slana Banja complex rests upon a former spa used during the Austro-Hungarian empire.¹⁶³ Socialist leaders chose this location in 1959 as a memorial cemetery for partisan fighters in WWII, representing an example of a memorial in the form of a constructed site.¹⁶⁴ The memorial park functioned as a recreational space where civilians could simultaneously learn about the history of Yugoslavia’s partisan struggle while escaping the pollution of the city’s factories.¹⁶⁵ Ioannis Armakolas explains that in the memorial complex, the commemoration of the partisan struggle and a space for physical activity “were all combined in the same space because they constituted values associated with and promoted by the Socialist regime” of hard work and physical strength.¹⁶⁶ Over 50% of registered heritage objects in BiH relate to the history of the Socialist regime, a legacy of Yugoslav pride during Tito’s rule.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶¹ Armakolas, 236

¹⁶² Ibid., 227.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ “Tuzla: a Changing Memorial Culture for a New Vision of Bosnia,” CRICResearchProject, March 12, 2012, Youtube video, 10:47, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SAQAMgVBBiY>.

¹⁶⁵ Armakolas, 227.

¹⁶⁶ Armakolas, 232.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 235.

Between 1959 and 1974, dozens of memorials and memorial objects pertaining to partisan soldiers and the legacies of the Socialist regime were constructed in the complex.¹⁶⁸ Yet after this memorialization boom, the complex became overgrown and unkempt and primarily attracted people for recreational activity.¹⁶⁹ However, the complex was revisited four days after the Kapija massacre, when local authorities planned a funeral at the Slana Banja memorial complex to honor the victims.¹⁷⁰ The funeral was held at four o'clock in the morning due to the continued shelling of Tuzla.¹⁷¹

In an effort to unite civilians in the height of tragedy, local authorities decided to defy the rules of official Islamic institutions and authority figures in BiH and buried all victims, regardless of religious orientation or ethnic background, in a common burial site within the existing Slana Banja memorial complex.¹⁷² Mustafa efendija Ćerić, the highest authority of the Islamic Community in BiH, opposed and criticized the “sinful” act of burying Muslims and non-Muslim victims of different religions in one gravesite.¹⁷³ Additionally, nationalist politicians from across BiH objected to the “unification” of victims in the burial site and verbally attacked local authorities and families of victims.¹⁷⁴ Despite protest to the joint burial site, local authorities remained faithful to their non-nationalist wartime policies and continued with the unified

¹⁶⁸ “Tuzla: A Changing Memorial Culture for a New Vision of Bosnia,” CRICResearchProject, Youtube video.

¹⁶⁹ “Tuzla: A Changing Memorial Culture for a New Vision of Bosnia.”

¹⁷⁰ Admir Muslimovic, “Bosnian Parents Mourn Child Victims of Tuzla Massacre,” Balkan Insight, October 12, 2018, <https://balkaninsight.com/2018/05/25/bosnian-parents-mourn-child-victims-of-tuzla-massacre-05-23-2018/>.

¹⁷¹ Muslimovic, “Bosnian Parents Mourn Child Victims of Tuzla Massacre.”

¹⁷² Armakolas, 237.

¹⁷³ Armakolas, 236.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 236.

cemetery.¹⁷⁵ Unlike many burial sites in BiH commemorating victims of war, there are no religious symbols included within the gravesite.¹⁷⁶ Instead, families had a choice to use non-religious symbols and engravings to honor their lost loved ones.¹⁷⁷



Figure 2: The completed memorial cemetery at the Slana Banja memorial complex.

Source: Ioannis Armakolas.¹⁷⁸

Continuing the legacy of anti-nationalism in light of tragedy, local authorities utilized the memorial cemetery as a site of community reconciliation and healing. Every year on May 25, the anniversary of the Kapija massacre, people gather in the town square and walk to the memorial cemetery to pay their respects to the victims.¹⁷⁹ The local community considers the creation of the joint-burial site as the most important wartime collaboration in Tuzla.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁵ “Tuzla: A Changing Memorial Culture for a New Vision of Bosnia.”

¹⁷⁶ Armakolas, 237.

¹⁷⁷ Armakolas, 237.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 237.

¹⁷⁹ “Tuzla: A Changing Memorial Culture for a New Vision of Bosnia.”

¹⁸⁰ “Tuzla: A Changing Memorial Culture for a New Vision of Bosnia.”

Following the joint-burial in the Slana Banja memorial complex, Mayor Selim Bešliagić and local authorities worked with the Tuzla Bureau for Urban Planning (TBUP) to reexamine the Socialist legacy of the complex and transform the Slana Banja memorial complex into a space of contemporary reflection.¹⁸¹ The TBUP noted that “Keeping the memories of the victims of aggression . . . fallen soldiers and civilian victims, is one of the most important obligations of citizens and authorities” and that the TBUP would serve this obligation by constructing new memorials dedicated to the Bosnian war while still preserving the old Socialist memorials within the Slana Banja memorial complex.¹⁸²

At the main entrance of the complex stands a memorial commemorating the units of the People's Liberation Army that fought in WWII to liberate Tuzla from fascist rule. To modernize the memorial, it was refurbished in red and white to soften the Socialist use of concrete, and the TBUP constructed a mosaic floor near the memorial that imitated traditional Bosnian carpets.¹⁸³

Apart from the civilian cemetery, two more memorials were constructed in the complex: the Memorial to the Fallen Defenders of Tuzla from the 1992-1995 war and the Memorial to the Fallen Decorated Soldiers of the 1992-1995 war.¹⁸⁴ In 2001, Mayor Jasmin Imamović was elected to succeed Selim Bešliagić, and is the current Mayor of Tuzla.

¹⁸¹ Armakolas, 237.

¹⁸² Armakolas, 238.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 244.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

While Mayor Bešliagić coordinated the initial resurgence of the Slana Banja memorial complex it expanded under the supervision of Mayor Imamović.¹⁸⁵ Imamović notes that Tuzla was the first city in BiH to construct a monument honoring fallen soldiers and civilians and emphasizes the full participation of Tuzla's political elite in supporting the commemoration process.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 242.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 241.



Figure 3: The memorial commemorating the units of the People's Liberation Army that fought in WWII to liberate Tuzla.

Source: Google Maps.

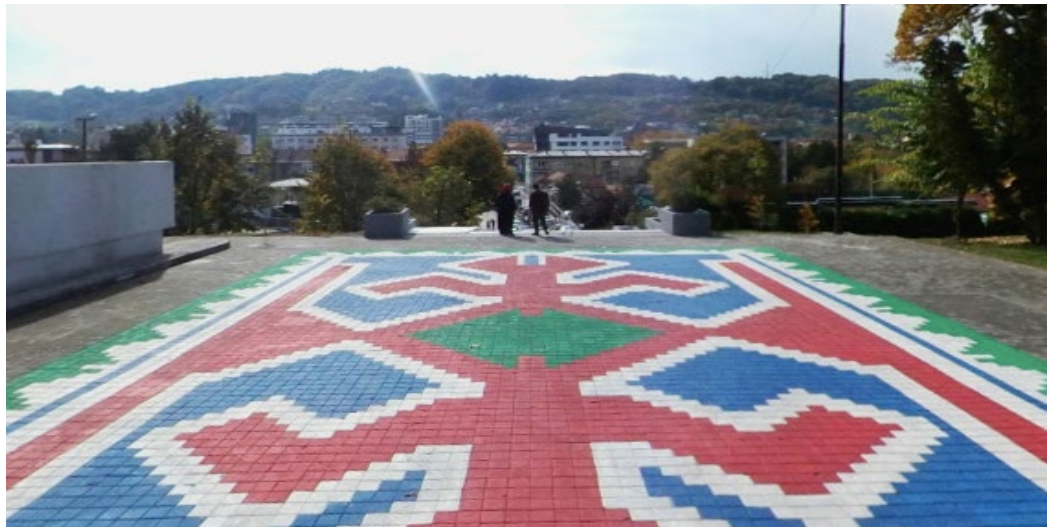


Figure 4: The mosaic at the entrance of the complex inspired by traditional Bosnian carpets.

Source: Google Maps street view.



Figure 5: The Memorial to the Fallen Defenders of Tuzla in the 1992-1995 Bosnian war.

Source: Ioannis Armakolas.¹⁸⁷

From 2001 to 2011, the TBUP renovated and re-arranged preexisting socialist busts in the complex to form an “Avenue of Heroes” linking the older part of the memorial complex commemorating Yugoslavia’s socialist period to memorials commemorating the Bosnian war.¹⁸⁸ By connecting the different stages of the memorial complex through a cohesive path, the spatial planning of the park by the TBUP reiterates that the memorial park acts as a space to honor the legacy of various generations and Bosnian traditions throughout history.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 244.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 239-240

Both former Tuzla Mayor Bešliagić, current Mayor Imamović and the TBUP wanted to promote the Slana Banja memorial complex as a space for recreation as it was during the Socialist period to expand its usage beyond solely a place for anniversaries or commemorations.¹⁹⁰ By expanding the park's pathways and maintained green spaces, the Slana Banja memorial complex attracts hundreds of Tuzla's citizens daily.¹⁹¹ The mixed usage of the complex was seen as a reinforcement of political and commemorative functions while allowing the public to naturally interact with Tuzla's history of the past and present.¹⁹²

Today, the Slana Banja memorial complex undergoes frequent renovations to preserve the cleanliness of the monuments and the functionality of the park as a recreational and commemorative space.¹⁹³ Mayor Imamović frequently visits the complex and encourages the implementation of new memorials into the park.¹⁹⁴ Mayor Imamović and the local community consider the Slana Banja memorial complex to be a successful memorialization effort to educate visitors about Tuzla's Socialist legacy and the victims, civilians and soldiers alike, of the Bosnian war.¹⁹⁵

Successes and Limitations of the Slana Banja Memorial Complex

The memorial complex represents an example of a constructed site. It fulfills Barsalou and Baxter's list of functions in the way that it a) creates a specific place for the immediate family and/ or the larger society to mourn victims, b) offers symbolic

¹⁹⁰ "Tuzla: A Changing Memorial Culture for a New Vision of Bosnia."

¹⁹¹ "Tuzla: A Changing Memorial Culture for a New Vision of Bosnia."

¹⁹² Armakolas, 240.

¹⁹³ "Tuzla: A Changing Memorial Culture for a New Vision of Bosnia."

¹⁹⁴ "Tuzla: A Changing Memorial Culture for a New Vision of Bosnia."

¹⁹⁵ Armakolas, 246.

reparations to honor the victims of violence and reinstate their reputations, c) symbolizes Tuzla's commitment to democracy and human rights, d) promotes reconciliation by recasting the national identity (emphasizes that all citizens are Bosnian, regardless of other ethnic affiliations), e) advances educational purposes, including the retelling of history for future generations, and f) facilitates historic preservation of specific era's in Tuzla's history.¹⁹⁶ In equating the presence of these functions to a degree of success, the Slana Banja memorial complex is successful in carrying out these functions of memorialization as a tool of transitional justice.

Because Tuzla's was the only major city in BiH to elect non-nationalist political representation prior to the onset of the Bosnian war, it is understandable that local authorities prioritized ethnic and religious inclusivity in their memorialization efforts. Additionally, Tuzla's government is the sole government in BiH that has never succumbed to political rule by the nationalist parties that emerged at the end of the Socialist regime.¹⁹⁷ Although local authorities received initial backlash from the Islamic community and radical nationalists when implementing the joint burial site, Tuzla's officials persisted in maintaining the city's legacy of non-nationalism in implementing memorials in the complex. The determining success of the Slana Banja memorial complex as a memorialization site by local authorities and the community alike encompasses a continuation of non-nationalist wartime policies demonstrated throughout Tuzla during WWI, WWII, and the Bosnian war.

¹⁹⁶ Barsalou and Baxter, "The Urge to Remember: The Role of Memorials in Social Reconstruction and Transitional Justice," 5.

¹⁹⁷ Armakolas, 247

While the Slana Banja memorial complex reflects a heritage scape that promotes education and reconciliation for the civilians of Tuzla, the city's boundaries symbolize the extent of the complex's influence in encouraging non-nationalist policies in BiH.¹⁹⁸ The success of the Slana Banja memorial complex in fulfilling Barsalou and Baxter's list of functions in collaboration with its inclusion of non-nationalist memorialization does not reflect the general trends of memorialization efforts in BiH, which tend to be ethnically and religiously exclusive.¹⁹⁹ The viewpoint of local authorities and Tuzlan citizens that the Slana Banja memorial complex is a successful memorialization effort rings true for anti-nationalist Bosniaks.²⁰⁰ However, the complex is unlikely to be considered successful by conservative or ethno-nationalist Bosnians, because the complex stands as an example of inter-ethnic commemoration rather than division.²⁰¹ Therefore, the success of the Slana Banja memorial complex is limited to the environment that it exists in and the perceptions of local authorities and civilians in viewing the complex as a peace-building memorialization effort rather than one that promotes division.

The Slana Banja memorial complex is a unique memorialization effort which expands beyond ethnic-nationalist centered memorialization present throughout most of BiH.²⁰² The complex illustrates the usage of memorialization efforts by political elites to promote a political agenda of tolerance and unity for the future of Tuzla, embodying the goals of transitional justice to come to terms with large-scale past abuses to achieve

¹⁹⁸ Armakolas, 248.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 246.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 249.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 249.

²⁰² "War of Memories: Places of Suffering and Remembrance of War in Bosnia-Herzegovina," 9.

reconciliation.²⁰³ The implementation of the Slana Banja memorial complex in Tuzla greatly juxtaposes the subsequent case study of the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Cemetery in Potočari. While local authorities and civilians led memorialization efforts in the complex in Tuzla, local Bosniaks who lost loved ones during the Srebrenica genocide and the international community jointly implemented the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Cemetery. Additionally, while Tuzla's political elite advocated for non-nationalist policies that translated into the form of the Slana Banja memorial complex, the establishment of the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Cemetery was in response to the ethnic genocide of Bosniaks within a UN safe zone in a territory controlled by Bosnian Serb forces. These two cases demonstrate the vast variations in the implementation and effects of memorialization efforts in BiH.

²⁰³ Brown, 276.

Case Study: The Srebrenica Memorial Complex

As Serbian forces moved towards Srebrenica, it was, at times, hard to believe in the declarations of protection; they echoed in a chamber of “Never Again”, as the enclave fell. As survivors arrived to free territory by foot, by bus, by any means, the eyes of all were hollow with shock that was only multiplied upon learning that those they left behind would not be joining them, ever again.²⁰⁴

-Ron Haviv

The Timeline of the Srebrenica Massacre, 1992-1995

In July of 1995, Bosnian Serb forces infiltrated a United Nations designated “safe area” in Srebrenica and killed approximately 8,000 Muslim men over approximately ten days. Although the Srebrenica genocide occurred during a short amount of time, the build-up to the mass ethnic cleansing of Bosniaks lasted for years.

Like Tuzla, the town of Srebrenica was established as a mining center in 1387 when large silver and lead deposits were discovered in the city’s hills.²⁰⁵ As a center of commerce and trade, Srebrenica attracted merchants and miners and prospered economically.²⁰⁶ After being seized by the Turks in 1440, the people living in Srebrenica were converted to Islam by the mid 16th century.²⁰⁷ Unlike Tuzla, the city of Srebrenica did not have a very diverse ethnic population. Throughout the 20th century, the town of Srebrenica was composed of a large Bosniak majority with a significant

²⁰⁴ This quote is located on the wall within the memorial gallery, located in Potočari at the former UN basecamp in a former battery factory where Bosniaks sought refuge from Bosnian Serb forces.

²⁰⁵ “Srebrenica,” Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Srebrenica>.

²⁰⁶ “Srebrenica,” Britannica.

²⁰⁷ “Srebrenica.”

Bosnian Serb minority.²⁰⁸ In the 1991 census, the Srebrenica municipality recorded over 36,000 residents, with 75% identifying as Bosniak and 22% identifying as Serb.²⁰⁹

Once the Bosnian war began, Bosnian Serb forces began to target as part of a broader effort to annex eastern BiH to join Serbia and Montenegro as a part of the existing Yugoslav federation.²¹⁰ At the time, the city of Srebrenica fell under jurisdiction from the autonomous zone of Republika Srpska. Serb sources claim that beginning in 1992, many Bosnian Serb villages were attacked by nearby Bosniaks opposing the attempted annexation.²¹¹ However, Bosnian Serb forces continually shelled Bosniak communities in eastern BiH, forcing Bosniaks to move out of their homes and villages in order to control land in hopes of contributing to a ‘greater Serbia’.²¹² Because of the fighting between Bosniak military Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ARBiH) and the Bosnian Serb military Army of Republika Srpska (VRS) throughout eastern Bosnia, many refugees fled to Srebrenica.²¹³ Soon, the town of 9,000 inhabitants grew to upwards of 45,000.²¹⁴

²⁰⁸ Ibid. Unlike Tuzla, I chose not to write extensively about the history of Srebrenica prior to the Bosnian war. This is because when the Srebrenica massacre occurred, the city had already been established as a UN safe zone and became a base for Muslim refugees all throughout eastern BiH. Considering that only a percentage of the population of refugees living in Srebrenica during the massacre were from Srebrenica or Potočari, and it was controlled by UN Dutch peacekeepers rather than a local government, I find it more important to focus specifically on the events leading up to the massacre rather than provide a history of the city itself.

²⁰⁹ “Srebrenica 360” (Al Jazeera, Remembering Srebrenica), accessed May 7, 2021, <http://www.srebrenica360.com/>. This website offers virtual tours of the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Complex.

²¹⁰ Jeffrey R. Smith, “Srebrenica Massacre,” Britannica (Encyclopædia Britannica, inc.), accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Srebrenica-massacre>.

²¹¹ Duijzings, “Commemorating Srebrenica: Histories of Violence and the Politics of Memory in Eastern Bosnia,” 151.

²¹² *Srebrenica Genocide: No Room For Denial, YouTube* (YouTube, 2018), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sq77TySTst0>.

²¹³ *Srebrenica Genocide: No Room For Denial*.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

In response to the drastic increase of refugees and the threat of annexation to BiH's eastern region, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 819 on April 6th, 1993 to designate Srebrenica as a "safe area" under supervision of UN Dutch Peacekeepers.²¹⁵ Hasan Hasanović, a survivor of the Srebrenica massacre, explains that the "safe area" surrounding Srebrenica was essentially a huge refugee camp, with inhabitants on the brink of starvation without resources to fulfill their basic needs.²¹⁶

Former UN ambassador Diego E. Arria, who introduced Resolution 819 to the security council expressed that he regrets this initiative.²¹⁷ It is now clear to him that the UN and the international community alike had no intent to defend the "safe area" against Bosnian Serb forces.²¹⁸ When testifying at the ICTY during former Serbian President Slobodan Milošević's trial, Arria stated that "The surrender of Srebrenica to the Serbs was of strategic importance—both for the Serbs and for the UN negotiators—because Srebrenica had to be on the Serb side in order to be able to clinch a 'deal.'"²¹⁹ With so many refugees concentrated in a designated area, Arria explains that the conditions of Srebrenica represented a form of "slow motion genocide."²²⁰ This claim is supported by the fact that in March 1995, Radovan Karadžić, then President of Republika Srpska, issued a directive instructing the VRS to "create an unbearable

²¹⁵ Sheila Zulfiqar Ahmad, "The UN's Role in the Bosnian Crisis: A Critique," *Pakistan Horizon* 51, no. 2 (April 1998): pp. 83-92, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41394460>, 86.

²¹⁶ *Srebrenica Genocide: No Room For Denial*.

²¹⁷ Lisa DiCaprio, "The Betrayal of Srebrenica: The Ten-Year Commemoration," *The Public Historian* 31, no. 3 (2009): pp. 73-95, <https://doi.org/10.1525/tph.2009.31.3.73>, 83.

²¹⁸ Lisa DiCaprio, "The Betrayal of Srebrenica: The Ten-Year Commemoration," *The Public Historian* 31, no. 3 (2009): pp. 73-95, <https://doi.org/10.1525/tph.2009.31.3.73>, 83.

²¹⁹ DiCaprio, "The Betrayal of Srebrenica: The Ten-Year Commemoration," 83.

²²⁰ *Ibid*, 83.

situation of total insecurity with no hope of further survival or life for the inhabitants of Srebrenica.”²²¹

Former UN Dutch Peacekeepers in DutchBat III, the last group to arrive in Srebrenica in 1995, explain that their battalion was under-supplied and under-equipped, without a clear mandate from the UN about their tasks in Srebrenica.²²² Serb forces already encircled Srebrenica by the time of their arrival, and the Peacekeepers were instructed to only use force in the case of self-defense.²²³ Medical and food supplies had to be smuggled into the area, as they would be seized by Bosnian-Serb forces if found.²²⁴ Former DutchBat III member Remko de Bruijne notes that for weeks before the genocide during his position on an observation post,

We saw tanks coming our direction and buses filled with soldiers. Every day we had to report to [the UN base in] Sarajevo so I told them we could see ten buses full of soldiers on the road in Serbia coming this way. This was weeks before their advance and every time we made this report, we were told that the Serbs have been contacted and it’s just an exercise and not to worry.²²⁵

Yet, the heavily armed VRS forces shelled and entered the enclave of Srebrenica on July 6th, 1995 resulting in 25,000-35,000 refugees fleeing to nearby Potočari to seek refuge at the UN basecamp.²²⁶ Survivor Hasanović said that refugees had faith in the UN to protect them, but on July 11th, Srebrenica fell to control of Bosnian Serb forces. On that day, Bosnian Serb general and Commander of VRS army Ratko Mladić gave a

²²¹ *Srebrenica Genocide: No Room For Denial*.

²²² Tom Barlow Brown, “It Was Hell’: Dutch Troops Recall Failure to Stop Srebrenica Deaths,” *Balkan Insight*, August 16, 2019, <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/08/08/it-was-hell-dutch-troops-recall-failure-to-stop-srebrenica-deaths/>.

²²³ Brown, “It Was Hell’: Dutch Troops Recall Failure to Stop Srebrenica Deaths.”

²²⁴ Brown.

²²⁵ *Ibid*.

²²⁶ *Srebrenica Genocide: No Room For Denial*.

speech stating “On the eve of yet another great Serb holiday, we give this town to the Serb people as a gift. Finally, after the rebellion against the Dahis, the time has come to take revenge on the Turks in this region.”²²⁷ Duijzings, a contributor to the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation, notes that Mladić saw the taking of Srebrenica as a revenge to the defeat suffered by the Serbs during the rule of the Ottoman Empire, and that BiH’s Muslim inhabitants were merely “purported descendants of the Turks.”²²⁸

On July 11th, Mladić requested to meet with head Dutchbat commander Colonel Thom Karremans after Karremans requested air support from the UN.²²⁹ Mladić demanded Karremans to stop using air support or he would immediately shell the refugees in Potočari.²³⁰ The refugees were exposed to horrible conditions, cramped within an old battery factory with hardly any food, water, or medicine.²³¹ During the meeting, Mladić requested that all weapons be surrendered to Bosnian Serb forces and stated that Bosnian Muslims could either survive or disappear.²³² Additionally, Mladić requested that Muslim men from the ages of 17-65 be separated from the women and children for questioning by Bosnian Serb forces to determine whether they are war criminals.²³³ In reality, Mladić planned to kill them.²³⁴ Mladić told Karremans that if he met his demands, he was willing to aid the refugees by transporting those who wished

²²⁷ *Srebrenica Genocide: No Room For Denial.*

²²⁸ Duijzings, “Commemorating Srebrenica: Histories of Violence and the Politics of Memory in Eastern Bosnia,” 151.

²²⁹ “Case No. IT-95-18-R61,” International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (Case No. IT-95-18-R61), accessed May 5, 2021, <https://www.icty.org/x/cases/mladic/trans/en/960704it.htm>.

²³⁰ “Case No. IT-95-18-R61,” International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² Francesca Cleverly, “What Happened in Srebrenica,” Remembering Srebrenica, November 16, 2014, <https://www.srebrenica.org.uk/what-happened/srebrenica-genocide/happened-srebrenica/>.

²³³ “Case No. IT-95-18-R61.”

²³⁴ “Case No. IT-95-18-R61.”

to evacuate Srebrenica to the Bosnian territory surrounding Tuzla.²³⁵ Colonel Karremans agreed to Mladić's demands.

After recognizing the gravity of their situation, 15,000 male refugees at the UN basecamp planned to leave the Srebrenica enclave to start the 63-mile journey to the free territory of Tuzla.²³⁶ As the refugees assembled, the VRS began to fire, killing men while others scattered into the woods.²³⁷ Bosnian Serb forces traveled through the woods to kill Muslim refugees throughout the night and the following week, and only 3,000 men survived to arrive in Tuzla five days later.²³⁸

On July 12th, 1995 Mladić arrived in Potočari, as Bosnian Serb forces separated the men from the women and escorted the men into a large house for questioning.²³⁹ Many UN Dutch Peacekeepers witnessed the mass killing of men and the raping of women by Bosnian Serb forces as busses began to arrive in Potočari.²⁴⁰ Over the next 30 hours, 23,000 women and children were relocated from the UN basecamp to the border of Kladanj, where refugees had to walk six kilometers to reach safety, facing terror from Bosnian Serb forces along the way.²⁴¹ The remaining men in Srebrenica and Potočari were rounded up and slaughtered by Bosnian Serb forces, resulting in the death of over 8,372 Bosnian Muslims scattered in mass graves across the enclave.²⁴²

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Francesca Cleverly, "The Death March," Remembering Srebrenica, November 15, 2014, <https://www.srebrenica.org.uk/what-happened/srebrenica-genocide/column/>.

²³⁷ Cleverly, "The Death March."

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Cleverly, "What Happened in Srebrenica."

²⁴⁰ *Srebrenica Genocide: No Room For Denial*.

²⁴¹ "Case No. IT-95-18-R61."

²⁴² Cleverly, "What Happened in Srebrenica."

On July 21st, Bosnian Serbs declared that UN Dutch Peacekeepers can leave Srebrenica.²⁴³ Before their departure, General Mladić handed Colonel Karremans a gift, and the two men shook hands and shared a drink.²⁴⁴ The Peacekeepers were seen celebrating and dancing in the streets, while the first reports of mass genocide begin to emerge as survivors of the Srebrenica massacre reached safety.²⁴⁵

Initial Construction of the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery

Despite the international community's inability to protect Bosnian Muslims during the Srebrenica massacre, the international community has a large involvement in post-war commemoration and memorialization in Srebrenica.²⁴⁶ Duijzings writes that the ICTY in the Hague and the Office of the High Representative were the most important international forces shaping the memory of the Srebrenica massacre, while other international bodies like the European Parliament contributed to commemoration policies in BiH.²⁴⁷

A crucial decision of the ICTY was classifying the Srebrenica massacre as a genocide and indicting then President of Republika Srpska Radovan Karadžić and Colonel Ratko Mladić on crimes of genocide.²⁴⁸ However, both men were only found guilty and sentenced in 2016 and 2017, respectfully, after they spent years in hiding.²⁴⁹ Duijzings argues that for many Bosnian citizens, these delayed convictions (paired with

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Duijzings, "Commemorating Srebrenica: Histories of Violence and the Politics of Memory in Eastern Bosnia," 145.

²⁴⁷ Duijzings, 146

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

general Serbian denial that Srebrenica was not a genocide) hinder the efficacy of reconciliation efforts in Bosnian communities.²⁵⁰ Although the classification of the Srebrenica massacre as a genocide has broader implications for future war tribunals, the inability of the international community to protect Bosniaks to prevent the massacre in the first place has more important effects on Bosnian citizens. Political scientist Jelena Subotić writes that “International apathy included failure to acknowledge the seriousness of atrocities, lackluster interest in intervening to stop the killing, and even standing idly by and watching as thousands were taken to slaughter.”²⁵¹ Therefore, it is understandable that Bosniaks do not always celebrate these efforts from the international community, especially when applied retroactively.

The second international involvement that Duijzings notes is the creation of the Office of the High Representative. The Dayton Peace Agreement established the Office of the High Representative (OHR) to address memorialization resolutions and enforcement within the boundaries of BiH, as Annex 8 of the Dayton Peace Agreement provided for “the formation of a Commission to preserve national Monuments.”²⁵² In 1997, following resistance to the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement, the international community awarded the OHR with the authority to “directly impose or nullify laws if deemed necessary as well as remove from office public officials if they violate the peace agreement.”²⁵³ The OHR is tasked with implementing civilian aspects of the Dayton Agreement, including decisions directly related to memorialization and

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Subotić, *Hijacked Justice: Dealing with the Past in the Balkans*, 3.

²⁵² David, 219.

²⁵³ David, 219.

identity building.²⁵⁴ In 2000, the third High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch issued a “Decision designating in perpetuity a plot of land at Potočari to be set aside as a cemetery and as a solemn place for the erection of a memorial to the victims of the Srebrenica Massacre” as well as a decision to establish the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery.²⁵⁵

Additionally, the European Parliament adopted three resolutions on the Srebrenica genocide in 2005, 2009, and 2015 to outline the ‘proper’ way to commemorate Srebrenica.²⁵⁶ Each resolution “Calls on the Council and the Commission to commemorate appropriately the anniversary of the Srebrenica-Potočari act of genocide by supporting Parliament’s recognition of 11 July as the day of commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide all over the EU, and to call on all the countries of the Western Balkans to do the same.”²⁵⁷ The following quote is an excerpt from the 2015 resolution, stating that the European Parliament

1. Commemorates and honours all the victims of the Srebrenica genocide and of all the atrocities during the wars in the former Yugoslavia; expresses its condolences to and solidarity with the families of the victims, many of whom are living without final confirmation of the fate of their relatives;
2. Condemns in the strongest possible terms the genocide in Srebrenica; solemnly declares that such horrendous crimes must never happen again and states that it will do everything in its power to prevent such acts from recurring; rejects any denial, relativisation or misinterpretation of the genocide;
3. Emphasises the need for political representatives in Bosnia and Herzegovina to acknowledge the past in order to work successfully together towards a better future for all citizens of the country; highlights the important role which neighbouring countries, religious authorities,

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, 218.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

civil society, art, culture, the media and educational systems can play in this difficult process²⁵⁸

David argues that since all international resolutions are written from the position of a bystander, rather than the victims and perpetrators themselves, these policies enforce ‘securitization of memory’ for the sake of international actor’s moral outlook rather than for the benefit of Bosnian citizens.²⁵⁹ However, these mandates from the international community (in response to demands of Bosniak families who had lost family in the genocide) did result in large memorialization efforts to commemorate the Srebrenica genocide. Within the context of general Serbian denial of the massacre the location of the memorial within Republika Srpska, without international pressure, it is unlikely that similar memorialization efforts to the scale of the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery would be implemented.

It is essential to note that the decisions of the OHR were largely informed by the demands of survivors and family members in Srebrenica who lost loved ones during the genocide. In 1996, Srebrenica women formed an activist organization called the “Mothers of Srebrenica and Zepa Enclaves” (now composed of more than 6,000 members) representing the mothers residing in two of the UN safe zones established during the war.²⁶⁰ The Srebrenica women were inspired by the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, a group established in 1977 by mothers protesting to raise

²⁵⁸ “European Parliament Resolution of 9 July 2015 on the Srebrenica Commemoration” (European Parliament), accessed May 6, 2021, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2015-0276_EN.html?redirect.

²⁵⁹ David, 223.

²⁶⁰ Janet Jacobs, “The Memorial at Srebrenica: Gender and the Social Meanings of Collective Memory in Bosnia-Herzegovina,” *Memory Studies* 10, no. 4 (May 2016): pp. 423-439, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698016650485>, 426.

awareness of the number of missing children during the post-Peron military regime.²⁶¹ Acting as a catalyst for implementing of the cemetery and memorial, the Mothers of Srebrenica and Zepa enclaves contributed to the importance of the memorial site as “a place of maternal and familial suffering.”²⁶² Janet Jacobs explains research on women survivors advocating for the establishment of the memorial in Potočari “found that this landscape held a particular meaning for the women because of the land’s connection to violence, loss, and death, ‘the place where everything happened and where nothing would ever be the same.’”²⁶³

Serb Opposition to the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery

The Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery was established in Potočari on May of 2001, following the OHR’s decree in 2000 to designate land by the former UN basecamp to commemorate Srebrenica.²⁶⁴ However, prior to the construction of the complex, the mothers and wives of the murdered and missing men of the Srebrenica genocide began to organize commemorative protests in Tuzla on the 11th of every month.²⁶⁵ In 1996, the Mothers of the Srebrenica and Žepa Enclaves stated that they wished to bury their sons and husbands in Potočari, the location of where many had seen their family members for the last time.²⁶⁶ In April 2000, the former Bosniak

²⁶¹ Jacobs, “The Memorial at Srebrenica: Gender and the Social Meanings of Collective Memory in Bosnia-Herzegovina,” 426.

²⁶² Jacobs, 426.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ “Srebrenica 360.”

²⁶⁵ Duijzings, 157.

²⁶⁶ Duijzings, 157.

residents of Srebrenica utilized their representation on the municipal council to pass an ordinance to establish the cemetery in Potočari.²⁶⁷

While Bosnian-Serb representatives initially rejected their proposal, they accepted in fear that their rejection would affect support for their political party.²⁶⁸ However, the implementation of the memorial center and following commemoration for Bosnian Muslims were met with opposition. The first large-scale commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide took place on July 11 2000 on the five year anniversary of Srebrenica. Although now celebrated on the July 12, Serbs initially recognized July 11th as “liberation day,” as it represented the day that General Mladić entered Srebrenica and stated that the town of Srebrenica would be given to the Serb people as a gift.²⁶⁹ With over 3,000 people attending the commemoration of Srebrenica, the event incited attacks from Serbs against Bosniaks.²⁷⁰ One house containing the family of Muslim returnees who had fled Srebrenica was set on fire, while Serb spectators stoned a bus full of Bosniaks travelling to Srebrenica.²⁷¹ Despite representatives from various Western and Islamic countries attending the commemoration, there were no representatives from the Republika Srpska present, as numerous Republika Srpska officials who have attended commemorations in Srebrenica have been labeled as traitors by Serb politicians.²⁷²

A common request of Bosnian Serbs living in Srebrenica was to have the international community implement a memorial site to equally recognize the Serb victims lost during the Bosnian war. However, in 2001 when RS Justice Ministry

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 160.

²⁶⁹ Ibid, 162.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, 157.

²⁷¹ Ibid, 160.

²⁷² Ibid, 161.

suggested that the names of Serb victims from the Srebrenica area be added to the list at the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery, members of Serb associations of war veterans and families adamantly rejected the suggestion.²⁷³ Instead, Bosnian-Serbs living near Srebrenica constructed their own monuments to honor lost Serb lives, like a monument unveiled in nearby Kravica in July of 2001, 6 years after the Srebrenica genocide.²⁷⁴ Although Republika Srpska officials did not attend the commemoration in Potočari the previous day, they attended the monuments unveiling to honor Serb victims in Kravica.²⁷⁵

Duijzings notes that Serb reactions to Srebrenica commemorations as well as the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery “have oscillated between outright obstruction and reluctant cooperation.”²⁷⁶ Unlike the implementation of the Slana Banja Memorial Complex in Tuzla, local authorities of different ethnicities did not work together in Srebrenica to implement memorialization efforts that appeal to their ethnically diverse population. Although Duijzings writes that the Republika Srpska government has been increasingly cooperative in allowing Muslim commemorations for Srebrenica, the government still promotes a false sense of the history of Srebrenica and the number of Serb victims killed, therefore dismissing the facts and history displayed within the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery.²⁷⁷

In September of 2002, the Republika Srpska issued a report detailing the events of Srebrenica, claiming that only 100 Bosniaks were unlawfully killed, while an

²⁷³ Ibid, 162.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Ibid, 160.

²⁷⁷ Ibid, 161.

additional 1,900 died from exhaustion or from combat.²⁷⁸ Yet in 2003, the internationally appointed Bosnian Human Rights Chamber commission investigated the claims of the Republika Srpska. The commission released a report in 2005 detailing the names of 19,473 civilians and soldiers involved in the Srebrenica genocide, demonstrating the vast preparation by Bosnian Serb forces leading up to the massacre.²⁷⁹

Additionally, between 2008 and 2012, the RS governments granted nearly \$1.1 million US dollars to the “Srebrenica Historical Project,” a “non-governmental organization” dedicated to distorting the events of Srebrenica to inflate the number of Serb losses in Srebrenica.²⁸⁰ Peter Lippman writes that in 2009, the organization filed a lawsuit against the Dutch State and the United Nations for their failure to protect Serbs from attacks from the Muslim population in areas surrounding Srebrenica, imitating a lawsuit filed by the Mothers of Srebrenica to the same parties for failure to protect Bosniaks from genocide.²⁸¹ Lippman writes that the Srebrenica Historical Project’s lawsuit “alleged that some thirty-five hundred Serbs were killed by raiding Muslims in the Srebrenica area.”²⁸² While this figure has circulated among Serb revisionists, “it is greatly distorted in the case of Srebrenica. It more accurately reflects the number of Serb casualties—both military and civilian—throughout the entire war in the broader Birač region.”²⁸³ Duijzing argues that the dominant post-war Serb narrative has been to

²⁷⁸ Subotic, *Hijacked Justice: Dealing with the Past in the Balkans*, 150.

²⁷⁹ Subotic, 152.

²⁸⁰ Peter Lippman, “Denial of War Crimes at Srebrenica and Prijedor,” in *Surviving the Peace: The Struggle for Postwar Recovery in Bosnia-Herzegovina* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2019), 360.

²⁸¹ Lippman, “Denial of War Crimes at Srebrenica and Prijedor,” 360.

²⁸² Lippman, 360.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*

equate Serb aggression and Serb losses with those of Muslims and Croats alike, and designate themselves as victims as often as they are portrayed as aggressors.²⁸⁴

The Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery

Located in Potočari, the site of the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery was chosen by survivors of the massacre, as well as family who had lost loved ones during the genocide.²⁸⁵ The cemetery was the first part of the memorial center to be constructed and was officially opened on September 20, 2003 by U.S. President Bill Clinton.²⁸⁶ At the time, the gravesite contained only 600 sets of remains, which has grown to 6,643 as of 2019.²⁸⁷ The graves are identical in form, with slim, white, and tall marble headstones, while newer graves lie under green temporary wooden markers with the person's name and birth year, once identified.²⁸⁸ Each year, more bodies are excavated and buried in the cemetery on July 11th, the anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre. However, many bodies remain to be found, as Serb forces buried Bosniaks in mass graves hidden to conceal the depths of the atrocities around Srebrenica and Potočari. The northeastern section of the cemetery is full, while land remains to the south and the west to implement new gravesites.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁴ Duijzings, 162.

²⁸⁵ Francesca Cleverly, "Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery," Remembering Srebrenica, December 13, 2014, <https://www.srebrenica.org.uk/lessons-from-srebrenica/srebrenica-potocari-memorial/>.

²⁸⁶ Cleverly, "Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery."

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ "Srebrenica – Potocari Memorial Site," Dark Tourism, accessed May 16, 2021, <https://www.dark-tourism.com/index.php/serbia/15-countries/individual-chapters/92-srebrenica>.

²⁸⁹ "Srebrenica – Potocari Memorial Site".



Figure 6: Mourners bury newly discovered remains on July 11th, 2020, the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica Massacre.

Source: Eurotopics.²⁹⁰

²⁹⁰ “25th Anniversary of Srebrenica Massacre,” eurotopics.net (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, July 24, 2020), <https://www.eurotopics.net/en/243923/25th-anniversary-of-srebrenica-massacre>.

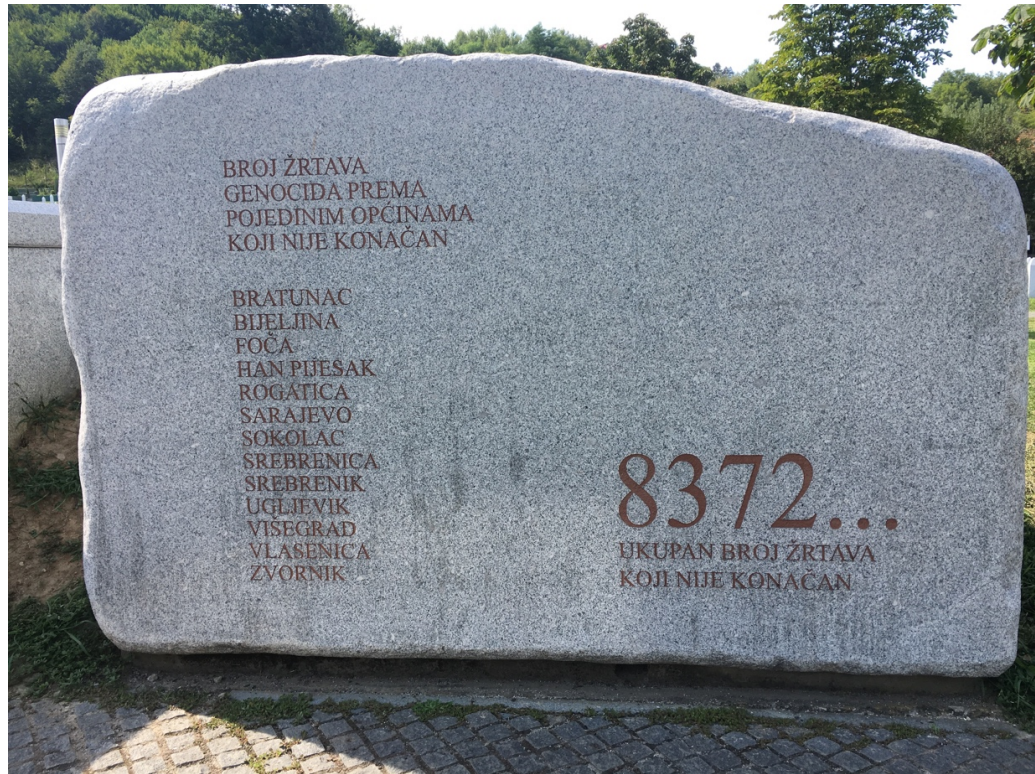


Figure 7: A headstone at the entrance of the Srebrenica-Potočari cemetery.

Under the number 8,372, representing the number of victims of the Srebrenica genocide, the text translates to “number is not final.”²⁹¹

At the front of the cemetery is a memorial wall, inscribed with the list of all of the 8,372 victims of the genocide, including those whose remains have yet to be found or identified.²⁹² Once entering the cemetery, a *musilia* signifies the central location for joint prayer before the burial of found remains.²⁹³

²⁹¹ I took this picture while visiting the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery in July of 2019.

²⁹² “Srebrenica 360”. To experience a virtual tour of the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery, visit <http://www.srebrenica360.com/>. The *musilia* is an open space that allows non-Muslims and Muslims alike to pray and express their condolences for the genocide victims.

²⁹³ “Srebrenica 360”.



Figure 8: An overhead view of the Srebrenica-Potočari cemetery.

The structure with the green roof is the musilia. Source: AP Photo, Kemal Softic.

Located across the road from the cemetery is the memorial center within the former UN Dutch Peacekeeper headquarters. The implementation of the memorial center within this building demonstrates a repurposing of a found site into a place of commemoration. In 2007, former Dutchbat soldiers organized a visit to Srebrenica to meet with the Mothers of Srebrenica to discuss the Dutch contribution to the memorial center.²⁹⁴ The Dutch embassy in Sarajevo provided funding to establish a permanent exhibition in front of the former Dutchbat headquarters, titled “Srebrenica Genocide-The Failure of the International Community”.²⁹⁵ The exhibit was completed in 2017, and the following principles guided its implementation:

- Professional standards (of international quality);

²⁹⁴ “Bosnië En Herzegovina (Srebrenica) - Vredesorganisatie PAX,” (PAX), accessed May 9, 2021, <https://paxvoorvrede.nl/wat-wij-doen/programmas/bosnie-en-herzegovina-srebrenica>

²⁹⁵ “Bosnië En Herzegovina (Srebrenica) - Vredesorganisatie PAX.”

- Preservation of the building's authenticity;
- Inclusive approach, involving both the survivors of the genocide and the main users of the building in 1994/1995, Dutchbat's staff;
- Using multiple narratives, where the formulation of a common story is not yet possible;
- In addition to the importance of the product, also see the process (making the fair in collaboration with all stakeholders) as an important part;
- The PMC [Potočari Memorial Centre] is primarily the place of the survivors. Where and how multiple stories can be processed is largely determined by them.²⁹⁶

These principles demonstrate that the form of the exhibit was widely dependent on collaboration with the local community and international actors alike, focusing on the truth-telling function of memorialization. The exhibit displays the events leading up to the Srebrenica genocide and its aftermath, including video footage and photographs from the Srebrenica safe zone and UN basecamp in Potočari. Visitors can walk through the former basecamp and view the lodging and graffiti from former Dutchbat soldiers as it would have been in 1995, contrasted with footage from refugees fleeing into the basecamp for safety.²⁹⁷ In particular, the exhibition emphasizes the reaction of the international community to the genocide (categorized as a failure through the exhibit's title) and the absent preventative measures by the UN and Dutchbat peacekeepers to protect the Bosniaks living in the safe zone of Srebrenica.²⁹⁸

The back of the complex hosts the documentation center, established in 2014 with help from the SENSE Transitional Justice Center located in Pula, Croatia.²⁹⁹ When entering the documentation center, visitors can sit in front of large TV that plays a film

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ "Srebrenica 360".

to educate visitors about the events and timeline of the Srebrenica massacre.³⁰⁰ The documentation center contains computers where archives of thousands of hours of testimonies from Srebrenica survivors, genocide perpetrators, and researchers that are accessible to all visitors.³⁰¹ Additionally, the documentation center contains videos and crime scene photographs and military documents from Bosnian Serb forces and Dutchbat soldiers.³⁰²

Finally, behind the former Dutchbat headquarters stands the former battery factory at the UN basecamp, where thousands of refugees sought protection from Bosnian Serb forces on the days leading up to the genocide. Today, the former factory exists as a large memorial space where visitors can view photographs and footage from the days leading up to the genocide and former possessions from Bosniak victims.³⁰³ The displays house individual artifacts, such as diaries, wedding rings, and prayer beads either found upon discovering the victims' bodies or donated by family members.³⁰⁴ Along the left wall of the complex, there are several panels in Bosnian and English accompanying maps, charts, and photos detailing the Srebrenica genocide and information about the Bosnian Serb officials and their respective ICTY trials and convictions.³⁰⁵

³⁰⁰ "Srebrenica 360".

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid. When I visited the memorial center in July of 2019, survivor Hasan Hasanović, who was 19 when Srebrenica fell to Bosnian Serb forces, spoke in the documentation center about his journey as a survivor of the genocide.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ "Srebrenica – Potocari Memorial Site".

³⁰⁵ "Srebrenica – Potocari Memorial Site".

At the front of the memorial room, there is a book of condolences where visitors can reflect on the events of Srebrenica and their experience at the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁶ “Srebrenica 360.”



Figure 9: The Memorial Room inside the former battery factory.

Thousands of Bosniaks sought refuge here before Dutch soldiers handed them to Bosnian Serb forces. The poster on the upper left contains writing from Dutch Graffiti found in the UN complex, stating “No teeth...? A mustache...? Smells like shit...? Bosnian girl!” while the poster on the right depicts one of the Mothers of Srebrenica standing outside Anne Frank’s house.³⁰⁷

Successes and Limitations of the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery

The form of the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery as a mix of a constructed site, a found site, and accompanying educational activities fulfills the following functions of Barsalou and Baxter's criteria: a) truth-telling or documenting specific human rights violations, b) offering symbolic reparations to honor the victims of violence and reinstate their reputations, c) symbolizing a community's or nation's commitment to values such as democracy and human rights, d) encouraging civic engagement and education programs to engage the wider community, and e) advancing educational purposes, including the retelling of history for future generations.³⁰⁸ However, the memorial does not function to a) promote reconciliation by recasting the national identity or repairing damaged relations among groups, or specifically b) promote discussions of a peaceful future based on coexistence.³⁰⁹

The collaboration of the local Bosniak community, such as the Mothers of Srebrenica and Zepa enclaves, contribute to the success of the memorial site in fulfilling the above functions. Ultimately, the memorial site would not have been constructed if the international community had successfully fulfilled the UN mandate to protect Bosniaks from Bosnian-Serb forces in the established safe zone. Duijzings illustrates the contradiction of the international community playing a large role in the occurrence of the genocide while also being a force that survivors and families of victims depend on for the large-scale commemoration of the massacre.³¹⁰ Through strong political and

³⁰⁷ I took this picture while visiting the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery in July of 2019.

³⁰⁸ Barsalou and Baxter, "The Urge to Remember: The Role of Memorials in Social Reconstruction and Transitional Justice," 5.

³⁰⁹ Barsalou and Baxter, 5.

³¹⁰ Duijzings, 165.

financial support, the Office of the High Representative and other representations of the international community have transformed the Srebrenica commemorations, unlike other memorialization efforts in BiH, into acts of remembrance designed for international consumption.³¹¹

Ultimately, for families of victims of the genocide, the most important part of the memorial site is the cemetery where they can have a proper burial for their loved ones alongside support from other survivors.³¹² In terms of providing a space for Bosniaks to heal, the memorialization effort is a success. Duijzings notes that for many survivors and local Bosniaks, the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery functions to reclaim space by bringing back bodies intended to be destroyed by Bosnian-Serb forces and establishing a Muslim presence within the complex within an area occupied by Bosnian-Serbs.³¹³ Additionally, the Mothers of Srebrenica and Zepa enclaves have utilized the commemoration of the massacre to demand economic and political support from the international community, and call for the prosecution of war criminals in the ICTY and domestic courts.³¹⁴

The limitation of the memorial site to promote reconciliation among ethnic groups or promote a peaceful future based on coexistence is greatly influenced by the location of the site within the Republika Srpska. Surrounded by a large Bosnian-Serb community, many of whom contest the memorials implementation and its delivery of history and facts that Bosnian-Serbs believe are distorted or dismissive to Bosnian-Serb

³¹¹ Duijzings, 160.

³¹² Ibid., 163.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

victims, it is difficult for the memorial to function to aid reconciliation in the region. Unlike the Slana Banja memorial complex in Tuzla which is generally well received by Tuzlan citizens, the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery is primarily accepted by Bosniaks and the international community, while contested by Bosnian-Serbs and primary Serb political actors. While the memorial provides the public with extensive archives, exhibitions, and places of mourning, current ethno-nationalist political structures in BiH limit which ethnic group it attracts.

Conclusion

The implementation and effects of memorialization efforts in post-war BiH reflect a wide variety of successes and limitations of utilizing memorialization as a tool of transitional justice.

In answering my first research question, *what forms of memorialization exist in Bosnia and Herzegovina?* I found that all forms illustrated by Barsalou and Baxter are present in BiH.³¹⁵ Through constructed sites, found sites, and activities, the forms of memorialization implemented in BiH reflect a wide range of processes. Specifically, the Slana Banja memorial complex includes monuments, walls of names of victims, and a cemetery, while also offering the space for commemoration demonstration activities for anniversaries of conflicts (such as the Kapija massacre) for the local community. The Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery includes a museum with important archives from the war, education resources for the public, walls of names and victims, graves and markers of locations of mass killings, and also stands as a fluid commemoration site for the anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre, where new bodies continue to be buried each year.

While researching *how do different forms of memorialization pursue or elicit different objectives?* I found that the research on overall memorialization efforts in BiH suggested that memorials tend to pursue the objective of “truth telling” about the events of the Bosnian war, albeit presented from primarily one ethnic group’s perspective without recognition of the other.³¹⁶ Yet, the objectives of each memorial are dependent

³¹⁵ Refer to Table 1: Forms of Memorialization from Barsalou and Baxter.

³¹⁶ Franović, “Remembrance and Reconciliation: Research on Monuments from the War in Bosnia Herzegovina,” 209.

upon the historical, political, and social contexts of their implementation, which act as the driving force for their establishment and subsequent goals. My two case studies reflect how these factors affect the various objectives of memorialization. For example, the Slana Banja memorial complex rejects the dominant trend in BiH of memorialization efforts of honoring solely one ethnic group, and represents an example from the 8% of memorials researched by the Centre for Nonviolent action dedicated to multiple ethnic groups.³¹⁷ The memorialization efforts of the Slana Banja memorial complex spearheaded by local authorities pursued the objective of non-nationalist commemoration of the Bosnian war, shaped significantly by Tuzla's practice of non-partisan policies throughout its history.

In contrast, the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery pursued the objective of creating a commemoration site for genocide victims and their families, while also functioning as a way for the international community to take accountability for their lack of actions to stop the genocide. As Mothers of Srebrenica and Zepa enclaves, the Office of the High Representative, and Dutch representatives jointly imagined the memorialization effort, there are layers to the objectives of the memorial effort that reflect the individual goals of each actor. However, memorialization efforts have unintended consequences, such as continuous Serb opposition to the history presented at the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery. Nonetheless, the contestation surrounding the memorialization effort further increases conversations about the history of Srebrenica and reveals the depth of ethno-nationalist structures within BiH.

³¹⁷ Franović, 209.

In researching *what factors limit memorialization processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina?* I found that divisive ethno-nationalist political structures are the most prominent barrier to memorialization efforts. Not only are ethno-nationalist divisions codified at the national level of post-war BiH through the establishment of the Dayton Peace Agreements, but the dominant ethnic groups of each canton and municipality have significant control over the implementation of memorials. This was not a problem in establishing the Slana Banja memorial complex, as Tuzla's local authorities all supported and contributed to the memorialization efforts. Yet, reiterating the points of Brkanic, in the Federation of Bosnia, there are no laws that restrict the implementation of memorials, contrasted with the Republika Srpska, where a memorial is installed only if it is considered important to a local council.³¹⁸ Therefore, any Bosniak living in the Republika Srpska has to seek approval from the Serb council to implement any memorials centering Bosniak civilians of war.³¹⁹ The Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Complex was able to be implemented in the Republika Srpska because of the pressure from the international involvement, yet still faced continuous opposition from the residing Bosnian-Serbs in the area, limiting the memorial's process as a transitional justice mechanism to promote reconciliation between Bosniaks and Bosnian-Serbs.

Finally, in researching *how are memorialization efforts evaluated as successful or unsuccessful?* I found that the definitions of success vary between those who implemented the memorial and civilians and political actors who perceive the memorial. Additionally, although many memorialization efforts fulfill Barsalou and Baxter's list

³¹⁸ Brkanic, 2018.

³¹⁹ Brkanic 2018.

of functions, their subsequent effects do not always promote reconciliation or even a sense of understanding between ethnic groups. Local authorities and most citizens in Tuzla believe that the Slana Banja memorial complex is a successful memorialization effort because it fulfills Tuzla's historical political agenda of promoting non-nationalist ideas. However, the complex is unlikely to be considered successful by conservative or ethno-nationalist Bosnians because the memorialization effort stands as an example of inter-ethnic commemoration rather than division.³²⁰ Therefore, the success of the Slana Banja memorial complex is limited to the environment that it exists in, and depending on who is perceiving it, it will elicit different responses. This same logic applies to the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial and Cemetery, where Bosniaks consider it to be a successful memorialization effort, because it fulfills the function of providing a space of healing and commemoration for lost loved ones in the Srebrenica massacre.³²¹ However, many Bosnian Serbs and Serb political elites consider the memorial a distorted commemoration effort that ignores the suffering that Serbs also faced during the war.

Therefore, memorialization efforts in BiH represent a form of transitional justice, but all memorials do not function to promote reconciliation. The act of utilizing memory as a reconciliation effort inherently suggests that the efforts will not be impartial to ethnic groups residing in BiH, as each group has a distinct memory of what they experienced during the war. "Truth" is fluid, and while a depiction of an event or

³²⁰ Armakalos, "Imagining Community in Bosnia: Constructing and Reconstructing the Slana Banja Memorial Complex in Tuzla," 249.

³²¹ Duijzings, "Commemorating Srebrenica: Histories of Violence and the Politics of Memory in Eastern Bosnia," 163.

prominent figure in the Bosnian war could be considered accurate by some, it invites contestation from other groups that have endured alternate experiences. While memorialization efforts offer an important way for local communities, authorities, and the international community to document memory in the aftermath of regional trauma, these efforts must be paired with other transitional justice initiatives to provide holistic mechanisms to promote peacebuilding in the region.

Thoughts for Further Research

If I were researching this topic, I would want to compare the implementation of other transitional justice mechanisms to memorialization efforts in BiH. I am curious if these efforts would undergo similar successes and limitations as memorialization and still face the same barriers to their implementation and subsequent effects. Additionally, as transitional justice and memorialization are newer fields of study, it would be interesting to refer back to my research in ten years and observe the changes within the academic field of transitional justice and memorialization. In response to the ongoing “memory boom,” more memorials will continue to be implemented in BiH, and it will be fascinating to see how implementation processes change as more transitional justice mechanisms emerge in the region.³²²

Ultimately, memory is a powerful tool that is shaped by local communities, political actors, and the international community to provide a space of healing and commemoration while simultaneously working to promote a political agenda. Memory continues to change and develop, as new generations contribute to the formulation of

³²² “What Is Transitional Justice?” (International Center for Transitional Justice, 2009), <https://www.ictj.org/sites/default/files/ICTJ-Global-Transitional-Justice-2009-English.pdf>, 1.

identity. The politics of memory present in Bosnia and Herzegovina represent that history is never merely a figment of the past, yet, is an element that continues to shape the present and future.

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