

**Why killing their neighbours and family?
ritualized and symbolic destruction of communities in Bosnia**

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„They were killed by Serbs who had been their friends, people who had helped harvest their fields the previous autumn, people with whom they shared adolescent adventures and secrets. . . . All of a sudden, seemingly without reason, they had turned into killers”.

Peter Maas, observer, Washington Post journalist

„This war was one where brother killed brother. We are the same people with different religions. People higher up made us take up arms, and only innocents ended up suffering”².

Mladan Tadić of the Tadić-brothers, former soldier, now café owner in Kozarac

„New demons had possessed the Balkan house and were preparing their vandalistic and bloody feast, first in Croatia and then in Bosnia”³. Demonization of Serb people both in the Balkans and in the rest of Europe has been a success-story, due to repetitive reporting on violence committed by Serb military, paramilitary and civilian people. Radically opposing to that image, Ivan Čolović, Serbian anthropologist and social theorist draws the traditional „innocent victim” image of Serb warriors, heroic, pure and immature dreamers whose task comprises „fighting against the aggressive virility of the enemy”; the enemy who is often perceived as infantile, and „shown in the figure of the rapist and abductor of Serb women”⁴. The extreme brutality and savagery of all-type warriors and the cleansing-propaganda in the last Balkan war seem somehow making fun of the above cultural-historical narrative. Cruelty, barbarism, slaughter, savagery, revenge are the most often used terms to describe the acts of war in Bosnia in all communities’ narratives, regardless of ethnicity, as neither of them were spared. It often hasn’t even been considered a war, but so far unknown forms of violent interaction⁵. It’s worth cogitating for a while about what kind of situations or people would get in the neck so much as to engage in verbal or physical violence against an other. One may realize how easily aggression (not only verbal, but physical) gets released under certain very simple everyday circumstances. What sort of elementary motives could break open then in war-time conditions? Once, my Serbian language teacher (a Serb living in Hungary) told that the greatest dilemma in his life had always been how he would

have acted in war if his wife had been raped and children slaughtered in front of him. Would he have undergone the same mental switch as to take a vengeance on any ethnic fellow of the committers? For the most ardent young Sarajevan Serb soccer fans it would have been quite evident to come at Bosnian Muslims waving Turkish flags and roaring „Death on Serbs“ at the Slavija-Sarajevo soccer match⁶ in May 2007, if there hadn't been about 700-member police-commando. However, the local police were doing nothing at all when seeing Slavija-fans throwing bottles, stones and burning torches at football-players. For young Sarajevan Serbs it is the few prominent idols and God who both show the right way: „...any [Muslim] foundations laid will be blown up“⁷. Radovan Karadžić, the propagator of the above statement still appears hand-in-hand with Ratko Mladić on young Serbs' mobile screens and T-shirts. For some Kosovar Albanians, not surprisingly, the same national hero-post is taken by Adem Jashari, the UČK martyr. But as for Muslims, the idolized image of the Chechen warlord Shamil Basayev strikes strangely in front of Sarajevo mosques, nurturing worries about the spread of the militant Wahabbi movement in Bosnia. The link is not accidental: Basayev was fighting the so-called „Serbian terrorists“ lead by Rajko Kušić, a former soldier of Karadžić and Mladić and allegedly sent to Chechnya by the Russian intelligence services. By all means, all these 'guys' have gained fame due to their reckless, self-sacrificing fighting for the noble purpose of saving the whole nation and eliminating all virtual and real enemies. It is more than enough to justify their own brutality and massacre.

Torturing and killing your own kin, friends and closest neighbours is not however a general phenomenon, but an extreme manifestation of how conflict indoctrination is able to provoke cognitive distortions beyond state-level war-time institutionalisation and instrumentalisation. William Golding wrote his shocking socio-psychological story, the „Lord of the Flies“ in 1966. The shipwrecked children's community of necessity was disintegrated in relatively short time by the growing feeling of insecurity in their suddenly emerged new social reality: the unknown island. Rivalizing leaders' mobilization lead to extreme savagery of a faceless or masked hord of small children, who, out of themselves and in the role of the warrior, were only thirsting for torture and blood, regardless the identity of the targeted person. When security reappeared out of the blue in the form of an adult father-like person, the earlier dreadful fighters suddenly turned again into vulnerable and innocent children. Former fighters, even war criminals are still marching the streets of Bosnian towns. Leaving their role-indicating uniforms and insignia behind, now they are ordinary citizens, remembered by only those who experienced their brutality. They did a 'good job' when making collective violence reign rationality. The strategy-work behind laid in the mobilization for anger of as many fighting units as possible, often

rivalizing for power-positions. Once anger is unleashed and violence is justified, aggression becomes a normative way of interaction in the name of ethnicity and religion, making it a micro-community-level tools of 'crisis management', dispute-settling, giving due or making justice. Micro-communities and groups are becoming the implementors of imagined boundaries, uniting into a wide external image of ethnicities in barbarian conflict (Golding's savagemen fighting the civilized ones).

The present paper focuses on how social reality is reshaped in the wake of entrepreneurial activity aiming to release aggression, and how new forms of violence become ritualized through shifts in collective perceptions, in war-time and post-war states of mind. These questions lead us to considerations on social cognition, that is on collective-level cognitive processes and developments. Cognitive psychology and anthropology, most dynamic disciplines have developed the frame-theory, embraced and even sanctified by a great number of social scientists. Taking into consideration the on-going debate on the place of cognitive structures and on the importance of cognition in the construction of cultural meaning, in the acquisition and transmission of ideas⁸, I will apply in this paper a mixture of socio constructionist psychological and socioanthropological approaches. While having resort to some concepts of the cognitive anthropological theoretical structure, this paper does not aim to erect psychological hypotheses, nor does it state that all studied phenomena could be addressed through studying cognition. I believe that any tentative to throughoutly explore individual or collective cognitive settings seems naive and airy. Mainly because the human-kind is a comfortable cognitor and therefore spares cognitive capacities⁹: people usually treat complex problems in a simplified manner, which ignores a multitude of crucial information and lead to serious distortions. No discipline has so far provided any fully satisfactory explanation on why do some people give themselves up to uncontrolled cruelty and others do not. And – as the cited observer, Peter Maass put it – „witnesses to war crimes rarely survive to tell about it.“¹⁰ Ritualized forms of violence are directly emanating from the particular settings of those social realities, prevailing in certain forms even today, as conflict in ethnically divided Bosnia has gone non-overtly violent. On the basis of preliminary research it can be stated that acts of extreme violence are committed collectively, but in specific experimental micro-communities (like that one in Golding's novel). The above statement fits in the general picture on war recreating group-formation logic and dynamics, both on the perpetrators' and on the victims' side.

This paper does not aim to determine responsibilities or make justice, nor does it associate itself with either of the fighting parties.

Priming for ethnicity

The present study is based on the assumptions that nationalism, aggression, ethnicity, violent religiosity and vindictiveness are states of mind that become activated under specific circumstances, and that the activation of violent ethnicity-centered states of mind and cognitive schemas is highly situational. It means that the activation depends on the often accidental and temporary coincidence 1. of war-triggered feeling of insecurity creating a micro-level context of group belonging-affirmation, 2. of schemas, constructed in ethnic and religious terms, 3. and of specific, ritualized releasers of aggression. For elaborating on this model, one should throughoutly explore

- cognitive capacities and processes on the one hand, and
- constraints on the other. These include cognitive constraints on aggression, and on aggressive representations, and distributional constraints on the acquisition of ideas, emanating from social interactions¹¹.

The above model supposes that violent behaviour is only a probability, and there will be a lot of group-members not willing to resort to violent means, although a minimal input is enough for activation of schemas forged in ethnic terms, as they are more easily evoked than any other¹². In the case of the war in Bosnia, anthropologic research shows that the everyday experience of sharply defined ethnicity was not common in most of the areas, and that the peaceful multiethnic and multireligious coexistence had a long tradition. These assumptions do not intend to fade the fact-like concepts on the strategically planned nature of violences committed in Bosnia. On the contrary, the distribution of locally meaningful releasers could be influenced by political and religious instrumentalisation of symbols and rituals. That is why I consider that the majority of existing studies and documents underestimate the role of the three faiths, church-leaders, religious superstition, mysticism and symbolism in the above distribution and activation process.

Schemas, frames and scripts are knowledge-structures forged on cognitive categories or mental constructions such as memory, representation, collective social knowledge, symbols, etc. As a result, schemas or frames have various forms and encode mainly general knowledge. On the basis of the above constructionist theory, the cognitive schema adds up to a skeleton or construction of socially transmitted macro-knowledge and groups of concepts. The weak point of that definition lies in the fact that we cannot really know which information or knowledge constitute a given schema. And also, even if the skeleton comports a social grounding, has social feet with fingers representing the narratives and cultural heritage of past generations, it has a highly personalized individual head, representing the cognitive constraints imposed by the human

mind with uncalculable mental and rational processes. Not forgetting the fact either that these social skeletons interact and create social groupings, which also has a crucial part in cognition. That is why this type of exploration by existing anthropological models will always provide us with limited empiricism and a high probability of distortion and prediction.

Scripts are complex schema-structures that reflect the background knowledge in different standard-situations. Not only the knowledge, but similarly to ways of thinking, the knowledge-structures can also be acquired through social interactions: either existing schemas being complemented, or progressed, or restructured¹³. In connection with the war in Bosnia, Anthony Oberschall is writing about a normal and a crisis frame which are altering and switched, defining the crises frame as „grounded in the war experiences“¹⁴. Even if I think that the war was not about switching between two well-defined, sharply delimited frames and states of mind, Oberschall has overwhelmingly contributed to the research on collective mobilization for violence by studying the sociopsychological aspects of different actors' involvement. Taking into account the centrality of civilians in violence and the inextricable amalgamation of victims and perpetrators, it is also important – as Ivana Maček suggested – to distinguish victim, observer and perpetrator narratives of violence and conflict. Also, it is not at all without general interest to depict the meaningful function, the real substance of sequences of collective violence often perceived as barbarian and animal-like. However, revealing and filtering all relevant schemas, processes, constraints within each interacting group in one particular conflict-case seems more than a life-long enterprise. Why then is it important to consider the role of cognition and collective knowledge in violence? The main reason is that through the collection and analysis of war-narratives and memories both on the basis of secondary and primary/field-work sources, the information/knowledge content of relevant schemas can be determined. Another reason is that the more some striking cases are studied in a multidisciplinary way, the easier interdisciplinary consent could be reached through harmonisation in terminology and aims. As for the schemas, what is considered relevant depends on the limits of research and the questions to be posed. In the case of the present research, ethnicity, violence, fear, honor and shame, religion, gender, war, etc. -related concepts would add up to thousands of schemas which should be examined throughoutly. Which is quite many, even if limited to a concrete conflict-event. My further limitation will lead to a small cluster of relational and object-schemas focusing on close interethnic relations: family, neighbour, friend, guilt or sin, devil, dead, blood, anger, etc, subject to further limitation to sub-schemas. The knowledge-content of these schemas is actually under mapping-process. If it works, the research will be later-on extended to other on-going conflict situations. In this paper, I will provide a general overview of my starting-hypothesis and

concepts, and I do not intend to provide a comprehensive theory of the cognitive determinants of violent behaviour. As situational variables are characterized by temporality and are strongly dependent on specific social settings and cultural context, I am quite sceptical about any attempt to feature an universal model of predicting and preventing intergroup forms of collective violence, or building ties of cooperation. Efforts must remain localized and tailored to present developments in distributional facilities (both cognitive and cultural), and in eventually condensing politico-ideological forces, taking in the meanwhile in consideration the theoretical assumption (e.g. that of Thornton) that violence is „always understood retrospectively“¹⁵ and is inherently past tense.

On the basis of the assumption that the extreme brutality committed by perpetrators of violence during the war, or the aggression that turned earlier good friends, neighbours and family members against each other was a social behaviour motivated by the activation of restructured schemas, there is much room for resorting to indoctrination as a mechanism of priming different behavioural schemas, and therefore as a learning process. The activation of ethnicity-based schemas entailed transformations in the everyday social interactions. Operating as a kind of ‘secondary socialization’, or “mental conversion”¹⁶, it created a new – distorted – social reality and knowledge, but also new social structures with ethnicity-centered types of intergroup behaviour (a kind of inversion of Allport’s ‘contact-hypothesis’). Ethnicity, being a state of mind and being artificially constructed as a narrativized identity, has to be affirmed from time to time through interactions. The ritualized forms of boundary-setting serve that aim. Violence in boundary affirmation allows the emergence of new narratives, as it “activates new social patterns and processes precisely because it does disrupts social and cognitive patterns”¹⁷. If it is the change in knowledge that transforms intergroup behaviour, what is then considered known and what is knowable? The information that human mind finds as matching to existing and learnt schemas is accepted as a truth or as a fact. (And perceptions actually depend on the degree of the conformity between the information and the schema.) Information distributed by conflict-myths and narratives about the other’s violence was meant to be collectively shared. In order to have the necessary schema-constellation for those narratives, an intense and aggressive conditioning (‘priming’) process was launched in a joint effort by the churches, the political elites, popular intellectuals, artists and the media. Which of course does not mean that those opinion-leaders were thinking in schemas and cognitive processes, but the underlying ideology must have been carefully conceived and prepared. The exact influence of intellectuals’ ideas during the war is difficult to estimate from our perspective, but their fierceness is easy to demonstrate. Dr. Jovan Striković, the director of the Saint Sava Hospital in Belgrade wrote his ultra-nationalist and

aggressive ideas in the book 'Doba ravnodušnih' (The time of the Indifferent) in 1996. A photo of him shows him encircled by good-looking nurses in Orthodox-style hospital-uniforms that were designed by the author-director himself. In his book he sets the moral imperative that an offence must be reacted to with an even greater one¹⁸, and rallies to the idea that national identity is genetically determined and carries the genes of tribal ancestors. The role of psychiatrists in political roles (such as Rašković and Karadžić) cannot be ignored either, even if psychiatrists in former Yugoslavia were practicing mainly clinical and medical treatment.

The good and the devil

The 'priming' process¹⁹ starts with the construction of the 'other' as a collectively guilty entity, along with the narrativized constitution of the in-group as a historically just continuum. If the sin lies in the belonging to an ethnic or religious group, then people judged member of it will be punished on the basis of that simple affiliation. Family no exception from that. It seems a radical statement at first, but people (under severe circumstances of uncertainty) can be influenced to think that family-members should get the same punishment as anybody else for the same guilt²⁰. And under circumstances of nationalist and hatred mobilization, even a few radical supporters are enough to make 'big noise'. The sorrow over the death and suffering of innocent victims is transformed in this way into the collective satisfaction over the guilty being punished. Why was it needed that politically guilty people (Muslims being foreign intruders, Croat-Ustashas having massacred Serbs in mass during the second world war, Serb-Chetniks having massacred Croats in mass during the second world war, and both Muslims and Croats living on unjustifiably occupied territories) were demonized at the same time, that is, perceived as devil? If experienced, or at least narrated behaviour cannot be empirically verified, a group validation and collective support is needed. At this point, the collective 'reason' could usually be found in the inherently shared and unquestionable source of legitimation: the religious belief, superstitions and mysticism. It was the feared and respected supreme power that transformed the atrocities into a metaconflict, while devil was generally perceived as operating through intermediaries that normally come from the cluster of ordinary people.

In the wake, people started to kill each other in the name of God²¹. Massive Catholic, Orthodox and Muslim de-secularization, dogmatization and retraditionalization waves, the spread of religious symbolism, the revival of the supranatural were serving the priming of ethnic division, the ethnicity being re-imagined as religious affiliation²². Secular interactional norms and principles have slowly been faded by the behavioural doctrines of religious nationalism. For nationalist political ideas, the blessing of churchmen was a legitimation in itself. Reis Cerić, Vinku

Pulić and Patriarch Pavle, the prominent church-leaders were all vested with overwhelming political and ideological power. Mile Babić, professor of theology in his 'Nasilje idola' (Violence of idols) states that during the war, religious institutions put the idea of nation in the middle of their power²³, and even threw themselves in ethnographic discourse on ethnic and religious roots of Croatship, Muslimship and Serbianship. 'Bepa и Hациja' (Truth and Nation), written by Vladeša Jerošić is an Orthodox nationalist book, issued in Belgrade in 2004, and diffused throughout Orthodox communities in the Balkans. We happened to find it in all Orthodox Churches in Sarajevo and Eastern Sarajevo. The above publications, along with other ones (mainly ethnographic works we found in libraries of secondary schools for example) mark the mapping and superimposed knowledge-providing power of the Church as a 'para-state', allowing it to act as a legitimacy-vacuum-filler²⁴ in reshaped public settings.

The political violence imposed by all sorts of elites and instigators on populations in Bosnia and Croatia derived from the agony of the ruling clusters, driving them to large-scale megaprojects, performances, enterprises, such as purification of desired territories and regrouping them into one national land, a Greater Serbia for instance. The ethnicization of political violence²⁵ took various forms, but its core idea was the massive involvement of civilian populations as referred to on the pages above. But, of course there was a significant variance in experiences and in perceptions of causes among civilians, soldiers and paramilitaries or torture units mobilized for the implementation of special forms of violence. Oberschall list some of the ethnicity-reasons evoked by paramilitaries for ethnic cleansing in Bosnia in 1993²⁶: long-term suffering from the collective guilt and violence of the other; the other representing an imminent danger, a threat to the entire nation, which is a question of survival, justifying extreme measures and revenge, and also justifying the preemptive violence to eliminate that danger. All these points reflect 'top-down'-wardly indoctrinated narratives related to ethnicity and boundaries.

Where your dead are lying... The logic and the ritual of violent boundary-setting

When travelling in Bosnia-Herzegovina, one very obvious sign make you know about ethnic boundaries (either officially drawn or set by unwritten laws of post-war experience): the condition of cemeteries and that of churches. Religious faith and the memory of war both symbolise sacrifice. The names on the graves and the religious symbolism of the graveyard are carrying the striking information about whom used to be living on that land before the war.

Advancing further, one may notice how still coexisting communities are rivalizing for having the highest church or mosque towers within the same town, the biggest and most 'animate' cemeteries, the most commemorations and the loudest calls for prayer of all.

Penetrating even further and taking the trouble to look into banal street symbolism, one may realize signs of aggression, ethnic nationalism, hatred and instigation for revenge (e.g. a graffiti in Zvornik saying “Zvornik smrdi” – Zvornik stinks²⁷). “Samo Sloga Srbina Spasava” (САМО СЛОГА СРБИНА СПАСАВА), “Only Unity Saves the Serbs” preaches one of the ethno-nationalist mundane slogans of proudness and patriotism, echoed in street-graffities, in the ornament of orthodox crosses (even if having an original and presentable sacred meaning) and T-shirts. During the war, the four ‘C’s became a kind of insignia of Serb militias on ruined and exploded buildings, but also the Orthodox Church, which (watching pictures about Karadžić, Mladić and Krajišnik being blessed by Patriarch Pavle) recalls narratives on church-led crusades.

The aggressively imposed and inherently aggressive boundaries made all pre-war stances unnatural. ‘Anti-natural’ thus affected mixed-marriages and neighbourhoods. In Serbian political mythology „ethnically mixed marriages...produce children who bring confusion into the natural order of affairs: our own and alien blood”²⁸. The natural state of things must therefore be a purified setting meaning ethnic homogeneity, and following the logic provided by Melanie Klein with her idea on ‘mechanisms of projection and splitting’²⁹, which means value-polarization: inherently pure and clean in-group vs. the inherently dirty, evil out-group. Yugoslavia appears thus unnatural construction, and the downfall of Yugoslavia the fulfilment of the destiny of anti-natural human communities³⁰. Contradicting ‘unnatural nature’ rhetoric, in border areas where the most fierce fightings and most violent cleansing took place, communities had a lot in common. The similarity – even if superficial – in cultural settings (e.g. the *zadruga*-system) and knowledge made border-line communities even more exposed to violent intervention: the less the members of different ethnic groups can be distinguished, or the more they mix, the more boundaries must be reaffirmed and filled with distinctive symbolic meanings³¹. Serb militias – on the basis of observers’ accounts – sometimes had to force or terrorize even Serb inhabitants to comply with the holy imperative of ethnic purity and to oust and kill those befouling that purity. It did not matter if it was family, friend or neighbour. Nature here becomes synonymous with purity, and paradoxically with warriorship. But to what extent is this war, post-war and (on the basis of Čolović’s account) pre-war narrative reflected by ordinary people’s lived experiences? The more exact question-formulation would be: by whom were these narratives echoed then and now? There are families (mainly in the countryside) who traditionally do not mix despite cultural likeness, not even for friendships or neighbourhoods. Maria B. Olujić anthropologist illustrates this phenomenon with the traditional song „blood is not polenta” (*krv nije pura*), which warns against the mixing of blood of different ethnic groups. Also, there are people who used to have somebody of an other ethnic group in their families, and immediate ‘entourage’, but after having

experienced violence in the name of ethnicity or religion, broke up all those relationships and started to give themselves up to the post-war reality of multiple boundaries. Victims' association-members are not susceptible to start friendly relationships with anyone of the perpetrators' ethnic group, moreover they are taking up a militant attitude in their quest for justice. Returnees are not usually returning to friendly neighbourhoods and helpful local authorities. And we should not forget all those underground or politically bound groups, shadow-militias and violence specialists (such as Voja Chetnik, Mirko Jović, Šešelji's Chetniks, Scorpions, the HVO's Maturice, the notorious Arkan's Tigers – the largest paramilitary in Serbia holding training camps, Legija – the murderer of Djindjić, Fikret Abdić, Parag, Juka Prazina, Caco, Celo 1, Celo 2 – having not always ethnically exclusive militias, Nasir Orić – the infamous Muslim Serb-killer in Srebrenica, etc.), mobilizing for revenge, for the continuation of purification and for the punishment of 'anti-natural' communities (mainly those living in urban centers). The majority of recruited fighters came from soccer fan-clubs and secondary schools, were unemployed male youngs or released prisoners³². Local authorities also played a contradictory role in the war. Criminality was facilitated by their engagement, and essentially aimed the troubleless flow of arms, gathering of inhabitants and smoke-screening. Seized and redistributed arms found their post-war mission in deterring eventual returnees from returning.

Masculinity and deadly sacrifice had a crucial symbolic function in the political boundary-setting ideology in the last Balkan-wars. Graveyards bear the memory of past sacrifice, but make a mental demarcation line in the present, as they recall the earlier continuum in territory and kinship lineages: „Wherever there are Serbian graves, there is Serbia. Graves mark the boundaries of Serbian land. That is a religion of blood, a religion of the earth and the dead. Open only to people of the same origin, so that others cannot convert to it”³³. The prototypic narratives and schemas related to the deadly sacrifice were all reconstructed along an ethnic and religious boundary-logic. Charles Tilly in 'The Politics of Collective Violence' emphasizes the importance of boundary in the ritualization and banal symbolism of cross-ethnic interactions. The cluster of forbidden boundaries, that is boundaries traditionally not transgressible are essentially related to honor and shame of men: killing of a kin, insult to honor is either by maligning a man's wife or territory, publicly humiliating him, or taking away equipment stemming from his masculinity and proudness (in particular weapon)³⁴. The silence of victims had to be responded by the noise of desire for revenge continuously reproduced and retargeted, using the cultural model of violent honor-saving: transgression of boundaries ritually released a traditionally codified set of procedures of provocation and disrespect, which included highly visible acts of violence on objects and symbols that are constitutive in the wrongdoer's identity. In the wake, re-revenge was

a due for every member of the hurt lineage, which resulted again in a ritualized, but already „head-for-an-eye“-like³⁵ disproportionate revenge-cycles. In the war, young males were especially targeted by the honor-shame discourse, as for them the experience of boundedness and the combative defense of those imposed limits was something new: „Let anyone who is a man come with us!“³⁶ If you stay, you are not a real man. The masculinity-schema was restructured in this way, gaining a war-time meaning. That is why the (difficult) destruction of Mostar’s old bridge by Croat soldiers had an additional message: you are prevented from becoming a real man (male adolescents are considered real men after having plunged into the Neretva river from that bridge). Thus, you will remain a child, you cannot carry weapons and fight, and your community remains defenseless. One single violent act symbolically intervened here as a collective humiliation of Muslims in Mostar.

Rituals and the intensified use of political symbols had a crucial role in reshaping social reality, human relationships and community norms³⁷ according to the purposes of war, and also in creating a strong sense of belonging within refashioned-purified, but dispersed communities. The performative nature of violent rituals made the episodes of the cultural revenge-model familiar, which helped the imitation of acts of violence in the new social settings. On that basis, one question emerges: can the ritually repeated „Death on Serbs“ threat at the Sarajevo-Slavija soccer match be considered as priming for a real body-to-body encounter among fans? That match, as a lot of other ones, was about ‘wounded’ players wallowing on the ground, surrounded by some other players from both sides provoking each other above the ‘victim’. The soccer-match can be considered in itself a ritual³⁸, rhyming with the featured procedures of honor-saving performances: identities are as clearly set as possible showing a kind of ideal-type division. In these idealized-dramatized settings, male participants transform into professional patriots (Muslims, Serbs or Orthodox, Croats or Catholics by profession) and specialists in home-defense. Rituals of manhood were reflected and generated on the columns of popular newspapers, stressing the extreme – biological – purity of identities: „The Serbs in Bosnia, particularly in the border areas, have developed and sharpened their capacity to sense danger to the nation and to develop a defence mechanism. In my family, we used to say that the Serbs in Bosnia are far better Serbs than the Serbs in Serbia...I am a biologist, so I know: species which live close to other species which threaten them have the best powers of adaptation and survival“³⁹.

The above social construct ensured that initial sporadic violence turned finally into a ‘war of numbers’. Constructed hatred and imposed boundaries served the aim of legitimating large-scale collective violence, and also the physical and symbolic destruction of entire communities in peace.

I am your best friend, I kill you for nothing! ⁴⁰ **Situational violence and the distribution of releasers**

Returning to the originally traced situational variates/distributional-model of mobilization for violence, the present chapter will try to draw an image of how popular mobilization was going on during the war, and in what it resulted: which somehow will question the role of cognitive and distributional constraints.

„Terror as usual”⁴¹ – Mobilizing schemas of fear, threat, honor and revenge

The monster of ‘information violence’ had two threatening arms: one planting the constant state of insecurity and fear in-group, aiming the mass persuasion of people of the imminent danger embodied by the other ethnic group. Because ‘normally’ it is uncertainty and unsecurity that provides the best ‘marge de manoeuvre’ for political, identity and war-entrepreneurs, who mobilize fellows by promising whole-life security and a bright future. The other stretching across the boundary, into the out-group, disseminating fear through scattered attacks (without any strategic-military significance), which aimed to keep inhabitants in inhuman living conditions, under constant terror and in a state of insecurity and fear⁴². It was the extreme uncertainty of everyday survival that nurtured fear and anger for years, making them greater and greater. The demonized, ethnically defined ‘other’ appeared threatening, fearful and challenging. A danger to be eradicated. The aim was clearly to evoke a desire for revenge⁴³, and repetitive calls for violence as duties or moral obligations was a popular mediatized technique of instigators to legitimize collective violence⁴⁴.

Out of all, the mass media (fully state-owned in Serbia at that time) proved to be the most effective entrepreneurs of fear and anger. The mediatized crisis discourse was anchored in the collective memory of previous ethnic crises and wars: in 1991, the VOX magazine put on cover the image of a Bosnian Muslim soldier in Nazi SS Division Handžar stepping on decapitated heads of Serbian leaders, with the caption: "Spremna Handžar Divizija" (The Handžar Division is ready). As for the Serb-side, „every day, tv featured programs lauding the capacity of the Serbs to survive the wrath inflicted on them in the past”⁴⁵. As a ‘live’ narrative supporting the past ones, Slobodan Milošević arrived at the Gazimestan commemorations of the Kosovo Polje battle the 28th June in 1989 „from the heavens”⁴⁶, as a ‘political God’. And his antithesis, Tuđman always appeared in his speeches in the skin of the Satan, the ‘Supradevil’ and ace-conspirator. The vilifying circle (in which domestic opposition-leaders and rivals were involved later-on) was accompanied by the repetitive reporting on traces of second world war mass graves and death

camps, torched cities and villages, horroristic war stories of on-going operations. Spectators and entire communities got soon familiar with facts⁴⁷ and through mediatized reporting experienced at home what was going on: their own hatred towards the other ethnicity, religion, and the evidence of on-going violence, the rightness of the own leaders and the guilt of the others. Also, their lives got impregnated with fear, uncertainty, and the feeling of insecurity. Within the deliberate strategy of uncertainty the few strongholds were the cluster of immediate leaders and the faith with high accessibility: the highly visible and audible Orthodox Church started to interfere for Serbs as a security-net against 'supernatural assaults' of the other 'ethnic' group possessed by some evil will. Also, Muslim solidarity from the outside world was demonstrated by the growing presence of foreign religious leaders and campaigns in the name of Islam. Repetitive appeals for revenge and to reduce the threat banalized violent means of crisis management and made it a normalized way of intergroup interactions in everyday life. Banalization of hatred and violence seemingly eliminates distributional constraints on releasers of aggressive schemas, but interfering cognitive constraints could still hamper the distributional flow of nationalist ideas. Such cognitive constraints are based on a bunch of conceptually distinct cognitive items: for example the beliefs of small localized groups about the object of their hatred or anger, their beliefs about the origins of their anger and hatred; their beliefs about the others' attitudes and the causes of these attitudes and behavioural patterns; or the strength of an eventual 'mimetic desire' aiming the appropriation of one of the other's identical traits. This investigation will be tailored to provide an answer whether the members of one particular group are aware of the provenance and motives of their own fear, anger and hostile attitude towards the other.

Genocidal rapes, kinship-slaughter and mutilations – The symbolic and the empirical destruction of identity

The graffiti in the chapter-title – provoking some repercussions on the socio-darwinist logic of ethnic superiority – suggests the logic that 'as your best friend I will do to you free of charge the greatest favour in your life: to kill you, as it would be better for you'.

Blood and body were bearing overinstrumentalized symbolism. While male blood traditionally represented the honor and shame dialectic, also the ability to defend the community, women's blood symbolized the cleanliness of the community's ethnic-religious lineages. Ethnic cleansing, and all its forms (genocidal killings, genocidal rapes, politicide or forced displacement) were on each warring side explained as a security measure, or „life necessity“⁴⁸, generating its own legitimization ideology. The difference lay in the scope, the organization and the concept: Serb concentration camps were specialized and preplanned, demonstrating the creative power of humankind in violence, with guards acting as omnipotent lords of human life and death. The

measures aimed the purification of territory and blood by the symbolic and empirical destruction of the others' physical integrity and identity defined on the basis of ethnicity and faith. The underlying political myth represented non-Serb ethnic-religious spots in Bosnia as „wounds on the Serbian body”⁴⁹, and that state of being injured proved to be a necessary schema for turning anger into violence⁵⁰. The destruction of the other's identity, the complete appropriation of the other's self and property opened thus the way for the construction of a new muscled and pure nation. Assaults targeted the very building block of the society, the family: fathers, mothers forced to “witness the repeated brutal sexual assault of their daughters – destroying the most basic culturally constituted parental function: protect the children”⁵¹. The maiming of family life was especially important in the case of mixed marriages in urban centres, but also in the extended family, the so-called *zadruga*, and other kinship networks in the countryside. In rural, mountainous areas, where communities lived more or less enclaved, the *zadruga*-system and lineally defined clans (e.g. the Serb *umilija*) had prevailed for long. The *zadruga* represented a *sui generis* form of a corporate family network, and the traditional circle of security and self-dependence, controlling and administering territory-fragments. Traditionally, it is a patriarchal and often religious network of related and neighbouring families, but not necessarily from the same kinship or lineage. The *zadruga*-structure has changed a lot over decades and decreased in scope, starting to resemble lineage clans, but was still a relevant context just before the war and subject to continuous revival (nowadays in a multi-ethnic form). The *zadruga* and the *umilija* are followed by the village and its administering elites in the loyalty hierarchy. Blowing up family houses meant a lethal wound on the family-body, as the family house constituted the physical embodiment of the family, its concrete tie to the soil, also, it was a visible sign of common effort⁵². On the other hand, highly visible and extremely violent destruction of symbolic buildings and monuments (one could make an endless list of them, but one of the most 'prominent' examples is the destruction of the national library in Sarajevo) was the maiming of the culture and aimed to weaken community-identities, to destroy the roots linking people to a certain territory and to make them leave. By destroying the nucleus of self-sufficiency, welfare, social and territorial grounding and not at last the traditional continuum, people were deterred from returning to the earlier occupied lands. On the ruins of destroyed identities new ones emerged with new community-forms, new loyalty bonds and new knowledge about reality.

Committing the same violence on human bodies in a repetitive way or imitating it by mock-executions and mock-rapes ritualized the harm made to the social or collective body of the other group and served as a violent affirmation of group-boundaries. The frustration-triggered group envy or 'mimetic desire'⁵³-schema aiming at the other groups' social position transformed

the symbolic meaning of the human body too. Along with looting campaigns and home-destructions which obviously targeted wealth possessions, through mental tortures and mutilations, the social and mental property, the identity was robbed as well, dehumanizing body. The basic theory in the background is what Gurr described as „perceived acquirement failure“, also a manifestation of powerlessness and resulting in frustration activating aggression⁵⁴. The desire thus gain a vital role in the constitution of the self⁵⁵.

Individual bodies started to mean the whole community, the entire ethnic group, not only on the victims' side, but on the perpetrators' side too. Torturers, rapists, murderers represented a social body acting against and making a collective assault on the other social body. Torture aimed to control, to symbolically – mentally – destroy the enemy and the threat it embodied, and to construct a new identity for the torturer⁵⁶, as if he would have been recreated from the body he had destroyed. As the perpetrators' aim was to eliminate the wrongful presence of the other groups, thus the dirt they embody, their role was seen heroic, patriotic and ritually represented as a triumph of Serb nationalism and symbolically the purity of its own lineages. Here finds its relief the original dissonance featured at the beginning of the paper through two opposing narratives of Serb warriors: that of brutality and that of purity. As the perpetrator is pure, it is necessary that the victim was not innocent, since pure souls do not torture innocent people. If they are not innocent civilians, they are guilty then, and as a matter of fact collectively. And who is guilty, those must pay for. They got only what they deserved, and they are the cause of their own punishment and are otherwise inferior creatures. Only body-objects. The suffering and death of the victims, as a collective entity is therefore favourable from the community's point of view. „Professional torturers, camp guards, and suicide bombers are not born but made“⁵⁷. This supposes that their extreme aggressivity is a learnt social behaviour, and that their exclusive collective identity is constructed on the common sense of the right cause and legitimate brutality. On that basis, perpetrators must have been conditioned for that extreme violence and psychologically 'camped', in order to undergo some mental torturing themselves, to fear their enemies and to want to destroy them. But it has to be taken into account that the majority of those mobilized for the implementation of some 'special' tasks came from prisons, were soccer hooligans or simply hungry for some violence⁵⁸. For people who closely experienced violence on a repetitive basis, the innocent-guilty dissonance does not necessarily entail the cognitive need of 'if I am good, he must be bad' self-justification⁵⁹. Though performed individually, torture and rape was essentially a group-based social action. Images and videos of the extreme brutality of torturers and executioners surrounded by other dozens staring at the display delirious and astounded are circulating online, even now, nurturing anger and remembrance.

Murder was not always the ultimate goal of genocidal measures. Mass rapes, humiliation and making victims suffer served 'better' some symbolic aim: to make detainees feel how bad it was to be Muslim, Serb or Croat. And how bad it was for earlier generations: symbolically expressed by forcing Muslim detainees into cannibalism on dead bodies of their kins, reducing them in this way to worthless objects⁶⁰. Also, „pain was often used as a symbolic substitute for death...Physical pain always mimes death and the infliction of physical pain is always a mock execution”⁶¹. The reproductive force of the different communities was targeted both through women and men. Women's body had a double symbolic meaning: the symbolic repository of man's honor and the embodiment of the social body and territory. Massive rapes against women, invading, penetrating and controlling their body meant thus a double transgression of boundaries: on the one hand, it aimed to shame men for their failure to protect the community and the honor of the lineage. On the other hand, mutilated and raped women were clearly symbols of a community or nation deprived of social and territorial integrity. By making Muslim women „incubators for Serb babies”⁶², the rapist irreversibly penetrated into the others' social body, starting to devour it from inside. “The standard minimum stay in one of the rape camps is 28 days – a complete menstrual cycle – in order to ensure impregnation”⁶³. Mutilated and/or raped women turned to be the most vulnerable post-war victims. They still bear the scars of war-time violence and will never return to their earlier identity and self. Also, they can never publicly stand the shame they underwent or return to their families for the protection of the lineage's honor. The film, 'Grbavica' illustrates how their voice is silenced by their own social position. Grbavica, the Sarajevo-district is a symbol itself, as it was under attack by Bosnian Serb gangs even in 1996. The film was banned in the Republica Srpska.

Detainees committing violence or torturing their own family-members and fellows can be considered a reversed mimesis, since victims were in this way forced to identify with perpetrators. Fathers were forced to rape their sons, daughters, sons were forced to rape their fathers, mothers, or to torture and even kill them. In that schizophrenic situation murderers, torturers and victims became completely indistinguishable. As for some of the rape camps, they were perceived by rapists as brothels, where women were waiting for soldiers to satisfy their sexual desires. „Rape camps were former coffeehouses and restaurants whose names symbolize both the traditional and the modern, such as 'Vilina Vlas' (Nymph's Tresses) and 'Kafana Sonja' (Coffeehouse Sonja). The names of these camps thus blame women for their own victimization”⁶⁴. For rapes against men, detainers forced other male detainees to commit the violence and always made it a public performance. Biting off the each other's testicle (one of the charges against Dušan Tadić at the UN Tribunal in The Hague) symbolized the same mimetic self-besmirching and inwardly targeted

self-destruction as the mimed brothels for women detainees. The difference between the soldiers' and civilians' experience of the war gradually became artificial⁶⁵. A lot of war-prisoners were deterred from returning home after having tortured their own kin, family and neighbours.

Mutilations were quite generally reported and represented by all sides. Also, it became a kind of ritualized manifestation of revenge, mainly that of unproportionate revenge, a head for an eye. Extracting heart and brain, decapitation, cutting off ears, gouging out eyes meant control over the substantial parts of the body, just like controlling its reproductive power by rapes, or cutting off breasts and penis. One interviewee (actually officer in the local government in Mostar and still frightened by having to return to prison as the consequences of her speaking out) told that she was taken to a camp because of her name. There she witnessed Serb guards getting angry about not being able to distinguish Croat and Muslim prisoners, and starting to mutilate body parts of them. 'Shave and cut' was a standard measure to see bodies in conformity with existing stereotypes of Muslim women and men, and to produce visible traits of ethnic affiliation⁶⁶.

Conclusion Shared identities and perceptions

One may remain perplexed over neighbours slaughtering each other, or interpret it as barbarian. In the absence of plausible explanations, re-demonization of peoples have become a common and popular trend in Western analytical approaches, but again, the main point would be to understand the functions of violence, which does not mean that it will gain a justification by that understanding. It is our Western-like humanitarian approach, framed by thinking in individual human rights that shadows the real, tied-to-earth motives for aggression and violence. A long range of explanations have come to light since 1995, among which the most popular concepts stress the holyfication and justification (religious and political) of violent acts rooted in the victimization and sacrifice of all three nations through historical narratives. On that basis, as elaborated in the present study, violence in Bosnia and in Croatia must have been preceded by careful intellectual preparations in Serbia and diasporas abroad (the infamous 1986 Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Science and Art, articles of *The Borba*, the „Proposed Serbian Church National Program“, etc.). Also, the coordinated nature of violence can be proved by the implication of professionals, those trained, indoctrinated and conditioned in professional training camps in Serbia, in Chechnya or in al-Kaida camps along with foreign mercenaries to be the bloody hand of originators. But one should not forget those ordinary citizens (if not victims) concerned with eliminating fear and the sources of it. The information-surplus that Serb war-

entrepreneurs disposed was emanating from that state of extreme collective fear, creating a comfortable *marge de manoeuvre* for manipulation. Ordinary people, often gathering into autonomous paramilitary or police units and equipped with small arms, clubs or stones, etc. engaged in preemptive measures in order to deter the danger, making them 'blinded' implementors of the cleansing-megaproject. The fact that these bands, units were often detached from any upper-military coordinating power, transformed violence into random collective pogroms organizing themselves from below under the control of a local mayor or respected extreme-headed leader, accumulating in a kind of 'municipality (*opština*) genocide'. As a consequence, violence throughout Bosnia and Croatia diverged both in intensity and geographical extension, border areas being the most vulnerable to it. And of course, Muslim and Croat counter-paramilitary units have rapidly been erected from volunteers. Those recruited were mainly rural people, tied to territory (as for Serbs, in *ćamilija*) with clear lineages or rituals, or had often experienced extreme violence before, as referred to earlier.

How can one then outline the identity of committers of violence? Again, we have to face the heterogeneity in motivations. If it was about a carefully prepared and previously ingrained hatred and scapegoating, how come that pre-war accounts are reporting about peaceful coexistence of ethnoreligious communities, and also that there are many studies emphasizing the out-of-blue nature of violence? Peaceful neighbourliness does not mean that there were no intergroup perceptions constructed in ethnoreligious terms before. On the basis of accounts from the late 1980s (mainly that of Tone Bringa), it can be noted that refined perceptions of difference were part of everyday interactions in the countryside. But loyalty bonds and necessity tied people to their immediate neighbourhood, creating multiethnic *zadruga*-like networks and shared identities. In these social settings, accentuation of ethno-religious features (both in self-perception and perceptions of the other) were highly situational. The deliberate affirmation of group-belonging by visual features didn't emanate from traits or genetic characteristics, but from religious affiliation, rituals and customs, which were mobilized later-on for violent purposes. If we take a rapid look at the most important situational variates that played a role in the war in Bosnia, we may notice that they show some prototypic features: 1. the performative representations of violent confrontations as public rituals, using the public landscape, 2. constant, unquestionable legitimation by the supreme authority, making ethnicity an unevitable truth of belonging that one either accept or be expelled. These features are considered prototypic as they structure situational variants of cognition even in sharply different situations of conflict. It means that people, regardless of ethno-religious affiliation, must have had some collective cognitive

conditions resonating with the above schema-structures: a perverse/masked perception of the self, of the other, and of religious terms⁶⁷ (e.g. God allowing evil things to happen).

The destruction of the others' identity was accompanied by the elimination of the shared elements in identities, such as neighbourliness⁶⁸, aiming the affirmation of boundaries. Within sharpened boundaries, mixed neighbourhood and mixed marriage became even more uncomfortable than before. Popular (originally not hostile) stereotypes provided source for rejection, and polarization in perceptions of difference led to aggressive (and still ritual) imposition of identity-markers even outside religious spaces and moments. People started to think in 'black and white' categories: Serbs and non-Serbs, Muslims and non-Muslims, good people and bad people (which is still quite common in Bosnia). Normative justification and the everyday practice of military and paramilitary units imposed no limits on violence, creating a deep incongruency in aims and tools, that is exceeding violence for eliminating virtual dangers. Neighbours ceasing to cooperate and to talk undermined the very building blocks of community-networks. The main concern was getting rid of the uncomfortable neighbours. Under these circumstances, the identity of the targeted person or people did not matter, as he or she became faceless and masked too. In Golding's novel, the powerless acting 'many' were wearing a mask, making themselves faceless, and irresponsible for anything that was going-on. That was the human necessity in violence, leading to improvised, randomized violence and aiming deterrence. Those in responsible position tended to join ad-hoc fighting bands or paramilitary, those in weak social and family position, or resisting violence tended to escape that situation: a lot of people fled abroad, or disobeyed. Human creativity in violence must be treated differently. It was characteristic of organized camps, where people were gathered and physically bounded in a straight place, making it a laboratory for gratification of stereotypes. Also, finding joy (as reported by Gross in his *Neighbours*) in slaughtering and torturing detained people was a direct result of an extreme accumulation of power as relief of frustration. Outside the camps, the outburst of joy is generated by the termination of threat related to the maddening fear.

As I have written before, the cognitive structure of such mental processes is informed by situational variants and is extremely difficult, even impossible to generalize. The lack of extreme-coordination, committing violence was a highly situational and arbitrary phenomenon. It is also our perceptions of differences among actors and victims that determine our final conclusions on events and phenomena. We can explain even the inexplicable on that basis. But we tend to ignore that our perceptions are constructed on the information we have. And we generally have very few information on past events. Perhaps that is the reason for the proliferation of studies on Bosnia and the Balkan wars in general. It is still not explained.

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 Kukić, Slavo – Faculty of Economics, University of Mostar
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 Šubašić, Eldar – Spokesperson, EUSR, Bosnia and Herzegovina
 Vlaisavljević, Ugo – Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sarajevo

¹ Term used by Michael Taussig in his book 'Nervous System'.

² Di Giovanni (2003).

³ Miroslav Volf in Todorova (1997).

⁴ Čolović (1997). Warrior.

⁵ Maček (2001).

⁶ On the basis of my own documentation recorded at the spot.

⁷ Ibrahimagić (2004).

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- ⁸ As presented in Boyer (1993).
- ⁹ Aronson (1999).
- ¹⁰ Maass (1996)
- ¹¹ Boyer (1993).
- ¹² Brubaker (2004).
- ¹³ Eysenck & Keane (1990).
- ¹⁴ Oberschall (2000).
- ¹⁵ Thornton (2002).
- ¹⁶ Milošević (1997).
- ¹⁷ Thornton (2002).
- ¹⁸ Čolović (1997). Hatred.
- ¹⁹ Aronson (1999).
- ²⁰ As referred to in Aronson (1999).
- ²¹ Interview with prof. Enver Kazaz, 10th Mai 2007, Sarajevo.
- ²² Puri (2004).
- ²³ Babić (2002:a).
- ²⁴ Iveković (2002).
- ²⁵ Brubaker (2004).
- ²⁶ Oberschall (2000).
- ²⁷ Dahlman & Ó Tuathail (2005:b).
- ²⁸ Čolović (1997). Nature.
- ²⁹ Klein in Suárez-Orozco & Robben (2000).
- ³⁰ Čolović (1997). Nature.
- ³¹ Cohen (2004).
- ³² Oberschall (2000).
- ³³ Denis de Rougemont in Čolović (1997). Nature.
- ³⁴ Tilly (2003), p. 96.
- ³⁵ Hinton (1998).
- ³⁶ Televised encouragement of Yugoslav People's Army. Čolović (1997). Warrior.
- ³⁷ Durkheim referred to in Cohen (2004).
- ³⁸ Tilly (2003).
- ³⁹ Appeared in Borba, the 28th of July 1993, in: Čolović (1997). Nature.
- ⁴⁰ War-time graffiti in Mostar.
- ⁴¹ Term used by Michael Taussig in his book 'Nervous System'.
- ⁴² Trial-Watch, http://www.trial-ch.org/en/trial-watch/profile/db/facts/stanislaw_galic_100.html
- ⁴³ Čolović (1997). Hatred.
- ⁴⁴ Mandel (2002).
- ⁴⁵ Milošević (1997).
- ⁴⁶ Milošević (1997).
- ⁴⁷ Milošević (1997).
- ⁴⁸ Foucault (2004).
- ⁴⁹ Čolović (1997). Frontiers.
- ⁵⁰ Suárez-Orozco & Robben (2000).
- ⁵¹ Suárez-Orozco & Robben (2000).
- ⁵² Huttunen (2005).
- ⁵³ Girard (1977).
- ⁵⁴ Fortman (2005).
- ⁵⁵ Livingston (1994)
- ⁵⁶ Theweleit in Olujić (1998).
- ⁵⁷ Suárez-Orozco & Robben (2000).
- ⁵⁸ Oberschall (2000).
- ⁵⁹ Aronson (1999).
- ⁶⁰ Moore and Fine in Suárez-Orozco & Robben (2000).
- ⁶¹ Scany in Olujić (1998).
- ⁶² Olujić (1998).
- ⁶³ Olujić (1998).
- ⁶⁴ Olujić (1998).
- ⁶⁵ Maček (2001).
- ⁶⁶ Olujić (1998).
- ⁶⁷ Babić (2002:b).
- ⁶⁸ Bringa (1995).