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Panel BK2: Memory and Reconciliation in Bosnia

**Srebrenica as a marker of memory in bilateral relations
between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the light of ontological security**

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Abstract

The article aims to analyse the impact of memory (official/historical memory) on security/foreign policy using the example of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina bilateral relations. The basis for these considerations is the concept of ontological security. It indicates the construction of the identity of state and is implemented through political decisions and social practices (e.g. remembering important historical events). Here, memory is treated as a social construct. In addition, the article focuses on memory leading to the formation of state identity, also seen in the international sphere.

Historical memory is a burden, challenge and opportunity for security and foreign policy. It has a considerable impact on bilateral relations between countries which used to be in conflict, like Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Historical memory generates numerous research questions – *who is the architect/leader of memory? what are the actors/institutions? what are the mechanisms, tools and instruments of its creation?*. In the example analysed, leaders use historical memory to create separate identities, commemorate chosen and appropriate victims, and develop selective narratives. Historical memory is present in celebrating important dates, historical sites, monuments and events, and in creating national heroes. The most significant elements in the analysis of historical memory of Serbia and BiH relations are: 1. the goals of foreign and security policy of Serbia and BiH according to the documents such as National Security Strategy of Serbia and BiH 2. the contemporary narrative of Srebrenica massacre and its perception by governments of Serbia, BiH and by Bosnian Serbs and Bosniaks 3. an official Srebrenica commemoration (memorials, Srebrenica Memorial Day, etc.).

Keywords: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, historical/official memory, Foreign and Security Policy, bilateral relations, Srebrenica

Introduction

There are many places of violence in Bosnia and Herzegovina which invoke the hottest emotions, such as concentration camps for non-Serbs near Prijedor-Omarska, Trnopolje, Karaterm; massacres places as in Ahmići, Trusina, Bradina. However, Srebrenica¹ remains the clearest indicator of ethnic tensions and a symbol of remembrance of the war not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It refers to the entire Yugoslav wars. The massacre was known as ethnic cleansing and afterwards was acknowledged by international actors as a genocide. Srebrenica as a politicised question and a determinant of bilateral relations between BiH and

Serbia is based on three elements: 1. the perception of the event in the contemporary political discourse in Serbia and RS; BiH and by Bosniaks 2. the actions on the Bosnian side for an agreement on the recognition of genocide and an official Srebrenica commemoration (memorials, Srebrenica Memorial Day, etc.); On both sides the goals of foreign and security policy of Serbia and BiH according to the documents such as: National Security Strategy, National Defence Strategy and main goals of foreign and security policy of Serbia and BiH was taken into account. 3. recognition and perception of Srebrenica by the international community. The article aims to analyse the impact of memory (official/historical memory) on security/foreign policy using the example of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina bilateral relations between 2015 – 2021, when 20th and 25th anniversaries of massacres in Srebrenica were commemorated.

Theoretical approach

The basis for considerations is the concept of ontological security, which indicates the construction of the identity of state, and which is implemented through political decisions and social practices (e.g. remembering important historical events). The theory of ontological security reviews the motives which increase state behaviour. They can be found in the need to maintain or recreate a positive identity anchored in a coherent and self-reflective narrative about ourselves and the community we identify with (Giddens; 2008:90). Thus, maintaining a narrative is undertaken by memory. Halbwachs points out that various groups rebuild their past. However, "when they recreate it, they deform it at the same time", all in order to maintain the unity of views (Halbwachs 2008, 421-422). "This is why the society strives to remove from its memory everything that could divide individuals, distance groups from each other, and in each epoch it changes its memories in such a way that they are compatible with the changing conditions of social equilibrium" (Halbwachs, 2008, p. 422). Additionally, A. Giddens points out the identity and names four basic issues, such as 1.an appeal to tradition, 2.to the past and to the memory of pre-eminent issues of circumstances that affect the present, 3. to the language that bears a certain culture, 4. and the continuity of identity that is burdened with the issues of fear or recognition (Giddens, 2008: 68-77).

Taking into account the assumptions of constructivists' theory of international relations and security studies (Lebow 2008, Wendt 1992, Buzzan, Hansen 2013), B.J. Steele, confronts the approach to ontological security in the framework of critical security research. He assumes that nation states are primarily interested in their own survival, including survival in an international environment. B.J. Steele views ontological security in the following way:

"While physical security is (of course) important to states, ontological security is more important because its fulfilment confirms the identity of the state (i.e. confirms not only its physical existence, but above all how the state views itself and second, how he wants to be seen by others) (Steele 2008: 2-3). Maria Malksoo claims that ontological security "establishes an inevitable link between state identity and security, emphasizing the role of "national memory" in the biographical self-narrative of the state. It indicates an ideational factor – the biographical self-narrative of the state, including its historical memory (Malksoo, 2015: 2-6). Here, the memory is treated as a social construct. Historical memory has a considerable impact on bilateral relations between countries which used to be in conflict, like Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Such states strive to establish their own narrative in order to keep identity and unified memories of their communities, both on global and local/national level. External actors such as states or international organisations (the European Union, OSCE, UN, NATO) are also engaged.

Historical memory generates numerous research questions – *who is the architect/leader of memory? what are the actors/institutions? what are the mechanisms, tools and instruments of its creation?* In the example analysed, leaders use historical memory to create separate identities, commemorate chosen and appropriate victims, and develop selective narratives. Historical memory is present in celebrating important dates, historical places, monuments and events, and creating national heroes. Marc Howard Ross understands collective memory as "selective narratives that will be plausible explanations found at a culturally memorial site, such as school texts, videos, memorial events, family stories, and sacred sites that are emotionally important to groups" (Ross, 2013). On the other hand, Astrid Erll defines it as a particular detail carried by groups, subject to time and space limitations. She notes that "groups are therefore characterized by highly evaluative and hierarchical memory" which shapes identity (Erll, 2018:37). Thus, constructing memory by political leaders provokes conflicts over its shape. Memory refers to its collective host (leaders, institutions), whose memory depends on the perspective of using memories, and indicates its selective but also strategic use (Assmann A, 2009:120-132; Erll, 2020: 64-65; Szacka, 2006:38) in the bilateral relations and keeping states security. Memory constitutes the basis of group identity, including political identity, making it easier to distinguish between "Us" and Strangers" (Sztóp–Rutkowska, Białous, 2020: 129).

Moreover, historical memory refers to finding national memory whose multi-level (external and internal) foundations can be traced back in geopolitical and geocultural factors. The concept of the nation is important for imagined geography and geopolitics of memory

(E.Said, Todorova). Finding new traditions or imagining communities (Hobsbawm, Anderson) also relates to the perception of enemies of a given country / nation. It consolidates communities. Also, the external enemy will create its own vision of politics, which will often provoke emotional reactions and lead to conflicts.

Thus, memory is a complicated creation in which relations can change (relativism) in political discourse. National remembrance remains the basic identification for the society, and the politics of remembrance means celebrating the past memories. Among the selected events of the past, war and conflict seem to have the greatest emotional charge and are events that shape the national identity as well as the state. Thus, the nation and the state will constitute the main framework of identification. On the one hand, the perception of memory from the perspective of internal influences (e.g. the elite and shaping national identity) and external influences (bilateral, international relations) include places and events important for the region or neighbouring countries in the research on memory and politics of memory. Borderlands comprise an important part where often culturally and ethnically mixed entities constitute either a "bone of contention" or a contribution to cooperation. An example of borderlands might be Sarajevo or the division of BiH into two entities, with Srebrenica as an ethnically mixed city. Ethnic rootedness reveals an *Us-Them* perception, which is not easy to overcome. Hence, it is justified to refer to ethnic matters both in remembering (commemorating) and in the processes taking place in inter-ethnic and interstate relations.

Likewise, in the context of ensuring a sense of security, the ethnic aspect is raised to a high level of concern for state systems. In approaches to ethnic studies such as primordialism, constructivism and instrumentalism, each of them engages memory in the creation of ethnicity and revives historical memory. According to primordialists, ethnicity appears as a primal identity which is essentially unchanged. They claim that people tend to attach themselves to a specific identity, especially related to religion and language, which their parents convey to them. On the other hand, instrumentalists focus on following community leaders and building ethnic solidarity. An example is the ethnic solidarity of Serbian political leaders and Bosnian Serbs in Republika Srpska in the case of Srebrenica. It should be noted, however, that Serbia's disagreement on recognising Srebrenica as genocide creates an image of an occupied "identity" that can be seen as a threat to the Serbian state. Thus, the Serbs try to create an image of themselves as victims not as perpetrators. BiH, in turn, does not recognise Kosovo because of Republika Srpska entity. The underlying cause of the conflict are often socio-economic considerations, and ethnicity is added to the clarification of the situation. As Stuart J. Kaufman has pointed out, ethnic conflicts will arise when the parties involved are divided

primarily along ethnic lines and for whatever other reasons, such as when economists support "their" group. He pinpoints that people are taught ethnic hatred, not born into it (Kaufman follow: Wang 2018; 13). Constructivism, on the other hand, emphasizes that ethnicity is a social construct, supported by inventing traditions and creating a mythological-symbolic complex related to the mythology of history. An interesting paradigm is that ethnosymbolism does not ignore political, geopolitical and economic factors, but focuses instead on subjective, symbolic ethnic identity, myths and memory, and socio-cultural elements (Smith).

The creation of friendly relations between states is conditioned by significant elements in which memory is used as a factor building peace and mutual understanding. Conciliation leaders and their leadership in bilateral and international relations contribute to mutual reconciliation. But it is noticed that history is used instrumentally by leaders in international relations and foreign policy. Zheng Wang pinpoints that "key historical events – both traumas and glories – are powerful ethnic or large-group markers[...] as historical traumas can bring a group together, so can historical events instil feelings of success and triumph" (Wang 2018: 15). An important role is played by: creating a common narrative and vision of the future, overcoming memory conflicts, and education - teaching history brings images of history closer, enabling the transmission of history and memory. Therefore, it contributes to building a community (Galtung). J. Galtung also describes the chosenness – myths - trauma (CMT) complex which helps to define national identity and to understand how states react in conflict (Wang 2018: 15-17). In the case of the Balkans, diaspora diplomacy also plays a significant role through the activities of diasporas supporting or opposing the processes of reconciliation. In the Serbian policy the Serbs in RS are described as the ones living in the region (in the post-Yugoslav area, Romania and Hungary) and Serbian diaspora is related to those who live further away.

It seems that memory is seen as an emotional approach to reality. Yet, creating memory is a rational activity conducive to the united functioning of societies and conducting politics. Thus, emotions are used to conduct real politics. However, the danger may be its deliberate distortion, leading to populism and aggression. These, in turn, lead to the escalation of conflicts between groups. Emotions such as *fear*, *anxiety*, *shame*, *humiliation*, *guilt* but also *hope*, *dignity*, *pride* are important in motivating the state to maintain unity (Giddens, : 54-91, D. Moisi, F Fukuyama) and cares about their security. In *The geopolitics of emotions* Dominique Moisi indicates that we cannot understand the world without analyzing emotions. He proposes a model of *emotion cartography* which combines several elements: public opinion poll, what people think about their future and present (you can also add the past -A.J-

S), statements by political leaders, and cultural products (e.g. films, books, monuments) (Moisi, 2012, p. 37). The aforementioned cartography of emotions determines the behaviour of states and national interests. Moisi believes that emotions are important and neither historians nor politicians can ignore them. Emotions "shape human attitudes, relations between cultures and the behaviour of nations" (Moisi, 2012, p. 57), determine the issues of sovereignty, security, identity and the struggle for resources or territory. Hence, the policy of memory in the public debate (journalists, leaders, institutions) is constructed on the one hand by exaggerating positive and negative features. Positive categories include national identity (cultural, religious) and the glorification of patriotism associated with such emotions as *pride, honor, dignity* and *hope*. The negative category is related to the exaggeration of negative events in the history of the nation (national features) related to emotions, such as: *honor, fear, humiliation, anxiety, shame*. Also, groups cultivating their own interests, F. Fukuyama calls the politics of resentment, where political leaders mobilize their followers and indicate that their dignity has been violated, diminished or disregarded (Fukuyama, p. 24).

Goals of foreign and security policy of Serbia and BiH

The instability of the Balkan region and the issue of bilateral relations between Serbia and BiH are caused by past events from the period of 90s of XX c. and the ethno-political situation in BiH. The policy of remembrance in Bosnia and Serbia gained special importance in building the identity of both countries after the end of the war, and has also become an important element in bilateral relations. In the case of BiH the strategic documents show the creation of an image of a civic state with general priorities and policy directions. In the analyzed documents, there is a clear lack of emphasis on the real ethnic divisions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and no indication so as to an identity that could unite the country. The documents fulfil international community demands regarding the multinational shape of the state. The National Security Strategy of BiH still has not been updated and does not show the actual picture of its threats, "enemies" and identity. Serbia, in turn, strongly points to the challenges to its national interest, identity and security, all of which are based on the consolidation of a specific national identity, as well as identifying the "enemy" and threats that come from the past. The goals and directions of BiH's foreign and security policy, according to its main documents, are oriented towards the preservation and protection of independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Equally important are the full implementation of the Dayton Agreement and multilateral relations, especially with the EU, NATO, and OSCE, UN, Council of Europe, which is to keep security and stability in the

region. Therefore after Joe Biden was elected the president of the US, in BiH there is hope for cooperation with the US, as well as a revision of the Dayton Agreement (reforming Bosnia-Herzegovina's constitution). Moreover, the US may want to minimize the influence of Turkey and Russia in the BiH area. In bilateral relations, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro are listed as priority countries. Among the challenges, the animosities caused by the war in 1992-1995 and the related nationalist extremism were laconic mentioned (MoDBA, 2006; MVPBiH. 2003; MoDBA1.2018). Serbia supports the Dayton Agreement and wants to keep the current position of the Serbs in the region. This is indicated by two documents, namely the National Security Strategy of Serbia (NSS) and the Defence Strategy. Also, the debate, or actually lack of it, about the memory of war crimes and the transfer of individual victories to the community creates tensions and a lack of response to reconciliation. In the NSS there are also local aspirations and attempts to achieve national unification of ethnic territories, and the implementation of larger state projects such as border changes. The strategy mentions the issue of "Great Albania". Also, attention is paid to the destabilization of political relations due to the strengthening of nationalist and extremist groups (MoD1, 2019, p. 5). Moreover, the Defence Strategy of Serbia and the National Security Strategy indicates that the strategy of Serbia's foreign policy is to strive for survival and protect Republika Srpska. "The preservation of Republika Srpska as an entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina in line with the Dayton Agreement, and strengthening the Serbs' position in the region and in the world" are of particular importance for the security and defence of the Republic of Serbia (MoD, 2019: 12-13). It is also connected to "developing parallel relations with Republika Srpska" in line with the Dayton Accords (MoD, 2019:23).

Serbia and BiH relations

Bosnia and Herzegovina's relations with the Republic of Serbia were established in 2000. In the 1990s, the FRY and BiH did not maintain formal relations, which was the result of the conflict in the BiH area in 1991-1995. Already in 2003 and 2004, Serbian presidents Predrag Marković and B. Tadić apologized to the BiH community for the crimes committed during the war. However, in 2006, the ICJ opened a trial on the crimes of genocide committed by the Serbs. But, the court cleared the Serbian government of direct responsibility of Srebrenica massacre, what made BiH unable to seek reparations. Also, the United Nations' war crimes tribunal and the International Court of Justice in The Hague recognized the crimes in Srebrenica as genocide (Jagiello-Szostak 2016: ;).

Affairs between the Republic of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina seem to be volatile. It should be noted that the relations between RS and Serbia also reflect the relations between two entities: Republika Srpska (RS) and Federation of BiH. An example is the joint meeting of the Government of the Republic of Serbia and the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was not positively received in Republika Srpska because it is believed that RS has the exclusive right to any kind of relationship with Serbia. Aleksandar Vučić sent a slightly different message to Bosnia and Herzegovina, though, showing that mutual relations are important. In 2015, the Serbian government provided 2 million euro to the municipality of Srebrenica for infrastructure development and further 3 million was reserved for joint projects. Vučić expressed the will to build good and happy future for both sides: "Serbia has done everything it could really, wholeheartedly, and we want good, sincere and fraternal relations with Srebrenica, just as the Serbs want them with Bosniaks"(B92 2015). A question arises here whether investment is a form of responsibility for the events of the '90s in Srebrenica and is compensation for not using the word genocide, which Serbian side see as embarrassing, offensive and hurting its pride. Similarly, in 2021, during the meeting of the BiH presidency with the Serbian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, solidarity between Bosnia and Herzegovina, development of infrastructure, implementation of economic projects and a joint fight against the pandemic were emphasized. Besides, Serbia donated vaccines against Covid to BiH (The Government of the Republic of Serbia 2021). The Serbian side emphasized the importance of stable relations in the region, preserving the integrity and the Dayton resolutions. In the context of a potential secession of RS from BiH, Tanja Topić points out that: "We live in constant fear of the referendum in RS since 2011. [...] It is an obvious example of a frozen conflict that is good for blackmailing political partners at home and the international community. [...] "When the referendum in Republika Srpska is mentioned, there is panic in the international community, as it is seen as a kind of litmus test for a possible declaration of independence"(Kožul 2015). Due to Serbia's road to the EU and no international support for the RS secession, it does not seem to be a real obstacle. However, the "frozen conflict" can be seen as reparation for Serbia's loss of Kosovo.

The contemporary narration of Srebrenica massacre and its perception by Serbia and BiH (Bosnian Serbs and Bosniaks)

Serbia's identity and its perception during Yugoslav wars was strictly related to the Milosevic regime which was blamed for the atrocities and fans the flame of nationalism in

those parts of Yugoslavia which Serbian population had to leave. The Serbian side, both in Republic of Serbia and in RS (entity of BiH) most often describes the Srebrenica event as a terrible crime, incident or massacre. Even though Serbia has apologised for the crime, it still refuses to accept Srebrenica as genocide. The denial of Srebrenica is called a negation, historical revisionism and denialism. In 2009, Sonja Biserko and Edina Becirevic described it a “culture of denial” that is seen in political narrative and media (Biserko, Becirevic 2009). In *Srebrenica Denial Report 2020*, the authors stated that “Denying the historical collective trauma of marginalized groups emboldens their oppressors and reinforces their marginalization, putting them at greater risk of future discrimination and violence” (Hanson Green 2020).

In 2010, the *Declaration of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia condemning the Crime in Srebrenica* committed against the Bosniaks population in 1995 was adopted (Parlament RS 2010)ⁱⁱ. The word genocide was not used in the declaration either. At the same time, a *Declaration condemning the crimes committed against members of the Serbian people and citizens of Serbia* (Deklaracija RS 2010) was created, which expresses regret and solidarity with the victims of the NATO bombing. In the second declaration, the Assembly of Serbia strongly condemns the crimes against Serbs in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Metohija, and calls on the parliaments of other countries, especially the former Yugoslavia, to condemn these crimes. It should be noted that Serbian historians published a declaration against historical revisionism entitled “Defend History” Declaration, signed by regional historians and a number of influential figures from academic, public, political and cultural life. The authors wrote: “Historical revisionism is an abuse of history, an intentional and tendentious distortion of past events. [...] Historical revisionism aims to maintain old myths and create new ones, reinforce stereotypes, cultivate prejudice and hatred towards neighbours. ‘We’ are always the victims, ‘they’ are always to blame. [...] Today, history is a platform for continuing the Yugoslav Wars by other means”(KROKODIL 2021). Despite the fact that Serbia recognized the Srebrenica massacre, but not as a genocide, there may also be detrimental consequences for e.g. the transitional justice period, and the advancement of its own vision of history.

The last two Serbian presidents, Tomislav Nikolic and Aleksandar Vucic, did not describe Srebrenica as genocide. Nikolic indicated that "In Srebrenica, serious war crimes were committed by some Serbs who should be found and punished" and "I kneel and ask forgiveness for Serbia for the crime committed in Srebrenica. [...] I apologize for the crimes committed by any person on behalf of our country and our people" (BBC 2012).

In 2015, Vucic participated in the 20th anniversary of the event but was attacked with stones. Bosnian politicians, OSCE and OHR condemned the incident. It seems that A. Vucic's visit to Srebrenica, despite not recognizing genocide, has a peaceful and conciliatory character. The relations between Serbia and BiH in the context of commemorating the events in Srebrenica are overly politicized. This generates strong emotions that may affect the stability of the region. Reconciliation in mutual relations is a difficult and lengthy process and such incidents hinder it, especially when it comes to Serbs and Bosniaks living in BiH. Vucic's visit in Srebrenica was seen as "great unexpected PR" of Vucic. However, the unlucky incident was also described as stoning "the hand of reconciliation". The Muslim mayor of Srebrenica, Camil Durakovic, described Vucic as "a brave man" in 2015. The Prime Minister himself mentioned tightening ties between Serbs and Muslims, and the possibility of Serbia's investment in development projects in Srebrenica. At the international level, however, the Serbian government sought Russia's support in the United Nations in order to veto the United Nations that declared the event in Srebrenica genocide (Džidić, Panic 2015; BBCa.2015). The change of the mayor of Srebrenica from Bosniak to Bosnian Serbs in 2016 is seen as an increase in nationalist tendencies. In particular, M. Grujčić denies genocide and claims that Serbs from Srebrenica face discrimination as to the truth about the massacre. Bosniaks, on the other hand, fear humiliation and discrimination (Reuters 2016).

Jelena Subotić stated that Serbia's responsibility for Srebrenica ends in 2007ⁱⁱⁱ. She goes on to indicate that "Srebrenica is not an important determinant of memory in modern Serbia". In the public memory, the Serbs feel unfairly treated by the international community (ICTY), claiming that not only the Serbs have committed war crimes. In the case of ontological security and the preservation of Serbia's internal and external identity, Subotić pointed to this "difference between Serbia's view of itself and its role in the 1990s war - and its assessment of the rest of the world"(Subotić 2018).

Srebrenica perception by Bosnian Serbs leader and Bosniaks identity

The issue of Srebrenica is used as part of a political battle in Bosnia. Undoubtedly, the politicization of the commemoration of Srebrenica does not lead to peace-building. There has been a shift in the perception of Srebrenica massacre and for many Serbs it remains a myth. The hope that Bosnian Serbs would recognize the event appeared when Dragan Čović, the president of the Bosnian Serb entity, and M. Dodik (in 2004 and 2007, respectively) admitted that genocide took place in Srebrenica (Face hhD TV 2021; Sadiković 2019; Karčić 2020). However, the second politician later changed the discourse and called Srebrenica a myth that

was fabricated by the Bosniaks, something that does not exist (SkyNews 2019; Rahim 2019), a fraud of the Bosniaks and part of the international community; the attack on Srebrenica was provoked by the Bosniaks' side. He also claims that the number of victims murdered in Srebrenica was as low as 2,000 victims instead of the judicially affirmed death toll of 8,372 (Hanson Green 2020). The Serb leader wants to strengthen the position and protect the Serb population living in BiH and argues for the autonomy, complete independence of the Republika Srpska and its incorporation into Serbia. In his opinion, BiH is "an artificial creation that is not a state." It is also visible that Vucic is trying to ease tensions and is conservative about the ideas of independence and secession proposed by M. Dodik. Lack of specific support may indicate reluctance to exacerbate relations in the region and potential destabilization (Dragojlovic 2020). The crime in Srebrenica is also denied by Milorad Kojić, director of the Republican Center for Research on War, War Crimes and Search for Missing Persons (RCiRZ 2021): "This is not genocide, full stop" (Maksimovic 2020). In the public space of BiH, there are several tendencies such as: talks about Srebrenica do not cease; talks continue with the conclusion that it should never happen again; there is "a conspiracy of silence" of people who are not ready to face the problem of Srebrenica and model of hesitating about genocide was passed on to citizens (Kožul 2015).

The form of preserving and consolidating the identity and national interest is the creation of parallel commissions, indicating the suffering of not only the Bosniaks but also the Serbs. The Commission for the Suffering of Serbs in Sarajevo and the Commission for the Study of the Suffering of All Nations of the Srebrenica Region was established in BiH in 2019^{iv}. The commissions are claimed to be international and their task is to establish the truth about the events of 1991-1995. However, their creation met with international and BiH's criticism due to the biased people participating in them, questioning the genocide in Srebrenica, which is conducive to relativizing crimes and glorifying criminals. The International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP) also notes that the establishment of the commission cannot affect the established historical fact - confirmed by the Hague Tribunal and the International Court of Justice - that genocide was committed in Srebrenica (Sorguc 2019). The identity confidence of Serbs seems to be growing stronger. At the beginning of 2021, a series entitled "Sarajevo Serbs - Missing People" was broadcast on RTRS, in which members of the Commission for Investigating the Sufferings of Serbs in Sarajevo present their views (Muslimovic 2021).

The question of Bosniaks' identity from the very beginning of its existence encounters many difficulties. Despite the fact that a military conflict in Bosnia and

Herzegovina is rather impossible, its internal matters, ethnic divisions, political quarrels, state dysfunction, unemployment, unfinished reforms, and corruption cause poor identification with the state of BiH (Kasapovic 2007; Zdeb 2019; Rawski 2018). All these factors also cause the continuation of the aforementioned ethnic and “frozen conflict” of three entities: Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats. Both internal reforms and international support are key issues for further stabilization of the state. From the Bosniaks’ point of view, the identity of BiH may be based on the multiethnic and unitary state (Wojciechowski, 2008: 36-37). Bosnian Croats and Serbs reject this concept, justifying the desire to dominate the Bosniaks. Nevertheless, the USA, the UK and some EU countries, uphold the "civic" conception of the state. Serbian identity, but also memory politics of Serbia and RS are also supported by Russia. Their close relations could be observed when Dodik paid a visit to the Russian president (Tanjug 2011; Bryś 2018) or Vučić visit in Moscow before presidential elections in 2017. Moreover, Russia points to the liquidation of OHR in BiH. In turn, Turkey, supporting the Bosniaks, seems to be hesitant about the concept of BiH and the fate of the Dayton Agreement (Latal 2020). In turn, a denial of the genocide in Srebrenica hampers post-war reconciliation and exacerbates the climate of political instability.

The new identity of Bosnian Muslims is built on the basis of Islamic values, references to Muslim heritage and Turkey, which helps to rebuild this heritage (Kujawa,2020:94). But the most important role in historical politics was played by Srebrenica, which was to build a sense of threat from the Serbs and become the centre of the spiritual life of Bosnian Muslims (Kujawa, 2020: 99-100). As T. Rawski notes that commemorating Srebrenica has its resonance in the moderate and radical approach of the Bosniak leaders. At one point, the moderate party placed the responsibility for the massacre on the entire community – the Serbian nation and the international community – instead of identifying individual perpetrators of the massacre. “Apart from politicians, the dominant memory-forming role was played by the Islamic Community, whose representatives were to provide the celebration with a religious background devoid of political references. The actions of the Islamic Community made it possible to meet the expectations of the international community”. On the other hand, radicals lobbied for a gradual return of the military-religious symbolism of the 1990s, for example, by developing the heroic figure of *šehid* (*martyr*) and the symbolism of death was pointed out. Thus, the religious criterion of belonging to the Bosniak nation was strengthened, linking it with the postulate of the nation state and the demand for the liquidation of Republika Srpska (Rawski 2018: 194-198).

Srebrenica – narration on the global level

In the international space, Srebrenica is defined as an universal symbol, shameful act, an emblem with no space to contradict the tragedy (No Room For Denial, UN) (ICTY 2021) as a symbol of the defeat of the West. Srebrenica is also a reason behind the "fight" for a good name of the victims and preservation of memory in the international arena. The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague (2001) and The International Court of Justice (2007) ruled that the Srebrenica killings were genocide. The European Parliament in 2009 declared 11th July the Day of Remembrance of Genocide in Srebrenica for the entire European Union (EURLEX 2015). Additionally, the symbolic acknowledgment of the guilt of the Dutch UN mission, which did not prevent the events in Srebrenica, demonstrates efforts against undermining the "good name" of the victims. In 2019, the Dutchs' supreme court upheld a ruling that the Netherlands was partially responsible for 350 deaths in Srebrenica.

According to ICTY representatives, Srebrenica is a "terrible event" which had an impact especially on Europe. In this way, it is similar to the memory of the Holocaust which has a universal message and had become a world commemoration event. The EU rejected the denial of Srebrenica genocide and called the massacre "one of the darkest chapters of modern European history"(Szucs 2021)^v. There is also faith in overcoming divisions and hope for an opportunity for reconciliation. During the 22nd commemoration of the Srebrenica genocide, held at the Potočari Memorial in Bosnia and Herzegovina, ICTY President Carmel Agius said that "the denial or distortion of history is an intentional assault on truth." [...] "History and time, as well as the international community, stand with you on the side of the truth"[...]"(ICTY 2017)^{vi}.

However, denying the genocide in Srebrenica has also international resonance. The Srebrenica issue evoked enormous emotions in the context of awarding of the Nobel Prize for Literature to Peter Handke, who denies genocide and openly supports the Milosević regime. The Serbian side congratulated and respected the Nobel Prize winner, and the representative of Bosnian Serbs were thankful for understanding Serbian interests. However, the representatives of Bosniaks and Croats criticized the decision of the committee of the Swedish Academy of Sciences. Šefik Džaferović (representative of the Bosniaks presidency) described the award as "a scandal and a shame." Z. Komsić (representative of the Croatian presidency) pointed out that "genocide in Srebrenica was awarded today". Regarding the international

treatment of Srebrenica, envoys from Turkey, Albania, Kosovo and Croatia were not sent to Sweden in 2019. Edi Rama, Prime Minister of Albania, said that it was "a shameful decision" and that "shame has become a new value", adding that "we must not become indifferent to racism and genocide"(Ozturk 2019;Wasiak 2019)^{vii}.

Official Srebrenica commemoration – local/national level

Local and global level of Srebrenica narration intertwine with each other. The most important official event of Srebrenica memorialisation is held in the Srebrenica Memorial Centre whose mission is “to protect the truth about genocide”. Secondly, Srebrenica Genocide Memorial, officially known as the Srebrenica–Potočari Memorial, and Cemetery for the Victims of the 1995 Genocide were opened in 2003 by the US president Bill Clinton: “We remember this terrible crime because we dare not forget, because we must pay tribute to the innocent lives, many of them children, snuffed out in what must be called genocidal madness” (US Embassy 2003).

The USA, the UK and the EU memorialisation support is constant and the narrative of “lessons should be learned” and “never forget Srebrenica genocide” is repeated. During the 25th anniversary of Srebrenica during Srebrenica Memorial Day (11 July), experts of UN mentioned that the hatred fracturing the pillars of mutual trust and tolerance was what caused devastation of relations (OHCHR 2020) on the local level. Whereas Charles Michel stated:” All Europeans should be humbled, and furious, at what was allowed to happen in Srebrenica. It is one of the darkest chapters of modern European history. By remembering, we renew our commitment to never let such atrocities happen again”, thereby confirming the mechanism of the lessons to remember (European Council, Council of the European Union 2020).

Another example is *Remembering Srebrenica*, founded in 2013, which is a British organisation raising awareness about the Bosniak genocide (Remembering Srebrenica 2020). On 25th anniversary of Srebrenica, Šefik Džaferović supported its work. He pointed that the Bosniaks’ society should reaffirm its determination and ensure that hatred and prejudice which had caused ethnic cleansing and genocide in BiH will never happen again. Between 2013 and 2020 clear engagement of the UK in the issue was also visible as the country organised commemorations of genocide of Srebrenica outside of BiH (Džaferović 2018). In turn, Z. Komsić hoped for a conviction of a Bosnian citizen Husein Mujanović by the Serbian court for war crimes in the month that marks the 25th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide. When it did not happen, he pointed out that the Serbian side is unable to demonstrate even a hint of moral responsibility for the genocide (RS n1info 2020). There was also the kind of

speech, the nature of which can be considered conciliatory. statement of President Zoran Milanović concerning the 25th anniversary was conciliatory. He pointed out that the world knows who is responsible for the crime and stressed that the entire Serb nation cannot be blamed for genocide. Milanović, also referred to the universal concept of "the responsibility of all of us and a lesson from which to draw conclusions: "The sacrifice of Srebrenica must be one of the key and well-learned lessons for European mankind for the sake of dignity and sincerity" (Milanović 2020).

According to *Srebrenica Denial Report 2020*, there are many negations and incidents regarding commemoration of Srebrenica events. In 2016, Mladen Grujičić, the first Serb mayor of Srebrenica, refused to accept the rulings of genocide given by international courts and he stated that many of the graves in the Memorial Cemetery in Potočari were fake. In 2019, during 24th anniversary of Srebrenica genocide, an activist from Eastern Alternative Association installed a plaque in Srebrenica with the inscription "in memory of the innocently killed Serbs of the Podrinje and Birac area in the period 1992-1995 by Muslim hordes." The association put up posters around Srebrenica featuring the image of General Ratko Mladić alongside the words "There was no genocide", at the same time glorifying him as a hero. Both Ratko Mladić and Radovan Karadžić are frequently encountered in and around Srebrenica on flags, banners and T-shirts which the town's Bosnian Serb inhabitants display (Hanson Green 2020). There are many examples of narratives which are shared in Republika Srpska such as: a claim about the Bosnian Muslims Serbs whose ancestors betrayed the Orthodox Church by converting to Islam; a claim that many of the names listed on the cemetery's Memorial Wall are in fact people who emigrated from Bosnia and are alive; another claim that many of the bodies buried in the Memorial Cemetery actually belong to Serbs killed by Bosniaks in Srebrenica (Hanson Green 2020).

It is also said in the media that most of the monuments commemorating military and civilian victims in the war in Bosnia refer to the predominant ethnic groups in the region, which does not contribute to building peace and stable relations. It is true that memorialization and the construction of monuments in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not regulated by any specific law^{viii}. The main problems with commemoration in BiH include: difficulties in putting up monuments devoted to a given ethnic group; most of the monuments in recent years have been to military, not civilian victims; such (military) commemoration is burdened with nationalist rhetoric; inscriptions on monuments erected by one ethnic group are often perceived as offensive by other ethnic groups; war criminals are commemorated and treated as heroes (Brkanic, Grebo 2020). On the one hand, nationalistic and perpetrators-

glorifying monuments for Bosniaks might be commemorating heroes for Serbs. These include a monument-mural to Ratko Mladic^{ix} in Kalinovnik in 2018, or a commemorative plaque in honor of Ratko Mladic's battalion on the East Novo Sarajevo side (the RS part) (RadioSarajevo 2021). On the other hand, memorials are also devoted to ordinary Serbian people killed in Bradina, or places like Memorial Complex in Kravica.

The process of stabilisation, peace building and reconciliation is difficult and burdened with misunderstanding, often not recognizing one's own faults in order to maintain the identity. On 2020, the symbolic "Monument to Peace" was unveiled in Srebrenica. It was located in the place from which Ratko Mladić spoke to the population of Bosnia in 1995. In his speech, he called for a "revenge on the Turks". The perception of the monument carries two completely different symbols with a high emotional charge. Arguments of the Serbian side, indicated by the mayor of Srebrenica refer to the memory. He argues that it is a universal symbol of peace, coexistence and looking into the future, a monument "which will not be associated with war at all, and will not be used to lay wreaths, or commemorate anything". A completely different narrative comes from the Bosniaks. Munira Subašić, the president of the association "Mothers of the enclave of Srebrenica and Žepa" (Karabegović, Salimović 2020; Husarić 2020), points out that the monument reminds mothers of the words uttered by a war criminal. It also insults both the living and the victims, generating additional anxiety in a fragmented society. Nevertheless, the monument was unveiled on the International Day of Peace, which possibly showed the will of the Serbian side to demonstrate its engagement in the reconciliation process.

Conclusion

Narrative constructs used by Serbian leaders and international community shows the intended effect on the global and national level. The key goal of historical policy/memory as public policy is to create, organize, maintain and preserve individual identities as well as the character of a given political community. The willingness of communities to reach agreement in the field of historical memory also has its moral overtone. The nature of such a community's (Serbs, Bosniaks) ontological security points to the ethical aspect to security and foreign policy.

The memory of Srebrenica events in Serbia is seen from the collective inside (in Serbia) and outside (Serbia-RS, Serbia-World) perspective. Both are aimed at preserving collective memory and identity in unjust and turbulent times. Taking into account emotions, it

would be described as lack of recognition, shame and fear of losing public image in Serbia's public space as well as in the international space. Serbia's policy towards BiH is based on calls for national unity and support for the policy pursued by the authorities in Belgrade. Political leaders from Serbia seem to reject the colloquialism about Srebrenica and genocide in their political discourse in order to seek dignity, simultaneously highlighting stabilisation, help and good neighbouring relations. Serbia also feels blamed by international actors. Meanwhile, RS leaders glorify war criminals through monuments erected at various locations of BiH with the indication of solidarity of the nation. They see Republika Srpska as an independent subject. Both Serbia and RS seem to ignore the moral importance of Srebrenica and emphasize the suffering of their own people. Srebrenica evokes persistent fear of assigning the collective responsibility to Serbs. Through a denial, the Serbian side makes victims of themselves. Additionally, the Bosniaks are accused of using Srebrenica as a tool for political purposes. Moreover, the intensification of Serbia-BiH relations (visits, donation to Srebrenica municipality) are to show that Serbia takes care not only of the Serbian population but is willing to establish good neighbourly relations. At the same time, the memory of Bosniaks is marked with trauma, mass killings and atrocities committed on individual human beings. These are memories of individuals who hold emotions of shame and "fight" for justice. There is a wide range of perspectives, from the suffering of mothers to a universal lesson for the future for Europe and the world. Taking into account the continuity of Bosniaks' identity, it seems that they are burdened with the issues of fear and recognition, caused by the past and contemporary Serbian political leaders who are not willing to admit the atrocities committed in the '90s.

The recognition of Srebrenica genocide by only selected countries and international institutions as well as previous accusations of not preventing the tragedy are an example of the neglected and moral failure of the international community. The UN itself also became a "battlefield" between Russia (which supports Serbia and RS) and some states of the EU, UN, OSCE and UK (which supports the memory of Srebrenica). Russia vetoed the UN Security Council's resolution which called Srebrenica genocide. Thus, metaphors of "shame" are also visible at the level of international politics – the countries which did not recognize the massacre should be ashamed.

On the one hand, over the years Serbia has the same policy of not recognizing the genocide in Srebrenica, which is also confirmed by the lack of celebration of the events in Serbia. On the other side, Serbian politicians are not welcome at the events. Such a policy fosters an increase in tensions between countries and the nationalist rhetoric on either side.

The shaken identity and mutual accusations become the basis for defining the threatened identity, identity that is burdened with the issues of fear or (un)recognition, as the ontological security of the state and ethnic communities.

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Notes:

ⁱ The massacre was committed against Bosnian Muslims by Bosnian Serbs.

ⁱⁱ Parliament RS, 2010, Declaration of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia condemning the Crime in Srebrenica,<http://www.parlament.gov.rs/upload/archive/files/eng/pdf/2010/deklaracija%20o%20srebrenici%20ENG.pdf> (access:13.04.2021). In the Declaration also stated: “the expectation that the highest authorities of other states on the territory of the former Yugoslavia would also condemn the crimes committed against the members of the Serbian people in this manner, as well as extend condolences and apologies to the families of the Serbian victims”.

ⁱⁱⁱ after the criminals were arrested and detained by the Serbian War Crimes Chamber.

^{iv} Despite the fact that the Government of Republika Srpska in 2004 adopted the Commission's report on the events in Srebrenica (10 to 19 July 1995) - which established that genocide had taken place in the area - but that report was repealed in 2018.

^v A.Szucs, EU pushes against denial of Srebrenica genocide, 29.03.2021,
<https://www.aa.com.tr/en/europe/eu-pushes-against-denial-of-srebrenica-genocide/2192062> (15.04.2021) As Ana Pisonero stated: “The EU is a union of values. Denial of well-documented and established facts about wartime events, including war crimes, or revisionism contradict the most fundamental of those values,”[...] “The European Union rejects and condemns any denial, relativization or misinterpretation of the genocide of Srebrenica”.

^{vi} Final address of ICTY President at Srebrenica genocide commemoration, 11.07.2017,
<https://www.icty.org/en/press/final-address-of-icty-president-at-srebrenica-genocide-commemoration>

(12.04.2021). "We are standing on what I believe and consider to be sacred land commemorating a dark event in the history of this nation, of Europe, and of the entire world. What happened in Srebrenica and its surroundings in July 1995 cannot be allowed to be a source of division forever. Rather, the truth should serve as a catalyst uniting the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina in their shared goal of reconciliation. It is not easy but, with good will and determination, it is a goal that I know you can achieve together. "

^{vii} Komšić, a member of the Croatian Bosnian presidency, together with the Mothers Movement of Srebrenica and Žepe sent a letter to the Swedish academy asking for a withdrawal of the award.

^{viii} In fact, there is a Missing Persons Act which gives victims' families or associations of victims' families the right to mark exhumation or burial sites.

^{ix} In 2017, Ratko Mladić was found guilty (ICTY) of committing war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.