

BOSNIA  STUDIES
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The Denial of Genocide in
Srebrenica in the Context of
Strengthening Neo-fascism and
Relativization of the Holocaust
in Europe

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Abstract

The denial of the 1995 genocide against Bosniaks in the UN security zone of Srebrenica, has continued uninterrupted for 25 years. This denial has taken various forms and manifestations during that time; from denying the extent and character of crimes and the number of victims, to not accepting relevant court verdicts and especially, ignoring the consequences of genocide. As time passes, we are beginning to get the impression that an additional phase to the denial of the genocide in Srebrenica has emerged, in which, through the glorification of convicted war criminals and their affirmation in society, genocide is affirmed as an acceptable procedure and activity.

We believe that this 25-year period of persistent denial, and even celebration of the genocide in Srebrenica, largely corresponds to the strengthening of neo-fascist and right-wing ideas and movements in European countries, which has been accompanied by an increasingly louder denial and relativization of the Holocaust.

In this paper, we intend to analyze the connection between these phenomena, because we believe that the ideas pedaled by deniers of the genocide in Srebrenica, are significantly suited to strengthening the neo-fascism and Holocaust denial and are using this atmosphere to intensify genocide denial against Bosniaks and yet paradoxically, affirm the genocide, by glorifying the convicted war criminals and their ideas.

Keywords: denial, genocide, Srebrenica, neo-fascism, Holocaust

Introduction

The living experience of genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) and the inadequate sanctioning of perpetrators (and deniers) of genocide, requires caution and constant re-examination of the social conditions that enable such a situation. The precedent set in B&H, where the perpetrator is recognized¹ but not fully sanctioned, encourages followers of extreme ideologies to pursue new forms of extremism and violence. There is a similar indication of such an attitude in the statements of European right-wingers and neo-fascists who, in an ideological

¹ Međunarodni sud za krivično gonjenje osoba odgovornih za teška kršenja međunarodnog humanitarnog prava počinjena na teritoriji bivše Jugoslavije od 1991. godine, Blagojević i Joškić, Predmet broj: IT-02-60-T, Prvostepena presuda, (17.01.2005), ICTY paragraph 674, https://www.icty.org/x/cases/blagojevic_jokic/tjug/bcs/050117.pdf, “The Trial Chamber is satisfied that all crimes committed by Bosnian Serb forces were part of a single plan to commit genocide against Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica, which can be seen in the document “Operation Krivaja 95”, whose ultimate goal was to destroy the enclave, and, therefore, the Bosnian Muslim community living there.”

sense, imitate the Serbian extremists who committed the last genocide against Bosniaks.²

Numerous right-wing, nationalist, and extreme organizations and parties are conquering large swathes of the social and political scene in European countries. In the last two decades, there have increasingly numerous attacks on minorities, migrants, and vulnerable groups, so we can no longer talk about isolated incidents. Despite the established legislation that prohibits Holocaust and genocide denial and anti-Semitism, we are witnessing the expansion of such phenomena, even in the most developed democracies in Europe.

Although anti-Semitism and Holocaust denial are a permanent feature of all xenophobic movements in Europe, in 2017 alone 1453 anti-Semitic crimes or misdemeanors were recorded in Germany (an average of four a day), classic fascist anti-Semitism and anti-communism have been increasingly replaced by anti-Islamic sentiment .

It is therefore, not surprising that there are no adequate reactions to the denial of the last genocide in Europe after the Second World War. Genocide deniers who go further and promote, glorify, affirm, and defend the perpetrators of genocide, use this lack of reaction. How could they not do so, when they see that in the parliaments of European countries places are won by organizations and parties that supported them even at the time of the genocide. They see that neo-fascists in Europe are drawing inspiration from Greater Serbia nationalism, because they believe that the wars in the former Yugoslavia were the beginning of a civilizational conflict between the Christian West and Islam.

The problems of definition: fascism, neo-fascism, post-fascism, far-right, extreme right, and the radical right.

The 1980s and 1990s can be considered as a period of intensive reaffirmation of (neo) fascist ideas in Europe. Italy is once again the cradle of this European or new fascism, now known under different names: post-fascism, neo-fascism, the extreme, radical or extreme right (the name extreme right is mostly used). The avoidance of the term 'fascism' is largely justified by the fact that these new extreme movements and parties in Europe do not have the characteristics that fascism and Nazism had before and during World War II. In doing so, they ignore the potential that exists in all these right-wing tendencies, characterized by "xenophobia, racism, anti-democracy, and a strong state."³ They also ignore

2 Some segments of this paper are taken from the doctoral dissertation of the author: Sabahudin, Šarić. (2017), Doctoral dissertation: Ideology of Neo-fascism and Genocide - the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, *PhD Thesis*, University of Tuzla, Faculty of Philosophy

3 .. Mudde, Cas. (2007), *Populist radical right parties in Europe*. (New York: Cambridge University Press) p. 188.

the consequences of the rampage of the right-wing movements that destroyed the former Yugoslavia, committing all known forms of crime, and even the greatest of all - genocide.

Most contemporary analyses of the emergence of a new wave of the extreme right in Europe⁴ emphasize the inflation of concepts, i.e. discussions that are aimed at describing the phenomena, and do focus not on their possible long-term consequences. Whilst scientific analysis is of course very necessary, the need to prevent these phenomena through adequate engagement is not emphasized. The perniciousness of the movement and ideology based on xenophobia, nationalism, and radical action can best be seen in the consequences of the genocide in B&H. That is why it is necessary to point out the possible causes of this situation in Europe, in order that the growth of this movement can be countered.

First of all, most witnesses of World War II, genocide, and other crimes are no longer alive. And those who are still alive, and have not succumbed to the influence of right-wing ideologies as in the Balkan countries, do not represent a critical mass and do not have a strong voice and influence to change anything. This is one of the reasons for today's progressively common acceptance of neo-fascism, which is increasingly considered a "normal" phenomenon because direct experience, especially war, suffering, crime, Holocaust, and genocide, cannot be replaced by any education and information. A deep commitment to research and an understanding of the problem is necessary, the seriousness of which is hinted at by Laszlo Vegel, who said; "National fences are being erected, **a feeling of repulsion towards all types of minorities is creeping towards us, which will quickly grow into a militant fear of any kind of otherness and culminate in various aggressive attitudes...** *Deja vu*, I often wrote this saying in my diary. The last time I wrote something was last week: I am drowning in the spirit of the thirties. They are reviving the neurasthenia of that period known to me from the literature. Now I face them directly."⁵

Even when a large number of World War II Holocaust and genocide witnesses were still biologically present in the early 1990s, there was no strong reaction to the genocide that was happening again in Europe - in B&H. In the case of geno-

4 For discussions on the definition of these terms, see: Traverso, Enzo, (2019), *New Faces of Fascism: Populism and Far Right*. (London and New York: Verso); Tamas, Gaspar Miklos. (2000), *On Post-fascism*. (First published in Boston Review 01.06.2000) Available at: <https://usa.anarchistlibraries.net/library/g-m-tamas-on-post-fascism>; Stanley, Jason. (2018), *Kako funkcionira fašizam?* (Zagreb: 24sata d.o.o.); Paxton, Robert, O. (2012), *Anatomija fašizma* (Zagreb: TIM press); Mudde, (2007), *Populist radical right parties in Europe*; Mudde, Cass. (2000), *The ideology of the extreme right*. (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press); Ignazi, Piero. (2003) *Comparative Studies: Extreme Right Parties in Europe*. (New York: Oxford University Press).

5 Vegel, Laslo, (26.09.2015), Evropa u pat poziciji, *Autonomija; Portal Gradjanske Vojvodine*. <http://www.autonomija.info/laslo-vegel-evropa-u-pat-poziciji.html>, (Retrieved 01.08.2020)

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cide in the United Nations Security Zone in Srebrenica, we can even speak of a kind of *support* to the aggressor, expressed through inadequate reaction and tacit consent manifested in the sluggishness of the international community to punish aggression against the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a sovereign member of the United Nations. This was the weapon that hit the victims the hardest. This “indifference” could be another reason for the freer affirmation of neo-fascist tendencies in Europe. If neo-fascism has gone unpunished and has not been eradicated in the Balkans, why could it not develop in the European countries that are its original cradle?

Why is that so? Unfortunately, all indications are that Europe, in itself, is more prone to xenophobia than we want to admit, or to paraphrase Boris Buden, that hatred has no basis in any objective reasons but is autochthonous. It is a part of something that comprises the so-called European⁶ identity. Buden points out that we are constantly wrong in thinking that European, or Western identity is defined only by positive, democratic, modernist categories, and that Europe was not a place where fascism was born and a place where Auschwitz was invented.⁷

The systematically created and propagated illusion of Europe as a nursery and heir of exclusively positive values, very skillfully covers some other aspects of European reality, among which is neo-fascism. As time goes on, we're waking up in a new, post-post-ideological Europe - in the Europe of Golden Dawn, Vojislav Šešelj and Viktor Orban, in Europe where Predappio and Bleiburg become places of pilgrimage, where skinheads burn synagogues and radical xenophobes conquer up to quarter of the votes in national elections, even in the civilized, beautiful gardens of bourgeois civilization, such as the Netherlands and Sweden.⁸

To talk about neo-fascism in general, it is necessary to highlight a kind of “new speech” that specifically avoids calling things by their real names, and thus significantly complicates and narrows the possibility of a phenomenological “return to things” approach to understanding the essence of the problem. Phenomenology, as developed by Husserl, is a “science of phenomena”, not mere phenomena or appearance, especially not mere **causes or illusions**, but as a science of “things themselves”, about the way things are given to us and how they “show” themselves in the world. According to modern phenomenology, the world of “phe-

6 The original reads; “Croatian”.

7 Buden, Boris. (14.12.2013), Prošlo je vrijeme manifesta, *Oslobodjenje*, <http://www.oslobodjenje.ba/kun/kultura/boris-buden-proslo-je-vrijeme-manifesta/95460>, (Retrieved: 08.04.2016)

8 Pavičić, Jurica. (2015), Tuga Europe ili kako je fašizam (opet) postao samorazumljiv, U: *Evropa, sedamdeset godina nakon Drugog svetskog rata*, (izv) Bremer, Alida i Ilić, Saša (Belgrade: Most Art), p. 178.

nomena” is therefore not a world of mere phenomena but a world of things as they are given to us, with regard to their **essence and being**.⁹

So, unlike Orwell’s ‘newspeak’, in our contemporary society, especially in mainstream science and the media, we are faced with an inflation of terms, and expressions, or, as Thompson says, “symbolic forms” or “mere phenomena”. With the difference being that instead of linguistic restriction, we are faced with inflation of words, names, terms, terms, expressions, concepts, and meanings. Thus, instead of limitation, we face a profusion of opinions, leading to confusion, mimicry, blurring, and generally hiding the essence of Husserl’s “things” and their “being and battle”. Of course, we do not want to dispute the desirability, and limit the possibility of pluralism of opinion here. However, we must emphasize that pluralism in our time, whatever you choose to call it (postmodern, post-postmodern etc.) has come to the brink of vulgarity, so that it serves more to justify each and every thing (concerning the area of neo-fascism, xenophobia, and then crime, murder, genocide), rather than to confirm humanistic, ethical, and universalist endeavors. The purpose of this approach to phenomena is mimicry, hypocrisy, relocation, and concealment, so that we do not have to face a reality that, if we call it by its real name, would require our serious engagement. There are many examples in which, even today, a lot can be elaborated by notions such as human rights, democracy, ethnic cleansing, terrorism, and Islamophobia. Such is the case with the concept and appearance of fascism, i.e. neo-fascism in the time of our lives. Xenophobia is justified by preserving identity, fighting migrants, preserving jobs for domestic workers, genocide is called a “great crime”, and concentration camps are the “fruit of propaganda”.¹⁰

This way of new speech is characteristic for ideologies where, instead of the correct characterization of things, there are shifts of meaning, generality, allegories, metaphors, etc., Deceit and concealment of real intentions are used, as noted by Umberto Eco in his essay on Ur-Fascism. He says that all Nazi or fascist textbooks used impoverished vocabulary and elementary syntax to limit the means for complex and critical thinking. “We have to be willing to recognize new forms of new talk, even when it appears in a whole new form of a talk show.”¹¹

When it comes to the new wave of fascism in Europe over the last three decades, Baudelaire’s saying that, “the devil’s best trick is convincing people that he doesn’t exist” could be applied. Namely, since today’s “far-right” is not fascism in its authentic forms, as in Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, then it is not

9 Fenomenologija. (2021), Hrvatska enciklopedija, mrežno izdanje. *Leksikografski zavod Miroslav Krleža*., <http://www.enciklopedija.hr/Natuknica.aspx?ID=19238> (Pristupljeno 4. 3. 2021)

10 Ivica Dačić - Nećemo dozvoliti da Bosna bude islamska država! - DJS - (TV Happy 17.06.2019) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AIOEyYWa37w>, (Retrieved 15.03.2021)

11 Eco, Umberto, Ur-fašizam, preveo: Efendić, Kenan, (Sic!). časopis za po-etička istraživanja i djelovanja), 18.06.2010, <http://sic.ba/rubrike/stav-esej/umberto-eco-ur-fasizam/>

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particularly threatening. This ignores the obvious fact that right-wingers (read neo-fascists) are already a serious force in many European countries: Austria, Belgium, Britain, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland.¹²

Although within the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), 16 countries have laws under which Holocaust denial is a criminal or civil offense, a further four have hate speech provisions covering the phenomenon. One IHRA liaison country and two countries positioned as IHRA observers, reject Holocaust laws. 21 EU Member States have transposed the Framework Decision into specific Holocaust denial laws. Outside of IHRA and the EU, Andorra, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, and Russia have similar regulations.

Neo-fascism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia

Neo-fascism is the resurrection of a form of political discourse and practice that nostalgically imitates historical fascism. It especially refers to symbolic politics and a culture of remembrance - the destruction of Jewish graves on the one hand and the erection of monuments to fascist collaborators on the other, the wearing of retro-fascist uniforms, flags and symbols, the use of retro-fascist political rhetoric, the rediscovery of fascist political ideas (and racial theories), and street violence against LGBTQ+ population and minorities by gangs, which sometimes happens with the tacit or explicit support of far-right political parties.¹³

Neo-fascism is also a movement that, based on the ideology of fascism, nazism, and racism, strives to restore fascism in a new guise. It is also an ideology that promotes nationalism, racism and xenophobia, and an authoritarian model of governing society. The basic characteristics of neo-fascist movements were best defined by Umberto Eco in his work titled "Ur Fascism". While not wanting to distinguish between fascism and neo-fascism, Eco uses the term "Ur fascism" or eternal fascism, making it known that, although manifest forms may have a difference, neo-fascism is inherently inseparable from fascism. Eco lists the typical elements of eternal fascism: the cult of tradition, rejection of modernism, irrationalism, fear of difference, individual or social frustration and an obsession with conspiracy. Added to this are feelings of humiliation by an enemy power, that life is permanent warfare, a contempt for the weak, cults of heroism and heroic death,

¹² Aisch, Gregor., Pearce, Adam. and Rousseau, Bryant. (23.10.2017), How Far Is Europe Swinging to the Right? *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/05/22/world/europe/europe-right-wing-austria-hungary.html>, (Retrieved 10.10.2020)

¹³ Krašovec, Primož. (2016), Evropska politika i (neo)fašizam, *STvar, časopis za teorijske prakse*, 8. Novi Sad; Gerusia. p.42-53.

machismo, selective qualitative populism, and the use of new forms speech.¹⁴ To this should certainly be added the characteristics of the modern extreme right as portrayed by Nikola Vukobratović and Mario Šimunković in the review titled “Right Extremism”, which are: advocating division, spreading of hatred, a desire for strict forms of ‘law and order’; anti-communism, and nationalism.¹⁵ Most of these characteristics can also be observed in the neo-fascist and right-wing movements in the former Yugoslavia, who have inherited the ideology of those who committed genocide against Bosniaks.

Anti-Semitism and the denial and/or belittling of the Holocaust, also form an integral part of neo-fascists and right-wing discourse of . In its annual report for 2019, published in February 2020, the Council of Europe’s independent body against racism and intolerance (ECRI), points to an alarming trend in the increased influence of ultranationalist and xenophobic policies across Europe. The report points to hate speech on social media, widespread anti-Semitism, and hatred directed at Muslims and an increasingly hostile environment for NGOs working with vulnerable groups. Europe is facing a shocking reality: anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, and other racist hate crimes are growing at an alarming rate.

A survey conducted by the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights entitled “Experiences and Perceptions of Anti-Semitism - Second Survey on Discrimination and Hate Crimes against Jews in the European Union” listed the following key results:

The vast majority of respondents (85%) believe that anti-Semitism and racism are the main problems across the EU Member States that participated in the survey.

The vast majority of respondents (89%) believe that anti-Semitism has increased in the country where they live in the past five years. The majority of respondents (72%) expressed concern about the growing intolerance towards Muslims.

The vast majority of respondents (89%) believe that online anti-Semitism has become a problem in the country where they live.

The vast majority of respondents (88%) believe that anti-Semitism on the Internet has increased in the past five years, and most of the state that it has “increased” a lot.

Most respondents state that they regularly encounter derogatory statements about Jews.

¹⁴ Eco, *Ur- Fašizam*, Ibid.

¹⁵ Vukobratović, Nikola, Šimunković, Mario (2012) *Desni ekstremizam*, (Zagreb : Savez antifašističkih boraca i antifašista republike Hrvatske) p.13

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The vast majority of respondents across the countries participating in the survey (80%) state that the internet is the most common platform for expressing derogatory statements.¹⁶

It should be noted that this includes data for 12 EU countries, in which Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism are mostly sanctioned by law.

In addition to the inevitable anti-Semitism, one of the key features of neo-fascism in Europe is anti-Islamic propaganda, action, and Islamophobia. According to the Polish anti-fascist association Never Again, cases of hate crimes and hate speech, which include the use of fascist symbols and the growth of anti-Semitism among extremist groups, have been on the rise since 2015, when the refugee crisis in Europe began.¹⁷ That is why political scientists warn that Islamophobia is the most important unifying factor of the new ultra-right, just as anti-Semitism was in the 1920s.¹⁸ Andreas Zick points out that now; “hostility to Islam is very widespread.” Xenophobia and racism were also expressed towards Jews, but the aversion to Islam has surpassed other forms of hatred.¹⁹ Islamophobia, as well as attitudes, distorted perceptions, speculations, and prejudices about Islam and Muslims - until recently characterized only by neoconservative writers and far-right politicians - have now become a part of mainstream discourse, and is taking on a certain permanence.

It is necessary to point out once again that the Serbian Orientalists and the Croatian right-wingers were the forerunners of this propaganda, which emphasized the danger of Islam and Muslims by promoting themselves as the bulwark against Islam and the walls of Christianity.

This growing hatred is best exemplified by the situation in France, where one journalist stated, “Hostility is directed mainly against Muslims. The word ‘immigre’ is almost synonymous with Islam, now the second most widespread religion in France, reflecting the cultural and ethnic racism deeply rooted in French history.”²⁰

16 Iskustva i predodžbe o antisemitizmu- Drugo istraživanje o diskriminaciji i zločinima iz mržnje protiv Židova u Europskoj uniji. (2018), *FRA – Agencija Europske unije za temeljna prava*, (Beč), https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2018-experiences-and-perceptions-of-antisemitism-survey-summary_hr.pdf (Retrieved 12.12.2020).

17 Opačić, Tamara, (24.11.2017), Selektivna amnezija: Hrvatski negatori holokausta, *Balkan Insight*, <https://balkaninsight.com/2017/11/24/selektivna-amnezija-hrvatski-negatori-holokausta-11-16-2017/?lang=sr> (Retrieved 11.24.2020.)

18 Grečić V. i Korać S. (2012), Politički diskurs ekstremne desnice u Zapadnoj Evropi, *Medjunarodni problemi* 64 (2), <https://doi.org/10.2298/MEDJP1202202G>, p.202–232.

19 Ćurak, Nerzuk, (26.02.2014), Uspon radikalne desnice u Evropi, *Radiosarajevo.ba*, <http://www.radiosarajevo.ba/metromahala/sta-drugi-pisu/nerzuk-curak-uspon-radikalne-desnice-u-evropi/1427699>

20 Huntington, P. Samuel. (1997), “Sukob civilizacija”, (Zagreb; Izvori” d.o.o. nakladničku djelatnost), p. 248.

This socio-political environment affects those who deny the 1995 genocide in United Nations Security Zone Srebrenica. This is one of the important reasons behind its intensity and, as we have already said, affirmation. European neo-fascists often cite war criminals who are responsible for the genocide of Bosniaks as their heroes and role models.

The most famous examples are Brenton Tarrant, who killed dozens of people in an attack on a mosque in New Zealand, as well as Anders Breivik, who carried out a similar attack on a youth camp in Norway in 2011. Radovan Karadžić was cited as one of the role models.

Also, already established right wing and neo-fascist parties in European countries have glorified and still glorify the Serbian anti-Muslim campaign. Mario Borghecio, from the right-wing and strongest party in Italy, Lega Nord, once said on the occasion of the arrest of indicted war criminal Ratko Mladić that for him, he was not a war criminal but a patriot, that the process against him was political violence and that Serbs could **stop Islam from penetrating Europe**.²¹

And already well-known members of the neo-fascist Golden Dawn from Greece who took part in the genocide in Srebrenica declared that they fought **“for a great Greece in Europe free from Zionists and Muslims”**.²²

Denial of genocide

In addition to the fact that there is no law in B&H and Serbia sanctioning genocide denial and the activities of fascist organizations, Serbia violated the obligation to prevent genocide under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in connection with the events of Srebrenica in July 1995.²³ Thus Serbia became the first state in history responsible for violating the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, giving rise to a paradoxical situation wherein: “It is forbidden in Serbia to deny genocide, for example, committed in the Congo, while it is completely legitimate to deny crimes committed, for example, in Ovčra or Kosovo and the genocide in

21 Salvatore, Valentino, (27-05-2011), Borghezio, “Mladic patriota, serbi potevano fermare islam”, <https://blog.uaar.it/2011/05/27/borghezio-mladic-patriota-serbi-potevano-fermare-islam/>

22 Grčka zastava nad Srebrenicom: Pripadnici Zlatne Zore bili su dobrovoljci u napadu na Srebrenicu, (15.06.2012), *Slobodna Bosna* http://www.slobodna-bosna.ba/vijest/1343/grchka_zastava_nad_srebrenicom_pripadnici_zlatne_zore_bili_su_dobrovoljci_u_napadu_na_srebrenicu.html

23 Presuda Međunarodnog suda pravde: Bosna i Hercegovina protiv Srbije i Crne Gore (26.02.2007) PDF. Prijevod: (Grupa autora), Izdavač: *Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava Univerziteta u Sarajevu* p. 231. http://institut-genocid.unsa.ba/pdf/Presuda%20MKSJ-a_BiH-Srbija.pdf, (Retrieved 16.03.2021.)

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Srebrenica.”²⁴ In this way, space is opened for the most brutal denial of the genocide in B&H, the insulting and belittling of victims, and, unknown in previous experiences of genocide, affirming the genocide by glorifying and rewarding the convicted genocidaires.

Genocide denial is, according to genocide theorists and researchers, an inseparable, final phase in the genocidal process. Gregory Stanton first published a document on the 8 phases of genocide in 1998, and in 2013 he expanded the number of phases of genocide to 10. In both cases, denial is treated as the last phase and is a warning that genocide could happen again. Stanton says, “We have sociologists, and I am among them, who have studied the effects of genocide denial - in short, we have come to the conclusion that the chance of future genocide increases more than threefold if there is no clear definition of past genocide. That is when we have a complete denial of the genocide that undoubtedly occurred. I think the exact number is 3.2.”²⁵ Despite the verdicts of international courts and courts in B&H, the echo of genocide is almost unstoppable in the public and scientific spheres of Serbia, Republika Srpska, and even by some international authors. Denial of genocide in Srebrenica has different forms and tactics, but it can be said with certainty that it encompasses almost all 12 tactics cited by psychologist Israel Charny.²⁶ In the following text we will give examples of the use of some of these techniques in denying the Srebrenica genocide:

1. Review and minimize statistics. The deniers of genocide try to bypass the key issue in this way, by playing with the number of victims, trying to downgrade it from the crime of genocide. Thus, the Republika Srpska War Crimes Investigation Documentation Center, together with the RS ICTY Relations Office, issued the so-called “Srebrenica Case Report” in 2002. Among the multiple insulting allegations in the report, it is stated that no more than 2,000 Bosniaks were killed in Srebrenica and that they were all armed soldiers, not civilians. The current member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Milorad Dodik, states in

24 Cvetković, Ljudmila, (11.07.2018). Žanić, Ivana, izjava u: Cvetković Ljudmila, Srebrenicu vređaju, ndležni u Srbiji čute, *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/srebrenicu-vredjaju-nadlezni-u-srbiji-cute/29357375.html> (Retrieved 12.11.2020.)

25 Šarić, Sabahudin, Negiranje genocide nad Bošnjacima, U: “SREBRENICA 1995-2015: EVALUACIJA NASLIJEĐA I DUGOROČNIH POSLJEDICA GENOCIDA” Zbornik radova sa Međunarodne naučne konferencije održane 9-11. jula 2015. godine Sarajevo – Tuzla – Srebrenica (Potočari): 9-11. juli 2015. Univerzitet u Sarajevu Institut za istraživanje zločina protiv čovječnosti i međunarodnog prava, Sarajevo 2016, PDF, Str. 402. http://institut-genocid.unsa.ba/userfiles/file/Zbornik%20Srebrenica%20%20-%20knjiga%20%201a0_6.pdf, (Retrieved 16.03.2021.)

26 Charny, Israel W. A Classification of Denials of the Holocaust and Other Genocides – Updated 2012, <https://www.ihgilm.com/a-classification-of-denials-of-the-holocaust-and-other-genocides-updated-2012/> (Retrieved 16.03.2021.), And see also Stenton Gregory, Twelve Ways To Deny A Genocide, <http://genocidewatch.net/genocide-2/12-ways-to-deny-genocide/> (Retrieved 16.03.2021.)

a similar tone, “Not even The Hague Tribunal, apart from the qualification that extends according to the system of the already decisive act, has never been accurate in the number of victims.”²⁷

The editor of TV Happy, a Serbian state television channel, says: “Every year when television broadcasts, when foreign statesmen come, they bring dead bodies from who knows where and bury them in Srebrenica.”²⁸ Vojislav Šešelj, a convicted war criminal and member of the National Assembly of Serbia, claims that he proved on 3360 pages that there was no genocide. According to him, the proof that there was no genocide is that women and children were not killed, but between 1,000 and 1,200 prisoners of war were shot, and secondly, the Genocide Convention specifies that genocide is the murder or attempted murder of a racial, ethnic, national or religious group. as such or a significant part of that group, which, according to him, was not the case in Srebrenica. Some international officials also contribute to this campaign. The American Philip Corwin, who was a UN official in Bosnia and Herzegovina from the spring to the summer of 1995, claims that the number of Muslims killed in Srebrenica probably does not exceed the number of Serbs killed in the region in previous years in attacks by Muslim war commander, Naser Orić.²⁹

2. Attack the motivation of those who tell the truth about genocide. Any allegation of genocide is treated as a conspiracy against the ethnic group from whom the criminals come. In that context, Milorad Dodik, on the eve of the 20th anniversary of the genocide in Srebrenica, claimed; “It is a huge crime, which has also created a huge political obstacle. This is also shown by this propaganda, which tries to create an image that all Serbs are potential killers in Srebrenica.”³⁰ The same person, in another statement, said; “I am claiming here that no genocide was committed! There was no genocide. There was a plan according to which certain foreigners and Bosniak politicians wanted to impose guilt and responsibility on us for something we did not do.”³¹ Genocide deniers always strive to find allies in the world who, for various reasons or ignorance, will make statements in favor of genocide deniers. Dodik said that, “a terrible crime happened by some Serbs”. Thus, the Prime Minister of Serbia, Ana Brnabić, stated that 75% of the 161 ac-

27 Milorad Dodik, predizborni skup u Srebrenici. (24.09.2012), *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/30052016.html> (Retrieved 12.12.2020.)

28 ĆIRILICA - Istina i mit o Srebrenici / 23 godine kasnije - (TV Happy 09.07.2018), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXXzy_tMO3c, (Retrieved 16.03.2021.)

29 Reljić, Slobodan, Od genocida se živi, *Novi standard*, 24.12. 2019. <https://www.standard.rs/2019/12/24/od-genocida-se-zivi/>, (Retrieved 16.03.2021.)

30 Dodik prvi put u Srebrenici, 25.03.2015, <https://www.dw.com/bs/dodik-prvi-put-u-srebrenici/a-18386602> Retrieved 16.03.2021.)

31 Dodik ponovo provocirao u Srebrenici: ‘Nije bilo genocida!’, 24.09.2012., <https://dnevnik.hr/vijesti/svijet/dodik-ponovo-provocirao-u-srebrenici-nije-bilo-genocida.html>, (Retrieved 16.03.2021.)

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cused are Serbs, evidence of the deeply ingrained Serbian attitude that the Hague Tribunal is anti-Serbian.

3. Claim that the deaths were unintentional.

4. Emphasize stereotypically negative traits of victims. The most famous example of this strategy, is the statement by Ratko Mladić after the occupation of Srebrenica, in which he talks about revenge against the Turks. Identifying Bosniaks as Turks is a well-known ideological matrix that was used both before and after the genocide.

5. Rationalize deaths as a consequence of an inter-tribal conflict that has its roots in history. This method was used during the aggression on BiH, and even after the genocide, especially among Western diplomats who justified their passivity by not interfering in “ancient Balkan conflicts”.

6. Blame “out of control” forces for committing the killings. In the Serbian “ethnocentric culture of remembering that crime, everything is transferred to criminals.”³² Thus, the Scorpions, the unit famously filmed executing Bosniaks, become an instrument in the process of proving the innocence of the state; t, “the entire responsibility for Srebrenica and other crimes committed on behalf of the state of Serbia falls on a group of pathological individuals who commit crimes by self-organizing, without any state aid or motive.”³³ Thus, the Serbian state is absolved from any responsibility.

7. Avoid condemning those responsible for genocide so that the “peace process” can be conducted. During the aggression and after the genocide, the international community tolerated Slobodan Milošević, the former president of Serbia, as a key figure in the peace process, even though they knew he was responsible for crimes. Today, the Serbian leadership is being treated similarly. Aleksandar Vučić, when he was the Prime Minister of Serbia, also said that condemnation should be muted, in a bid to avoid the aggravation of relations, primarily within B&H but also between Serbia and B&H. On the occasion of **announcing the revision** of the genocide verdict. “We will respond professionally. It seems to me that we will get the expected answer. An answer that, I can’t say, is in Serbia’s favor, but certainly, an answer that is not harmful to Serbia. But this whole process certainly takes us away from “It seems to me that we have invested a lot, a lot of energy and effort in this matter,” Vučić said.³⁴

32 Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava, Slučaj Škorpioni (2008) *Helsinški odbor* (Beograd) Available at: <http://pescanik.net/2008/09/slucaj-skorpioni/>. (Retrieved 12.13.2020.)

33 Karačić, Darko et al. (2012), *Revizija prošlosti, Politike sjećanja u BiH, Hrvatskoj i Srbiji od 1990. FES Sarajevo*, <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/sarajevo/09702.pdf> (Retrieved 12.21.2020.) p. 222.)

34 Mihajlović, Branka. (20.02.2017), ‘Genocid je zabranjena reč u Srbiji’, *Radio Slobodna Evropa*. <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/bih-revizija-tuzba-srbija-beograd-prava-adresa/28320801.html>

8. Justify the denial of genocide in favor of current economic interests.

9. To claim that the victims were well treated, while at the same time denying genocide.

In the text entitled “Genocide in Srebrenica”, which was published on February 5, 2019, on the website of the Serbian Embassy in Portugal, Serbian Ambassador to Portugal Oliver Antić writes that after the capture of Srebrenica, the Serbian army provided buses to evacuate 17,000 women, children, and the elderly. Muslim territory, and adds that many of them “decided to go to Serbia”, where they still; “live completely safe”.

10. Claiming that what happened does not fit the definition of genocide. The classic example is provided by Ana Brnabić, the Prime Minister of the Government of Serbia, who said; “I don’t think it was genocide. I think it is, you know. You know, it looks like... I think it was a horrible, horrible crime. But genocide is basically when... Genocide is the murder of the entire population - women, children... And this was not the case here.”³⁵ Draško Stanivuković, the mayor of Banja Luka, a student of economics, also played the legal expert when he said: “Do you know the definition of genocide? Extermination of people from a certain territory. Was the intention in that sense that everyone is expelled? Srebrenica is part of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We are talking about the intention to exterminate a nation from that territory, about the intention to kill children. There was no such intention. I said it was a big crime, I feel sorry for every victim. But what is the problem? The problem is that the issue is politicized. What he wants is that when that famous word is said, I will not repeat it, then it will be said that the whole nation is like that.”³⁶ Aleksandar Vučić, the President of Serbia, said; “No one questions the gravity of the crimes in Srebrenica, but the question arises as to why they insist on the legal qualification that it was genocide.”³⁷

11. Blaming the victims. This is one of the most common methods and tactics of denying the genocide in Srebrenica. It implies that Bosniaks in Srebrenica are guilty of genocide because they committed “crimes” against Serbs, carried out terrorist attacks on Serb villages and the like.

12. To say that peace and reconciliation are more important than blaming anyone for genocide. In this context, the tactic is to equalize the crimes,

35 Srbija nikada nije prihvatila kvalifikaciju ‘genocid’ (20.03.2019) *Al Jazeera Balkans*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LlmlgCi8RDY&feature=emb_logo

36 Draško Stanivuković: ‘U Srebrenici nije bilo genocida, a presude Karadžiću i Mladiću ne priznajem. Čiča-miča, gotova priča.’ (24.11.2020) *Jutarnji*. <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/svijet/u-srebrenici-nije-bilo-genocida-a-presude-karadzicu-i-mladicu-ne-priznajem-cica-mica-gotova-pri-ca-15008153> (Retrieved 12.15.2020)

37 Beta, Vučić: Zašto se insistira da je zločin u Srebrenici genocid?, 17.03.2017., <https://rs.n1.info.com/vesti/a235660-vucic-zasto-se-insistira-da-je-srebrenica-genocid/>, (Retrieved 16.03.2021.)

the criminals, and victims and the effort to forget the past and assuage idea of responsibility.

Affirmation of genocide

Promoting, rewarding, and affirming crimes through the affirmation of convicted war criminals, is a specific feature of the genocide against Bosniaks in Srebrenica. Nowhere else in the world have we seen the celebration of war criminals and genocidaires to the extent we have seen in Serbia and Republika Srpska, with streets named after them, murals painted, buildings named after them, and involving them in the teaching processes in universities. This is a precedent in history and says a lot about the state of consciousness, moral loss, disrespect for the victims, and general disrespect for humanity both in our country and in the world. By tolerating such actions, the international community, as well as the public in Serbia and the Republika Srpska, are dangerously lowering the threshold of tolerance for violating fundamental human values. The possible consequences of such actions are very dangerous and long-term, but that is a topic for another time.

For some, a state that glorifies war criminals or Nazis in the 21st century is comical, but that is a naive reaction given the anger, prejudice, and hatred that feed many European fascist movements today. It would be a serious mistake to believe that these are just harmless right-wing lunatics.³⁸

Conclusion

Political and social developments in the immediate vicinity of B&H, as well as in Europe, in terms of attitudes towards genocide and genocide denial, do not inspire much optimism. We are faced with the brutal attitude of genocide deniers towards this global crime. There is no doubt that the social and political activities of these actors will be largely determined by their views on the crime of genocide. Therefore, it is necessary to find ways, instruments, and to plan activities that will strengthen and affirm the positive decisions of domestic and international courts on genocide. It is necessary to affirm the narrative of genocide as a crime that must not be forgotten and denied. Adequate legislation in this regard is only part of the activities that can stop the denial of any crime, especially the genocide in the 1995 UN Security Zone in Srebrenica.

³⁸ Burns, Nicholas. (13.06.2013), *Uspon mržnje, Buka*, <https://www.6yka.com/novosti/uspon-mrznje> (Retrieved 12.21.2020).

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