



**Center for Global & Strategic Studies
Islamabad**

The Bosnian Genocide and Srebrenica Massacre (1992-95)

Published on 28th June, 2019



The end of Cold war and fall of communism deteriorated the political, inter-ethnic and economic situations of Yugoslavia. The Balkan region is comprised of multi-ethnic, multicultural groups having diverse norms, values, and religious rituals. The diversification of ethnicities and disintegration of

Yugoslavia in the 1990s brought genocide back to Balkan region known as the "*Bosnian Genocide*" and "*Srebrenica massacre*". The conflict exploded when the Serbian Army began to drive "ethnic cleansing" of Muslims. The Balkan wars since 1991-2001, caused more than 200,000 casualties and 2.2million people have been displaced. After WWII, it is the greatest atrocity committed by Serbs on the European Soil.

Ratko Mladic "*the butcher of Bosnia*", was responsible for this worst genocide. In April 1992, Serbian army with the active assistance of Yugoslavia troops and Paramilitary forces started to obliterate all non-Serbian from Balkan region. Serbs Army used harmful tactics such as siege warfare, systematic persecution, murder, rape, beating and harassment against Bosnian and Croats Muslims. still, the number of victims is increasing day by day as recently Podrinhe' s identification project told that 31 more victims of Srebrenica massacre are ready to be buried on July 11th.

During WWI the Balkan region acted as a buffer zone between two great empires (Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman Empire) and political turbulence always remains obvious throughout the history. As WWII and defeat of Axis powers reintegrated Eastern Europe, Balkan region was renamed as "*Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia*". General Joseph Broz Tito a renowned Communist revolutionary of Yugoslavia struggled to harmonize all to strengthen the Yugoslavian republics and wanted to maintain a peaceful coexistence of nations in the Yugoslavian federation. Yugoslavian republics have enjoyed more liberal freedom comparatively to western and central Europe, but political mobilization was banned in this region to suppress nationalism. Primarily, Joseph Tito suppressed nationalism for the smooth functioning of Yugoslavia to avoid any political disturbance, after his death, the

internal conditions of Yugoslavia were deteriorated due to inter-ethnic conflicts.

Disintegration of Yugoslavia

In the 1980s, there was an overwhelming rise of nationalism and political violence by various ethnic groups, which leads to political upheavals. Initially, Croats and Slovenia sought for maximum authority and ethnic dominance which was defuse by state authorities to avoid any conflict between states. In this context, the rise of nationalism moved forward to collapse of the Yugoslavian federation and all six republics Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and Macedonia got independence.

The reasons behind the collapse of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia contain multiple nationalities, decentralization of power, polarization, consistence discrimination, the rise of ethnic nationalism, the downfall of communism, Economic crisis, and IMF demands for reforms, hyperinflation, unemployment, and intolerance. These problems instigate ethnic groups like; Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, Albanians, Slovenes to strive for more political rights and this political disturbance resulted in the eruption of ethnic conflicts. Serb leaders denounced Muslims for all socioeconomic and political crises. Therefore, the Serbs Army started to crack down of non-Serbs. These Ethnic conflicts lead Bosnia to be a battlefield in eastern Europe, it' s hard to believe that Ethnic pluralism could disturb the inter-state relationships.

The rise of Nationalism and Ethnic Conflicts

After Joseph Tito, the power vacuum and degree of centralization created a serious political and economic crisis. A weak ruling administration was staggered by new emerging ethnic nationalist leaders most prominently,

Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia and Tudjman in Croatia. Autonomous movements of Kosovo and Albanians were violently suppressed by Serbian Administration. Serbian Army has started a political movement and campaign of harassment and violence against Bosnian, Albanian and Serb Muslim ethnicity. When Milosevic took over the Serbian presidency than he deliberately exploited the Serb nationalist against Muslims. He was dispatched to Albanian majority for meeting with the local leadership of Bosnia and Albania to settle down the ethnic conflict and political turmoil, but the reaction of the crowd was extremely aggressive.

Instead of urging serenity and immediate solution, Milosevic provoked Serbs against Bosnian and Albanian by confronting the Serbs. During the visit in 1987, Milosevic sowed seeds of Genocide against Bosnian Muslims. Milosevic used public media as a tool of propaganda against Bosnian and Non-Serbs to intensify the tension between them. They have driven the Serbs Army started intimidating, killing, torturing, harassing men and women. The ethnic cleansing of Bosnian Muslims was carried out about 90% by Serbs Armed Forces to destroy Bosnian Muslims. While "ethnic cleansing campaign" . Slobodan Milosevic toiled for Greater Serbia under the control of Serbs people but escalating internal ethnic conflicts enforced him to wipe out all Muslims.

Slobodan Milosevic and Bosnian Genocide

In October 1991, Croats and Bosnian Muslims claimed independence from Yugoslavia but Serbs refused to accept independence. EU and UNO also recognized their independence of Croatia and Bosnia but Serbs under the leadership of Radovan Karadzic sieged and blocked Sarajevo. They occupied approximately 70% of the country by killing and persecuting the Muslim community. UN imposed sanctions over Serbs to overcome the conflict. The

international community as a mediator worked to end war but these Bosnia efforts failed which leads to clashes between Croats and Bosnians.

Serbian Army opened fire on peaceful protestors in Sarajevo and killed more than 100,000 people including men, women, and children. There were about 200 concentration camps in which the Serb army and paramilitary forces tortured and killed Bosnian Muslims. To escalate the regional conflict, another Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic established an autonomous Serbian region known as Republika Srpska in Feb 1992, they wanted to stay with Serbia and Montenegro. This was the initial point of Bosnian war starting from April 1992 and ended in 1995. The most extensive and systematic techniques were used by Serbs Army to kill and torture thousands of Bosnian Muslims.

Actors Involved in the Bosnian Genocide and Srebrenica Massacre

Bosnian Serbs Army, paramilitary groups of Bosnia, Bosnian Serb political leaders, and local police were behind this deadliest ethnic cleansing in Bosnia. The Substantial evidence showed that political, security, military and paramilitary actors of Serbia were involved to carry out genocide and Srebrenica massacre. On July 1995 Bosnian Serb Army began to attack Srebrenica *“UN protected zone by blue helmets”* . The UN peacekeeping troop comprising 450 officials were there to control Sarajevo and Srebrenica, most of Serbs Army weapons were under UN control as the part of demilitarization accord in 1993. When UN corps came under fire, they requested NATO for air support. EU mediators meet with Slobodan Milosevic and Ratko Mladic in Belgrade urging the Serbs to abstain from military action and to negotiate a political solution, but they had been refused. During 7th of July 1995, the Bosnian Serb Army has significant progress in their attacks on a safe area of Srebrenica.

NATO was again asked to help but once again they denied because they believed that Serb troops did not intend to overrun and assault the entire enclave. On 9th of July 1995, Slobodan Milosevic gave a new order to take over Srebrenica and the next day they entered a town and started execution of hundreds of men and boys. On 11th July, Ratko Mladic a military commander entered Potocari, Srebrenica "*Safe Area*". They have separated men and boys from women and kids, to take them to concentration camps. As the mass execution continued, it caused over 8,000 dead, thousands displaced, and an unknown number of women raped by the Bosnian Serb soldiers, today this notorious massacre is recognized as "*Srebrenica massacre 1995*".

Response of the International Community

NATO and UN retaliated against Serbs Forces, starts air strikes to stop them. United Nations imposed sanctions, the arms embargo on Bosnia and Serbia to avoid any sale and purchase of arsenals. Apart from, these bombings and arms embargo, all contracting parties were asked for a ceasefire and they signed a treaty in 1995 "*Dayton Peace Accords*". Bosnia was considered as a federation of two political entities; (Bosnia & Herzegovina- Muslims and Croats), (Republika Srpska-Serbs). Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic were convicted for genocide and crimes against humanity at Srebrenica, by International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. In 2017, Ratko Mladic who was behind the Srebrenica massacre, sentenced for life imprisonment.

Conclusion

The Bosnian genocide and Srebrenica massacre had an adverse impact over ethnic groups in Balkans. Any minor inter-ethnic conflict could instigate the fight between traditional rivals. The international community is consistently working to mitigate the vulnerable precarious conditions of the Balkan region.

UNO also sent permanent peacekeeping missions to de-escalate the conflict, which is still active in Bosnia to maintain regional stability, assistance to refugees, restoring human rights and settlement of peace between ethnic groups. “Dayton Peace Accords” paved the way to overcome inter-ethnic conflict but there is an ongoing continuous ethnic conflict, which could ignite the large-scale war between both states. International Community must have a need to intervene to start peace talks. Every state must normalize their ties for general prosperity and economic progress.

