



END OF DEGREE PROJECT

DEGREE IN: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2023/2024

JUNE 2024

ROARS AND LEGENDS: THE GEOPOLITICS OF THE ARKAN TIGERS

AUTHOR: Vladislavova Delcheva, Siana

NIE: X-4945874-T

TUTOR: Mantecón Díaz, Lucía

Madrid, June 17th, 2024

Contents

INTRODUCTION	3
I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE ARKAN TIGERS.	6
1. THE YUGOSLAV WARS: AN OVERVIEW.	7
2. THE CREATION OF THE ARKAN TIGERS AND THEIR <i>MODUS OPERANDI</i> .	12
3. THE PROFILE AND RECRUITMENT METHODS OF THE MEMBERS WITHIN THE TIGERS.	16
4. THEIR ETHNIC CLEANSING AND DISPLACEMENT.	19
II. ANALYSIS OF THE TIGERS' ACTIONS.	21
1. THEIR ROLE IN CONFLICT ZONES: PARTICIPATION IN KEY BATTLES AND OPERATION.	21
1.1 MASSACRE OF SIJEKOVAC, BOSANSKI BROD.	22
1.2 MASSACRE OF VUKOVAR.	23
1.3 BATTLE OF BIJELJINA.	25
2. ALLEGED CRIMES AND DELICTIVE ACTIVITIES: EXAMINATION OF REPORTED ATROCITIES.	26
3. TACTICS AND OPERATIONS: ANALYSIS OF MILITARY STRATEGIES.	28
III. THE GEOPOLITICS OF THE ARKAN TIGERS.	30
1. THEIR SUPPORTERS, GEOPOLITICAL ALLIANCES, AND THEIR SOURCES OF FUNDING AND FINANCING.	31
2. THEIR PUBLIC AND MEDIA PERCEPTION.	34
2.1 OVERVIEW OF THE MEDIA DURING THE 90S IN THE BALKANS.	35
2.2 THE POSITIVE PERCEPTION OF MILOSEVIC AND HIS IDEALS.	37
2.3 THE NEGATIVE PERCEPTION OF MILOSEVIC AND HIS IDEALS.	39
2.4 ADVICE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.	40
IV. THE RULING OF THE ICTY.	42
1. VERDICTS AND SENTENCES: OUTCOME OF THE MOST NOTORIOUS TRIALS.	42
1.1 TRIAL OF ZELJKO RAZNATOVIC.	43
1.2 TRIAL OF SLOBODAN MILOSEVIC.	45
2. EFFECT OF THE ICTY ON INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE: LESSONS LEARNT AND CRITICS.	47
CONCLUSION	50
BIBLIOGRAPHY	52
ANNEX 1.	59

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

Introduction

This tribunal, and this trial in particular, give the most powerful demonstration that no one is above the law or beyond the reach of international justice.

Prosecutor Carla Del Ponte in her opening remarks in the trial of Slobodan
Milosevic.

The Balkans. Quite a notorious region of Europe, yet deeply forgotten by the community. Important events of European history have taken place in the Balkan region, such as the Yugoslav Wars, part of which are going to be developed, briefly, in this project. The region, however, has always been known for its illegal mafia groups, paramilitary organizations, and deeds. In this regard, the Arkan Tigers conforms to the object of study of this project. This paramilitary organization, firstly known as Serbian Volunteer Guard, was one of the main operators during the 1990s in the Yugoslav wars.

The organization was first founded by Zeljko Raznatovic, whose nickname was Arkan, and he managed to lead his men in a variety of paramilitary actions in which the Tigers happened to form one of the most feared and best-known organizations at the time. All the Tigers' reach could have never been achieved if it was not with the 'humanitarian aid' received by the Serbian Government, of course, in secret.

As mentioned, it has been noted that the Balkan region has never succeeded in grabbing the sufficient international attention, compared to Western Europe or even the United States. The intention, then, is to clearly give more visibility to the Balkans, highlighting their relevance in Europe's history not only in the past, but also in the most recent.

Furthermore, the objective of the essay will be to prove that one single group of armed men, the majority of whom had no previous training in war, could win the support of a whole community and become one of the most significant paramilitary forces known in the region. Through this study of the Arkan Tigers, their access to power will also be analyzed, as well as their influence in the region and their development within the Yugoslav Wars.

With all mentioned, the hypothesis of the project circles around those situations as war in the region pushed for the creation of paramilitary groups such as the Arkan Tigers. Therefore, it is suggested that such groups managed to gain much more importance in certain regions of the conflict than the Serbian armed forces. The hypothesis states that paramilitary organizations in the Serbian region, in particular, the Arkan Tigers – though with the support of the Serbian Government – managed to not only support the army when needed, but they also gained much more prominence than it.

As well, in a second lane, it will be debated the questionable principle of equality before the law. Therefore, it is established, as hypothesis, that not everyone is equal before the law, since the fact of having a high rank – as did Milosevic – or connections to the Government, - as did the Tigers – can exempt you from being judged.

From the initial perspective of the essay, it seems that politicians, due to their rank and position, happen to enjoy some immunity before the law. The apparent disparity in the application of justice suggests that politicians can evade responsibilities and consequences that a ‘common’ person could never evade. Through this essay, the intention is to investigate whether the perception is confirmed or rebutted, determining whether justice is equally applied to all individuals, without considering their social status; and whether the Tigers did manage to be more prominent than the national armed forces.

In this regard, both the object and topic of the essay seem to have a strong relevance within geopolitics and international relations, as it is aiming to contribute significantly to several aspects. First, it is going to throw light on a region which deserves to get more international attention, as, historically, it has never been included in political speeches as much as other regions have. This first focus will help with a wider and deeper comprehension of the region of the Balkans.

Secondly, the project will contribute to the analysis of armed conflicts and the factors which lead to the birth of paramilitary organizations, such as the Tigers. In the third place, the essay seems to be important as it will try to get over the relationship between the people’s perception that politicians are exempted from complying with the law. This essay aims to not only generate debate and reflections over questions of justice, conflict and governance globally.

This essay, in terms of its methodology, will employ a quantitative one, whereby it will incorporate a systematic literature review, as well as document analysis. There will not be a particular case study, though it will oversee an examination of the case of the Arkan Tigers within the Yugoslav wars and, additionally, it will include a review of the trials of two prominent figures within the organization.

Key sources for this research will include primary and secondary sources, in particular Resolutions from the United Nations Security Council – specifically the one establishing the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, - as well as books and reports, the most used of which have been C. Stewart’s book ‘‘Hunting the Tigers: The Fast Life and Violent Death of the Balkan’s Most Dangerous Man’’ (2008); and T. Purroy’s history reports of the Balkan Wars.

Lastly, for the development of the essay, the following structure will be assessed:

First, a look at the theoretical framework of the issue, where a general perspective of the Yugoslav Wars will be given, to understand historically where to situate the Arkan Tigers. Then, the creation of the paramilitary group and their modus

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

operandi will also be addressed, with the intention of determining how they conducted ethnic cleansing throughout the years they were active.

Following the first chapter, the actions and deeds of the Tigers will be assessed, examining the role they had in three of the most important regions of the conflict: Sijekovac, Vukovar, Bijeljina, where their most atrocious crimes took place. Several other crimes attributed to them will also be developed, analyzing their military tactics and strategies as well, trying to comprehend how they established their role as paramilitaries in the conflict.

A further investigation of the Tiger's main supporters, geopolitical alliances and sources of funding will be established in the third chapter. In this case, it will be crucial to analyze whether the group had been financed and supported by the Serbian state itself. In addition to this, it will be analyzed whether the Tigers appeared in the media, and what was their perception in the public eye.

The last chapter of the essay will be devoted to mentioning the preliminary rulings of both Slobodan Milosevic and Zeljko 'Arkan' Raznatovic, not focusing thoroughly into the legal matters but evaluating their impact on both international law and the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia. As well, given they way in which both cases finished, it is going to be addressed the criticism that they received by the public.

Finally, the conclusions of the project will be presented, trying to state the final resolution to the hypothesis previously presented.

I. Historical background of the Arkan Tigers.

Before beginning with the matter at hand – the geopolitics of the Tigers of Arkan, or Arkan Tigers – as means of setting the starting point of the issue, the first chapter is going to be devoted to the explanation of the historical situation under which the Tigers were created. It is vital that, before commenting on who they were, their birth as a paramilitary organization and their deeds, the period in history in which they roamed must be set.

In such a case, structured in different topics within the first part of the project, it is going to be developed – though briefly – an overview of the Balkan Wars, also known as Yugoslav Wars. It is important to clarify that this project is not intended to be a history-related one, and that the mentioned overview will be simplified, aiming to understand the first piece of the complex puzzle in the birth of the Arkan Tigers.

Due to this, the first chapter will not dig any deeper than necessary into the details of the war. The main goal will be to locate the paramilitary organization in time, to better understand their context.

Once the historical background is established, the description of the Tigers' creator will be developed, as well as the reason behind their creation. These two topics are essential, as when getting to know their creator, his political incline, social background, and similar causes, various clues can be directly delivered to the analysis of their actions, allowing to explain some of the reasons behind their acts.

In addition to this, it is going to be delved into their *modus operandi*, since describing the group's way of conducting their duties and actions has proven not only to be necessary in the analysis, but also quite a great lead in understanding the influence that the group had.

Following the research, the profile of the members of the Tigers will be examined. It was quite impressive that most of the recruited men happened to be part of a selection of football devotees from the Red Star of Belgrade Football team. It was even more impressive the fact that some fanatics were able to shapeshift into one of the most feared and best armed paramilitary organizations of the Balkan region, being the authors of the most severe crimes committed in Europe – some of which have led the Tigers to the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

To end the first chapter, the focus will be turned on the most significant problem that occurred because of the Tigers: the ethnic cleansing and displacement conducted by them during the Balkan Wars. In addition to this, the consequences and reactions of the international community to such atrocities will also be discussed, though further during the essay.

The reasons behind the ethnic cleansing, and whether it was due to recent problems or rather their main cause had to do with a problem which had been dragging on for decades, will be addressed. Sadly, the Balkans had already been suffering from ethnic conflicts long before the Tigers came into existence.

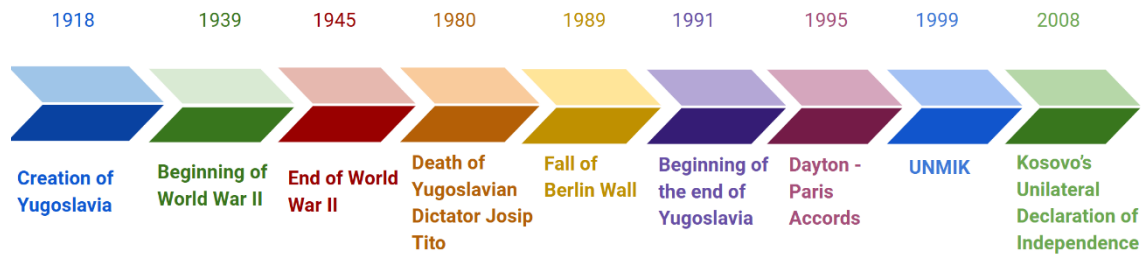
Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

Acknowledging the mentioned four points within the first chapter will allow the development of further geopolitical and media analysis, helping to get under the Tigers' skin and gut their history.

1. The Yugoslav Wars: an overview.

To understand the Yugoslav Wars means, first, the understanding of the meaning behind the word *Yugoslavia*.

Back in 1918, as can be pictured in Graph I and Map I, when the region was created, it was established under the name of the 'Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes,' and it was later renamed as 'Yugoslavia,' in 1929. Different ethnicities who were part of the *Slavs* were joined together, creating the 'Federation of Yugoslavia,' which meant 'the southern (*Yug*) Slavs (*Slavija*)' (Cueto, 2021).



GRAPH I. Timeline of the historical background of Yugoslavia. *Source: Own Elaboration.*



MAP I. Map of the origins of Yugoslavia. (*Enciclopedia Britannica, 2024*)

The fact of joining several different ethnicities did, rather sooner than later, cause a slow yet powerful burn that led to the dismemberment¹ of the Federation seventy-seven years later.

Therefore, it can be stated that, neither the Second World War (1939-1945), nor the death of Yugoslavian Dictator Josip ‘Tito’ Broz, or even the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 could be said to be the direct cause of the dismemberment of the Federation of Yugoslavia, whose ethnic issues had been deeply rooted in its peoples from further in history.

At first, Yugoslavia was a federation² of six different republics: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia (which also had the two provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina), Montenegro, and Macedonia. In Map II, inserted below, can be seen what it meant for the Former Yugoslavia to break into six different states.



MAP 2 Political map of Yugoslavia’s six republics. Source: (Marín, 2022)

For the easy comprehension of the overview, and with the clear idea that the project is not intended to be a historical one, only the most ‘recent’ events causing the break of Yugoslavia will be addressed.

For this, it was not only Yugoslavia the one suffering from instability in the Balkan region ever since the fall of the Berlin Wall. Close to the Balkans, the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (USSR) was the first one to break, in 1991, originating new states within the complex and new world order that was beginning to be shaped. The

¹ The dismemberment of a State happens when, according to the Oxford Public International Law dictionary, the territory of that State becomes the territory of two or more new States. Consequently, the predecessor state ceases to exist, and the new ones are seen as its successors (Tancredi, 2007).

² According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a ‘federation’ is a group of states which have joined with the aim of forming a larger organization or government (Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary, 2024).

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

second in line was Czechoslovakia, splitting peacefully in 1993 into the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

The last one in line was the Federation of Yugoslavia, whose dismemberment turned out to be the most violent of the three, because it did not only involve present unease, but it also brought back past ethnic tensions and religious conflicts (Reyes, 2013).

In this sense, Yugoslavia has always been a territory of conjunction of many different peoples, whose religions, origins and traditions were, of course, very different from each other. Among those varied ethnicities, there were Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats, Muslim Bosnians, Albanians, Slovenians, Macedonians, Bulgarians...

With such a variety, the international arena was not able to comprehend the reason behind the strong (but apparent, in reality) unity of the Federation, and less could it understand their breaking. Nevertheless, this detail could easily be explained and justified by the fact that the 'glue' between each republic within Yugoslavia was the power that Dictator Tito had over them, convincing the world that he had finally solved the ethnic problem and the tensions in his country. He would claim that he had solved them due to the high respect that he was shown by the Yugoslavs as well as his strong rhetoric, which usually claimed for '*Fraternity and unity*,' (University of North Carolina, n.d.).

Tito governed Yugoslavia for over thirty years, and until his death in 1980, he had managed to reduce the separatist movements and ideas, achieving an apparent unity within the Federation (Millán, 2021).

However, Tito's death woke again historical tensions which had not escaped the people's minds, and after former Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic took control of the Serbian Government in 1989, the end of Tito's 'harmonious' coexistence saw its deadline. The republics that conformed Yugoslavia, of course, felt attacked by Milosevic's ideas of achieving a 'Greater Serbia,' in which he considered that the Serbs were above any other national of the Federation, which led to a bigger chaos soon after (Millán, 2021).

During the 1990s, the years of Milosevic, Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina decided to achieve their independence, jump-start of which was Serbia's abolition of Kosovo's autonomy in 1991. In this decision, Slovenia was the first country to take the initiative, spreading the belief that Slovenians were the most urban, westernized, and rich region of the Yugoslav Federation, and that deserved attention (Purroy, 2017).

Slovenia's goal was to present their country as a strong link to Europe, contrary to the 'poor' and 'delayed' Balkans. Hence, the 'War of the ten days' began in late June 1991, when Slovenia created their own army of militias in order to fight for the cause – event that will be seen happening in other places of Former Yugoslavia as was Serbia, with the creation of the Serbian Volunteer Guard (Purroy, 2017).

This short, yet intense war, aimed to achieve international sympathy towards Slovenia, trying to call for Western intervention. Nevertheless, the mentioned war proved to be a propaganda war, in which the population suffered ten days of complete horror even though the casualties were not numerous. Slovenia gained its independence from Yugoslavia in July 1991 (Purroy, 2017).

For Europe's morals, the consequences of the 'War of the ten days' were traumatizing, experiencing within its own frontiers a war, something nor imaginable back then. Therefore, Europe, which at the beginning had bet on the unity of Yugoslavia, decided to 'switch sides', defending the different, new republic's borders. It is true, though, that Europe always tried to do so avoiding the renegotiation of said borders, which were established after the Second World War (Purroy, 2017).

Slovenia's independence was slowly recognized by the international community, and this recognition was initially led by Germany, followed by the European Union's (EU) recognition of the Slovenian state in May 2004 (Purroy, 2017). On the other hand, Yugoslavia was shocked, especially its Federal Army (JNA). Still, Slovenia marked the first step for the Serbians' desire to create their own national army, capable of defending their interests in a fearless manner.

On the same day in which Slovenia proclaimed its independence, June 25, 1991, Croatia was following the same lead, and declared its independence then too. The Croatian state's ambitions were similar that Slovenia's: joining the EU and staying away from the 'delayed' Balkan region (Purroy, 2017).

In the Croatian case, Yugoslavia showed the same carelessness as with the Slovenians, though the difference that made the former's process easier than the latter was that within Croatia there was a minority of Serbian-origin residents who had been suffering attacks from the Croatian nationals. This was the spark that fueled the nationalistic ideas of Serbia, since the Serbo-Croats managed to strengthen the JNA, allowing Serbia to counterattack (Purroy, 2017).

On his side, Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's though kept being the same: if Croatia managed to leave Yugoslavia, the Serbian minority within that country would need to join either the Federation or the future Serbian State (Purroy, 2017).

Because tensions between Serbia and Croatia were growing, the elements which at the beginning seemed to be moderate, began – on both sides – to shift toward more radical ones, which lead to the creation of paramilitary groups ever so highly under the ultranationalist wing (Purroy, 2017).

On Serbia's behalf, author Tomás Purroy described the big role of the Arkan Tigers or the White Eagles in his article 'Descifrando la Guerra (II).' The former would, rather sooner than later, become the forefront of any Serbian operation from that point on, forming one of the most elite organizations (Purroy, 2017).

The strongest hit in the Yugoslav wars happened when, between August and November 1991, the Croatians attacked the city of Vukovar – described in further

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

chapters – leading to the biggest battle described, proving that it was not going to be easy to ‘end’ with Croatia’s revolution. In the aftermath of the conflict, providing that groups such as the Tigers were fighting on Serbia’s behalf, the Serbian state managed to win the battle of Vukovar. However, the image of a broken, destroyed city, with only 100,000 civilians surviving who had previously been kept in paramilitary custody was not ideal. After the battle of Vukovar, the Croatian goal was met when they managed to get international attention (Purroy, 2017).

Peace came in 1992, when a ceasefire was signed, and Resolution 743 of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) was introduced. This Resolution view the establishment of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), whereby 12,000 Blue Helmets were going to be deployed with the intention of protecting the Serbo-Croatians. By the beginning of 1992 Croatia had already – though pending issues – confirmed itself as an independent state (Purroy, 2017).

The third country to make a statement about their independence was Bosnia and Herzegovina. This republic had previously been considered the best example of an ideal cohabitation of different ethnic groups within Yugoslavia, though this myth disappeared after the first multi-party elections held in November 1990. Two years later, Bosnia and Herzegovina proclaimed its independence referendum, supported, of course, by the Croatians and the Muslim minorities residing in the republic. The referendum was approved only two days after its presentation (Purroy, 2018).

Bosnia’s independence was recognized by the US and the EU both soon after the proclamation. The Serbian minority of Bosnia, on its side, refused completely to accept that situation, claiming their right as a minority to decide whether to unite with the Serbian State. The minority quickly sped up and formed *Republica Srpska*, while the Croatians were trying to do the same in the Southern part of Bosnia. With this situation, Serbia decided it was a good occasion to begin their actions (Purroy, 2018).

After the wins in the North and East, the Serbians ended up assaulting Sarajevo, on May 2 and 3, 1992. The attack, however, was unsuccessful, the Serbs decided to perform a long and cruel siege, leaving the defense of the city in the hands of their paramilitary networks (one of them being the Arkan Tigers). All this was taking place while the international arena was becoming more and more interventionist.

Eventually, the Croatian Army entered in Bosnia, though it was stopped by the Bosnian army in 1993. Finally, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) intervened directly in the conflict, in 1994, achieving an ultimatum over the city of Sarajevo (Purroy, 2018)

In spite of the international efforts, the battle of Srebrenica, for example, did not save history from experiencing one of the worst episodes of the Balkan wars. In this occasion, the winners of the battle were the Serbians, who managed to displace 25,000 women, children and elders into Muslim territory, killing – in addition – around 8,000 men in military age (Purroy, 2018).

Once the Bosnian conflict had ended, the need for international intervention was even more obvious than before. The Serbians had been vanquished in the battlefield, though they had tried to reorganize themselves among the disaster. The key to this restructuring was the arrival of the Arkan Tigers to the defense of the Corridor of Posavina, which proved further how such militias happened to gain way more force than the military men themselves.

The end of the war was negotiated in the US, in the city of Dayton, and signed in Paris in 1995, creating the Dayton-Paris Accords³. During its signing, Milosevic appeared confident, surrounded by different strong identities both from Europe and the US, as well as by the Presidents of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was finally recognized by the Serbs as ‘independent’ (Purroy, 2018).

After the conclusion of Bosnia’s independence, it seemed that the Balkans would finally settle into peace. However, this was far from the truth, as there were still several issues pending: the Albanian minorities and the surviving ‘neo-communist’ regimes of Bulgaria and Serbia, whom the West was not willing to fight (Purroy, 2018).

Was the West scared of a USSR outcome? The Yugoslav wars just proved further how international diplomacy could risk being put at stake from a minor region as big as Spain’s community of Extremadura (Purroy, 2018).

Yugoslavia does not exist nowadays, though its burning ashes are still latent, proof of which was the 2008 unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo, which happens to not be recognized by big international actors like China or Russia, as well as states such as Spain, Greece, or Romania, and whose fight for independence began even earlier than the Slovenian one (Purroy, 2018).

2. The creation of the Arkan Tigers and their *modus operandi*.

After establishing the historical overview of the main conflict and stating the prominence that the Tigers began to reach, it is vital to state that the legal framework had always been uncertain during the Balkan Wars. Even though contraband did not manage to escape the eyes of Yugoslav intelligence, no one succeeded in creating competent armed forces, which led to the supremacy of the police and paramilitary groups like the Arkan Tigers (Purroy, 2018).

³ The Dayton Accords managed to put an end to the Balkan conflict, and they set the basis for the establishment of peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which included a territorial division of Bosnia and Herzegovina into the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republica Srpska; the establishment of a central government with a tripartite presidency – one representative of Bosnian nationality, one of Croatian nationality, and one of Serbian nationality,- the implementation and supervision from international peace forces, organized by the NATO; among others (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), 1995).

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

Focusing on the analysis of the context of who the Arkan Tigers were, it shall first be mentioned two of their most influential figures: Slobodan Milosevic and Zeljko ‘Arkan’ Raznatovic.

Milosevic, mentioned in the previous chapter, got into action once he was elected as President of Serbia, being – before that – the right hand of previous Serbian President Ivan Stambolic, behind whose shadow Milosevic grew. Through the Serbian nationalism born in Kosovo, Milosevic accessed the Serbian presidency leading the Anti-bureaucratic Revolution. Soon after the Albano-Kosovar miners’ strike of 1989, through which it was aimed to gain Kosovo’s independence, Milosevic stood up for Serbia’s unity, willing to take Kosovo ‘back’ and punish those who had conspired against unity (Purroy, 2018).

The first creator, and hence, leader, whose name the Tigers took after, was Arkan. However, that was not an accurate name: it was a nickname, with which Zeljko Raznatovic came up after years of delinquency. Arkan was one of the identities that Raznatovic went under in his multiple acts of vandalism. Nevertheless, he was not a novice in terms of vandal acts, like happened to be his fellow companions on the other borders of Yugoslavia, considered heroes who controlled the black market (Alonso, 2012).

Raznatovic, son of a former Air Force official, was educated in a strong familiar discipline. His father even had him interned in many boarding schools. In his young years, in which he was in and out of jail several times, it must be highlighted his beginnings in the Secret Yugoslav Services, where his first mission was to get rid of the Croatian rivals and create a Yugoslav – Serbo-Croatian, more specifically – ‘mafia’ which would work under the rules of Dictator Josip ‘Tito’ Broz in exchange for protection (Alonso, 2012).

In 1989, Raznatovic returned to Belgrade to fund, supported by the Serbian Government of Milosevic – though in secrecy – the embryo of the Arkan Tigers. However, his work and ideologies started to be drafted earlier than that, when, supported by the State Security Service of Serbia, Arkan started moving military equipment into locations of Croatia and Bosnia dominated by Serbs. In those locations, Serb local groups were being prepared for a future uprising (Stewart, 2008).

The main problem that Arkan had against Croatia was that the Croatian President Tudjiman had been assaulting the Serbian minority in Croatia. What provoked Arkan over the time was not just the repression of the Serbian minority under Tudjiman’s rule, but also the actions Tudjiman executed, such as the adoption of a new Croatian flag with a coat of arms that looked like the Ustache⁴ badges worn during the mass Serb killings that occurred during World War II (Andreopoulos, 2024).

⁴ The Ustache composed a social movement created in the 1930s with the intention of fighting for an independent state of Croatia (Tarrida, 2019). In their will to achieve the ‘purest’ Croatian state possible, the Ustache began exterminating Serbs, Jews, and Gypsies from their country (Andreopoulos, 2024).

All the injustices committed against the Serbs by, among others, the Ustache, began to make Arkan's blood boil. These also triggered him with ideas which saw development years later.

For Arkan's ideas and plans to see reality, he first needed men. He needed to form a group strong enough, and convinced enough, to fight for the ideologies he was portraying. In the selection of his volunteers, Raznatovic chose people among the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Army, prisoners, and – curiously – the extreme fanatics of the Red Star of Belgrade – a simple football team (Alonso, 2012). He would also go around prisons to find his men, of course, with the secret permission of the Serbian Government (Stewart, 2008). After choosing his men, Arkan would meet his recruits at his mansion.

Faithful to his belief in the Christian Orthodox supremacy of Yugoslav Serbs before the Croatian Catholic minorities and Bosnian Muslims, Arkan took control of the devotees of the Red Star of Belgrade football club, whom, until then, had been composed of many other groups of different peoples, the main of which was popular by the name '*ciganin*' (gypsies) (Robinson & Ojeda, 2017).

Raznatovic, of course, did not consider such a disrespectful name as '*ciganin*' to be the one attributed to those fans. Therefore, he decided to rename them as '*delije*' - which, among other meanings, it mean 'brave youngsters.' The national and international context reached the football stands, where the ideas of Raznatovic began to be more visible (Robinson & Ojeda, 2017).

Soon after, the football stands would mutate, and rather than discussing the latest action of the goalkeeper, or how a certain player could have led them to victory, they would debate how Yugoslavia should be a unified republic, where the Serbs ought to be predominant among the rest of the nations.

Following Robinson and Ojeda (2017), notwithstanding all those factors, the line was about to be crossed, when on May 13, 1990, the scheduled match between the Red Star of Belgrade (Serbia) and the Dynamo of Zagreb (Croatia) never took place. The most crucial point to consider was that, just a week before the match, Tudjiman was elected as President of Croatia, aiming for the independence of his country, recapping all his ideas seen above (Robinson & Ojeda, 2017).

The match never started, and a war among the players began instead. It seemed clear that the political tension that was commencing during the match was going to condition it as well. For this, of course, the '*delije*' came ready, carrying Molotov cocktails, guns, and knives, which can be better pictured in Image I of Annex I (Viñas, 2017).

After getting notice of those issues, President Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia asked his Chief Officer of State Security – Jovica Stanisic – to hire Arkan with the target of asking him for his leadership and organization of his fellow football fanatics for more important things than football: to create a paramilitary unit, parallel to the

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

Serbian army, to recruit, instruct, and indoctrinate real assassins. Therefore, in October 1990, and counting on the – secret – economic help of several businessmen who were in favor of the cause, Zeljko Raznatovic created the Serbian Volunteer Guard (*Srpska Dobrudjanska Garda, SDG*) (Robinson & Ojeda, 2017), name which later changed to ‘The Arkan Tigers or Arkanovci,’ after their leader acquired a tiger as a pet (Stewart, 2008).

According to an interview made by BBC News Mundo in 2012 to an investigator from the Belgrade Center for Security Policies (BCSP), ‘They [the Tigers] were an untouchable mafia, and their cruelty was known ever since the war’ (Milosevic, 2012).

Regarding the Tigers’ *modus operandi*, it seems clear that they had had severe training which gave them the order to kill all those who were not Serbs and clean the Earth from ethnic enemies (Robinson & Ojeda, 2017) It did not seem to matter whether those targets were women, children, or elders. Arkan, on his side, was courteous, and he had also learned languages from Europe (given his multiple stays in prison).

The Tigers were deployed in support of the JNA, and their image was full of their beliefs as disciplined killers as well as brutal soldiers. It was also said that every time they were as much as mentioned in a Croatian or Muslim Bosnian village, the villagers’ aim to escape was almost automatic (Robinson & Ojeda, 2017).

Arkan became the most powerful mob boss and gangster of the country, criminalizing politics, and politicizing crime, as the editor-in-chief of the independent Serbian radio and television network, V. Matic, described. Arkan was not only a criminal, but he also later became the head of a political party – the Party of Serbian Unity (SJJ) – and a member of the Serbian Parliament.

To finish with the presentation of the group, it must be mentioned that Arkan was murdered during the afternoon of January 15, of the year 2000, in one of the most luxurious hotels in Belgrade, where he was staying. When the act took place, it managed to take not just Arkan’s life – who was even wearing a bulletproof vest – but also two of his bodyguards. By then, Arkan was 46 years old, and for a great part of the right or extreme right political groups, he died as a hero, even if for the rest of the Serbs he had died as a war criminal. One thing can be said for certain: Arkan died with the same violence he made sure to spread during his ‘ruling’, as well as without being judged for his acts (Redacción Clarín, 2000).

The fact that Arkan took politics, together with his murder and the fall of Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic – all events happening in the year 2000 – made the Tigers’ organization reshape into the Zemun Clan, also considered an extremely violent group. The new Clan accused the EU directly of killing their former leader, and they swore to a vendetta (BBC News, 2012).

The vandalism of the Clan continued going until 2013, the year in which they murdered Serbian Prime Minister, Zoran Djindjic, one of the main actors responsible for

the fall of the former President, Slobodan Milosevic, and who led him to the ICJ's disposal (EuropaPress, 2012). The story of the Arkan Tigers finished with his killing. Nevertheless, even if the organization was no longer active, its members signed contracts among more than six hundred security businesses in Serbia – some, of course, related to the Zemun Clan.

To summarize this chapter, this group was not born out of the blue, but with the calculated support of organizations like the Government and several Ministries, even if – as will be developed in further chapters – this support had been done in secrecy. In addition to this, even if their birth as an organization could be considered ridiculous – given the fact that they were merely a football fan club – it is undeniable that the severance of their actions outnumbered the one of any other similar groups.

3. The profile and recruitment methods of the members within the Tigers.

The paramilitary unit of the Arkan Tigers could be said to have been small, compared to any other military unit. However, given their 'small' size, it was surely one of the most brutal units witnessed in Europe.

In this chapter, the profile of the members who joined the Tigers is going to be overviewed, along with whether their members joined voluntarily, and whether there were any other affiliated groups that should be considered when analyzing their wrongdoings (Niehoff, 2023). The group's first members to join – twenty-six in total – were recruited in October 1990 from the hooligan fan club of the Red Star of Belgrade football team, as has been mentioned.

At their greatest peak, the Tigers numbered around 1,000 men, most occupying positions of light infantry, armed with Kalashnikov rifles. The unit had a small, armored force made up of a few armored personnel carriers and a T-55 tank which featured heavily in their media photos (see Image II of Annex I) (Niehoff, 2023). Other sources, on the other hand, such as author and journalist C. S. Stewart (2008), reported that, once Arkan was ready to take the front, he had gathered over 3,000 men for his private army, though the main group circled between 500 and 1,000 men. For Stewart, and according to official reports, the Tigers would grow at times to as many as 9,000 men.

The Arkan Tigers began with a rather small group of Red Star football fans – extreme fans – who slowly were also joined by former criminals, Arkan being the first and best example, as well as other ordinary volunteers who simply admired their leader and the ideologies he transmitted.

To understand what the members of the Tigers underwent, it must be comprehended first that they were strongly linked to the most extreme, nationalist Serbian, radical political party: the White Eagles (*Beli Orlovi*). The fact that the Tigers are linked to extreme right movements can give hints about their ideologies, and it

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

confirms their logic of needing to vanish all non-Serbs, ‘justifying’ their ethnic cleansing mentioned in the following chapter. In addition to this, such White Eagles – and hence, the Tigers – kept operating as a private army.

Many rumors were split around about both (Paul, Clarke, & Serena, 2014). Famous for their internal order and discipline, it was said that Arkan had strict rules for his men: a total ban on alcohol, a strong prohibition on gambling, apparently harsh punishments in case of misbehavior (even for minor faults), as will be described below.

A day within Camp Erdut – the most notorious training camp of the Tigers – was summarized by C. Stewart in his book (2008). Stewart described that a regular day within the training camp used to begin around 05:30 am, and not long after, at 06:30 am, all soldiers had to be dressed and standing in front of their Commander Arkan, who would portrait this title even after his death. Instruction to soldiers began shortly after, ‘teaching’ them strategies of ethnic cleansing. In testimonies gathered by the author, former soldiers who had been in the Army before joining the Tigers also described the training at Camp Erdut as ‘grueling.’

After being trained, the soldiers were sent and distributed to the battlefields, with the ‘mission’ to protect the unprotected Serbian population. As an example of this, there are plenty of testimonies stating that any time the Tigers were *en route*, being as ruthless as they seemed to be, people would run away, trying to save their lives (Paul, Clarke, & Serena, 2014). Arkan’s men would walk around and roam the streets singing songs with a nationalist incline, of course, with lyrics as provocative as ‘*Oh, (...) my brother, you have always been Serbian.*’

Many of the men who voluntarily joined the Tigers were not just football fans. Still, they were either previous members of the armed forces – such as police officers, military men, or similar – or previous criminals who had already undergone training in fighting and arms ruling. In any case, whether they knew what they were doing or not, they were interned in camps where they would be trained most fearlessly, to make them endure, be strong, and fight ‘honorably’ for their country.

One of those camps was the previously mentioned Camp of Erdut, in eastern Croatia (see Image III in Annex I), however, not everyone who was dragged there wanted to join the Tigers. Among those men who were forced to fight, there were army deserters and Serb refugees. Around 700 men were suing Serbia for forcing them to go to war (Balkan Investigative Report Network, 2014).

Working hand in hand with the Serbian police, Arkan made those refugees undergo extreme military training, indoctrinating them into showing no mercy for non-Serbs, even if they were women, children, or elders, as seen (Paul, Clarke, & Serena, 2014).

The Tigers’ training and equipment left an impression, according to a declassified report from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the unit was deemed to

be ‘not the usual rag-tag bunch of men,’ though they rather looked more like professional Western troops (DCI Interagency Balkan Task Force, 1995).

After stating some rules Arkan had over his men, another question arises: which were the recruitment measures Arkan would use to get his men’s attention into joining the organization?

Analyzing what was described more thoroughly above, it can be suggested five main recruitment measures that the Tigers could have used:

First, ideological propaganda. Through ideological indoctrination, and not media propaganda, Arkan managed to create an idea of superiority and heroism, romanticizing the Tigers’ self-image as strong, powerful, and fearless soldiers, who were legitimately fighting for their country and saving its citizens from non-Serbs.

A very common target for these kinds of organizations is usually a vulnerable person, for example, unemployed youth of military age. Through indoctrination, they easily convinced them to join, especially after mentioning the next point in this list: the financial incentives.

Financial incentives and rewards. It is not unique to the case of the Tigers that, to make their members more engaged with the organization and its values and mission, they would be promised material benefits after a mission was accomplished. Those benefits could come in the form of money, arms, drugs, or women.

Another point that could influence the joining of a person to the Tigers, could be personal ties. As in every organization of such caliber, many of the soldiers got in because they already knew someone who was within the organization, whether that was a friend, a brother, or a neighbor who, relating to the first point, had spread the correct amount of indoctrination to the future member to get him interested and attached. To make him relate to the cause for which they were fighting. A particular example is the fact that one of the first members to join Arkan in this cause was his brother-in-law, Aleksandar (Stewart, 2008).

A fourth tool of recruitment could be coercion and intimidation. Punishment, of course, particularly to those who were not willing to join the Tigers but were forced to. This allowed for the implementation of the fear of death, where the possibility of getting killed if there was not correct behavior played a huge role in those Serb refugees who – most often than not – had no particular interest in being part of the Tigers.

As well, once a recruit had joined the Tigers, the reception of various forms of punishment kept them coerced and with fear to even think about finishing their compliance to the organization. Stories and testimonies of soldiers who tried resisting the instruction of Arkan state that, some of the punishments the ‘disobedient’ would receive ranged between stripping them naked and tying them to trees; making them bark like dogs while tied with chains to dog houses; to receiving a hundred lashes on their bags or legs (Stewart, 2008).

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

Lastly, gun rewards should also be mentioned as a tactic that the Tigers would use over their men to secure their permanence and loyalty to the organization. Quoting the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) there is an unrevised file exemplifying the rewards that came directly from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Serbia toward the Tigers for their successful intervention in the liberation of Borovo, shortly after the battle of Vukovar (Vladisavljevic & Stojanovic, 2020).

The file quotes *‘As a sign of recognition for the successful cooperation and direct participation in combats for the liberation of Borovo, I [the Minister of Defense] am rewarding small arms as a war trophy to (...) Zeljko Raznatovic aka Arkan, Commander of the Special volunteers’ detachment (...) a submachine gun number 106986.’*

4. Their ethnic cleansing and displacement.

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Transnational Organized crime of the Balkans was not structured traditionally (Dojcinovic, Holcová, & Cerantola, 2020). As already described, the Balkans operated not hierarchically, but through networks crafted by strong ethnic and trust alliances. This has been further proven by the main protagonist of this project: The Arkan Tigers, a strong alliance of Serbs who believed their ethnicity was above any other.

The Balkan wars, which started in Slovenia and Croatia in 1991 had, by June 1992 displaced more than two million people, 250.000 of whom had managed to find refuge in the neighboring countries. However, the numbers are not official (Agencia de Naciones Unidas para los Refugiados. Comité Español, 2018). Outside of Yugoslavia – or what remained of it – nobody could understand why the Bosnians did not negotiate the division of the Federation according to the different ethnicities that lived in it.

The answer was simple: there was not a single place in Yugoslavia with a ‘pure’ ethnic group, as all of them cohabitated in the territory. In case this division happened, it would just trigger further displacement and flee of the minorities away from Bosnia (Sánchez Aranaz, 2019). One of the multiple examples that proved Arkan’s ethnic cleansing – and which clearly stated Arkan’s (and Milosevic’s) strategy – can be found in the Bosnian city of Zvornik, bordering Serbia, where 60% of the population happened to be Muslim, in counter position with the other 40% who were Serbs.

Once the Arkan Tigers arrived, the Muslims, scared, either tried to run away or hid in their homes, from where they were pulled away and packed in trains as if they were objects, heading Concentration Camps in Croatia. Of those Muslims who arrived at the camps, none knew what had happened to their friends and family members who could never ‘survive’ it at all (Sánchez Aranaz, 2019).

Some of the most brutal and heartbreaking testimonies told the world that many had been killed in front of their eyes; others had escaped; but many others' bodies had been spotted floating over river Drina. The general planning of such ethnic cleansing on Serbia's behalf was made, and this is an important point, with a focus on geographical maps dated from the first census of 1948 – right after the Second World War – which meant that what the Serbs considered 'theirs' was based on a source of information that had not been updated for more than forty years (Sánchez Aranaz, 2019).

As a result, the ethnic cleansing performed by the Arkan Tigers advanced on the battlefield, creating, as mentioned, Concentration Camps where men of military age who had not been yet killed, nor had they had the chance to escape, were kept. Of course, the conditions of said camps were below the bare minimum, and inhumane. Testimonies are truly heartbreaking.

Finally, by the end of August of 1992, more than two and a half million Bosnians had seen themselves obliged to move away from their homes; more than a hundred thousand of which were interns at the more than ninety Serbian Concentration Camps, all spread between Serbia, Bosnia, and Montenegro. In the end, more than one hundred and sixty people have been taken to court because of this ethnic cleansing during the Balkan Wars (Agencia de Naciones Unidas para los Refugiados. Comité Español, 2018).

The slaughtering of thousands of men, women, and children in the former Yugoslavian territory has been marked as one of the most brutal crimes against humanity in recent history.

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

II. Analysis of the Tigers' actions.

The second chapter of the project will dig deeper into analyzing the acts of the Arkan tigers. As per 'act,' it is meant to examine their role in some key battles, stating their operations and military tactics. This first part aims to understand how they operated, as they claimed to be an almost military organization. It is well known that all army organizations, before arriving at the battle, draft a plan, seeking an objective.

The goal, in this case, is going to be an understanding of the objectives of the Tigers and how they conducted their operations to reach them. In particular, the battles developed will be those of Bosnia and Croatia, particularly the sieges of Bosanski Brod and Vukovar or Bjeljina, linking it with the repercussions these acts had.

Then, the alliances – both state and non-state actors – that contributed to Arkan's legacy will be analyzed, finishing with a point of situation of said legacy recently. Following, it is going to be determined the 'alleged' crimes they had committed during the battles mentioned in the chapter above. In addition, an evaluation of witnesses' reports is going to be included, to get the other side of the story properly viewed.

To finish with this part of the essay, the various accountability methods and implications will be mentioned, bearing in mind that further analysis of the law will be developed in a subsequent chapter.

To end the chapter, a slightly more tactical vision of the case at hand will be given, analyzing the different tactics and military strategies followed by the Tigers in the above-mentioned battles and violations. An insight into their funding will also be considered, as due to such funding, they were able to manage weaponry and other resources that came in handy while in conflict. Lastly, a brief mention of the use of propaganda and psychological warfare tactics will be analyzed, trying to see if they had used any of these to control the population – or even, their members – and the territories they gained in battle.

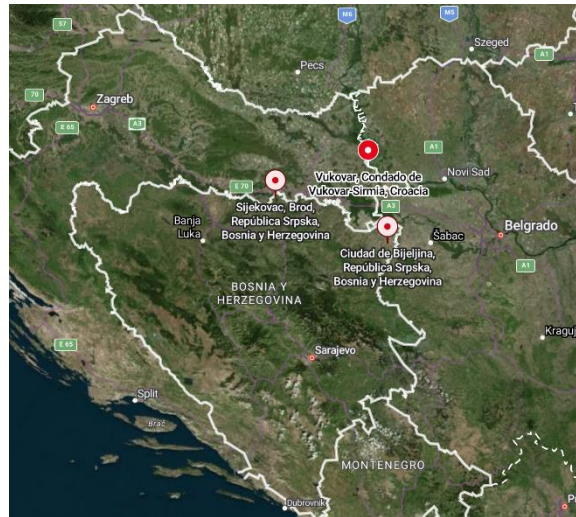
1. Their role in conflict zones: participation in key battles and operation.

It has already been settled that the Tigers became famous after spreading a far-reaching ethnic cleansing, which strategies included – among others – assault, forced displacement, torture, killing, blackmail, and concentration camps. After the assaulted cities were cleansed, they were looted and burned to the ground. Later, the militia made the Muslims clean up the mess, then crawled to their hands and knees afterward to the post office to get their exit documentation (Paul, Clarke, & Serena, 2014).

In this case, the major battles in which the Arkan Tigers participated are going to be analyzed, both within Serbia and neighboring countries like Bosnia and Croatia. The siege of Bosanski Brod – where the victims were Serbs – along with the siege of Vukovar and the Bijeljina Massacre are going to be described, intending to get to know

their repercussions, as well as the strategic objectives behind them. The goal is to conduct a comparison between battles where the Serbs were victims – which have been left unjudged – and battles in which the Serbs were the attackers, analyzing their judgment in further chapters.

In the following map, the three cities that are going to be described – where the Tigers’ most brutal battles took place – are located, simplifying the comprehension of their location. It serves as an opportunity to locate the different states that took part in the battles.



MAP 3. Map of the location of Sijekovac, Vukovar and Bijeljina. Source: Self elaboration

X

1.1 Massacre of Sijekovac, Bosanski Brod.

Sijekovac is a city in the northern area of Bosnia. During the Sijekovac Massacre of 1992, one of the biggest and heaviest massacres towards Serb civilization was produced by, according to the Center for the Investigation of War Crimes in Bosnia’s Serb-dominated *Republika Srpska*, regular Croatian Army Forces, aided by Croatian National Guard members, and the Croatian paramilitary groups (Susak, 2020). This could prove further the intentions of just-elected Croatian President Tudjiman that were described previously.

During the afternoon of March 26th, in Bosanski Brod, the Federal Yugoslav Army, represented by Croatians and Bosnians, launched an attack on a factory in Sijekovac, proceeding afterward to bomb the zone (Sánchez Aranaz, 2019). In this massacre, and according to allegations from the victims, the majority of the attackers wore coverage over their faces, probably to remain as anonymous as possible, though it was later known that the attackers belonged to the Croatian military forces together with help from a Muslim paramilitary unit – similar to Arkan’s Tigers, though on the other side of the conflict.

The large atrocities of this massacre, committed against Serbian civilians, categorized Sijekovac as one of the most horrific scenes of the Balkan wars. The

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

situation got so aggravated in the zone, that the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the time wrote a letter to Butros Ghali, who was the Secretary-General to the United Nations (UN) back then, asking him for an intervention of the UN to avoid a civil war. According to the Bosnian government, the situation in the Republic was dangerously deteriorating (Stewart, 2008).

The way war is conducted is quite simple to analyze. In this case, we can judge some similarities and differences between the way Croats attacked versus the war Serbian paramilitaries (Arkan's group) did. A point in common in their tactics that we find is that both sides were fighting to defend their nationals. The Arkan Tigers and the Serbs were fighting to defend the clean lineage of the Serbs, believing that the Muslims were getting their country dirty.

On the other hand, the Croats were trying to fight the Serbs off, defending the Muslim population of their land, as well as their civilians, who were unfairly suffering the consequences of the Serbs' attacks. A difference that can be stated between both groups is the fact that the Serbian paramilitary groups had no issue in capturing, torturing, and even murdering young kids.

As seen in the statement above, Arkan's men even recruited boys of military age to fight side by side with them and had no problem dragging young Bosnian or Croatian Muslims from their homes and making them watch as they committed the crimes. On the other hand, and with the above-quoted testimony, Croatian paramilitaries did spare youngsters' lives.

To conclude with the analysis of this first battle, it is important to state, as another difference between Serbian paramilitaries and Croatian ones, that these crimes, committed against Serbian civilians by Croatian militias, have never been processed. In the following chapters, the judicial process of the Arkan Tigers will be discussed, and the issues revolving around these processes will be addressed.

1.2 Massacre of Vukovar.

The Eastern Croatian city of Vukovar had an interesting yet turbulent past before the events that will be discussed in this section. For a long time, 800 years to be more specific, the city had been influenced by – among others – Croatia (Zivic & Degmecic, 2016).

At the time of the Balkan wars, Vukovar was not only resided by Serbian civilians but also Croats, which included a percentage of the Muslim population.

Again, the goal of the Yugoslav Wars, and more particularly, the goal of the Serbian paramilitary groups like Arkan's, was to get the *Republika Srpska* as 'clean' as possible. This generated hatred from other nationalities towards Serbs, which led to the Vukovar branch of Croatia's militant party at the time to aim of provoking a war

with the Serbians, as the only way to get Vukovar clean of them (Zlocini Nad Srbima, n.d.).

Considering the initial goal of the JNA, and getting notice of the hate and repressions that Serbs were suffering in Vukovar, the Yugoslav Army – with help from the Tigers, among other paramilitary groups – launched an attack on the Croatian city of Vukovar on August 1991, giving a jump-start to the siege that was coming (Milekic, 2021).

When said siege began, many civilians and town residents – especially vulnerable citizens such as children, women, and elders – hid themselves in their basements, or their neighbors' basements, trying to escape and hide from all the bombs and artillery the Tigers were displaying with the Army. The battle had started, the devastation of which can be found in Annex I, Image IV.

Therefore, it can be said that, because of the Croatian pressure over the Serb citizens of Vukovar, and because of the bigger goals that the Tigers represented, the attack had begun. In turn, the Croatians were going to defend themselves, their ideals, and their territory, though they were much less armed than the Tigers.

However, was there any other goal for this attack on Arkan's side? Yes.

Analyzing the previous Croatian influence over Vukovar, and again, the Serbs' intention of ethnic cleansing, the siege of Vukovar was not just an 'occupation', but it was intended to get the city cleaned according to Greater-Serbian national policy. The goal was to erase, even violently, all national Croatian symbols and identity, wiping them out and turning Vukovar into the Serbian Athens on the Danube (Zivic & Degmecic, 2016).

As a last point to the analysis of the battle of Vukovar, it can be stated that another objective for this siege had to do with the strategy of the Serb-dominated Yugoslav army. The Tigers and their peers wanted to consolidate control over the region of Eastern Slavonia – which happened to be the region where Vukovar was – and they reached it.

Of course, this siege was accompanied, as seen, by heavy ethnic cleansing. What is curious about this detail, is the fact – just like in Sijekovac – that, even though the Croatians had also led an ethnic cleansing of Serbs – probably out of revenge – it was roughly in the same numbers as the Serbs had to the Croatians (Partos, 2003). The execution of Serbians lasted even after Vukovar was liberated – from May to November 1991 – and just like in the case of Sijekovac, even if judgments were brought against Croatians, they were never executed.

The reason behind this non-execution of the judgment lay behind the fact that the Prime Minister of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Milan Panic made an exchange of prisoners (Zlocini Nad Srbima, n.d.). The Croatians who were freed were welcomed across the country as true heroes, a different case – internationally speaking – if referred to the Serbian Arkan Tigers.

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

This analysis is not intended to pick the Arkan Tigers as victims but to state the question of whether it is fair that, for the same crime, one side was punished, and the other was left as a hero. For more than 80 days, almost 2.000 Croats tried to defend Vukovar while the Serbian-led Yugoslav Army bombed it. Years later, in 2010, Serbian President Boris Tadic paid a visit to the area, and he apologized for the massacre (van de Ven, 2015).

1.3 Battle of Bijeljina.

The last battle in the analysis of the Tigers' acts is the battle of Bijeljina, close to the border of Serbia with Bosnia and Herzegovina. Again, the brutality of Arkan's men was made obvious, not just by the acts they committed, mentioned below, but also because of the armament they carried, compared to the little things that civilians from Bijeljina had (see Image V from Annex I).

The takeover of Bijeljina happened during the first days of April 1992, by Serbian armed forces led by Arkan, who was a man already to be feared, even if the testimonies state that they had only seen his face over the television (Dzidic, Ristic, Domanovic, & Milekic, 2014).

As their usual *modus operandi*, the Tigers would beat up and torture whoever they could, 'not leaving a millimeter of white skin,' according to one of the citizens who suffered the siege. One of these witnesses was a local journalist, who was released by Arkan, proving the importance he gave to media and public opinion, and using the journalist to broadcast an appeal directed at the Bosniaks on Radio Bijeljina, requesting them to give up their weapons (Dzidic, Ristic, Domanovic, & Milekic, 2014).

As in previous sieges, Arkan's Tigers were masked when looting the houses of the Bosniaks, where they devoted themselves to ransacking every possession the citizens had, including gold, money, and everything they could find in their way. Above other tactics, they also raped women (Dzidic, Ristic, Domanovic, & Milekic, 2014). According to Sánchez Aranaz (2019), during this battle, Arkan had already set himself a record, being regarded as terrifying after the siege of Vukovar.

To aid the Tigers, branches of their organization like the Panthers were responsible for much of the ethnic cleansing of Bijeljina. These associates were also responsible for the 'voluntary' transportation of Bosniaks – among other ethnicities – abroad in exchange for fees.

Among other tactics – in this case quite different from the other two battles – was the fact that these Panthers, under Arkan's rule, forced the citizens of Bijeljina to 'voluntarily' sign a document giving up every right they had over their property. If by any chance, the citizens were unwilling to resign their property, were in any case forced to live (Human Rights Watch, 2000).

To conclude with the harshest battles where the Tigers took place, the massacres of Bosanski Brod, Vukovar, and Bijeljina had been described and analyzed, finding similarities and differences between each of them. Said similarities included actions such as displacement of citizens, violations, rape, and other forms of torture, including looting and stealing.

On the other hand, the most notorious difference was that, while Croats – for instance – seemed to be ‘absolved’ from the crimes committed – as they also expelled and killed Serbs – the Serbs, who expelled and killed Croats, did not find the same fate. Unlike the battles of Bosanski Brod and Vukovar, in the battle of Bijeljina, none of the Arkan Tigers were convicted. This will be further developed in the next chapter.

2. Alleged crimes and delictive activities: examination of reported atrocities.

In the second part of the chapter, though without digging deeper into the national or International Law covering the case of the Arkan Tigers, the various delictive activities the Tigers committed are going to be set.

First, a context will be given, starting with the testimonies of the victims given to some journalists. Here, it will be stated what the Tigers were accused of. Then, the investigations that have taken place, and the trials – if there have been – are going to be outlined, describing the actual accusations and the responses to those. After evaluating the response to the trials and the resolutions to them, some controversies will be analyzed, if they exist, connecting with the cases seen above.

They dragged the husband out of the house first, across the street from the mosque (...). The soldiers were telling me not to take photographs. Then the wife was dragged out. She was screaming - shots rang out and the husband went down. (...) and then they shot her, and she went down. Then they dragged out the sister-in-law. I walked back towards some other soldiers who had just taken a kid on the lawn of the mosque. He broke free and tried to escape but couldn't (...). They shot him in the back. Over the road, they shot the butcher's sister-in-law before the order came to move to another part of town...

Ron Haviv told Vulliamy (2000)

Given the many other testimonies above mentioned, several crimes can be attributed to the group: violations and rape of women, beating and torture particularly to men, murder, forced displacement of civilians... Sources coincide that the most atrocious crimes that the Tigers allegedly committed took place in – above others – the city of Bijeljina (Stojanovic, 2020).

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

However, not many trials can be found about the Tigers, and if a report is to be found – in most cases from journalist sources rather than Tribunal ones – it has to do with the Tigers escaping justice rather than facing it. What can be found, though, is newspapers covering issues such as the fact that some of the Tigers had been sent to jail for other crimes, such as the killing of Zoran Djindjic in 2003, former Serbian Prime Minister (Balkan Investigative Report Network, 2014).

Of course, who could not escape trial – though he did after he died without being tried – was Arkan. According to the Case Information Sheet on Arkan, he was indeed charged with several crimes that had to do with the atrocities led by him during the Balkan Wars (International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia).

Therefore, following the ICJ, Arkan should have been tried for:

- Murder and other inhumane acts such as rape⁵, grouped into crimes against humanity.
- Cruel treatment and other violations of the laws and customs of war.
- Willfully causing great suffering, and willfully killing, which according to the ICJ induced grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949.

Regarding the controversies circulating the Arkan Tigers, scholars have been brave enough to compare their actions with those of the German SS-Einsatz units during World War II, given the fact that both involved the killing of civilians on a genocidal scale and the use of concentration camps. Also, another controversy circled more than 18 years after the attack on Bijeljina, what should be expected would be the trial for the crimes committed there. However, this was not the case.

In 1999, the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia accused Arkan of war crimes, as seen above, although he was just accused of the ones committed in 1995 in the Sanski Most area – northwest Bosnia – (Ahmetasevic & BIRN, 2010).

The last controversy questioning how it is possible for the Tigers to not be judged at all comes after their criminal acts were immortalized in photographs by Ron Haviv – U.S. photographer. Even though the pictures clearly showed the Tigers, with their faces uncovered, and the victims on the floor being beaten up – clearly recognizable – the investigation by the Serbian War Crimes Prosecutor's Office was conducted against unidentified attackers (Sarajevo Times, 2022).

⁵ The first case in which rape was established as a weapon of war was the Prosecutor v. Akayesu case. In this occasion, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) established for the first time the crime of rape as a crime against humanity, according to International Law. In addition to this, the case also underlined the connection between the crime of rape and genocide (International Justice Resource Center, n.d.).

3. Tactics and operations: analysis of military strategies.

In the last part of this chapter, the efforts of the Tigers, with their military tactics and strategies employed in their aim to establish territorial control over the cities they seized, as well as to establish political alliances. In addition, their assessment and management of resources like their weapons, funds, and supplies are going to be analyzed.

The Serbian Volunteer Guard – the Arkan Tigers – had a big influence, exaggerated probably by the intensity of their crimes, but also by Arkan's publicity-seeking presence – which could perfectly be used not only as a military tactic but also as a persuasion one, especially for the recruits (Encyclopedia.com, n.d.).

Looking at their war tactics, several weapons of war – not necessarily guns – can be mentioned, the first one of them being rape. Especially towards women, rape and violations were a common tactic for Arkan's militia to get them subjugated and enhance the militia's power over the non-Serbs (Dzidic, Ristic, Domanovic, & Milekic, 2014). Years later, some victims have received compensation for their suffering, although, of course, it will never be enough (Balkan Investigative Report Network, 2014).

Aside from raping, beating, torturing, killing and similar atrocities were also used by the Tigers to get what they had planned: territorial control and political influence (Stojanovic, 2020).

Violence was a deliberate strategy of Arkan, but the most deliberate tactic of war was the perpetration of offenses towards cultural and religious monuments, enhancing the conflict and 'demonstrating' which was the only valid religion: Serbian Orthodox Christianity. According to Paul et al., by 1992, almost 70% of the Bosnian architectural infrastructure had been demolished, of which 300 were mosques, and 50, Catholic churches.

The Tigers had planned their war, and their fighters happened to be perfectly equipped and organized, following the *Teritorijalna Odbrana's* scheme. *Teritorijalna Odbrana* was a civilian armed force created by Dictator Tito's anti-Stalinist communism, anticipating an eventual invasion by the Soviets. After getting their armament ready, the Serbians would descend from the countryside to the cities, cutting off communications and imposing their ideologies, as detailed in, for example, the cases of Vukovar or Bijeljina (Sánchez Aranaz, 2019).

Their tactics and action plan were simple: areas to which they considered their belonging – either for strategic or just historical reasons – were declared Autonomous Regions, and a brutal elimination of the non-Serb population followed, with violence and torture implied (Sánchez Aranaz, 2019).

Commenting on their resources, it must be pointed out that their weapons and armament came mainly from the JNA, though Arkan's men – who already had a criminal record – also managed to get weapons from robberies and lootings (Stewart, 2008).

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

Finally, looking at the strategy behind their ethnic cleansing, Arkan's men set a 'perfect' example in, above others, the city of Zvornik. Zvornik was populated by a majority of Muslims – 60%, to be more precise – over a population of 18000 civilians. By then, ethnic cleansing methods were not known, especially not the concentration camps that the Tigers would later develop. Such camps, authors say, were like those used by the Nazis during World War II. Following their example, the Tigers would drag the Muslims to the camps and execute them, as mentioned previously (Sánchez Aranaz, 2019).

Given their tactics and military methods, a last question arises: where were the Tigers trained to get those tactics? The most popular training camp was Erdut – Eastern Croatia – on the Serbian border. There, recruits trained in areas of weapon handling, military techniques, setting and disassembling mines, first aid, survival skills...

Here, they were also indoctrinated under the principles of Arkan's veteran men, principles of which included watching torture, gang rape, killing, or being even forced to participate.

In conclusion, this chapter has proven that the Tigers were perfectly organized, militarily speaking, even if they were just a militia or paramilitary group. Starting with the analysis of some of their most notorious battles, their alleged crimes, and their tactics, it is clear enough that they knew what they were doing, and that they were being helped and funded by the Government, which meant that, of course, they were not alone.

III. The geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

Geopolitics⁶ is a complex web which further reveals how complex is the interplay between ideology, influence, and power. The third chapter of the project is going to delve into two main topics which are very relevant when describing such a complex group as the Tigers: who supported them and what was their media perception.

This chapter is going to examine what is considered to be the backbone of the Tigers: their supporters and financiers. Therefore, several key points are going to be developed, all of which are important factors that will help to dig deeper into the importance of the Tigers, and how was it possible for them to last that long in time as a paramilitary organization; as well as how was it possible for them to conduct all the actions they did – many of them cataloged as atrocities – without further repercussion from, for instance, political and governmental authorities of their country.

The chapter will begin with the identification of all those bodies, whether political, governmental, or private ones, who supported the Arkan Tigers' organization, and who stood by their side, confirming their decisions, tactics and military operations, and most probably, authorizing them and funding them to keep going, supporting the Tigers' ideals and way of seeing Serbia as the strongest, and most valuable nation of Yugoslavia.

It will also be important to determine who – within the Serbian government, as well as the international arena – supported them not only ideologically but also financially. Their funding and form of getting every weapon and permission they got to execute their operations is crucial in understanding the far reaching of their activities. This will help understand how they managed to escalate with such speed in the geopolitical arena.

Due to the fact that a lot of the power the Tigers – and not just them, but also many other paramilitary organizations – held did not just come directly from their main funding sources, such as the Serbian Ministry of Foreign Affairs or any other Serbian businessman; but the public opinion and media perception of them, their ideas, how the group was being portrayed in the media, and their acts also had a big role in the entire time the Tigers were active.

Then, the focus will be shifted to the perception of the Tigers' acts in the eyes of the public, as it was crucial for the group's legitimacy: whether such perception on the local and international newspapers was positive or not, who usually perceived them positively and who usually perceived them negatively, and their main reasons why. This section will explore the impact of the Tigers' image as well through propaganda, their 'national' songs, their public relations campaigns – if there were – and some counter-narratives, trying to focus on Europe's point of view over them.

⁶ Geopolitics encompasses the study of how a state's size, political position and ideology, among others, can influence its power and international relations (Cambridge Dictionary).

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

Understanding where the support – both financial and geopolitical – for the Tigers came from and adding the perception people had of them – whether they were Serbian nationals or not – it is going to allow to understand even better the reach that the Tigers had, and why their power lasted so long, as the case with many paramilitary organizations is that they are rather short lived.

Of course, such was not the case with the Tigers. In addition to this, delving deep into their surroundings will allow them to understand their geopolitical landscape and their connections to power, perception, and influence.

1. Their supporters, geopolitical alliances, and their sources of funding and financing.

The point of departure that must be first mentioned before furthering into the analysis of the funding of the Tigers, is the fact that former President Slobodan Milosevic was the mind behind the man.

Together, Milosevic and Arkan shared the same ‘mission’: to reach a Great Serbia, clean, and made of pure Serbians. Providing a short overview of who was Milosevic – as means to understand his background and connection to Arkan – it can be stated that Milosevic was a former Serbian politician and administrator whose main goal as President of the country was the pursue of Serbian nationalism – just like Arkan.

For this, he subsequently entangled his country into conflicts with other Balkan states, using paramilitarism as his best weapon (Allcock, 2023). Given the ultranationalist ideas that Milosevic did not hide from sharing, it can be doubtful how he managed to stay in power for such a long time, though the answer is simple: he maintained his power through the repression of his opponents, as well as by controlling the mass media and public opinion. Similar actions can be seen in the way Arkan managed to control his men, and to gain the number of followers he gained during his rule.

The relationship and sharing of ideals between the Serbian President, Slobodan Milosevic, and the paramilitary leader of the Tigers, Zeljko ‘Arkan’ Raznatovic, could not be but the strongest proof of the secret influence and support the Tigers got from the Serbian Government. The Government – through the local police force – during the wars of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, was also in charge of financing and supplying the lifestyle of the recruits in previously mentioned Camp Erdut, where the SDG – later, the Tigers – held its training.

Several businessmen, not just governmental agents, were also in charge of sending the biggest part of the financial help to the organization (Robinson & Ojeda, 2017).

Following an investigation conducted by journalist C. Stewart in 2008, which was reported in his book *'Hunting the Tiger: The Fast Life and Violent Death of the Balkans' Most Dangerous Man,* after Yugoslavia broke apart, secret diplomacy was conducted with several government officials. Of those, the most notorious one was the Interior Minister Radmilo Bogdanovic, who was also accompanied by some of Milosevic's handpicked agents. After those conferences, the Serbian State Security – in Serbian, *Sluzba Drave Bezbednosti*, or SDB) – who worked for the mentioned Ministry, completely replaced the Federal State Security Agency (UBDA) and fixed Arkan's Tigers in its place (Stewart, 2008).

The Tigers, of course, had the mission to serve President Milosevic's personal ambitions, serving to direct the war for Greater Serbia. As Arkan's Tigers grew more comfortable working for the Ministry of Interior, of course, they did not perform their actions freely: the SDB, overtime, provided the organization with resources such as equipment, weapons, means of transport and financed the paramilitaries with millions of dollars under the name of 'humanitarian aid.' The Government also served the Tigers in aiding them with smuggling operations to fill their own personal offers (Stewart, 2008).

Hence, that is the proof of the not-so-hidden governmental support for the Tigers' actions.

The fact that the SDB was supporting the Tigers under the Government's rule was a well-known secret all around Serbia, as well as internationally. Agents from state security would visit Camp Erdut regularly, providing the recruits with instructions as well as money exchanges (Stewart, 2008). Those visits and financing constitute persuasive evidence of the tight connection between Milosevic, and the Tigers, considered to be his 'dreaded instruments of ethnic cleansing.' A very common visit to Camp Erdut was often made by Radovan Stojicic – known as 'The Hulk' who was the head of the Territorial Defense of Eastern Slavonia, later promoted as Serbian Deputy Minister of Interior (Stewart, 2008).

After Arkan recruited his men – as seen, both voluntarily or forcibly taken to Camp Erdut, sometimes with the help of the Serbian police – he made them sign off several pieces of paperwork in which the recruits had to promise they would turn in even their ID card, as a means of 'destroying' any evidence that would tie to the Serbian Government. If the influence, support, and financing of the Serbian Government, Ministries, agents such as the local police force, and several businessmen was not enough, the oath made to the Christian Orthodox Church must also be mentioned.

Again, after recruiting his men, Arkan did not only make them sign off his Identification Card, but he also made them sign statements – written, of course – by which the recruits swore allegiance to the Orthodox Church. After this oath, the recruits were baptized. One of the most important moves of Arkan, besides aligning with the Serbian Government, was aligning with the Orthodox Church, since this would mark the difference between – in his words – the 'Heavenly people' – in reference to the Serbians – and the 'insufferable Catholic Croats and Bosnian Muslims' (Stewart, 2008).

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

A further spot on how strong the Governmental influence was upon the Tigers can be exemplified in Arkan's funeral, where thousands of people arrived to grieve him. Quoting Stewart's analysis of 2008, to Arkan's funeral assisted politicians, former Tigers, and celebrities among others, all of them exemplifying and providing further Arkan's great rise, and even bigger fall.

In search of international alliances or support for the Tigers, the result has led to the fact that neither did Arkan receive big or notable international support and finance, nor a huge international action against him has been called upon.

After stating that this paramilitary organization was financed and aided by the Serbian Government itself, as well as the Orthodox Church, and some businessmen of the country, the attention should be shifted towards the reasons behind which a government would pursue the financing of such paramilitary groups, and understanding what the government could get in exchange for such support.

Conducting a thorough analysis, it is clear that, first and foremost, paramilitarism is an irregular form of organization whose aim is the organization and fulfillment of acts of violence on behalf of a state (Üngör, 2020). It is clear – in the Tigers' case – that they completely fall into this definition, being proven how they had been carrying out criminal acts – categorized even as 'genocidal' – on behalf of the state, represented by the Serbian President Milosevic. Professor on Holocaust and Genocide, Ümit Üngör, in his book *'Paramilitarism: Mass Violence in the Shadow of the State'* (2020) further clarified that paramilitarism can be the tool used by governments with an apparently well-functioning police force or army, to successfully perform political violence against civilians. In this case, it seems correct to say that political violence exercised against civilians – against all those civilians who were not 'pure' Serbians, in this essay – proved to be a powerful tool of control (Üngör, 2020).

Following the analysis, in some cases, paramilitary organizations – though linked to the Government, or financed by it – must be separated from the structure of the country's regular Army (Kandrić, 2020). However, this was not the case of Arkan, as not only did some of his recruits come directly from the state's armed forces, but also the training methods Arkan would follow in order to get his recruits in shape and ready for battle would be nothing less than military.

Despite using paramilitarism as a way of controlling the public, scaring the civilians, and getting their goals further, Governments may use paramilitary organizations as a bridge between civil society and the military world (Kandrić, 2020). In this case, Governments get involved in paramilitarism or use it as an ally to encourage understanding between the elites (policymakers in the security and defense areas) and the people.

Subscribing M. Kandrić (2020), this bridge between the Government, civil society, and the armed forces through paramilitary groups like the Tigers helps the reaching of a cooperation with municipal administrations too, as well as the police. All

this collaboration made through the Tigers helped enhance their use not only at war but also in crisis management and response.

In summary, the geopolitical analysis of the Tigers suggests that paramilitary groups find a limited integration in the national defense systems, given the lack of a legally binding definition that exists of the term ‘paramilitarism’ itself. However, Arkan’s Tigers have demonstrated that they do not fall into said description, as their link to Governmental and National Security demonstrated that they were quite a state-loyal group (Kandrić, 2020).

Finally, it should be noted that paramilitarism in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) – the Balkans included – is quite a usual phenomenon, therefore the idea of a group like Arkan taking over cities and using violence in pursuit of their goals neither was a new issue for the zone nor is it going to be the last case happening.

2. Their public and media perception.

In the research of a reason why Arkan was considered a hero among his men, and the civil Serbian society, not much information was found. It seems that the shift of the cult of personality turned to former President Milosevic, who can be considered Arkan’s ‘boss’. In this chapter, an analysis is going to be conducted on how the media can be a very useful tool while in war to control public actions as well as public opinion.

This, of course, does not mean that Arkan or his Tigers did not take covers of newspapers, as several images of them were laid out in different media works. However, the most controversial information and media perception is attributed to Milosevic, hence why the focus will be turned on the person whose ideas the Arkan Tigers portrayed as their main goals.

First, it should be understood what freedoms Serbian and Yugoslavian media had during the Balkan wars. State-run media should be understood, analyzing also the reasons that make a politician like Milosevic – and his fellow companions from other countries – take such control of newspapers.

Then, a look at the positive perception of Milosevic and his ideals will be addressed. In this part, it is intended to describe what tools, words, and actions were published and how they grabbed the public’s attention, providing a positive image for the citizens.

Lastly, a quick glance to the negative perception – the other point of view – will be provided. It needs to be analyzed what can the international community do to not fall in the polarization of the media in times of conflict. In this case, many authors have provided their advice for the international community, and they will be developed as

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

well, contributing to our analysis of the media and its effect over public opinion in times of war.

2.1 Overview of the media during the 90s in the Balkans.

To understand whether the media contributed to the creation of a cult of personality towards Milosevic and his followers, it should be firstly stated that, ultra-nationalist controlled media has been flooding newspapers and electronic media ever since the fall of the Iron Curtain.

As an example of how this state-owned media contributed to the polarization of the public opinion as well as the control of it, it can be stated how ideas of ‘one part-one regime’ – meaning, Dictator Tito’s regime – quickly spread during the Cold War. Quoting Kemal Kurspahic, the United States Institute of Peace (2003) also determines that in the 1990s, nationalist-owned media could be said to be the ‘midwife’ t the birth of Milosevic, his power and the spread of his regime (United States Institute for Peace, 2003).

Nevertheless, and though media plays an important role in conflict, constructing to the polarization of the civil society, it must never be underestimated how it also bears the enough power to ‘balkanize’ and unite and reconcile those peoples who, at the expense of someone’s extremist ideas, had been separated.

Prize-Winning Journalist Roy Gutman, quoted in the United States’ Institute of Peace (2003) made a note which describes almost to perfection what it meant when stating that Serbian media in times of Milosevic was completely state-owned – which further explains the reason why a great number of Serbians would adore Milosevic and, in turn, Arkan – to the point where no distinction could be made between Balkan professional journalists who were just doing their job and reported what was happening at the time, and Milosevic’s official ‘propagandists’ (United States Institute for Peace, 2003).

It can be affirmed, after a superficial analysis, that media played – not only in the bust, but it still does in present times – a big role when it came to the spread of propaganda, rooting it deep in the citizens, not just Serbian citizens, but also Bosnians and Croats. Especially in the 1990s, where almost everyone had easy access to the media, state-owned – and hence, Milosevic owned – media could easily control and manipulate their opinions, narratives, and the way war was being waged (Propaganda, Media and Fake News During the Yugoslav Wars, 2020).

In addition to this, the existence of a federalized radio diffusion system in Former Yugoslavia also helped with the diffusion of the various regional ideologies that had been laid out: in Serbia, Serbs were the victims; in Croatia, Croatians happened to suffer more because of Serbian violence...

Coming back to the main topic, Arkan's Tigers, and their relation to the media and the public perception, statements gathered by Journalist C. Stewart in 2008 described the Commander as a convincing man, who would more often than not, remind his men of how their people – his people – Serbians, had been beaten up not just then, but for centuries, subscribing to what Milosevic's state-owned media was spreading. Of course, the media, even if it would show Milosevic more often than Arkan, constantly covered the Tiger's actions, creating a 'hype' towards an imminent genocide (Stewart, 2008).

In this regard, it would be of interest to understand which tools media use in order did to influence Serb's opinion to such an extent. Journalists suggest that, in the first place, the several news covered definitely did not give much information, lacking to dig deeper into the topic and describe the issue (Propaganda, Media and Fake News During the Yugoslav Wars, 2020). This first tool proved to be useful to influence public opinion, as it would grab their attention for a short span of time, which also made information spread quicker.

Furthermore, media would also use reactions and words which would enhance hate towards the other ethnicities – pushing toward the fight – as well as fear of them: an example of this is clearly seen in Serbian media, where, as mentioned, the Croats were portrayed as conspirators against Greater Serbia. On the other hand, Western media, anti-Serbian in its majority, would take the Muslims' side, publishing the atrocities they were suffering on behalf of Serbian paramilitarism.

What the media managed to create, or better, further develop, was rivalization. However, it did not just create rivalization and enhance the hatred between ethnicities, but it also followed with another consequence: the individual did not exist anymore. People were now part of a bigger movement: their ethnicity, which kept fueling the participation in violence, and the spread of paramilitarism to fight for their ethnic superiority. A useful example to prove this statement, could be the fact that, in Serbian media, Bosnian Muslims – their rivals – were called 'Turks,' while their people, the Serbian army, the Serbian paramilitaries, and the Serbian civil society would be referred to as 'heroes' (Propaganda, Media and Fake News During the Yugoslav Wars, 2020).

Lastly, to give way to the following chapter, and following in the life of the speeches and ways of portraying propaganda and the media, for the regime's sake, Slobodan Milosevic published, in 1989, a set of his speeches which, hand in hand with the media, kept on supporting his ideals and his way of viewing Greater Serbia.

Author A. Djilas (1993) categorized said speeches as 'arrogant' and 'simple,' providing also that their vocabulary was very limited, which further proved, according to the author, Milosevic's narrow intellectual horizons. Nevertheless, this 'simplicity' should never be taken for granted, as the fact of constantly using ritual formulas, military vocabulary happened to be an extreme success within the population (Djilas, 1993).

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

His mechanical style convinced the readers, that is, the Serbian reading public. In this regard, even if the book of speeches, according to A. Djilas (1993) was a 'naïve book,' with a 'propagandistic' background, it became a national best-seller, making the public completely subscribe to Milosevic's ideals.

2.2 The positive perception of Milosevic and his ideals.

Linking the topic with the previous sub-chapter, it seems clear to state that Milosevic had gathered quite some power in the media, reaching Serbian households with such ease that it could not but grow further. Even though it is true that at the beginning of his election campaign his political position was not as strong, after gathering himself the 'major levels of power' (Cohen, 2001), including the state-owned media, the police and armed forces, the paramilitaries, and the state's economic apparatus, merging it with the support of the people allowed him to reach a level of power he probably did not expect in his beginnings.

In times of war, the development of the war itself does not in itself prove successful unless it has the public's support. In this case, Milosevic was smart enough to control the media and achieve a great cult of him and his regime, and a much bigger support from the Serbs, some of which even joined paramilitary organizations such as the Tigers to show their support.

In a journal article written by S. Poggioli in 2006, the journalist quotes Mr. Dejan Anastasievic – a Serbian journalist – in his description of Milosevic as a 'master of manipulation' (Poggioli, 2006). Anastasievic clearly stated the great work of Milosevic in achieving the positive support of not just the population, but also his great capacity to make the tables turn when it was time to fight.

With his speeches, use of propaganda, and public influence, Milosevic was able to 'make his enemies fight one another, instead of fighting him.' This declaration further proved the great capacity Milosevic had to make himself 'loved' among his people, even if what he was masking as 'good actions' were nothing less than mass murders and atrocities.

Stated further in S. Poggioli's article, 'Milosevic: The Life and Death of a Strongman,' more proof of his positive impact in the media and population is laid (Poggioli, 2006). The way his manipulative words could sink into the Serbians, not even allowing them to have a judgment of themselves only contributes to the analysis stated above: the individual was gone, and it was now merged into a bigger sense: the ethnicity. For instance, when Bosnia had declared its independence, Milosevic made good use of his manipulative speech, making the Serbians believe that what Bosnia's Muslim majority aimed to achieve – or 'impose' – was a 'fundamentalist Islamic State.'

Of course, Milosevic left no room for doubt when journalists asked him about such statement, and he defended himself declaring that he was ‘supporting our people to survive there with humanitarian and civilian help.’

Again, this last statement does not just show the amount of manipulations Slobodan Milosevic laid on the table, but it made his intentions look clear and justified before his people. In this case, he was not being a monster aiming to exterminate Bosnians from a different religion than his, he seems to only want to protect his people, trapped in Bosnia under the ‘evil Muslim’s’ actions.

The acknowledgement of Slobodan Milosevic on behalf of the Serbian population, and the spread of his nationalism was made even more visible in various chanting that spread through the Serbian cities. One of those songs or jingles sounded in the following hymn (Djilas, 1993):

*Slobodan, they call you freedom,
You are loved by big and small.
So long as Slobo walks the land,
The people will not be in thrall.*

In summary, it is more than clear that Milosevic had a positive impact among his national fellows and followers, not just gaining their respect, and support, but also making himself the owner of songs and cheers.

In turn, the attention is briefly going to be shifted to analyzing how the Tigers gained influence and repercussions in the media, although not as directly as Milosevic. When analyzing Arkan’s influence, it has been determined that, just as Milosevic, Arkan was a very powerful man. The difference between both could be that while Milosevic was popular among the population and the armed forces, Arkan was only popular – or better known – in his own lobby, that is, his Tigers and fellow businessmen and government officials who, as seen, supported them.

The best example of Arkan’s influence within his lobby would be his funeral. His perception as a national hero among the citizens who had learnt of his ‘heroic’ actions in supporting Serbia and Milosevic was further shown that day (Stewart, 2008).

In this regard, an important point of debate would be the way in which Arkan gained influence among civilians, and how did he become a ‘hero.’ Arkan made sure his actions were widespread among Serbia and the nations surrounding Serbia in several paramilitary anniversary celebrations and parades. These public displays only grew their public support, especially after the Tigers themselves dedicated some of their time out of the battlefield to clean historic monuments connected with Serbian military history, as some kind of service to society (Kandrić, 2020).

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

2.3 The negative perception of Milosevic and his ideals.

The positive perception of Milosevic and Arkan would only grow among their followers, contrary to the opinion spread through their opposition and international media. In this regard, many journalists such as Nenad Pejic – author of the paper ‘Media’s Responsibility for the War in Former Yugoslavia,’ 1992 – described that the rise of Slobodan Milosevic and his apparent ‘love’ within the population showed that adults, apparently educated, had no capacity to discern the real facts of the war from the false information that was being spread (Pejic, 1992).

Of the many false news and fake information that Serbian government would share in the state-owned media, which had a positive effect in the population, which decided to enhance their support towards Milosevic’s regime, it was not uncommon that the Serbian media would share images of dead bodies, signaling them as ‘Serbian victims who had been killed.’

The problem with such fake information was that, even if on the one hand it would win the sympatization of the civilians, the identification of such corpses as ‘Serbs’ in the media happened even before the actual identification of the bodies had even begun (Propaganda, Media and Fake News During the Yugoslav Wars, 2020). This meant that news about ‘Serbians being killed’ were spread before even knowing who those deceased people were. In this regard, the first negative effect of state-owned media could be said to be the widespread of lies, fake information, and non-confirmed data.

Linking with the ‘positive’ effect that the media had, when the intention was to attract a short span of attention from the public, a negative counter effect is also found: the short headlines, which were shocking and remarkable, together with the mentioned images were published one day, and immediately disappeared the next. This only contributed to the inappropriately displayed facts (Propaganda, Media and Fake News During the Yugoslav Wars, 2020).

Adding up to the negative effects of Milosevic’s state-owned media, G. Stokes, J. Lampe, D. Rusinow and J. Mostov (1996) reflects other authors’ view over the topic, stating that Milosevic’s words were full of lies, ‘fantasy and half-truths’ (Stokes, Lampw, Rusinow, & Mostov, 2017). In addition to this, the previously mentioned authors subscribe to the opinion that such nationalistic media only helped to ‘poison the political atmosphere.’ Serbian citizens’ judgment was clouded enough to understand the reality of their situation, and the media helped only to radicalize them even more, as it had been seen.

If those effects were not enough, the most important negative effect that was drawn out of the analysis would be the spread of xenophobia (Stokes, Lampw, Rusinow, & Mostov, 2017).

The radicalization of the media, or just in Serbia against Croatia, but vice versa as well, only cultivated an extreme incline to xenophobia which, in turn, discharged in mass killings and genocide. Milosevic's power did not come from statues, for example, which could be destroyed once he fell, but it came only because of the images and speeches he left in the media (Poggioli, 2006).

In order to conclude the positive and negative effect of the use of media in the rise of Milosevic's ideology, and therefore, the Tigers' popularity, the analysis has clearly shown how different manners of violence and propaganda were used in order to spread fear among the nationals of Serbia, contributing to the building of national – and religious – groups whose main aim was the self-determination of their country (Powers, 1996).

As seen, war propaganda made a good work in spreading the 'good' image of Milosevic and his ideas of constructing a Greater Serbia, allowing him to build his own army – the SDG, or Arkan's Tigers, - and achieving battles he would have never thought before had he been on his own. In addition to this, it can be stated that, after the analysis, it has been seen how there was not much propaganda of the Tigers, given the fact that they used to act in secrecy, and their recruitment method, for instance, did not need for a flier to be published, as they would rather use other methods already described to gain the public attention.

2.4 Advice for the international community.

The fact that the media can be useful during wartime, permitting the construction of public opinion easily, and conditioning it. The influence of the statements in the newspapers could easily intimidate Serbians and drive them into the belief that they were being the victims of the conflict. On the other hand, the media could also manipulate Bosnian Muslims or Catholic Croats into believing that Serbians were the evil one.

Who was right then? Analysis from an objective point of view determines that neither of them was right, nor better, each was right within their circumstances, which were not necessarily shared. What lessons can be learnt out of the analysis conducted on the effect of the media during the Yugoslav wars? Could the international community have reacted and avoided the rise of regimes like Milosevic's? The answer seems to be clear: yes.

Following this statement, the United States Institute of Peace (2003) drew three main lessons out of the interplay of nationalism and the state media during the 1990s:

First, the media played a very important role not only during the conflict, but it would also have an important role when it came to peacebuilding and peacekeeping. There is no doubt that the media encouraged the ethnic hatred and tensed the relations

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

of Serbia and the Balkans, which according to the U.S. Institute of Peace was a ‘costly mistake’ that could have been avoided had the international community made a bigger and stronger effort in bringing peace.

Second, the Institute acknowledged that the media could have been a powerful tool to unite and reconcile the region, had they not only filled themselves with spreading such polarized information. Of course, this second point can be extrapolated to nowadays Balkan region, if the media aimed to transform the propagandistic ethnic hate into inter-ethnic reconciliation.

Lastly, the main goal of the media, not just in the Balkan conflicts but also in a more general spectrum, should be to combat nationalistic and separatist voices, not giving them a chance to spread their messages, and aim for a unified community, and an even stronger international community. If this goal is to be achieved, it should be by supporting and financing media organizations which seek to reach further, and go beyond the ethnic-political lines, providing more objective information, and sharing the various points of view (United States Institute for Peace, 2003).

IV. The ruling of the ICTY.

The last chapter of the project is going to be devoted to the analysis of the ruling of the International Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia, established by the United Nations Security Council⁷ in 1993 as an ad hoc tribunal⁸.

The aim of this analysis is to clarify and understand how it managed to contribute substantially to the change of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) landscape, allowing victims of IHL violations a chance and an opportunity to give them voice, and state the atrocities and horrors that they witnessed or experiences during the Balkan wars in the 1990s.

Of course, and even though slight details of theory must be commented on to allow for a better comprehension of the analysis, this chapter does not aim to constitute a theoretical framework on International Law (IL) or IHL. The major goal is to understand what the most notorious sentences and trials meant for the international community and, more specifically, how those trials changed the Serbian community.

First, two of the most prominent verdicts for this project are going to be described. Even though they will not be described in depth, as this chapter does not intend to determine the legal matters thoroughly, the aim will be to briefly state the accusations of both Zeljko 'Arkan' Raznatovic and Slobodan Milosevic, to extract the changes that marked the International Law's path.

In the second part, and with a slight reference to another very important tribunal for the development of International Law - the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda - will be made, to assess what lessons can the international community learn from conflicts like the Balkan Wars, like the genocide of Rwanda⁹. As well, lastly, a mention of the influence of the ICTY towards the Serbian community will be assessed.

1. Verdicts and sentences: outcome of the most notorious trials.

Briefly, it shall first be commented on the origins of the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia's establishment and founding, to understand the legal scope where the case study finds itself.

After the UNSC approved Resolution 827 on May 25, 1993, (United Nations Security Council, 1993), the ICTY began its work. Since 1993, the Tribunal has taken more than 90 people to trial, responsible for a variety of crimes during the Balkan wars (Martín, 2023).

⁷ United Nations Security Council Resolution 827, 25 of May 1993.

⁸ An ad hoc tribunal refers to a court created to deal with a specific matter, such as the crimes committed in the territory of Former Yugoslavia, and which addresses cases related to international crimes such as genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2010).

⁹ The ICTR was created under UNSC Resolution 955 in 1994.

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

The creation of the ICTY's was necessary since the international community was – finally – beginning to focus their attention on the several atrocities that were being committed in the territory of the Former Yugoslavia on both sides of the conflict. Resolution 827 of the UNSC clearly states that it was an alarming situation, where “widespread and flagrant violations of international law” were occurring, and that, of course, such situation of killings, rape, and ethnic cleansing constituted nothing less than a “threat to international peace and security.”

During its first years of work, the ICTY happened to lack not only a basic structure, but also resources and staff. Nevertheless, as it gained prominence, and began receiving indictees since 1996, the Tribunal increased its role, devoting its resources into holding trials (Murphy, 1999).

The ICTY can only relate its jurisdiction to the following matters: according to its Article 2, grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949¹⁰; according to its Article 3, grave violations of the laws and customs of war; according to its Article 4, serious crimes of genocide; and lastly, according to its Article 5, severe crimes against humanity (Murphy, 1999).

When analyzing the influence of the ICTY, its trials and jurisprudence, in Serbia and the territories of Former Yugoslavia, it must be determined that, politics of state compliance with such international tribunals often establish their dependance of target states to bring the perpetrators to justice. In the case of Former Yugoslavia, it must be stated that those target states which helped with the implementation of the ICTY in the Former Yugoslavia were the USA and the EU (Ostojic OSTOJIĆ, 2014).

After having introduced, though shortly, the ICTY and its general goals, two of the most notorious trials are going to be examined: first, that of Zeljko ‘Arkan’ Raznatovic, and second, the one of former Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic.

The aim of the following trials’ development will be to simply overview their chargers, why they have not complied with their indictment, and the consequences for international humanitarian law - and international law in general - that those trials had, especially the trial of Slobodan Milosevic.

1.1 Trial of Zeljko Raznatovic.

The first time Zeljko ‘Arkan’ Raznatovic was informed that he had been indicted by the ICTY was in September 1997, only two years before former President Slobodan

¹⁰ The Geneva Conventions of 1949, alongside with their Additional Protocols are in charge of establishing the laws that regulate the conduct during an armed conflict. It can be said that they are the core of IHL. In particular, the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols protect those who are not taking part in the conflict, such as civilians or health workers, among others, and they call for measures that can be taken in order to prevent or even finish the hostilities (International Committee of the Red Cross, 2014).

Milosevic's indictment was filed. Arkan's indictment confirmed that he had been the leader of the football team of the Red Star of Belgrade, which later turned into the Serbian Volunteer Guard, also known as the Tigers (International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia).

However, according to a Statement made on January 17, 2000, by Madame Carla Del Ponte – Prosecutor for the ICTY – following reports of Arkan's death only two days before, it was disclosed that Arkan's indictment remained confidential until the month March 1999, when the confidentiality order was partially lifted.

In the process, Arkan was charged, on the basis of individual criminal responsibility of Article 7.1 of the Tribunal's Statute of: crimes against humanity, violations of the laws and customs of war, and breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 (International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia).

What is curious about Arkan and his paramilitary organization is that, of all the paramilitary units of the Serbian Volunteer Guard, only one of the fighters – Boban Arsic – has been convicted (Stojanovic, 2020). In addition to this, subscribing Judge Del Ponte's words in her statement following Reports of the Death of Arkan, Arkan's judgment never came to reach the finish line, and hence, dictate a verdict, given the fact that he was killed on January 15, 2000, when the trial was still ongoing.

Nevertheless, while analyzing Arkan's sentence, the most notable issue is that he never had to comply with imprisonment or any other such punishment. The reason for this is that he happened, as seen, to be murdered in January 2000. This meant that Arkan never stood trial, let alone punishment, for the war crimes he committed (Stojanovic, 2020).

Of course, after Arkan's death, his case was closed, leaving many of the victims without any minimum compensation.

All in all, though, the unfairness of leaving the victims without a compensation did not last long, as different and various facts of Arkan's crimes – whether committed by him, or instructed by him – were established in several other trials, the most important of which were the trials of Jovica Stanisic and Franco Simatovic, both of whom were senior officers of the Serbian State Security (Stojanovic, 2020).

A point which stands out when analyzing not only Arkan's case, but the legacy of it in other indictments such as the two mentioned above, shows a change: witnesses were allowed to testify about Arkan, his unit or the crimes they committed, and even though it was very well known that Arkan got help from the Serbian state, there was no proof of it (Stojanovic, 2020).

However, both Stanisic and Simatovic were the last officers indicted by the ICTY, in which verdict it was clearly stated that the Serbian State's implication was clearly done, through its public workers and officers, in the several crimes which organizations such as the Arkan Tigers committed both in Bosnian and Croatian

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

territory. This confirmation was the last legal confirmation needed to be able to establish the role of the Serbian Government in the Balkan wars in the 1990s (Martín, 2023).

Both cases of Stanisic and Simatovic stated that they were part of a criminal organization in which Slobodan Milosevic was the maximum leader (Martín, 2023). Of course, and even though Arkan was the commander and recruiter of the Tigers, he did not do but perform or portray orders that came from above. As seen when examining the media perception, Arkan was hardly ever in the media if it wasn't for his wedding and several other cases. Therefore, when analyzing Arkan's 'trial' there is not much reference to investigate.

In spite of that, most of the details of Arkan's deeds as well as his Tigers were revealed in other trials, as seen, particularly in the trial of Slobodan Milosevic, described below. In this case, it was not Milosevic who confessed the Tigers' involvement in the crimes, but it was an anonymous witness, named B-129, who spoke and gave away the relationship between the Serbian Volunteer Guard and the Serbian State Security, kept secret during the wars (Stojanovic, 2020).

1.2 Trial of Slobodan Milosevic.

According to many authors, and to the international community in general, the fact that former President Slobodan Milosevic was indicted by the ICTY happened to be a very important turning point as well as a watershed moment for international justice. Milosevic was indicted two years after Arkan, in May 1999. The most notorious fact of his indictment was the fact that Slobodan Milosevic was the first head of state to be prosecuted for war crimes by an international tribunal, leaving aside his immunity from prosecution (International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, n.d.).

Another important difference in this trial, compared to others, was that the public had continuous access to it, which allowed witnesses to bring in written statements and evidence (International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, n.d.).

The confirmation of Milosevic's involvement in the crimes he was accused of – such as those committed in Bosnia and Croatia, above described – was the result of many years of accumulating investigations and evidence of the crimes, the direct actors who performed those crimes, the mid-level leaders that the perpetrators reported to – such as Arkan – and the highest level authorities who, allegedly, conspired with Milosevic in order to fulfill his goal and achieve a Greater Serbia (International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, n.d.).

Similarly to Arkan's case, Slobodan Milosevic never had a verdict for the charges pressed against him. Following the ICTY's Prosecutor's statement of 11 of March 2006, Slobodan Milosevic's death some weeks before his trial reached a completion, prevented justice from being correctly implemented in his case. Prosecutor

Carla Del Ponte further stated in that press release that the international community should not worry about justice being delivered, as both the community and the Tribunal would be the ones in charge to ensure that all the accused were brought to justice and tried in the Hague.

During the analysis of the indictment of Milosevic, there is another fact that makes it different with respect of other trials during this time: Milosevic was granted permission to represent himself, under his choice, which gave him – granted by the Prosecutor – some extra-time to examine the witnesses' evidence as well as include his own (International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, n.d.).

In any case, and to allow a fair trial, the ICTY granted him a Counseling Chamber to act as *amicus curiae*, assisting him in making sure his trial was being held fairly and he understood the proceedings completely. This, again, constituted an innovation in such trials (International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, n.d.).

According to the International Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia's file of Milosevic's trial, the length of the trial Slobodan Milosevic faced made a substantial change in similar proceedings, which will be developed below. In any case, it can be stated that Milosevic's trial lasted nothing less than four years, mainly because of his health conditions.

When analyzing other issues that made a difference in international law or in international tribunals like such, there is the case of the jointure of cases. The Prosecutor's intention was, as both the charges for the crimes committed in Kosovo as well as those committed in Bosnia and Croatia happened to, generally, state same ideas, and charged Milosevic with crimes against humanity, grave breaches of the Geneva Convention of 1949, and others, the most efficient method of judging and proceeding with the case would be to join the cases.

As described in the file of Slobodan Milosevic's Trial in the ICTY, the Prosecutor argued that "the purpose of the joint criminal enterprise described in these indictments and the methods applied to achieve the goal are effectively identical." Finally, it was decided, as described in Milosevic's trial file of the ICTY, that the Kosovo case was going to be judged separately, while the cases of Bosnia and Croatia were going to be joined. This jointure, of course, caused criticism.

At the end of the Trial, Milosevic was charged under Article 7.1 for individual responsibility as well as under Article 7.3 of the ICTY's statute, for his role as superior who had common responsibility over those crimes. He was convicted for crimes against humanity, violations of the laws and customs of war, and grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, just like Arkan (International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, n.d.). However, and as mentioned, the trial was suspended following his death, so no charges applied directly to him.

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

2. Effect of the ICTY on international justice: lessons learnt and critics.

The following chapter is going to try to, first, analyze the media perception and, most importantly, the Serbian population's perspective of the works of the International Tribunal of Former Yugoslavia. After this, a summary of the consequences for the international community of the trial of Milosevic, more specifically, as it is the most developed one, will be examined.

When determining the perception of the trials for the Serbian population, a notorious detail would be the fact that, as described in Chapter 3, the Balkans tended to glorify all who had been condemned to war crimes, showing their disapproval towards the ICTY. At the same time, Belgian Jurist Serge Brammertz declared that "those convicted were no heroes. They were not indicted for having saved their peoples (...)" which further fueled the Serbian hate towards the ICTY (Martín, 2023).

Local authorities in Bijeljina, a battle examined in previous chapters, honored their warlord Arkan's organization naming a street after it, while the war victims did not have any such memorial, and their suffering had never been commemorated (Nikolic, 2022).

In other matters, it has been argued, and widely, the fact that international criminal justice is a must when it comes to consolidating peace and security. Also, it has been stated that it also promoted reconciliation. In the Serbian case, the ICTY has enjoyed very little progressive effect on the political leaders, institutional changes or even the Serbian society, primarily because of the effect of Serbian traditional, nationalistic power (International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, n.d.).

The nationalistic perspective, again, sees the Serbs as victims rather than victimizers. On the other hand, it sees most of the outsiders, including the ICTY, as the victimizers rather than the victims. As mentioned, the ICTY was created by Western states within the UN, with the main goal to avoid intervention in the Balkans. Nevertheless, the court did not reach to stop or reduce violence in the region (International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, 1995).

According to the ICTY, Serbia is still far from establishing a liberal democracy, even though changes regarding democratization are underway. Still, Serbia is defined as a "hybrid" regime or "transitional" one, and even though many Serbians still do not completely trust the Tribunal, studies conducted in 2003 and 2004 showed that Serbian civilians were commencing to believe that the work of the Tribunal was slightly positive.

In any case, Serbian opinion over the trial, and external help was polled by the Belgrade Center of Human Rights and Strategic Marketing in 2004 and 2005, quoted by the ICTY. The poll showed that 72% of the Serbs polled confirmed a lack of understanding of what the ICTY's goal was. Of course, this could have been the result of Serbian propaganda, where the deeds of the ICTY were described as anti-Serb. Serbs considered the work of the ICTY as a "necessary evil."

Author M. Ostojic (2014) determined that it was not until Milosevic's fall in October 2000, that the job of the ICTY was established as a symbolic measure of the Serbian society's will to come to terms with the criminals' legacy (Ostojic OSTOJIĆ, 2014). In addition to this, Serbian society was also willing to adhere to the principles of liberal democracy, and as said, changes are on the way.

Continuing with the next matter at hand, the lessons learnt, and changes introduced by the ICTY in regards of – particularly – the Milosevic trial, there can be stated a few that have already been mentioned above. In this case, it is going to be determined how those changes and lessons affected international jurisdiction, and how other tribunals also helped in contributing to the development of international humanitarian law.

The proceedings against Milosevic were a turning point for international justice, and it was critical regarding those who had been the most affected in the territories of Former Yugoslavia from the crimes of which he was charged (International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, n.d.).

Firstly, the fact that there was a chance to bring a former head of state, who usually enjoys immunity of jurisdiction, to trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity fueled great expectation in the international community. As well, it created a big controversy in Serbia (Human Rights Watch, 2006).

According to the ICTY's file on Slobodan Milosevic, he was the first head of state – former, by then – tried for war crimes and violations of International Humanitarian Law, which served as a lesson internationally, determining that no one could use a position of advantage to claim immunity from prosecution.

Together with the work of the ICTY, and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the creation of the International Criminal Court came to life in the international arena. With this, it was made even clearer that no government official, because of his or her position, was – in any case – above the law. Since Milosevic's trial, other leaders and heads of state such as Saddam Hussein and Charles Ghankay Taylor – former presidents of Iraq and Liberia, respectively – had also faced justice for atrocities which have been committed during their watch (International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, n.d.).

In the second lane, a second lesson learnt from this case related to the duration of the trial. It has already been determined that, though intermittent, Milosevic's trial lasted four years. This was, of course, a lengthy trial, and it made it more difficult to manage it efficiently (International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, n.d.). In this regard, the international community began implementing stricter time limits for the trials, as a primary innovation resulting from this trial.

A third change had to do with the evidence presented. The evidence presented to the court, according to the ICTY's file on Slobodan Milosevic's trial, would serve for future generations' consideration of history. As well, the file determined that, because

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

this trial became public, and much evidence could be brought to court, the secret diplomacy that constituted the Serbian State's involvement in the funding and financing of the paramilitary organization of the Tigers came to light. In this regard, Milosevic's trial opened the door to these state secrets, proving that their alleged "humanitarian aid" came in the form of weapons and money rather than actual humanitarian aid (International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, n.d.).

A fourth lesson learnt from Milosevic's case has to do with the jointure of cases. As seen in the file of the ICTY on the case, the jointure was one of the most controversial issues, however, the lesson that can be extracted from here is that jointure proved to be an efficient tool, as it helped with the elimination of the duplication of charges, ensuring a more efficient trial.

Lastly, in the fifth consequence and lesson learnt from Milosevic's case could be placed the self-representation. Milosevic, under his will, decided to represent himself during his trial. The lesson that can be extracted from this change is that the right of self-representation should be subject, according to the File of the ICTY over the case, to the defendant's capability to fulfill the role of a counsel, attending the court sessions with regularity. The most valuable lesson from the trial was the use of amici curiae, securing a fair trial (International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, n.d.).

Conclusion

The last part of the essay will be devoted to the several conclusions extracted for the analysis itself, along with answering to whether the hypothesis presented in the beginning: are all citizens equal before the law, regardless of their social rank or the position they hold?

It was, first, clearly established that the paramilitary organization of the Arkan Tigers was not created out of the blue, but it did with the calculated and organized support of the Serbian Government as well as various Ministries. Of course, this support was provided through secret diplomacy. Even if the origin of the Tigers can seem comical, as they were born out of a football fanatics' club, it is undeniable that the reach of their actions superseded those of any other similar group, especially in reference to the ethnic cleansing they conducted.

The measures of recruitment used by Arkan to attract men had nothing to do with regular propaganda flyers or any similar, but through ideological indoctrination, incentives, financial rewards, personal links, coercion and gun rewards. With all these tools, Arkan managed to create an army big enough to be even better considered than the JNA itself.

Following the analysis, three of the most brutal battles in which the Tigers took part – Sijekovac, Vukovar, and Bijeljina – were mentioned, allowing to conclude that, contrary to the crimes committed by Serbian paramilitaries – which have been judged – those committed against Serbs by Croatian militias have never been taken to court, which, at first, can prove that the law is not, in fact, equal to all.

The geopolitical analysis of the Tigers suggested that paramilitary organizations have been perfectly integrated within the national defense systems, even if the term 'paramilitarism' does not enjoy a legally binding definition. In any case, the Tigers do not fit within any definition of paramilitarism, as their link to the Serbian National Security showed that they were a group with a strong loyalty towards the Serbian state. Following this statement, it seems clear to determine that the hypothesis of the essay, suggesting that the paramilitary groups created in the region managed, in fact, to be more active and more considered by the Government than the regular, national Armed Forces.

In other matters, war propaganda proved to have done a great job in defending Milosevic's ideals, while not a notorious presence was made of Arkan in the papers. On the other hand, his Tigers did appear in the media, especially when being judged – by the public – for their actions on the battlefield.

Regarding why there was never as much propaganda of Arkan, it is concluded that it was due to the secret diplomacy under which his actions underwent, especially when receiving 'humanitarian aid' from the Government in the form of guns or money.

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

The trial of, particularly, Milosevic, allowed for other heads of state such as Saddam Hussein to be judged for the atrocities they committed. In this regard, and to conclude, the hypothesis of the project has been completely rebutted.

The essay sustained that being part of an organization like the Government or being part of a group with strong links to the Government could completely exempt a person from being prosecuted and judged. However, both the trials of Milosevic and Arkan have proven – especially Milosevic’s trial, which later allowed for other state leaders to be prosecuted – that no one happens to be above the law.

However, the hypothesis can also seem to be unresolved, since neither Arkan nor Milosevic had been sentenced for any of the atrocious act they committed, because both were killed before their trial, and the proceedings were stopped in both cases.

It is true, though, that even if they had deceased, their crimes were taken to court, attributed to lower-rank soldiers who served both men. In this point, it seems that the hypothesis is confirmed: those with a higher rank, though proceeding initiated, never suffered any consequences for the acts committed; while those with a lower rank, unprotected by the Government, did suffer verdicts and sentences for the acts they committed.

In conclusion, it is going to be taken as the hypothesis has been rebutted. The reason of this is the fact that, even if it seems like the international community still has a lot of work to do, in order for real and effective justice to be made in cases like this, it has been demonstrated that not even the President – former President, in this case – of a country can escape being judged by acts that he may have not committed personally and with his own hands, but which were planned, ordered, and executed by men under his rule.

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Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.

ANNEX 1.



IMAGE I. *"The Battle of Maksimir Stadium" in Zagreb, prelude to the Balkan Wars. (Viñas, 2017)*



IMAGE II. *Arkan observing his fighters in Sanski Most in Bosnia in September 1995. (Stojanovic, 2020)*



IMAGE III. Members of the Serbian Volunteer Guard, or 'Arkan's Tigers,' performing training exercises in Erdut during the Yugoslavian Civil War. Source: Getty Images, Antoine Gyori-Corbis.



IMAGE IV. *Disaster of Vukovar.* (Lyon, 2021)

Roars and Legends: The Geopolitics of the Arkan Tigers.



IMAGE V. Picture of Arkan's Tigers in action in Bijeljina. Source: Ron Haviv.