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SILENCE AFTER BOMBS. PRACTICE, ROLE, AND TRAINING OF INTERPRETERS
IN CONFLICT ZONES. A CASE STUDY OF THE WARS IN BOSNIA AND
HERZEGOVINA AND CROATIA

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To all military officers, interpreters and military language trainers who participated in this research. For having given me their time, contribution, but especially for having shared their sometimes-painful memories. To all the interpreters who worked in the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia in the 1990s, who were never given credit for their contribution to communication and peace.

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Recurring acronyms

ANOLIR = Association Nationale des Officiers de Liaison et des Interprètes de Réserve
APC = Armored Personnel Carrier
BCMS = Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian
BCS = Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian
CIMIC = Civil-military cooperation
CLC = Chinese Labor Corps in WWI
CLSS = Language Services Section within the ICTY
CMO = Chief Military Observer
COMIFOR = IFOR Joint Force Commander
COMISFOR = SFOR Joint Force Commander
CSCE = Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (1962-1979), later OCSE
DM = Deutsche Marks
ECMM = European Community Monitoring Mission in the former Yugoslavia (1991-1995)
EUFOR = European Union Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina, also known as *Operation Althea* (2004)
EUMM = European Union Monitoring Mission (after 2000, previously ECMM)
EUPM = European Union Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2003-2012)
FNRJ = *Federativna Narodna Republika Jugoslavija* Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (1945-1963)
FRY = *Savezna Republika Jugoslavija*, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1992-2003)
GS/GSL = General Service and related Categories in UN contracts
HDZ = *Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica*, Croatian democratic Union (1989-)
HDKP = *Hrvatsko Društvo Konferencijskih provoditelja*, Croatian Association of Conference Interpreters
HOS = *Hrvatske Obrambene Snage*, Croatian Defense Forces, paramilitary formation (1991-1992)
HQ = Headquarters
HSP = *Hrvatska Stranka Prava*, Croatian Party of Rights, led by Ante Pavelić (1919-1929)
HSS = *Hrvatska Seljačka Stranka*, Croatian Peasant Party founded by Stjepan Radić (1904-)
HVO = *Hrvatsko Vijeće Obrane*, Croatian Defense Council, the official military formation of the Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia founded in 1992
IAPTI = International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters
ICC = International Civilian Consultants after NATO 1998 of SFOR language services reform
ICSC = UN International Civil Service Commission (ICSC)
ICTY = International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia
ICZ = Interpreting in Conflict Zones (hereinafter ICZ)
IEBL = Inter-Entity Boundary Line between Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
IFOR = Implementation Force (1995-1996)
JNOF = *Jedinstveni narodnooslobodilački front*, Popular Liberation Front led by Tito (1935-1945)
KFOR = Kosovo Force (1999-)
KLA = Kosovo Liberation Army (1993-1999)
KM = *Konvertibilna Marka*, Convertible Marks, single Bosnian currency after 1998
KVM = Kosovo Verification Mission (1998-1999)
LCH = Local Civilian Hires after NATO 1998 of SFOR language services reform
LOTs = Liaison and Observation Teams in NATO IFOR and SFOR
MTF/MNTF = Multinational Task Forces in NATO IFOR and SFOR
NDH = *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, Independent state of Croatia (1941-1945)
NSE = National Support Elements
OPTAG = Operational Training Group
OSS = Office of Strategic Services, US intelligence unit during WWII
OTP = Office of the Prosecutor within the ICTY
OZNA = *Odjeljenje za Zaštitu Naroda*, Department for People's Protection (1944-1946), later UDBA
POW = Prisoners of War

PTSD = Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
PWB = Psychological Warfare Branch of the Allies in WWII
RACVIAC = Regional Workshop on Threat Assessment and a Risk Informed Approach for Nuclear and other Radioactive Material out of Regulatory Control
ROE = Rules of Engagement
RS = *Republika Srpska*, Serb Republic, one of the two entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina
SANU = *Srpska Akademija Nauka i Umetnosti*, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts
SDA = *Stranka demokratske akcije*, Party of Democratic Action founded by Alija Izetbegović
SDG = *Srpska dobrovoljačka garda*, Serb Volunteer Guard led Željko Ražnjatović, also known as Arkan's tigers
SDP = *Socijaldemokratska Partija Hrvatske*, Social Democratic Party of Croatia (1990-)
SDS = *Srpska Demokratska Stranka*, Democratic Party of Serbia led by Radovan Karadžić (1990-)
SFOR = Stabilisation Force (1996-2004)
SFRY = *Socijalistička Federativna Republika Jugoslavija*, Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1963-1992)
SHAPE = NATO Supreme Headquarters of Allied Powers in Europe
SIPA = State Investigation and Protection Agency established in Bosnia and Herzegovina under the EUPM mission
SLEE = Scuola di Lingue Estere dell'Esercito
SOE = Special Operations Executives, UK definition for agents or spies
SOFAs = Status-of-forces agreements
STANAG = Standardization Agreement in NATO countries
TCC = Troop Contributing Countries
UDBA = *Uprava državne bezbednosti/sigurnosti/varnosti*, State security administration, Yugoslav secret police (1946-1991)
UNCRO = UN Confidence Restoration Operation (1995-1996)
UNHCR = United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIPTF = United Nations International Police Task Force (1997-)
UNMIBH = United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995-2002)
UNMO = United Nations Military Observer
UNMOP = UN Mission of Observers in Prevlaka (1996-2002)
UNPA = United Nations Protected Areas, or pink zones
UNPREDEP = United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (1995-1999)
UNPROFOR = United Nations Protection Force or *Force de Protection des Nations Unies* (1991-1995)
UNPSG = United Nations Police Support Group (January-October 1998)
UNTAES = United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (1996-1998)
VRS = *Vojska Republike Srpske*, Army of the Serb Republic

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INTRODUCTION

Traditionally conceived as the failure of dialogue and diplomacy, wars have emerged, in the last twenty years, as contact zones (Ruzich, 2021: 75), where communication, and therefore language exchanges are essential.

Despite their importance, the role of civilian and military language agents, be they translators, interpreters, multilingual officers, or language assistants, has only recently been considered with the “cultural turn” (Lassner, 1998; Wadensjö, 1998; Summerfield, 2014; Kelly *et al.*, 2019: 5) in translation and war studies and due to the dire fate faced by local interpreters in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq in the 2000s (Kahane, 2007).

This has spurred a broad and multidisciplinary reflection on languages, war, translation and interpreting as unavoidable factors of conflicts (Kelly *et al.*, 2019: 4), and led to the emergence of Interpreting in Conflict Zones (ICZ) as a subfield of research. The issue has been approached from different angles including the humanitarian (Bartolini, 2009; Fitchett, 2014; Delgado Luchner & Kherbiche, 2018), military (Cappelli, 2011; Footitt & Kelly, 2012; Snellman, 2014), theoretical (M. Baker, 2005; M. Baker, 2006, M. Baker, 2010; Footitt & Kelly, 2013), or educational one (AIIC *et al.*, 2011; Albaaka, 2020) and efforts have been parallelly made to trace back the role and presence of interpreters in wars over the centuries (Baigorri Jalón, 2011b; Ruiz Rosendo & Persaud, 2016; Takeda 2016; Persaud, 2016; Todorova, 2016; Gómez Amich, 2018a; Baigorri Jalón, 2019; Wolf 2019; Moreno Bello, 2014).

As per the research **background**, despite the growing interest, relatively few studies have been published on interpreters during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia in the 1990s, where several international missions required interpreters for day-to-day operations.

Existing research has focused mostly on post-1996 NATO SFOR (Stabilisation Force) and IFOR (Implementation Force) missions (Kelly & Baker, 2013; Jones & Askew, 2014; Askew, 2019) and on the ongoing EUFOR (European Union Force) mission (Persaud, 2016) while limited information is available on the war years (1991-1995) when two missions were deployed to the area, UNPROFOR (United Nations Protection Force) and the ECMM (European Community Monitoring Mission). Besides a few contributions (Stahuljak, 1999; 2007; 2009; Dragovic-Drouet, 2007), most work on the topic has been carried out by Catherine Baker (C. Baker, 2010a; 2010b; 2011a; 2012b; 2014), who pointed out how interpreters in Bosnia and Herzegovina were untrained students or other professionals whose complex position within the armed forces and their community alternated between prosperity and insecurity.

Information is nevertheless still missing on how interpreted communication between foreign troops and local armies and population worked in the war years (1991-1995) in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and especially Croatia, and almost no data is available on the recruitment, training, tasks, roles, and perceptions of interpreters. Furthermore, there is no data on interpreting at a higher, governmental or conference level, despite the great number of peace conferences organized in those years, while the former Yugoslavian interpreting market is described as limited and underdeveloped (Dragovic-Drouet, 2007).

The general perception, by reading academic works and general-public output, is that both conference interpreters and the many ad-hoc liaison interpreters on the ground have been

forgotten by both researchers and fellow colleagues, despite their contribution to peace, while international scholars have not seized the chance to reflect upon their experiences.

This research project **aims** to reconstruct the practice, role, and training of the interpreters who worked in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia in the 1990s, considering interpreters in a wider sense of the meaning, both high-level conference interpreters and untrained linguists, translators, and fixers working for foreign peacekeepers on the field.

This project has a twofold objective: on the one side, it aims to fill a gap in the history of interpreting, by giving voice to a category that has remained silent even long after bombs stopped falling, further enriching the socio-biography of the profession today. On the other, it aims to shed light on topics such as interpreters' recruitment, training, employment, neutrality, and ethnicity, paying attention also to the specific Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian language question. The ultimate and over-arching goal is to identify best practices and problematic issues that emerge from this experience that may transcend the case study and contribute to the ongoing discussion of how conflicts shape interpreter-mediated interlingual communication (Baigorri Jalón, 2019).

As the Iraqi and Afghan conflicts have shown, the recruitment and deployment of interpreters in conflict zones is still a complicated issue, and their status, position, and rights are far from being recognized. In this respect, we believe that the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia is the perfect case study as enough time has passed to reflect on it and because of its international and interethnic nature, in which knowledge of a minority language complicated heteronomous recruitment of interpreters. Hopefully, the results of this project could help military organizations and the interpreting community to learn from the lessons of the past and better organize and improve interpretation services, both for interpreters and service users, in similar conflicts in the future.

As per **methods**, this project adopts a historical approach using information across multiple sources, as employed by Baigorri Jalón and Takeda (Baigorri Jalón, 2014: 2; Takeda & Baigorri Jalón, 2016: XI) and as outlined by Delisle (Delisle, 1997). The concept of historical sources was extended here to press bulletins, news reports, written accounts of interpreters and service users, ICTY proceedings, academic publications and journals, pieces of national legislation, photographs, television footage and interviews with interpreters, service users and military language trainers. This wider approach to sources was necessary, on the one hand, given the “archival invisibility” of interpreters in conflicts (Bowen *et al.*, 1995; Footitt, 2019) and barriers to archive access. On the other, it follows in the footsteps of a recent tradition in historical research that widens the concept of the historical source to less traditional ones (Burke, 2008; Fernández Ocampo & Wolf, 2014; Gunn & Faire, 2016).

To describe the role, practice, and training of interpreters in the war in the former Yugoslavia, this dissertation analyzed available literature to later define a methodological framework and present its original results. It is therefore divided into three blocks: literature review (Chapters 1 to 5), methodology (Chapter 6), and results (Chapters 7 to 10). At the end of the work, a list of references and 6 annexes are included: a list of interviewees (Annex A), interview questions

(Annex B), sources (Annex C), relevant historical events (Annex D), while lists of recurring acronyms and figures are presented at the beginning of the dissertation.

The literature review is divided into two sections. The first one (Chapters 1 to 3) paints a picture of the specific historical, social, military, language and political contexts in which interpreters were called to operate. In Chapter 1 we offer a thematic and historical overview of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, in Chapter 2 we discuss the peculiar Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian language question and in Chapter 3 we present the missions deployed to the area from 1991 onwards.

The second part of the literature review (Chapters 4 to 5) focuses more specifically on conflicts, languages, and language mediators. In Chapter 4, we propose an overview of the role that interpreters have played in contemporary conflicts, proposing both a historical overview and a thematic one that considers issues such as interpreters' categorization, recruitment, employment, training, risks and protection, tasks and skills, ethics, and quality. In Chapter 5, we present available information on interpreting in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, following the thematic review described above, which will also guide us in our analysis of results.

In the second section, Chapter 6 outlines the main methods used in this dissertation, while the third and last section presents the results of our research from Chapters 7 to 10.

Chapters 7 and 8 focus on liaison interpreting for peacekeeping missions and present the bulk of the results following the thematic categories outlined in Chapters 4 and 5. To facilitate reading, results are split here into two chapters: Chapter 7 deals with peri-process aspects of interpreting (categorization, recruitment, employment, training, risks, and protection) (Kalina, 2006), while Chapter 8 focusses on in-process aspects (tasks and skills, quality, and ethics, that is status, neutrality, and confidentiality).

Chapter 9 focuses on conference interpreting during the war in the former Yugoslavia, by first offering a picture of the Yugoslav interpreting market of the time, its training opportunities, professional associations, and working conditions. It then outlines the changes that occurred during the war and includes short biographies of interpreters who featured on the side of politicians during the war.

Finally, Chapter 10 presents the conclusions of this work and some recommendations emerging from the experience of interpreters and service users in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia that might help peacekeeping or military forces better manage, on the ground, interpreting services provided by locally recruited civilians.

CHAPTER 1: THE WARS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AND CROATIA

“*The Balkans produces more history than it can consume*” - Winston Churchill

1.1 Introduction

Offering a literature review on the wars in the former Yugoslavia, and more specifically on those in Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina in the 1990s is no easy task for the great amount of scientific and narrative output available (Dragovic-Drouet, 2007) but most importantly because there is no agreement on even the most basic historical facts thus complicating the process of historical research and validation (Gow, 1997a). Most scholars, both from the region and abroad, have been accused of supporting one of the national groups and while some have taken an overt ideological stance, like the pro-Serbian Nobel Prize winner Peter Handke, others have willy-nilly been labelled as sympathizers or supporters of specific national narratives ever since the early 1900s (West & Hitchens, 2007).

A related issue is then the lack of reliable uncontested historical sources and data which have often been the object of historical revisionism for political purposes. For example, according to Tito's historiography 70,000 Serbs were killed in the Jasenovac concentration camp, while Serbian historians claimed, in the 1980s, that the number ranged between 700,000 and one million (Dedijer, 1984, as quoted in Ramet, 2002: 5). Socialism pioneered this revisionist approach to history so that, even when not twisted for political purposes, historical sources are considered a priori so manipulated at the origin as to be useless for the reconstruction of the truth (Bianchini, 2003b: 14).

When the past is not analyzed historically it ends up being the site of collective repression and the cradle of further massacres (Cohen, as quoted in Ramet, 2002: 51-52), and history becomes a cyclical rather than linear repetition of the previous conflicts (Privitera, 2007).

If numbers and figures are problematic, words make no exception: designations concerning the language, or languages, spoken in the area - on which we will dwell in a dedicated chapter - geographical entities and ethnic groups are also conflictual. We avoided here the use of ‘Yugoslav/Yugoslavia’ considered improper today (Halpern & Kideckel, 1993) and ‘Balkan’, usually having a derogatory connotation (Ristović, 1995: 6; Žižek, 1999; Todorova, 2015). We also avoided to refer to the 1990s events with the term ‘civil war’, frequently used in the international press, and national denominations like *domovinski rat*¹ (in Croatia), *agresija na Bosnu i Hercegovinu* (in Bosnia and Herzegovina) or *otadžbinski rat* or *odbrambeno otadžbinski rat*, as in ‘the war in defense of the homeland’ (in the Serbian Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina). To keep an equidistant position, we spoke of Yugoslav wars and specified that we referred to the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s. In the same way, based on the considerations set out by Gow (1997b) we spoke of ‘dissolution’ of Yugoslavia and not of ‘secession’, or ‘succession’, putting the accent on a set of multiple processes of disintegration.

¹ Officially translated in English as the Croatian War of Independence, but the term *dom*, homeland, stresses the dimension of ethnic belonging.

This said, we will try in this chapter to present the literature on the topic although keeping in mind that the Yugoslav wars, as a set of violent wars on the territory from the former Yugoslav Federation, are a complex phenomenon that cannot be reduced to a single narrative or explanation and that the main points discussed here refer to the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. To minimize ideological stances and interpretations, and to portray the wider context in which the conflicts took place we offer here both a chronological and a thematic approach, considering some of the factors that historian Dejan Jović (2009) identified as the causes of the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

1.2 Thematic overview

1.2.1 *The national question explanation*

The most widely debated cause of the conflict is undoubtedly the so-called ‘national question’, i.e. the problematic "expression of the conflicting national ideologies that have evolved in each of its numerous national and confessional communities, reflecting the community's historical experiences" (Banac, 1984: 406). The national question is the prism through which most scholars have analyzed the Yugoslav wars, although mainly focusing on the Croat-Serbian antagonism, while little attention was paid to the role of the Serbian-Slovenian confrontation in unclenching the war (Woodward, 1995: 63) and to the Bosnian question in general, for which academic contributions appeared only after the war (Pinson 1995; Malcom, 1996; Pirjevec, 1998; Andjelic, 2003; Mønnesland, 2005; Hoare, 2013).

The key to understand the national question (or national questions) is that a nation doesn't necessarily coincide with the borders of a state, nor citizenship, and the concept of nation, *narod*, like the German *volk*, is that of a community of people sharing a common history, tradition, culture, and language. Therefore, the nationality of individuals is not determined by the country they are born and live by birth or by choice, but by a set of historical, family, traditional and linguistic factors. This is a confusing concept for countries where state and nation mainly coincide, but essential to understand wars that saw the clash of competing ethnic groups laying a claim on the same physical territory. As a result of dominations, wars, migrations, and conversions dictated by historical-political events, the areas covered by Tito's Yugoslavia, especially the old-border areas like Herzegovina, Slavonia, or the so-called *Krajine*², were inhabited by people that considered themselves as belonging to different nations, professed different faiths but lived together in the same geographical area.

That is why the centuries-long debate on how to organize the South Slavic states became crucial, because national borders did not coincide with ethnic ones, and to create separate nation-states meant ‘giving up’ one's minority in the neighboring state and risk its disappearance, through cultural assimilation or purge, as well as losing the claim to that area. Consequently, the ‘land of the nation’ is every area inhabited by one's fellow nationals³, and

² In the local language, *Krajina* (*krajine* plural) means border area and covers the *Militärgrenze*, the old military frontier between the Habsburg and Ottoman empires.

³ The Chetnik leader Draža Mihailović affirmed that “wherever are Serbian graves, there is Serbian land” (Malcom, 1996: 179), a statement that one could hear frequently in the Nineties from all ethnic groups (Pirjevec, 2014: 32).

when these are the object of attempts of expansion or reconquest, the concept is often referred with the adjective 'great' as in 'Great Serbia', 'Great Albania', and 'Great Croatia'. This is the central aspect behind the national question and all policies of territorial expansion, conceived essentially as wars of reconquest of those "unredeemed brethren of historic land that lay outside the boundaries apportioned to them by the powers" (Mazower, 2007: 96) and the rationale that motivated nationalist political discourse throughout the 1980s and 1990s in Yugoslavia.

1.2.2 The economic explanation

The wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia have also been explained considering the economic-financial factor behind violent dissolution, analyzed, among others, by Malcolm (1996), Woodward (1995), sociologist Laslo Sekelj (1990), Lederer (1994) and Yarashevich & Karneyeva (2013). Although with different and sometimes opposite perspectives, they all identified in the financial and economic crisis that Yugoslavia experienced from the 1960s until the 1990s the reasons for the collapse of the country's socio-political system. Structural inefficiencies, self-management failure, high public debt, deficits in the balance of payments, and the fall in agricultural and industrial production led the country to a halt: in the 1980s only 5% of Yugoslavs managed to make ends meet (Tromp, 2002), inflation peaked to 2000% in 1989 (Andjelic, 2003: 190), public debt skyrocketed to 20 billion dollars and unemployment reached, in areas like Kosovo, 50% (Woodward, 1995: 54).

There were also huge gaps in terms of development and living standards, despite federal efforts and solidarity funds financed by the most prosperous companies and Republics (Calic & Geyer, 2019: 217). Slovenia and Croatia, for example, boasted an advanced industry and a thriving tertiary sector, while Macedonia, Kosovo, and parts of Serbia were rural and underdeveloped: as a reference, in the 1970s-1980s, Slovenia was 7.5 times richer than Kosovo (Tromp, 2002). According to diplomat and historian Ivo Lederer, it was precisely the effort to relieve the more backward areas and at the same time promote industrial development in the northern ones that stretched the country's resources to the limit, leading to manifestations of economic nationalism and nationalism tout court (Lederer, 1994: 437). This argument is also supported by economist Milica Zarković-Bookman (1994) who analyzed the overlap between economic stagnation and nationalism to explain the rise of ethnic claims in Kosovo, Serbia or the *Krajine* and it is shared by Woodward, who identifies the roots of the conflict in the breakdown of the political and civil order, which occurred when trying to transform a socialist society into a free market one at a time of dire economic crisis. Other arguments in this sense are those put forward by Michael Hetcher and Walter Connor (as quoted in Zarković-Bookman, 1994: 8) who identify the drive to express nationalist positions not in the state of economic crisis and underdevelopment, but in economic growth and industrial modernization, with rich Slovenia considered the main actor behind the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

1.2.3 The ancient hatred explanation

One of the most popular explanations of the conflict is that it was triggered by the resurgence of ancient hatreds, unrecovered revenge and barbaric violence. This argument can be found, in part, in Robert Kaplan's travel diaries *Balkan tragedy: chaos and dissolution after the Cold War* (Kaplan, 2005) – a book whose reading allegedly convinced the Clinton administration not to intervene in Bosnia and Herzegovina – and can probably be traced back to the clash of civilizations theory by Samuel P. Huntington (2011). In 1993, in his introduction to the Carnegie Endowment report on the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 (International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan wars & Kennan, 1993) diplomat and historian George Kennan, explained the 1990s wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina by drawing parallels between present and past rapes, killings, mutilations, torture, burnings and mass migrations (Banac, 1984: 296).

This theorization supports that the different cultural backgrounds of Yugoslav people – Western-catholic influence in Croatia and Slovenia, Muslim in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Orthodox-Byzantine in Montenegro, Serbia, and Macedonia - have paved the way for irremediable cultural and civil divides. It is an interpretation that was largely adopted by the press and the international community during the conflict, but also promoted by the political leaders of the region. Although fascinating, this historical-cultural-sociological argument is considered today the result of a somewhat patronizing Western approach to the Balkan as the place of disaggregation and madness (Todorova, 2015), and an oversimplification of very complex matters. More in-depth analysis of the intersection of ideological, cultural, ethnic, and social aspects is offered in the already-mentioned volume by Halpern and Kideckel (2000) and in Ramet's *Balkan Babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Fall of Milošević* (2002), which considers the modification of values, attitudes and worldviews that led to the wars, through the media, the arts, and gender relations rather than a simplistic conception of ancient hatred among neighbors.

1.2.4 The class-struggle explanation

An interesting, but less explored key to conflict interpretation is the theory, also supported by Italian journalist Paolo Rumiz in *Maschere per un massacro* (2013), of class struggle between the educated and multicultural city bourgeoisie and the uncultivated nationalist countryside or urbanized peasants, also reported in the first Yugoslavia:

It was [...] around the turn of the century that the fundamental dichotomy between urban and rural emerged, a dichotomy between modern, Western-influenced urbanity, on the one hand, and village life with its traditional social culture, on the other. [...] What is more, the urban-rural dichotomy also symbolized the social dividing line between 'rulers' and 'people', between the 'city-coat wearers' (*kaputaši*) and those wearing peasant costumes. (Calic & Geyer, 2019: 23)

In the 1960s, roughly 2.5 million Yugoslavs left the countryside and flooded cities seeking work in the secondary or tertiary sector as a result of the economic crisis (Ibid: 195) which led cities to grow at a pace unprecedented in any other European country. As a result, they struggled to provide adequate housing and infrastructures, and the 'new migrants' were relegated to the tumbledown suburbs or peri-urban areas, where they often ended up living with

their countrymen, generally from the same ethnic group. This not only reinforced the national link but generated a sort of aversion for the city multicultural dwellers, who laughed at these *dosljaci*, newcomers, implicitly considered second-class citizens (Woodward, 1995: 44). Nationalism had a greater hold, initially at least, in the countryside and in suburbs rather than in cities such as Sarajevo, or Vukovar or even Zagreb and Belgrade: a survey published by the weekly magazine *Danas*, in May 1990, showed that in Bosnia and Herzegovina the educated population of the urban centers continued to support the federal government and saw war as a remote possibility, whereas peasants, especially in Serb-majority areas, were more in favor of an armed solution to the national question (Andjelic, 2003: 135).

When war broke out the Serbian intelligentsia left Belgrade en masse while the rural youths had more difficulty escaping compulsory conscription: poorly educated and prostrated by the crisis, they were easily maneuvered with threats and promises of easy money, as the story of Dražen Erdemović, the only perpetrator of the genocide in Srebrenica who willingly confessed his crimes, seems to confirm (Magini, 2014).

War offered “frustrated country bullies” (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 6) the chance to settle old scores and take possession of televisions, video recorders, cars, and jewelry they could have never afforded (Mojzes, 1994: 104-112). A case in point, according to Rumiz (2013), is that of the Serb village of Pakrac, in Slavonia, near Vukovar, where the paramilitary unit known as Arkan’s Tigers first terrorized Serb inhabitants with stories of Croat atrocities and then raided those homes themselves when the local Serbs abandoned them. According to this explanation, this is probably why the centres of cities like Vukovar or Sarajevo were hit with such fury, not just for being symbols of multicultural and inter-ethnic tolerance, but also for their class status.

1.2.5 The religious explanation

Religion is another factor put forward as an explanation for the conflict, perhaps because of the growing association between religious and political authorities in the 1990s. Officially atheist, the Tito regime tolerated the private practice of religious worship but had undoubtedly taken away the enormous power, social influence, and property of religious authorities. It is not surprising, therefore, that as socialism crumbled, religious organizations seized the opportunity to break out of their relegated role and to provide socialization and identification (Calic & Geyer, 2019: 269).

The Serbian Orthodox Church, for example, played a pivotal role in the revival of nationalism in Serbia ever since the 1960s, staging public events with an ethno-religious appeal, like the traveling exhibition of Prince Lazar's⁴ remains in 1989. To a certain extent, this reinforced the idea that the Serbs were on the verge of a war of religion, or better of ‘defense’, against the secular threat from ‘the Turks’, this time identified with the Muslims of Bosnia, who were Slavs converted to Islam under the Ottoman rule (Pinson, 1995).

⁴ The tradition goes that Prince Lazar died in the battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389, guiding a coalition of Christian princes trying to save Christianity from the Muslim invasion of Sultan Murat I’s army.

The Catholic Church was less vociferous in their support of the Croat and Slovene cause but equally active both in exerting pressure on the Catholic diplomacy in Rome and in organizing memorial days and rehabilitating previously disputed figures like Archbishop Alojzije Stepinac⁵, who became a symbol of Croatian national and religious self-determination. The Catholic Church also worked hard to resume a role within the state, strengthened by the great interest in religion aroused after the 1981 apparitions of Our Lady in Medjugorje, in Herzegovina, where Catholic priests had open nationalist militant roles (Tromp, 2002; Andjelic, 2003: 139).

The Muslims of Yugoslavia, concentrated mainly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, had always had a less close connection with religion than the Orthodox and the Catholics: in 1990 only 37 % of the Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina were practicing Islam and 60 % had never set foot in a mosque (Calic & Geyer, 2019: 271). In the 1970s and 1980s, however, with the gradual rediscovery of Bosnian-Muslim specificity and their recognition as a constituent nation, religion became a more important factor and Imams adopted more radical positions, calling for a return to the strict observance of Ramadan or the veil for women, a practice forbidden by the Yugoslav authorities. Between 1969 and 1980, partly thanks to donations from Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Libya, 800 new mosques were built, the number of Korans sold increased, and a faculty of Islamic theology was opened in Sarajevo. Although Bosnia and Herzegovina has always remained multi-confessional through the conflict, Izetbegović took advantage of the increasing influence of Islam (Andjelic, 2003: 157) to obtain arms and fighters from Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia, Afghan or Iraq, although their actual number is still debated (Pirjevec, 2014; Calic & Geyer, 2019: 310).

This return to spirituality was thus observable in all ethnic groups, and especially among young people: in 1967 only one-third of Yugoslavs declared to be religious, but that proportion had gone up to 50% in 1987, and 84 % in 1990 (Cohen, 1998: 53). Religious leaders took advantage of this rediscovered spirituality and lent their voices to nationalist narratives, of which they would become the most effective spokespersons, especially in rural areas (Andjelic, 2003: 174). The war of religion is a particularly well-trodden track in explaining the conflict also for the almost systematic destruction of religious buildings and symbols during the war. Nevertheless, if religion played a fundamental role in the identification with the ethnic group, in the creation of myths, and in justifying political/military activities, the destruction of the opponents' religious signs and monuments seemed to be aimed more at ensuring that other ethnic groups did not return to those territories rather than at the religious symbols in themselves, "in other words, attacks on religious objects served strictly political purposes; politics was primary, not religion" (Ramet, 2002: 81). This is why sociologist of religion Paul Mojzes claims that it would be more appropriate to talk about an ethno-religious war (Mojzes, 1994: 125; Cohen, 1998: 57) where religion simply offered the ideological counterpoint for ethnic belonging.

⁵ Croatian Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac was sentenced by Tito's partisans to 16 years in prison for collaborating with the *Ustaše* regime. The issue is still debated, for many, he was a *Ustaše* collaborator and military vicar-in-chief, for others a sort of hero who entertained relations with the *Ustaše* to save lives. He was rehabilitated in the 1990s and beatified in 1998.

1.2.6 The geopolitical explanation

Finally, another widely investigated factor in this conflict is the geopolitical aspect, which covers considerations about Yugoslavia's international position between the Western and Communist blocs, and the international community's response to the war. The Yugoslav wars are often explained as the opposed interests of world powers, eager to extend influence over a former buffer zone, following the concept of alliance blocs with Croatia and Slovenia orbiting in Austria and Germany's sphere, Serbia in Russia's, and Bosnia and Herzegovina looking at Islamic countries like Turkey. Some analyses go further back in time to century-old power relations, such as Habsburg or Ottoman politics, or the resurgence of alliances and patterns from First and Second World Wars. This is still a very popular interpretation of the conflict, exemplified by the words of Yugoslavia's defense minister, Veljko Kadijević, who told *Le Monde* that the Carrington Plan was Germany attacking Yugoslavia for the third time in a century (Tromp, 2002).

When the first signs of the conflict appeared, the international powers all supported, initially, the preservation of the status quo, and only later, pushed by public opinion, changed their approach, which remained nevertheless "hastily contrived, incoherent and frequently lacked a sophisticated grasp of the region's complexity" (Cohen, 1995: 233).

Such a conservative reaction was probably due to the US determination not to "continue shouldering most of the burden of the post-Cold War era" (Kaufman, 1999), a position held by two US administrations until the Clinton one adopted the concept of 'war of aggression' and de facto took charge of the negotiations that led to the Dayton Agreement. If the United States later came to be seen as the 'defender' of the Bosnian Muslims (Branco, *et al.*, 2018: 312), Russia was considered Serbia's protector although it adopted a very cautious approach, caught up in the process of internal renewal following the fall of the USSR and perestroika, alternating between support for the Serbian brother and the will to start a collaboration with the West (Gow, 1997b: 195).

Even more complex was the position of the then European Community, focused on German reunification and the creation of the European Union after the signing of the Maastricht Treaty, which lacked the necessary strength and cohesion to pursue a single, coherent policy divided as it was from the inside. Germany and Austria were in favor of Slovenia and Croatia's recognition, the UK and France feared a renewed German hegemony in the region and a surge in Islamic sentiment in Europe respectively (Macleod, 1997: 250), Spain was worried about the creation of a 'dangerous' precedent for the integrity of its borders and Italy about a migration crisis. European and American diplomacy was de facto inconsistent, alternating interventionist and stand-still phases, and it is accused, above all, of having made itself complicit in the exterminations perpetrated against the Croatian and Bosnian-Muslim populations with the embargo on arms imports and its general approach is described as "a combination of inadequate timing, insufficient measures, inconsistency, and lack of political will" (Gow, 1997b: 299-300).

1.3 Historical overview

The thematic overview proposed above aims to bring some order to the jumble of works and voices, but also to identify concepts, like *narod* (people/nation) and themes that will recur in the following presentation on how the wars started, developed, and unfolded. In the next section, we propose a historical overview that does not aim to comprehensively explain the conflict or attribute responsibility, but only to paint the background and context in which interpreters worked.

1.3.1 First Yugoslavia (1918-1941) and the Second World War (1941-1945)

The term Yugoslavia was first used to refer to the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (*Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca*), established in 1918 under the leadership of the Serbian royal family Karadžević (Tromp, 2002) on the ashes of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, based on a concept of self-determination of the South Slavs, championed by the Illyrist or Yugoslavist movement ever since the mid-seventeenth century. Nevertheless, the first Yugoslav experience was characterized by the constant disputes between Serbs and Croats, (Mazower, 2007: 110; Privitera, 2007: 63), between centralism and federalism, where several illegal or semi-illegal organizations started to raise their heads⁶.

In this tense climate, in 1928, Stjepan Radić, the leader of the Croatian majority party who openly called for Croatia's independence was shot and killed in Parliament on 20 June 1928 by a nationalist Serbian Radical Party member: it led to a governmental stalemate which King Alexander I resolved with an autocratic turn, crushing any nationalist tendency. The failure to resolve the national question, the economic crisis of 1929, and the following social crisis, had therefore already decreed the failure of the first Yugoslavia when the German invasion began on April 1941 (Calic & Geyer, 2019: 149). In Belgrade, a collaborationist regime supported by the Serbian Fascist Party immediately started persecuting Serbian Jews, who had been almost totally exterminated by the end of 1942, Slovenia was divided between Germany, Italy, and Hungary, while Croatia saw the birth of the Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, later NDH) led by the *poglavnik* (leader, *duce*) Ante Pavelić. Pavelić's Croatia was a regime of terror (Glenny, 2012: 486) which implemented not just the systematic extermination of Jews and Roma, but also of Croatian and Bosnian Serbs (Connelly, 1999) in a series of concentration camps, of which Jasenovac is only the most infamously known. The majority of Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina had no choice but to join the resistances, together with many Croatian Jews. We use the word resistances in the plural because there were two resistance movements active in Yugoslavia during WWII: the Chetnik resistance, led by Colonel Dragoljub Mihailović, and the Popular Liberation Front (*Jedinstveni narodnooslobodilački front*, JNOF) of the Yugoslav Communist Party, led by Josip Broz, known as Tito. Chetniks and partisans had initially fought together against the *Ustaše* and the

⁶ Among these we find the Yugoslav Communist Party, established in 1919 and outlawed between 1920 and 1921, Ante Pavelić's Croatian Party of Rights (*Hrvatska Stranka Prava*), which called for violent Croatia's secession and whose followers, the *Ustaša*, plural *Ustaše* carried out terrorist attacks, the Internal Revolutionary Organization (VMRO) of Vančo Mihajlov in Macedonia, and the anti-communist and anti-separatist ORJUNA.

Wehrmacht but in 1941 they clashed in “a war within the war” (Calic & Geyer, 2019: 134) that led to a vicious cycle of massacres whose responsibilities are still debated today.

Partisans, who had managed to unite the population around the motto of ‘brotherhood and unity’ (*bratstvo i jedinstvo*), had achieved some degree of military success in 1942 and 1943 and managed to come out victorious, liberating Belgrade in 1944 and Sarajevo in April 1945. After liberating the country, the Partisans unleashed, however, a series of retaliations targeting all non-communists, collaborators⁷, Chetniks and religious figures like the Croatian archbishop Alojzije Stepinac, but also civilians of which the Bleiburg massacre, in May 1945, is the most infamously known, although the number of victims is still controversial. In November 1945, Tito managed to discard the monarchist option and obtain international support for a socialist federation, the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia (*Federativna Narodna Republika Jugoslavija*), modeled on the Soviet federation system, whose first constitution came into force in January 1946.

1.3.2 Second Yugoslavia (1944-1991)

Tito's Yugoslavia, or Second Yugoslavia, which took the official name of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) with the 1963 constitution, was described as a Federation of six republics (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Montenegro, and Macedonia), five constituent nations (Croats, Serbs, Slovenes, Montenegrins, and Macedonians - the Muslims would only be recognized as a constituent nation in 1968⁸), four languages (Slovenian, Serbian, Croatian, Macedonian), three religions (Catholic, Orthodox, and Islamic), two alphabets (Latin and Cyrillic) but a single party.

Initially considered a satellite state of Stalin’s USSR, Yugoslavia took positions that led to an unexpected break-up with Moscow in 1948 and to the expulsion from the Cominform, forcing the country to devise a new, Yugoslav path to socialism, identified in federalism and workers' self-management (*radničko samoupravljanje*). Supported by US and international funding, Yugoslavia turned to rapid industrialization in the 1960s and adopted a semi-planned economy, featuring a good tertiary sector and an already flourishing international tourist industry, also accepting some degree of private initiative (Andjelic, 2003) and trade agreements with the European Community, COMECON countries (Woodward, 1995: 1) and the USSR. On the international stage, the country had created a neutral place for itself between the Eastern and the Western bloc within the Non-Aligned Movement established in Belgrade in 1961, and in 1953 Tito signed the Balkan Pact, a 20-year military alliance with Greece and Turkey that indirectly guaranteed NATO defense against possible USSR attacks to Yugoslavia. All these factors made Yugoslavia, in the 1960s, the most advanced socialist country in Europe, with a high standard of living, especially compared to the Soviet bloc countries, whose citizens could

⁷ In Istria and around the Trieste area this phenomenon went down in history under the name ‘massacre of the *foibe*’, from the name of the karst formations where Italians accused of fascist collaboration were thrown and killed.

⁸ In the Yugoslav constitutions, the term *narod*, ‘nations/peoples’ referred to the constitutive peoples that is Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Macedonians, Montenegrins (and only later to Muslims), whereas the term (*narodnost*), erroneously translated as ‘nationalities’ (Fidahić, 2018: 70) meant national minorities (*nacionalne manjine*) after 1974. Minorities were represented in political bodies and enjoyed the freedom of cultural and religious expression but were not allowed to declare themselves Republics or to start a secession.

travel freely for business or pleasure. Nevertheless, although some tolerance and pluralism were indeed granted, civil and political freedoms Yugoslavia remained a “soft totalitarian country” (Andjelic, 2003: 35) that never really achieved democracy (Privitera, 2007: 100), centered on communist cornerstones like the party and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

To keep nationalism at bay, Kosovo and Vojvodina were granted the status of autonomous provinces within the Federal Republic of Serbia (Calic & Geyer, 2019: 168) and Yugoslavia adopted a carefully balanced system of quotas for less represented nations or minorities - the so-called ‘*ključ* (key) system’ (Woodward, 1995: 38-39) - while ethnically based public organizations and claims were heavily repressed by the Yugoslav secret services (UDBA).

Nevertheless, by the 1960s, the idyllic image of brotherhood and unity began to creak under the weight of forced modernization, economic hardships, and frustration at the central and republican levels, that even the greater federalization granted by the 1963 Constitution didn’t manage to calm down (Calic & Geyer, 2019: 214) with many Yugoslavs seeking their fortunes abroad as *gastarbeiters*⁹. In this climate, demands for greater autonomy emerged in Kosovo, Bosnian Muslims called for their recognition as a constituent people - a decision made official in 1969 - while in Croatia the ‘Croatian Spring’ movement called for equal rights for the Croatian, Slovenian, and Macedonian languages, but most importantly for greater autonomy and democratization, and questioned the ethnic quotas in the army and the contribution to the federal budget.

1.3.3 Winds of war (1970s-1980s)

Although repressed with an iron fist, protests had generated impatience in all national groups and the situation only worsened with the 1973 oil crisis, which led to a fall in production and exports, an increase in the cost of imported goods, a deficit in the balance of payments, and rising unemployment. Tito died a few years later, in 1980, leaving the country in the hands of an increasingly technocratic, corrupt, and compromise-prone ruling class (Andjelic, 2003: 29) that faced further economic upheavals: with the oil shocks of 1978/1979 the economy went into recession, inflation peaked at over 2000%, debt exposure and unemployment rose exponentially (Glenny, 2012: 623) so much so that the country was shaken, for the first time, by numerous strikes. The middle class was forced to resort to exchange, bartering, illegal work (Andjelic, 2003: 52) and to ethnic networks and connections to survive while the *gastarbeiter*, whose remittances had financed half of Yugoslavia's trade deficit since the 1960s, came back to join the ranks of the unemployed (Woodward, 1995: 49). In this climate the richer republics, Slovenia and Croatia began to criticize the system of internal redistribution of resources (Ibid: 74), while dissatisfaction with the ruling class, prompted by a series of scandals mounted (Andjelic, 2003: 65) and the “ruling elites started codifying national strategic goals and articulating them into political programs” (Branco *et al.*, 2018: 291).

In the 1990s the economic crisis triggered social tensions: uprisings in Kosovo exploded once more, long-unheard reinterpretations of WWII history became frequent in political debate, revisionist historical studies flourished, and ancient myths and literary works were

⁹ From German, a foreign worker in Western Germany between 1955 and 1973.

rediscovered to suit a nationalist narrative. In 1986, the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (*Srpska Akademija Nauka i Umetnosti* - SANU) published in Belgrade a memorandum that presented Serbs as the 'historical' victims of Croat-Albanian and Yugoslav discrimination. The memorandum was condemned by the entire political class, except for Slobodan Milošević, a former bank manager who had become the champion of the rights of the Serbs of Kosovo, claiming that they were pushed out of their homes by the now more populous Albanian community.

As the knots of self-management came to a head and the regime's control was loosened, the initially democratic ferments turned nationalist, and the dominant perception of the ethnic group completely distorted (Bianchini, 2003a: 41) so that a Kosovan man helping a fallen woman off the street could easily end up as a story of rape in newspapers. This was possible because decentralization had isolated the republics, political life and media communication had reverted at the Republic level, mobility had stopped and job prospects were increasingly oriented locally and towards family connections (Woodward, 1995: 40-41).

In Serbia, Milošević used the press to build his 'mutilated victory', while his project increasingly took on the tones of the 'Great Serbia', persecuted by history (Privitera, 2007: 130-131), that could finally achieve peace only in a single state of all Serbs. He became party leader and Serbian federal president in 1987, and in 1988 he used protesters on the streets of Montenegro and Vojvodina to stage a coup d'état and put his most trusted men in power (Ramet, 2002: 30; Andjelic, 2003: 99) de facto controlling 4 of the 8 votes of the Federal presidency Council. He immediately revoked the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina and in 1989 in Kosovo protests were suppressed by the federal army, the JNA (*Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija*) that started to appear to Yugoslavs more as the defender of Serbian interests rather than Yugoslav ones (Calic & Geyer, 2019: 155).

In Slovenia, after the Kosovo protests, the first hints of economic nationalism began to merge with broader national demands and socio-cultural ferment, especially in music and journalism. The trial of three journalists from *Mladina* for having published JNA's secret military documents took 40,000 Slovenes to the streets on 22 June 1988 as the fact that it was held in Serbo-Croatian and not in Slovenian was seen as the perpetration of the Serbs' domination through army and language (Ramet, 2002: 32).

In Croatia, the 1980s saw the publication of historical studies that tried to cleanse the Croat of old fascist crimes, like the works of Franjo Tuđman, young partisan general, historian, and founder, in 1989, of the party HDZ (*Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica*) who claimed the right to self-determination "of the entire Croatian people within its historical borders" raising the concerns of the Croatian Serbs, Bosnian Serbs and the Bosnian Muslims in Herzegovina who lived within that historical border (Calic & Geyer, 2019: 287).

At the same time, the last common Yugoslav unifier, the cult of Tito was being destroyed: the Serbs accused him of needing a weak Serbia to create a strong Yugoslavia (Pirjevec, 2014: 19) while Croats and Slovenes blamed him for having held together the South Slavs against their will under the yoke of communism. In this revolution of symbols (Mojzes, 1994: 68), old national and controversial tales, music, characters, religion and slogans, previously expressed

in private and tolerated as folklore, became more and more frequent in public expression, especially in football stadiums where pictures of politicians and saints, Chetnik songs, and Roman salute were now frequent.

In all this turmoil, the incumbent federal prime minister, Ante Marković, with the support of the American economist Jeffrey Sachs, had embarked in 1989 on a brave program of political and economic reforms (Andjelic, 2003: 121) that nevertheless failed to redress the economy: after initial success, in June 1990, the foreign debt increased to 22 billion dollars (Ramet, 2002: 50), inflation rose again, industrial production slowed down and the policy of real interest rates, together with high taxation, led to the bankruptcy of more than 8,000 companies (Woodward, 1995: 129).

Meanwhile political relations had also become very tense between the Republic's leaders, especially between Slovenian Prime Minister, Milan Kučan, and Slobodan Milošević, over the protests organized in Slovenia to support Kosovo. Slovenia, using a loophole in the 1987 Yugoslav Constitution amendment, had introduced in 1989 a provision that gave republican laws precedence over federal ones (Branco *et al.*, 2018: 276), and went to the 14th Congress of the League of Yugoslav Communists in January 1990 ready to discuss the idea of an 'asymmetric federation' and economic and political reforms. The Slovenian demands were ignored by the bloc now ruled by Milošević and the Slovenes left the congress, followed by the Croats, leading to the dissolution of the League of Communists after almost 50 years (Bianchini, 2003b: 153). If the federation still existed nominally, the first multi-party elections in the Republics saw the victory of parties organized along ethnic or national lines even in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which until then had seemed less prone to nationalist tendencies, where three parties of an ethnic-national character emerged, the Democratic Party of Serbia (SDS) of Radovan Karadžić, a psychiatrist of Montenegrin origin, the Muslim formation of Alija Izetbegović and the Croatian HDZ, directly dependent on Zagreb.

1.3.4 The wars in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (1991-1995)

Taking advantage of the electoral turmoil, Milošević had printed paper and taken possession of about a third of the federal monetary funds for 1991 (Mojzes, 1994: 68; Pirjevec, 1998: 32) and took over the army using the excuse of peaceful demonstration in Belgrade. Slovenia and Croatia refused to contribute to the federal budget and called popular referendums for independence, won with an overwhelming majority, despite questions being somehow vague and unclearly formulated (Bianchini, 2003b: 156).

In January 1991, Kučan and Milošević met in Belgrade and Milošević agreed to let **Slovenia** part ways with Yugoslavia, as it was ethnically homogeneous and played no role in the Greater Serbia project if Kučan promised to recognize the right of the Serbs to live in a single state. It seemed a done deal, if not for the JNA (*Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija*), the fifth best-equipped army in Europe (Zimmermann, 1995), with some 140,000 ground, 10,000 navy, and

33,000 air force troops, plus about 500,000 reservists¹⁰. Most JNA troops were recruited through compulsory conscription in all Republics, but for historical and economic reasons, despite the system of quotas, Serb officers prevailed in the army, while the navy and air force's cadres were mainly from Slovenia and Croatia.

When the Slovenian and Croatian declarations of independence were issued on 25 June 1991, the Slovenian territorial forces changed their insignia and took possession of the national borders, effectively disempowering the JNA, which found itself without a leadership - as Milošević had opposed the election of Croatian Stipe Mesić as President of the federation - and in the absurd situation of having to attack itself. What is known as the 'ten-day war', or the 'customs war' (27 June-6 July 1991), was resolved in a matter of days with the defeat of the JNA, whose young recruits - some of them were Slovenes - were defeated by popular support and by the newly created Slovenian forces.

In **Croatia**, meanwhile, in addition to a series of measures aimed at reducing the Serb weight in the state machine, the new constitution stirred fears among Serbs, who were no longer referred to as a constituent people, but as a minority. The 600,000 Croatian Serbs (Gow, 1997b: 19) saw it as the first step towards a return to the *Ustaše* era and turned for help to Milošević's Serbia, whose propaganda machine had been successful in fueling their fears. In the summer of 1990 in the town of Knin in the *Krajine* area, Serb members of the police and the Serb mayor, Milan Babić, took control of the town and the police station and declared their sovereignty and autonomy from Zagreb. The Croatian government was prevented from restoring order by the Yugoslav army and clashes intensified between February and May 1991 in Plitvice, Borovo Selo, and Pakrac, while other incidents started in Vukovar. Given the growing intensity of the fighting, the international and European diplomacy on 7 July 1991, on the Brioni islands, obtained that Croatia and Slovenia suspend all independence activities for three months, while a commission of experts (Badinter Commission) considered the legal basis for independence and an observation mission entered Slovenia to supervise the withdrawal of the JNA from its territory.

Despite the diplomatic attempts, among others, by the European Community Conference on Yugoslavia and the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia (ICFY), as the three-month deadline approached Yugoslavia was even more divided: Kosovo had declared independence on 2 July 1990 and was recognized only by Albania, while Macedonia declared independence on 25 January 1991 (Ramet, 2002: 63). Croatia and Slovenia had progressively withdrawn their soldiers from the JNA that made up for the many desertions, also among the Serbs, by recruiting Serb nationalists and bands of irregular 'volunteers' and progressively taking possession of most weapons and equipment. In the meantime, JNA forces withdrew from Slovenia and moved to areas in Croatia with a Serb majority, while the Croatian government desperately tried to get hold of armaments present in the Croatian JNA barracks. Clashes intensified in the Croatian provinces of Baranja, Dalmatia, and Slavonia, especially in

¹⁰ After the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, following a partisan tradition, Tito created an army of reservists, (*Teritorijalna Obrana*) in each Republic (Ramet, 2002: 6), made up of civilians to be conscripted in the event of an all-out war. They were never really deployed nor properly trained, but they would provide the basis for the future Republican armies.

Vukovar, between the newly formed Croatian forces and the Croatian Serb forces, the latter quickly taking control of 15% of the country using JNA equipment (Woodward, 1995: 173). The Croatian Serbs proclaimed on 19 December 1991 the Serb Republic of Krajina (RSK), with Knin as its capital city.

The Yugoslav Prime Minister, Ante Marković, who had become increasingly isolated at home, but also abroad, as European diplomacy was now dealing with national leaders directly, resigned on 20 December 1991. To prevent an escalation of the conflict, international diplomacy issued an embargo on deliveries of arms and military equipment to Yugoslavia (Owen, 2013: 60) while remaining undecided on recognition. Nevertheless, when the city of Vukovar, in Croatia, fell to the Serbs after a three-month siege on 18 November 1991, flooding the world's television screens with long-forgotten scenes of war massacres, Germany and Austria, under pressure from internal public opinion and the Vatican, unilaterally recognized the countries before the Badinter Commission's final opinion and despite France and UK opposition within the UN security council. Croatia and Slovenia were officially recognized by EC members on 15 January 1992, but recognition intensified the fighting in Croatia, which had by then spread to the border areas with Bosnia and Herzegovina. At this point, the international community authorized an UN-led peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), to monitor and guarantee respect for human rights in Serb-held areas and the ceasefire agreement signed by the JNA and Croatian forces.

More problematic was the case of **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, where the ethnic composition was much more heterogeneous (Andjelic, 2003: 185) and where an independence referendum at the end of February 1992 had seen Croats, Muslims, and urban Serbs voting for an independent Bosnia and Herzegovina, while Bosnian Serbs had already proclaimed their own state in January 1992, the Serb Republic (Republika Srpska) with a provisional capital in Pale, not far from Sarajevo. The independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina was formally recognized by the international community in April 1992. Nevertheless, following the ceasefire agreement between the JNA and Croatian forces, the JNA army withdrew from Croatia and moved to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the place of origin of many of its Serb soldiers, including "the butcher of Knin" (Pirjevec, 2014: 166), General Ratko Mladić, who would officially become the commander of the Army of the Serb Republic (*Vojska Republike Srpske* – VRS) in May 1992. If the situation had thus been relatively calm in the country until the spring of 1992, armed scuffles intensified in April, and on 2 April Bosnian Serb militias permanently surrounded Sarajevo, firing on the crowd that had gathered to peacefully protest against Karadžić and Izetbegović's nationalist policies. The longest and bloodiest siege in history after St. Petersburg's lasted until February 1996 and turned multi-ethnic Sarajevo into a nightmare of human suffering and folly: the city resisted without water, food, medical assistance, bombed day and night and targeted by Serb snipers for four years. The newly founded Croat and Bosniak armies and police forces, despite their attempts to illegally import weapons, were still poorly armed and trained while the Bosnian Serbs, with the support of what remained of the JNA and its equipment, rapidly occupied in the spring of 1992 almost 70 % of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a methodology defined as "village against village" (Privitera, 2007: 155): Croat and Muslim communities were expelled at best, or purged, at worst. These episodes, later

defined and sanctioned as ethnic cleansing by the Hague Tribunal, were often carried out by paramilitary units¹¹, such as Arkan's Tigers, Vojislav Šešelj's Chetniks, Milan Lukić's White Eagles, with the help of Macedonian and Montenegrin reservists¹² (Pirjevec, 1998: 87), the latter particularly active in the bombing of Dubrovnik. In May-June 1992, the United Nations extended the deployment of UNPROFOR to the country and later proclaimed the few enclaves that the newly formed Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina had managed to hold and protect, such as Tuzla, Žepa, Goražde, Srebrenica, and Bihać, UN protected areas in April 1993, although remaining substantially unable to protect them or prevent fighting and human suffering (Pirjevec, 2014: 202).

In the autumn of 1992 in Herzegovina, Croats had proclaimed the Croatian Republic of Herzeg Bosna (*Hrvatska Republika Herceg-Bosna*) (Woodward, 1995: 194), led by Mate Boban, who began expelling Muslims and Serbs from the area. The move led to a war within the war between Croats and Muslims that would generate further violence and cause terrible material destruction, the most famous of which is the bombing of Mostar's Ottoman bridge by General Praljak's HVO troops in November 1993. The Croat-Bosniak war baffled the international community and tarnished the image of Croatia as a victim of Serb aggression, especially after prison camps were discovered in the area. By May 1993, all the attempts to come to a ceasefire had failed: the Vance Owen plan was officially rejected in a referendum by Bosnian Serbs, the Bosnian Muslims and sabotaged by the United States, reluctant to support the military intervention the plan required (Malcolm, 1996: 248; Gow, 1997b: 301).

It was only in January 1993 that the newly elected Clinton administration took a more active role in the conflict resolution tasking diplomat Richard Holbrooke to find a compromise through the so-called contact group, featuring France, Germany, Russia, and Great Britain. On 18 March 1994, in Washington, Bosniaks and Croats agreed to create a Bosniak-Croat federation and ended their year-long war, thus laying the basis for the American plan to divide the country into three entities (as in the Owen-Stoltenberg plan). Meanwhile, Belgrade had begun to distance itself from the Bosnian Serbs, both out of political calculations and due to increased unrest and opposition to the war in Serbia, brought to its knees by embargo and sanctions, and now featuring among the 40 poorest countries in the world. Aware of the change in power balance on the field, Milošević dumped Šešelj, began to openly criticize Karadžić and presented himself as the reasonable man, hoping to attribute responsibility for the war on the Bosnian Serbs who, in turn, intensified military operations, perhaps convinced that they would continue to go unpunished. After an ill-fated Bosniak attempt to free Sarajevo from the siege, Bosnian Serb forces, in July 1995, tightened the siege on the protected enclave of Srebrenica and entered the city, meeting no opposition from the UN Dutch troops. Under the eyes of the UN, Serb forces led by General Ratko Mladić, slaughtered some 8,000 civilians who had gathered around the UN's base: it was the first genocide on European soil since WWII.

¹¹ Several paramilitary formations, whose deeds are still the object of criticism, were also active on the Croatian side, like the HVO (*Hrvatsko Vjeće Obrane*) and HOS (*Hrvatske Obrambene Snage*) or Bosnia Herzegovina's Green berets and Black Swans.

¹² In April 1992 Montenegro and Serbia joined together in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), or Third Yugoslavia, and Montenegro, although keeping a low profile, provided support and reservists to the Serb cause during the war.

The tide of the war nevertheless began to turn with the first joint military victories of Croats and Bosniaks against Serbs in Bosnia, in the *Krajine*, and in Western Slavonia in 1994 and 1995, who were now better organized and armed, apparently by European or Muslim states, with the acquiescence of the United States (Gow, 1997a; Pirjevec, 2014: 489). On 5 August 1995, in a lightning attack called Operation Storm (*Operacija Oluja*), led by Croatian general Ante Gotovina, the Croats recaptured almost all their lost territory in one night. The attack created a reverse exodus: if in 1991 and 1992 Croats were pushed out of Serb-controlled areas, it is estimated that in August 1995 between 150,000 (Calic & Geyer, 2019: 313) and 200,000 Serb refugees left those areas (Privitera, 2007: 160; 494). Nevertheless, Bosnian Serb violence also became more systematic: after the fall of the enclaves of Žepa and Goražde and a second mortar attack on a Sarajevo market on 28 August 1995 public opinion called for more robust intervention. UNPROFOR Lieutenant-General Rupert Smith and NATO Secretary-General Willy Claes, apparently without prior authorization from New York or General Janvier, ordered a series of NATO attacks on Serb positions, that continued throughout August and September. The attacks would deal a severe blow to the Bosnian Serbs and allow Croat and Bosniak forces to break the siege of Sarajevo, marking the beginning of the end of the war.

1.3.5 Dayton and the post-war years (1995-today)

At this point the parties had no choice but to seriously negotiate: Franjo Tuđman, Alija Izetbegović, and Slobodan Milošević flew to Dayton, a military base in Ohio, and signed, on 21 November, an agreement for the cessation of hostilities, solemnly ratified in Paris on 14 December 1995. The Dayton agreement entailed the creation of a federal state in Bosnia and Herzegovina divided into two entities: the Bosnian Federation, composed of Croats and Bosnian Muslims, covering 51% of the territory, and the Republika Srpska, owning 49% of the territory, with the Brčko district, an area with a still heterogeneous ethnic composition, to be later decided by international arbitration. The country was to be led by a rotating trio of presidents, one for each ethnic community, initially assisted by an ad hoc international institution, the Office of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Dayton Agreement nominally marked the end of a conflict whose death toll, once again, is disputed, also given the high number of missing persons and yet undiscovered mass graves, but calculated by international experts, for Bosnia and Herzegovina alone, between 200,000 (Bianchini, 2003b) and 250,000 (Pirjevec, 2014: 535) while the number of refugees is attested between 2 and 3 million (Bianchini, 2003b: 171).

In the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), or Third Yugoslavia, made up of Serbia and Montenegro, Milošević remained firmly in power for several years, throughout the Kosovo¹³ war of 1998-1999, until the NATO bombing of Belgrade in March-June 1999. He was finally arrested and transferred to The Hague in 2001 but died in his cell under suspicious circumstances. Franjo Tuđman remained the President of Croatia until his death in 1999, while

¹³ The Kosovo war, although partly linked to the events presented here, is another conflict that does not fall within the scope of this study.

Izetbegović retired from politics in October 2000, and the International Tribunal only opened an investigation on them after their deaths. The Tribunal, formally dissolved on 31 December 2017 and now replaced by a residual mechanism, tried 161 people, convicting just over 91: 62 Serbs, 18 Croats, five Bosniaks, two Montenegrins, one Macedonian, and one Albanian. Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić, captured in 2008, and Bosnian Serb General Ratko Mladić were sentenced to life imprisonment, Croatian General Ante Gotovina was acquitted in 2012, Bosnian Croat general Slobodan Praljak committed suicide in a Hague courtroom in 2017 while Serb paramilitary leader Vojislav Šešelj returned to politics after serving ten years.

In Croatia, the transition to sovereignty and peace was rather quick: foreign missions had left the country by 1998 (2002 for the Prevlaka area) and Croatia joined NATO in 2009 and the European Union in 2013. The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, however, remains problematic, both economically and politically: since Dayton few real reforms have been undertaken (Johnson, 2004), corruption and poverty still affect economic and social development with high levels of unemployment and low post-western investment, while inter-ethnic reconciliation and the return of refugees are still thorny issues. The country's access to NATO has been stalled since 2008 by the Bosnian Serb entity rejection to allocate military facilities to the central state, and according to a report by the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the country has been facing in recent years the real risk of disaggregation, or worse, return to war. Bosnian Serb nationalist leader, Milorad Dodik, still denies the Srebrenica genocide and has promoted a series of protests that have de facto blocked the functioning of the state. He recently announced the creation of autonomous institutions for tax, health, and defense matters, interpreted by many as the country's secession declaration or, worse, as a war declaration. Given the traditional Russia-oriented penchant of Bosnian Serbs, fears have intensified after the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, which led NATO to strengthen its military presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Chapter 2: THE BOSNIAN/CROATIAN/MONTENEGRIN/SERBIAN (BCMS) LANGUAGE QUESTION

2.1. Introduction

The language issue related to this dissertation is perhaps one of the most complex and unique in the history of linguistics and geopolitics, as the conflict was often “anchored in language” and “language quarrels have been used as a proxy for unresolved issues of national identity” (Fidahić, 2018: 16) with some of them still ongoing as we write.

The issue was included in this dissertation, not to give voice to nationalist or anti-nationalist language policies, but to try and portray the complexity of the language situation in the region and understand how it affected interpreting work during the wars in Chapter 9¹⁴. We will therefore offer here a short historical overview, using, whenever possible, primary sources and a body of works representing different positions, sometimes opposed.

We will see that the entire discussion has revolved mainly on issues like the naming of the language, the nature of Serbo-Croatian, regional and dialectal variations and the extent to which they should be included in the language, as well as on topics pertaining to corpus planning, like alphabets, variants, and terminology.

The naming of the language has been crucial as applying a linguonym meant that the national group after which the language was named would eventually dominate and absorb other groups' languages, and therefore support their geographical claims. For example, calling the language of the Croats of Vojvodina ‘Serbian’ “would contribute to their separation from the bulk of the Croatian people and would become a means of denationalization” (Ivić, 1992: 103), and the same would be true for other national minorities.

Another crucial issue has been whether Serbo-Croatian is a dead language, as it has not disappeared at the death of its speakers nor following “language shifts” (Greenberg, 2008: 13) and, most importantly, whether it was ever one language. Many linguists, especially in Croatia, Bosnia and Montenegro, believe that Serbo-Croatian was just a political construct imposed during the common state experiences in which similarities are the result of common language planning (Ivić, 1992: 106; Škiljan, 2004a) while others affirm that on a linguistic and communicational level, Serbo-Croatian existed, as it functioned as the unofficial official language of Yugoslavia, and that it still “somehow exists” given the unimpeded communication among speakers (Bugarski, 2004b: 18) without resorting to code-switching (Kordič, 2004: 34). A final issue, is that of the local, regional and dialectal variations within the language(s) as the way people speak is “differentiated geographically, but also functionally and socially, as well as individually” more than ethnically (Radovanović, 1992: 94). For example, although the Croats from Herzegovina refer to Zagreb as their standard language, their language resembles more the one spoken by Serbs and Muslim Bosnians living in the same area, than the Kajkavian dialect spoken in Zagreb. In Bosnia and Herzegovina especially, it is virtually impossible to distinguish a Serb from a Muslim or a Croat from the way they speak if they come from the

¹⁴ We use here the ICTY's acronym of BCS (Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian) - now including M for Montenegrin, BCMS (Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian), after the country's independence in 2006 - for reasons of practicality, although being fully aware that it is not free from criticism.

same area, unless they want to stress specific language features to mark their ethnic identity (Hammel, 2000: 25), modifying their own natural expression, by adopting words, structures and pronunciation to conform to the identified ethnic group. If the former Republican borders quickly became national ones, they have never corresponded to those of the various Stokavian sub-dialects or to the ethnic affiliations of the local populations adding a further layer of complexity to the already complex language question (Sekereš, 1977: 369, as quoted in Greenberg, 2008: 53).

We will first describe here the origins of the language(s) and their main differences, to later discuss the creation and development of Serbo-Croatian throughout first and second Yugoslavia and then highlight how the language question became paramount in pre-war and war years (1970s-1980s) to conclude with an overview of the language situation today on the institutional and private market and in international Academic institutions.

2.2 Historical overview

2.2.1 *The origin of the language(s) of the South Slavs*

The BCMS language(s) are classified as South-Western Slavic languages, unlike Slovene, a Western South Slavic language, and Macedonian, an Eastern South Slavic language, which have always been treated as distinct and will not, therefore, be addressed in this work. The South Slavic languages form what linguists call a ‘dialect continuum’ or a ‘dialect chain’, where “the boundaries between the speech communities are ‘soft’ because there are no barriers to comprehensibility and ‘the consciousness that they are dissimilar is not self-evident’” (Škiljan, 2001: 90). They began to diverge from Eastern South Slavic languages in the 11th century, after a so-called ‘Common Slavic period’, for geographical and historical reasons, with differences accentuating in the 11th and 14th centuries.

As per BCMS language(s), between the 19th and the 20th century, three *narječje*¹⁵, or **supra-dialectal variants**, emerged based on the different forms of the interrogative pronoun ‘what’: Shtokavian (*štokavski*, from *što?*), Kajkavian (*kajkavski*, from *kaj?*) and Chakavian (*čajkavski*, from *ča?*).

At the beginning of the 19th century, the Shtokavian supra-dialect was the most widely used in Serbia, Montenegro and part of Bosnia and Herzegovina and this is the reason why it was chosen as the basis of the common Serbo-Croatian language, but also of modern-day Croatian, Serbian, Montenegrin and Bosnian, while Chakavian and Kajkavian were relegated to the realm of informal communication. Despite sharing a Shtokavian base, the different languages in the region have always adopted different forms for the long ancient **Slavic vowel yat**: it became *-je/ije* in the so-called Ijekavian (*ijekavski*), *-e* in Ekavian (*ekavski*) and *-i* in Ikavian (*ikavski*) pronunciations. As an example, the adjective ‘beautiful’ is produced as *lijepo* by Ijekavian, *lepo* by Ekavian, and *lipo* by Ikavian speakers¹⁶. Ijekavian pronunciation is typical

¹⁵ Unlike a dialect, a supra-dialect is a language that incorporates elements of different dialects and performs the function of a common language for a specific geographical area (Mønnesland, 2005: 218).

¹⁶ To add a further layer of complexity, the regions’ languages also have diatopic variations, in the form of dialects and sub-dialects, which deviate sometimes from the dominant *yat* pronunciation: some Kajkavian-Ijekavian dialects around Zagreb feature *-e* instead of *-ije*, while in some Chakavian dialects we find a mix of Ekavian and Ikavian. This is because population

of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro, but also of western Serbia, Ikavian is mainly spoken in the coastal areas of Croatia and Bosnia, while Ekavian is spoken mainly, but not exclusively, in Serbia. Ijekavian was later identified with Croatian, or the Western variant, and Ekavian with Serbian, or the Eastern variant, an over-simplification that fails to consider that language territorial distribution doesn't always fall within well-defined state boundaries or national constructs (Fidahić, 2018: 55) as well as the specific feature of the language spoken in Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Next to the different forms of the word *yat*, the main differences in the languages can be found in **lexicon**, as the Balkan peninsula was subject to different foreign dominations over the centuries: the areas roughly corresponding to today's Croatia and coastal Montenegro were under Austro-Hungarian and Italian rule and therefore often feature German, Italian - especially in Dalmatia - and Hungarian words, while today's Serbia and partly Bosnia and Herzegovina were once part of the Ottoman Empire and feature more Turkish, Arabic, Greek and Persian terms in their leksikon (*kašika* for spoon, *peškir* for towel, *hleb* for bread, *hilijada* for one hundred in Serbian) although some can be found also in Croatian.

Differences in lexicon also come from the dialectal basis, the political and cultural history, the written tradition, the foreign languages that served as a model for elaboration (Popović, 2004: 31) and religious affiliations (Edwards, 1985: 27): Croatian has acquired cultural and religious terminology from the Latin world, Serbian from Greek, Russian, and Church Slavic, while the Islamized Slavs of Bosnia were influenced by the Islamic world. This can be seen, for example, in the western and eastern language development in gender variation (*minut/minuta*, *kvaliteta/kvalitet*), and in the different approaches to word formation (*općina/opština*, *sport/šport*, *filozofija/filosofija*, *aktualan/aktuelan*) as well as in transliteration: if the western variant accepts Latin sources in their original form, the eastern one follows the phonological method of Greek (*Genova/Ženova*, *George/Dorđe*, *Abraham/Avram*).

Finally, a very small number of differences can be highlighted at a **grammatical level**, for example in the declension of some bi-aspectual verbs, influenced in Serbian by the Greek suffix *-isa* (*formulisati*) and in Croatian by the German suffix *-ira* (*formulirati*) (Greenberg, 2008: 52) or in the trend in Serbian to lose the infinitive in servile constructions as in *moram da radim* (Serbian) vs. *moram raditi* (Croatian) to express the meaning 'I must work'. Differences in tenses are minimal, although the eastern variant retained a tense that Radić calls the *ima perfekt* (Radić, 2002, as quoted in Greenberg, 2008: 52) while the western one, especially today's Croatian, has almost lost aorist. Phonetic differences are numerous and remarkable at the town, county, and village levels, and they are so many that it would go far beyond the scope of this dissertation to consider them, although we can say that standard Croatian doesn't distinguish today, in oral communication, phoneme *č* and *ć*, produced in an intermediate position.

2.2.2 First Yugoslavia and WWII

migration and displacement over the centuries changed the language map: the creation of the *Militärgrenze*, for example, saw Orthodox Shtokavian-Ijekavian populations settling into Catholic Chakavian-Ikavian areas (Hammel, 2000: 23).

The languages spoken by the South Slavs differentiated in the 15th century around three supra-dialects (Shtokavian, Chakavian, and Kajkavian), three ways of pronouncing and writing the *yat* vowel (Ijekavian, Ekavian and Ikavian), and in some instances of word formation, although the language situation was more complicated as “borderlines of the language communities were sometimes so crisscrossed that it was impossible to delineate them univocally” (Škiljan, 2001: 96). Reflection on language started in the region in the early 19th century when the South Slavs were still divided politically and found in language a common denominator for unity and independence. Among the most active linguists was, in Serbia, Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (1787-1864), the father of the Serbian language, who proposed a radical language reform based on Shtokavian and influenced by the ideas of Manzoni, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, and Jernej Kopitar, that served the political aim to unify the South Slavs and “soustraire les Serbes vivant sous domination autrichienne et turque à l’influence linguistique et politique de la Russie” (Kordič, 2004: 31-32). In Croatia, some linguists influenced by Vuk’s activity in Serbia, later known as Vukovites, started a debate about the Croatian language, which, until then, had been written in different supra-dialects (in Shtokavian in Dubrovnik and Slavonia, in Chakavian in Dalmatia and in Kajkavian in Zagreb), or in foreign languages (Italian, Hungarian, and especially German). Linguist Ljudevit Gaj (1809-1872), a convinced supporter of the Illyrian movement (see § 1.3.1) proposed a language reform of the Croatian Language that elevated Dubrovnik’s Shtokavian and Latin script to standard literary language (Greenberg, 2008: 25-26). Gaj found in Karadžić an ally to discuss the creation of a common literary language, a project that was officially approved with the signing of the Vienna agreement in March 1850. The agreement (*objava* or *izjava o zajedničkom jeziku*) chose the Shtokavian supra-dialect as the basis of the common literary language, in its Ijekavian pronunciation, with Latin and Cyrillic coexisting in a state of synchronic spelling (Ibid: 27). No agreement was found on the naming of the language, which proved immediately a thorny issue: if the compound adjective Serbo-Croatian had come unofficially into use, the official name represented its political and national identity and sparked intense debate. An agreement was not reached and in the end, everyone called the language whatever they liked, the Croats called it ‘Croatian’, the Serbs ‘Serbian’, and the two appellations continued to co-exist together with Serbian-Croatian or *narodni naš jezik* (our native language).

The Agreement had moved the first steps in the creation of a common language and the Yugoslav Academy of Sciences and Arts, established in Zagreb in 1867, became the center for the promotion of political, and linguistic Yugoslavism. By the end of the century, the notion of a common language was fairly established both inside and outside the area, despite the persistence of linguistic clashes and discussions on both sides, also promoted by the creation, in 1919, of the first common state, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovene, whose official languages were ‘Serbian-Croatian-Slovenian’. As we have seen in chapter 1, the first common Yugoslav experience saw the struggle between the Serbs’ demands for greater power and the Croats and Slovenes calling for equal representation and in some cases independence, a debate that also involved language: Croatian, Bosniak and Montenegrin linguists complained that the common language imposed Serbian models and that “Bosniak, Croatian or Montenegrin forms were marginalized or re-coded as provincialisms” (Greenberg, 2008: 246).

With WWII and the creation, in 1941, of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), the Croats declared Croatian their national language and embarked on a language reform (Vonić & Vujić, 2009) that went in the opposite sense of the common Serbo-Croatian experience. Old ‘Serbian’ and ‘foreign’ words were replaced with new ones, either retrieved from Old Slavic, such as *pukovnik* (general), *stožer* (headquarters) or *poglavnik* (führer, duce) or newly formed like *krugoval* (radio), *slikopis* (film), while Cyrillic script was banned. Nevertheless, although fines and prison sentences awaited citizens who did not comply with new rules (Kapetanović, 2018), these changes ‘by decree’ didn’t manage to leave a permanent mark on the almost completely illiterate population. If not much happened linguistically in Nazi-occupied Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, annexed to NDH, underwent language Croatization, following the reform implemented in Croatia.

2.2.3 Second Yugoslavia

Over the war years, the partisan circles, which attracted fighters belonging to different ethnic groups, promoted a revival of the language discussion aimed at smoothing out language differences. When the South Slavs joined in a single state, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) after WWII, its constitutions did not recognize a single official language (Kovačec, 1992: 43) - as it would have meant admitting the superiority of one people - but listed Slovenian, Macedonian and Serbo-Croatian as having equal dignity, both in Cyrillic and Latin, although Serbo-Croatian served as the unofficial official language of the country (Radovanović, 1992: 94) and the official language of the Yugoslav army (JNA).

The issue of language convergence was officially discussed in 1954, in Novi Sad, Serbia, when Croat and Serb linguists met to discuss planning, status and orthographic conventions and adopted the so-called Novi Sad agreement, establishing that Croats, Montenegrins, and Serbs spoke one language - Bosnian Muslims were not mentioned since their identification as constituent peoples dates to 1968 -, developing around two literary centers, Belgrade and Zagreb, and, therefore, featuring two variants¹⁷, the eastern Ekavian and the western Ijekavian variants. It was also decided that the two alphabets, Cyrillic and Latin, enjoyed equal status and that all South Slavic peoples were required to learn them in school, regardless of their preference of use. As for the language name, it had to always mention both variants: *sprskohrvatski* for the eastern variant, and *hrvatskosrpski* for the western one, written without a hyphen to emphasize their substantial indivisibility, although official designations, changed over the years: ‘Serbo-Croatian/Croatian-Serbian’ in the Socialist Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, ‘Croatian literary language also known as Croatian or Serbian’ in the Socialist Republic of Croatia after 1971, ‘Serbo-Croatian’ in the Socialist Republics of Serbia and Montenegro.

¹⁷ The term ‘variant’ was chosen instead of ‘pronunciation’, but it was later criticized as it raises the question: “What are they variants of? Is Serbian a variant of Croatian or *vice versa* or are they both variants of an overarching abstract concept called Serbo-Croatian?” (Magner, 1992: 189).

In Novi Sad, linguists also committed to collaborate for the creation of a joint dictionary and spelling manual (*Pravopis*)¹⁸ and to develop terminology and taxonomy for all spheres of economic, educational, and cultural life. The adoption of the same school standard, frequent contacts, and common experiences reinforced understanding within the continuum and the spreading of the common language, while authors like Branko Mamula (Bagdasarov, 2018), or Tito himself, tried to achieve greater interconnection, by mixing both eastern and western variants in the same text or speech.

However, a kind of bilingualism or diglossia remained, so that ‘the common language’ was used in official and institutional settings, while in personal and family ones, in each Republic, people continued to speak as they had always done. Books were published in the variant preferred by the author but were read throughout the country, and foreign works were translated in the language of the Republic in which they were published: according to UNESCO’s Index Translationum, between 1979 and 1991 of the 15,855 translations of foreign books 6,800 (43%) were published in Serbia, 3,150 (20%) in Croatia, 650 in Bosnia and Herzegovina (4%), 57 (0.5%) in Montenegro, 3,557 (23%) in Slovenia and 966 (6%) in Macedonia (Hlavac, 2015: 251).

Despite the proclaimed collaboration, nevertheless, no “common commissioning agency for language planning” was ever established (Brozović, 1992: 72-73), corpus planning remained substantially polycentric and the language initiative laid in the hands of the Republics, often through non-administrative institutions like the *Matica*¹⁹ (Škiljan, 2004b: 49).

Also, several standardization and codification issues remained unsolved and would be widely politicized in the following years, like **spelling** and **terminology**. The latter, in particular, was complicated by several levels of synonymy (Benson, 1978: 301), English loans and new coins²⁰, especially when the eastern and western variants competed. Therefore, specialized dictionaries published in those years, such as the 1965 *English/Serbo-Croatian Technical Dictionary* by Radić, or the 1955/1971 *Medical Dictionary* by Aleksandar Kostić, were often incomplete, competing, and increased terminological confusion. All attempts at publishing a common grammar were voided of any significance and the publishing of the common dictionary became a complicated political matter, as the inclusion of a certain entry, or the definition provided for it was often understood as a political act: the dictionary by Serbian linguist Miloš Moskovljević, for example, was withdrawn and destroyed by Yugoslav authorities for the inflammatory potential of some lemmas and definitions (Ibid: 300).

Another recurring issue was that of **alphabets** and discussions emerged as to how proficient were Yugoslav citizens in using both Cyrillic and Latin. Serbs felt that Croats had never really adopted the double alphabet in schools and complained that Croatian Serbs were unfamiliar with Cyrillic, while Croats saw the discussion as an attempt to impose a Serbian trait through the public machine (Hammel, 2000). An exception was Bosnia and Herzegovina where "such was the previous familiarity and interchangeability of the Latin and Cyrillic scripts that students in Bosnia barely had a consciousness of whether a text was in Latin or Cyrillic" (Pupavac,

¹⁸ *Pravopisi*, or orthography manuals, are the most important linguistic coding tools whose publication is, even today, a media event.

¹⁹ The *Matica*, in Slavic countries, is a cultural and literary organization in charge of the promotion of the national language and culture. Often acting also as publishers, they have frequently supported and accompanied nationalist debates.

²⁰ Benson (1978) gives the example of ‘station wagon’, for which more than nine synonyms were in use: *familijarna kola*, *karavan*, *kombi*, *kombi kola*, *mobil*, *kombinovano vozilo*, etc.

2006: 122) and where the famous newspaper *Oslobođenje* used the two alphabets on alternate pages.

2.2.4 The pre-war years (1970s-1980s)

In the 1980s, with the flare up of nationalism, the language debate became the arena to discuss wider political issues, as the desire for independence mounted in the Republics. The first ethnolinguistic claims were heard at the beginning of 1966 when Slovenian cultural and scientific bodies wrote to *Radiotelevizija* Ljubljana to ask for a television program only in the Slovenian language, complaining that more than half of the TV programs were in Serbo-Croatian, meaning Serbian (Batović, 2010: 581). In the same years, scientific language institutions in Croatia complained that Serbian words were frequently presented “as more acceptable, while Croatian ones were treated as regionalisms/dialecticisms” (Bagdasarov, 2018: 33-35) and in 1967 they published the *Declaration on the Name and Status of the Croatian Language* (*Deklaracija o nazivu i položaju hrvatskog književnog jezika*). Signed by several associations and intellectuals, including the famous writer, poet, and philosopher Miroslav Krleža the declaration rejected the Novi Sad agreement, demanded that all language standards in Yugoslavia be considered equal and affirmed the right of the Croats to publicly use their own language, the ‘Croatian literary language’ (*hrvatski književni jezik*).

The declaration was condemned as part of the Croatian Spring movement (see Chapter 1) but the last Yugoslavian constitution of 1974 accepted its claims and established that every Yugoslavian citizen had the right to use their own language and alphabet “in proceedings with state bodies and organizations exercising public authority [...] and the right to classes in their own language in accordance with what is prescribed by law” (Socijalističke Federativne Republike Jugoslavije, 1974). Despite granting increased multilingualism - with federal acts and regulations translated into all 7 languages (3 versions for Serbo-Croatian, Slovene, Albanian, Hungarian, Macedonian) and some Federal and regional bodies even providing interpretation for their proceedings (Bugarski, 1992: 19-20) - the new constitution opened the way to language independence within the Serbo-Croatian block, as language rights were understood as national rights (Ibid: 21) and the term ‘variant’ would soon be replaced with ‘language and alphabet’ (*jezik i pismo*), de facto allowing the naming of the national languages as in Figure 1.

TABLE 1. The Unified Language from 1954 to 1974

1954	1974
Western variant	Croatian standard idiom/ Croato-Serbian literary language
Eastern variant	
Ekavian	Eastern variant-ekavian pronunciation/ Serbo-Croatian literary language
Ijekavian	Eastern variant-ijekavian pronunciation/ Serbo-Croatian literary language
Ijekavian	Montenegrin standard idiom/ Serbo-Croatian literary language
Western variant plus Eastern variant/ijekavian	Bosnia-Herzegovinian standard idiom/ Serbo-Croatian literary language

Figure 1: The Unified Language from 1954 to 1974 (Greenberg, 2008: 40)

a variant, or language, in its own right. Reflections on language started to appear in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1980s, focusing on its Turkish, Arabic and Persian influence in terminology

Also, if the language debate had always revolved around Croatian and Serbian, with the recognition of Bosnian Muslims as one of the constituent peoples in the 1980s, linguists from Bosnia and Herzegovina called for the recognition of the Bosnian language, not as a hybrid of Serbian and Croatian, but as

and on the presence of Turkish phoneme /x/, as in *kahva* vs. *kava* (Askew, 2011: 10-12), although retaining a certain linguistic tolerance as ethnic groups lived and coexisted, often in mixed families and marriages.

Parallely, in 1986, the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts published an inflammatory Memorandum which called for the right of the Serbs to freely use one's language and alphabet and claimed that Serbs throughout Yugoslavia were discriminated and that the Cyrillic alphabet, as the epitome of Serbian Orthodox heritage, risked disappearing (Bagdasarov, 2018: 51).

In such a complex political and language situation, in 1988, the Constitutional Court of SFRY declared the term 'Croatian literary language' adopted by Croatia after 1974 unconstitutional, because no mention was made to Serbs living in Croatia, and unleashed a wave of protests, just like the trial of *Mladina* journalists in 1988 in Slovenia, which was held in Serbo-Croatian instead of Slovenian, (Ramet, 2002: 32; Bugarski, 2004a: 4). We can see how language quarrels preceded and supported political ones, so much so that, in a way, "the final break-up of Yugoslavia had been presaged in language issues a good quarter-century before it actually occurred" (Bugarski, 2004a: 3). Languages became, in those years, one the pillars of "linguistic nationalism", that is ethnic nationalism expressed in language, or rather a process that manipulated language to achieve nationalist ends (Bugarski, 2001: 73), where language loses its communicative function and focusses only on the symbolic or manifestative ones (Bugarski, 2009).

2.2.5 The 1990s and the breakup of Serbo-Croatian

Ever since the 1970s, language had become a symbol of ethnic, national and confessional allegiance and members of a determinate language community were pushed to "homogenize within, and heterogenize outwardly" (Bugarski, 2001: 73). This is what Fishman calls "contrastive self-identification via language" (Fishman, 1972, as quoted in Askew, 2011: 11), where language "is the shibboleth that differentiates friend from foe". In the 1990s linguists set to work to differentiate the nationally defined languages from the ones spoken by the 'other' ethnic groups, Serbo-Croatian became almost a swearword (Požgaj-Hadžić, Balažić Bulc & Miheljak, 2013: 37-66, as quoted in Szerhorváth, 2015: 2): if in the 1981 census almost 73% of the population identified as speakers of Croato-Serbian or Serbo-Croatian²¹, in the 1991 37,5% of Yugoslav citizens declared their native language was Bosnian, 28.8% Serbian, 13,5% Croatian, while only 26.6% Serbo-Croatian and 1,4% Croato-Serbian (Bugarski, 2001; Hlavac, 2015: 247-248). An episode quoted by Glenn (1996: 145), perfectly explains the state of things at the eve of the war: in 1991, the Democratic Party of Serbia had brought together all political parties of the six Republics for a conference in Sarajevo as a last attempt to stop the war. Dragoljub Mićunović, the Serbian party secretary and chairman, welcomed everyone with an inspiring opening speech and informed the audience that interpretation was available in Slovenian and Macedonian. At this point, Neven Jurica, from the Croatian HDZ, requested

²¹ Nationalists attribute the 1981 census results to the limited choice of language designations rather than to the support for the Serbo-Croatian/Croato-Serbian language project.

simultaneous translation in Croatian, causing clamor and laughter in the room, while a Sarajevo delegate demanded translation into Bosnian, thus ending the conference proceedings.

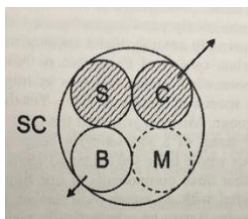


Figure 2: The evolution of BCMS (Bugarski & Hawkesworth, 2004: 7)

In June 1991, with the independence of Croatia, Slovenia and later Bosnia and Herzegovina, the internal language borderers became external ones (Bugarski, 2004a: 4), and former variants were officially elevated to distinct standard languages, while a language tribunal was established in Slovenia to protect the Slovenian language from Serbo-Croat influences (Ibid: 5). The war years saw more prominence given to language differences, in a process of “political self-assertion, for in an era of national or regional secessionism there is a natural tendency to complement political independence by linguistic separatism” (Hobsbawm, 1996: 1078). We will briefly outline below how languages evolved during and after the war years, a situation that, as described in fig. 2 (Bugarski & Hawkesworth, 2004), saw mainly Bosnian, Croatian, and to a lesser extent Montenegrin speakers pulling out of the Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian sphere.

2.2.5.1 Bosnian/Bosniak

Bosnia and Herzegovina had been excluded from the language debate until the 1980s on the assumption that the language spoken in the country was a mixture of Croatian and Serbian, as the three ethnic groups had coexisted, mingled and intermarried for centuries, and there was no clearly defined antecedent language to build upon (Greenberg, 2008: 136). The first debates started on the pages of *Oslobođenje* in the 1980s, and by the 1990s half of its readership did not believe in the common language policy anymore (Mønnesland, 2005: 472) and called the language Bosnian. Linguists like Džezvad Jahić (1999), Senahid Halilović (1990), Josip Baotić (2004) and Ibrahim Čedić (2009) were among the first to try and codify the new Bosnian standard and justify its status in works that “laid the scientific foundation for political action regarding the proclamation of a Bosnian language” (Mønnesland, 2005: 484).

In the 16 points of *The scientific foundation of the Bosnian language*, Jahić (1999) dated the language back to the thousand years of independent medieval Bosnia, while the Austro-Hungarian times were considered pivotal for its development. The specific features of the Bosnian language were nevertheless more difficult to identify, since Bosnian Serbs, Croats and Muslims living in the same area often spoke the same language, so corpus planning meant “walking on a tightrope between words perceived as ‘Croatian’ and words considered to be ‘Serbian’” (Greenberg, 2008: 143). Starting from the works by Senahid Halilović (1990) and Slobodan Remetić (1970), the language reform centered on the velar fricative *h*, in forms where it wasn't used before but is etymologically justified (*lahko* vs. *lako*), in forms where it is not etymologically justified (*hudovica* vs. *udovica*, *hlopta* vs. *lopta*) and in words like *sahat* (hour), *halat*, (tool), and *rahat* (satisfied)²². Vocabulary reform was achieved by introducing or reviving Turkish, Arabic, and Persian loanwords, identified as Bosnian in a moment of renewed

²² Bosnian Muslim linguists do not fully agree on which words should feature the velar fricative *h*.

reconnection with its Islamic heritage (as *selamiti* instead of *pozdraviti* for *greeting*) and by infusing elements typical of rural dialects, blended with their Central Stokavian lexicon.

The reform, which did not affect the basic grammatical and lexical structure of the language (Bugarski, 2001: 83-84), remained generally tolerant of doublets (like *kruh* and *hleb* for 'bread') and synonyms from the eastern and western variants, which would become one of the typical features of Bosnian, while Croatian constructs and words, even the ones introduced after 1991, were more welcome than Serbian ones, an issue raised by Šator (1999) and partially confirmed by the Oslo Corpus of Bosnian Texts of 1997 (Mønnesland, 2005: 484-502).

The reform was nevertheless criticized by linguists like Hebib-Valjevac or Filipović who claimed that, in an attempt to characterize the language, it had been infused with an excess of oriental words that even Bosnian Muslim speakers did not understand (Šator, 1999; Askew, 2011: 52).

The Bosnian language reform was not welcomed by Bosnian Croats and Serbs, who increasingly identified with Croatian or Serbian, but the thorniest issue proved to be its **linguonym**, that is should the language of Bosnia and Herzegovina be called Bosniak (*bošnjački*), or Bosnian (*bosanski*)? If several scholars agreed that the language should be named after the land (Bosnian) and not the ethnic group (Bosniak), Bosnian Croat and Bosnian Serb linguists opposed this choice, as it extended, they argued, a language characterized by eminently Bosnian Muslim features to the entire country, ignoring the languages of the other constituent peoples. Conversely, calling the language *bošnjački*, would mean that only Bosnian Muslims speak that language, thus forgetting that speakers from all ethnic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina share common language features, and move towards further separation. Today, the language is officially called Bosnian, although the debate is ongoing and there is sometimes uncertainty among speakers on the linguonym so that it is common to hear the genitival construction *jezik Bosne i Hercegovine* (the language of Bosnia and Herzegovina). It should be said, however, that on December 13 1992, the language was defined as the standard literary language of Ijekavian pronunciation which can be described as Bosniak, Serbian or Croat language (Karadža, 2004: 26) later changed to Bosnian in 1993, following a request by 105 scholars and intellectuals (Mønnesland, 2005: 485), whereas in the Constitution signed by Bosnian Muslims and Croats in 1994, the official languages were Bosnian and Croatian with the Latin alphabet (Federacija BiH, 1994).

As we can see, no mention was made of Ijekavian Serbian and the **Cyrillic alphabet**, which has had an important symbolic value for the Bosnian Serbs. In the 1992 Republika Srpska Constitution, Serbian Cyrillic was listed as the official alphabet and the November 1994 Law on the Official Use of Language and Script (*Zakon o službenoj upotrebi jezika i pisma*) institutionalized the Bosnian Serb leadership's preference for Cyrillic and Ekavian. Between 1993 and 1998 in Serb-held areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the Croatian *Krajine*, authorities insisted on the use of Cyrillic, although Glenny and Bugarski observe that, in practice, only a small portion of Croatian Serbs were able to use it (Glenny, 1996: 12): "I witnessed the extraordinary spectacle of a Knin Serb attempting to write the address of his relations in Belgrade in Cyrillic. He could not do it. Half-way through the address, he gave up and wrote it in Latin" (Bugarski, 2004b).

In September 1993, the leader of the Bosnian Serbs, Radovan Karadžić went as far as to pass a decree imposing the use of the Ekavian Serbian pronunciation of Belgrade and Novi Sad in all Republika Srpska public offices, institutions, radio, television stations and newspapers. Nevertheless, it soon became clear that the legislation was impossible to implement, because despite being Serbs, citizens of Republika Srpska spoke very differently from their Belgrade counterparts, and it was finally scrapped by the Republika Srpska parliament (Greenberg, 2008: 79-80).

The Dayton agreement, signed in 1995, gave very little guidance on how the language situation should be managed, but it was signed in three equally binding versions (Bosnian, Croatian, and Serbian) and English. After the war, the Federation constitution listed Bosniak and Croatian in the Latin alphabet as official languages, while that of the Republika Srpska indicated Ijekavian and Ekavian Serbian, with Cyrillic being privileged over Latin. On a request of Alija Izetbegović, nevertheless, the Constitutional court of Bosnia and Herzegovina found, in 1998, such language provisions unconstitutional, and these were changed, for the Federation into Bosnian, Croat and Serb language with Latin and Cyrillic as official alphabets (Askew, 2011: 138-139), whereas Republika Srpska adopted a slightly different formulation but granting substantially the same rights (“The language of the Serb, Bosniak and Croat people”) (Republika Srpska, 1992: art. 7).

Despite language equality on paper, both in the Federation and the Republika Srpska, these provisions have been inconsistently applied (Greenberg, 2008: 156), often after the intervention of the European High Representative, and language continues to be a dividing ground in schools, where the ‘two schools under one roof system²³’ is still too often the rule. In Republika Srpska, the debate on Cyrillic has been recently revived: in 2018, a bill of law tried to prescribe the use of Cyrillic on all public communication in the Republika Srpska, but it was later judged unconstitutional by the Bosnian Supreme Court. Banja Luka and Belgrade nevertheless agreed in September 2021 on a bill on the use of the Serbian language in public life and the protection and preservation of the Cyrillic alphabet (Bugarski, 2000).

2.2.5.2 *Croatian*

On independence, Croatian was proclaimed the national language and language planners set to work to define its specific features and status. They traced its development to well before the common standardization efforts and claimed that language agreements with the Serbs were only aimed at buying time, the so-called “a step backwards, two steps forwards approach” (Brozović, 1995: 26), until language independence was politically possible²⁴.

Parallely, substantial corpus planning reforms were introduced to establish the dominant features of the Croatian language and differentiate it, as much as possible, from Serbian (Bugarski, 2004a: 3). Some of the principles that guided the reform were contained in Dalibor

²³ A system established as a temporary measure to address the offensive post-war ethnocentric education system and encourage the return of refugees and displaced persons, it results today in a form of permanent segregation within the school system, despite the efforts of the international community (OSCE, 2018).

²⁴ Not all Croatian linguists, like Babić, for example, agree on this claim.

Brozović's 1971 *Ten Theses on the Croatian Language* and in a banned *Pravopis* from 1971, published in London (called 'the *Londonac*', the Londoner). The reform was carried out prescriptively, through manuals and Croatian-Serbian Dictionaries (*razlikovnici*) and, since no major differences existed in grammar, phonology, syntax, and morphology, it focused mainly on vocabulary.

The vocabulary reform, which invested all areas of life, but especially the military and administrative ones, cleansed Serbian and/or Yugoslav words - perceived as almost the same thing - although supporters of the reform claimed that it was merely aimed at "draw[ing] on the riches of one's language tradition" (Katičić, 1987: 187 as quoted in Kalogjera, 2004: 90-91). In all cases, such words were replaced with Croatian archaisms (*oživljenice*), ethnically Croat regionalisms, and neologisms (*novotvorenice*), the latter being either new words or words with a common root with Serbian but a different ending (ex. *Koleginica* (Serbian)/*kolegica* (Croatian)). An example of the recuperation of ancient words is that of the names of the months: *prosinac*, which replaced *decembar* for example, comes from the old Slavic verb *prositi*, to beg for charity, while *travanj*, which replaced *april*, is a clear reference to *trava*, the grass starting to appear in that month of the year.

A similar purist approach was adopted also for borrowings from other languages to be replaced, whenever possible, with words adapted to Croatian's phonological structure (*prilagodjenice*) or, better, with native Croatian words (*usvojenice*). The preference for *usvojenice* has led to the creation of new words, even for concepts common among speakers - like *aerodrom*, which became *zračna luka* to avoid a calque from English. Borrowing was discouraged from all languages, although words from nations and languages historically close to Croatia (Greek, Latin, French, Italian, German and Hungarian) are better tolerated, while internationalisms like *familija*, *ekonomija*, *historija*, *centar* (to which Serbian is very much prone) were replaced with more Croatian words (in this case *obitelj*, *gospodarstvo*, *povijest*, *srediste*). According to the Croatian *Savjetnik*, 20,000-25,000 words make up the most important differences between Croatian and Serbian (Barić *et al.*, 1999: 9) and these have been partially attained through the war-years reform, fully supported by the Tuđman administration²⁵, although more rigid reforms, like the 1994 proposal by HDZ MP Vice Vukojević to fine or imprison those who violated Croatian language rules, were rejected.

After the war, this prescriptive language approach has been criticized by several media and linguists like Brozović (1995), Katičić (1999) and Barić *et al* (1999: 10) and we still see today the struggle between two *pravopisi*, a more prescriptivist and a more tolerant one, which take, respectively a right-wing and left-wing political connotation. The debate on Croatian vs. Serbian words has considerably slowed down the creation of a commonly accepted Croatian dictionary and the establishment of terminology for sector-specific fields while, in everyday language, a sort of diglossia still exists, with people using 'Serbian' words or English calques in familiar communication and resorting to prescribed Croatian ones in official settings. Although Croatian is probably the language that has changed the most since independence, a

²⁵ When Croatian President Franjo Tuđman, in a slip of the tongue, used the Serbian adjective for happy, *srećan*, instead of *sretan* in public, his speech was properly edited in subsequent reports (Greenberg, 2008: 50).

century of “standard communion preceded by about fifty years of common pre-standard efforts” (Škiljan, 2004a: 71) has left a permanent mark that cannot disappear overnight, and the public, though picking up and actively using the new words²⁶, doesn’t seem to be so interested in such issues as linguists are. Nevertheless, a whole new generation of Croats has been born and raised speaking the ‘Croatian standard language’, and with links to Serbian or Bosnian almost severed, language distance will further increase, despite the languages being still mutually intelligible today.

2.2.5.3 Montenegrin

The Novi-Sad agreement had defined Serbo-Croatian as the language spoken by Croats, Serbs, and Montenegrins, but it had never considered the specific features of the Ijekavian Montenegro pronunciation, featuring lexicon similar to Serbian, but sharing morphological features of the Ijekavian dialects of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Western Serbia. In the 1970s, a debate started that led to the recognition, in the 1974, constitution of the *Crnogorski književnojezički izraz* (Montenegrin literary and linguistic way of speaking) (Greenberg, 2008: 40-41; 89). In April 1992, Montenegro joined Serbia into the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) where the official language was called Serbian, although the Montenegrin version of the constitution listed Serbian Ijekavian with both writing systems as its official language (Republika Crne Gore, 1992), as a way to symbolically integrate with Western nations, attract tourists and reach out to Bosnian and Albanian minorities for whom Cyrillic was the alphabet of their regional foes (Greenberg, 2008: 62).

The debate over a Montenegrin language took new momentum in 1993-1994, following the attempt to impose Ekavian pronunciation on Ijekavian Bosnian Serbs, when Montenegrin linguists began calling for a separate Montenegrin standard and committed to proving that the literary language had developed independently from the Polabian language, extinct in the 18th century, for the presence of three phonemes: *ś*, *ź*, and *ż* (Karabeg *et al.*, 1998). Vojislav Nikčević, a professor of Slovene literature at the Nikšić Philosophy Department, carried out a language reform that introduced the above-mentioned phonemes, and promoted archaisms and regional pronunciation, thus shaping an idiom steeped in Montenegrin dialectology, history and folklore (Bugarski, 2004b: 12). The reform was nevertheless not very popular among all linguists nor the general population, as the language depicted was far from actual everyday communication (Jaroszewicz, 2010-2011: 108, as quoted in Melnytska, 2016). The debate simmered for a couple of years and emerged once again with the country’s independence in June 2006. In 2008, a Council for the Codification of the Montenegrin Language (*Savjet za standardizaciju crnogorskog jezika*) was established to develop the language’s spelling principles, grammar, and dictionary, but it proved unable to find an agreement and was replaced in 2009 by a three-person Expert Commission for the Standardization of the Montenegrin language which published the *Pravopis* and the Grammar, partly implementing some of Nikčević’s ideas. 2010 saw the establishment of the Institute for the Montenegrin Language

²⁶ Every year the magazine *Jezik* and the association Dr Ivan Šreter collect entries for new Croatian words, with the winning ones entering the language the following year. In 2021, to describe the Covid-19 pandemic, for example, the following words were created to replace the loan translations from English: *velepošast* (instead of *pandemija*), *društvoštaj* (instead of *lockdown*), *dišnik/disajnik* (instead of *respirator*), and *samoosama* (instead of *samoizolacija*).

and Literature, later the Department of the Montenegrin Language and Literature in Četinje, and 'Montenegrin' was the label given to language teaching in schools.

The reform was nevertheless disputed and telling of the divisions in Montenegrin society where half of the population still claims to speak Serbian: in a 2003 census, only 22% of Montenegrins chose Montenegrin as their native language and 59.67% preferred Serbian, while in 2011, 43% claimed to speak Montenegrin, but more than 8000 interviewees declined to answer the language question (Kölhi, 2012: 88). Language reform in Montenegro is still too young to make any substantial considerations although it should be noted that a public opinion poll in 2013 showed that almost half of the Montenegrin society does not support language innovations.

2.2.5.4 Serbian

After the dissolution of second Yugoslavia, Serbian underwent language reform but the switch from Serbo-Croatian to Serbian was in general slower and with limited consequences (Bugarski, 2000: 199) if compared to Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, at least on a concrete language plan, although it did change on an abstract symbolic level (Popović, 2004: 25).

In terms of status planning, Serbian linguists continued to focus on establishing links between the language of Serbia proper and the one spoken by Bosnian and Croatian Serbs, with a clear nationalist goal. If corpus planning was minimal, introducing more elements from the vernacular and discouraging German borrowings (Greenberg, 1998: 53-54), the most heated debate revolved around pronunciation and the protection of Cyrillic as a symbol of Serbian identity. When Serbia and Montenegro joined together in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) in 1992, although both alphabets were officially listed in the Constitution, Cyrillic was favored, as proved by the printing of Cyrillic-only banknotes, criticized by Serbian linguist Ranko Bugarski as an attempt to unify a greater Serbia under Cyrillic (Ibid: 61). In 1993-1994 the language debate in Serbia centered on two competing *pravopisi*, one by the so-called status quo linguists (Pešikan, Jerković, Pižurica), supported by the Matica Srpska, the Novi Sad and Niš Universities and the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, and one by the so-called neo-Vukovites (Šimić, Ostojić, Ćorić, Stanojčić) from Belgrade University. Both accepted the two alphabets and pronunciations, but the neo-Vukovites, politically linked to the Serbian Radical party, called for more radical reforms. They also accused the *Matica* of Ekavian domination and of disregarding the contribution of Ijekavian Serbs to Serbian literature while status quo linguists pushed for the abandonment of the Ijekavian pronunciation to unify Serbian under a single official pronunciation. The debate between the two groups went on for years, creating orthographic and grammar confusion in Serbia and hindering a coherent language-planning process. The status-quo linguists and the *Matica pravopis* officially prevailed in 1997 and a Committee for the Standardization of the Serbian language was established, although it never reached consensus, while the public opinion remained, in general, quite skeptical of centralized approaches of any type.

2.2.6 The BCMS languages today

As outlined above, the process that led the variants to become independent national languages, has been a complex linguistic, sociolinguistic and political one, that is still a cause for debate and strife, as languages cannot be created by decree (Bugarski, 2004b: 14). In 2017, a group of intellectuals and NGOs from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Serbia, started a series of conferences to discuss the language issue which resulted in the Declaration on the common language (*Deklaracija o zajedničkom jeziku*), affirming that Croats, Bosniaks, Serbs and Montenegrins use a common, standard, but polycentric language. The declaration was signed by 200 prominent writers, scientists, journalists, activists, and other public figures, among others, Noam Chomsky, Ronelle Alexander, Josip Baotić, Ranko Bugarski, Vesna Bulatović, Senahid Halilović, and Snježana Kordić. It also admitted that language and people do not have to coincide, that each state or nation may independently codify its own variant of the common language, and that the four standard variants enjoy equal status, calling for the abolishment of all forms of linguistic segregation and discrimination in educational and public institutions.

Nevertheless, the issue of the language(s) of the region is still problematic for all those that operate in one or more of the region's languages, when organizing interpreting or translation services or teaching them, with different solutions being adopted.

The International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), for example, decided to provide interpretation into one language, identified with the acronym BCS²⁷ (Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian in alphabetical order) - although providing written translation into the language chosen by the accused (either Bosnian, Croatian or Serbian) - after consulting, in 1995, two language experts who came to the conclusion that the region's languages are mutually intelligible and that the existing differences would not justify the refusal of an interpreting service in one of the other languages (Bugarski, 2004b). Ellen Elias-Bursac (2015), a former ICTY translator and interpreter and Dražanović-Carrieri (2002: 49), the first head of the language unit, underline the practical rationale behind this choice, as it was not always possible to determine what language a witness or a defendant spoke beforehand, especially since most came from Bosnia and Herzegovina and spoke in the same manner. On this point, Besmir Fidahić (2018), former ICTY interpreter, claims that by choosing BCS as a *lingua franca*, the tribunal violated the moral and procedural rights of the victims by providing interpretation in the same language, or variant, of their aggressor and that, since most interpreters at the ICTY spoke either Croatian as spoken in Croatia and Serbian as spoken in Serbia, the tribunal made "a strong national, ethnic, and political identity statement against Bosnia and Herzegovina and the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina" (Ibid: 180). Despite the BCS agreement, language issues took center stage throughout the tribunal's life, and they were often exploited by defendants to slow down the tribunal's work or as a defense strategy²⁸ (Elias-Bursac, 2015: 193) and proved sensitive also for interpreters who "very often resorted to

²⁷ Today BCMS (Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian) after Montenegro's 2006 independence and language reform.

²⁸ Ante Gotovina's defense managed to prove, for example, that the word *stationar* (literally a first-aid post, doctor's office) could also mean, in Croatian, a soldiers' lodgings, and that the presence of the word on Croatian training target maps from 1993 did not prove the intention to deliberately attack the civilian population (Elias-Bursac, 2015: 220).

middle-of-the-road solutions” (Draženović-Carrieri, 2002: 52).

The language issue was equally thorny for European and American **universities**. If the universities in the region were quick to change the names of respective curricula and courses, the process was slower in foreign universities and guided more by technical/economic reasons than ideological or sociolinguistic ones, especially in smaller universities (Neweklowsky, 2004). Ever since the late 1990s only a few universities outside the area have taught the regions’ languages separately (Mønnesland, 2005: 510), while institutions such as Stockholm, Helsinki, Oslo, Paris (INALCO), London UCL (Hawkesworth, 2004), Bologna and Vienna recognize the languages as distinct but train students together. Other universities, like Copenhagen and Trieste, and many educational institutions in the US, including the Defense Language Institute (Browne, 2004), have preserved the Serbo-Croatian/Croato-Serbian label despite the fact that it is considered outdated by all linguists from the region, who reproach international colleagues to not “conceptualize language (and language designations) as socially constructed and therefore reflective of socio-political events” (Kordić, 2010 & Longinović, 2011, as quoted in Hlavac, 2015: 252), also making things harder for their own students.

In the **translation and interpreting market** today, the rule is generally to have separate accreditations and qualifications for each of the BCMS languages, both on the private and institutional market. In EU institutions, the Translation and Interpretation Directorate General have separate units for each language (Goranka Antunović, as quoted in Hlavac, 2015: 257) although, since Croatia is the only EU member country, it remains to be seen how this will play out when and if the other countries join the EU. For interpreters with Croatian as a C language, Bosnian, Montenegrin and Serbian can be added to the language combination by simply presenting a self-declaration that they are able to work professionally from those languages (Hlavac, 2015). On the private market, separate designations also seem to be the rule although only a few scientific contributions are available on the issue (Hlavac, 2015; Bernardi & Polidoro, 2022). Hlavac (2015) who investigated language pre-disposition in the BCMS language combination among Australian language professionals, points out that interpreters and translators no longer work from/into Serbo-Croatian and BCMS languages they are not accredited for, although in practice, they evaluate on a job-to-job basis, especially since clients and agencies usually question the fact that these are three different languages. A survey from 2020 (Bernardi & Polidoro, 2022) and the author’s professional experience as a conference interpreter with Croatian as a working language on the Italian private market confirm the need to negotiate, for every assignment, the working language not just because of clients’ expectations but also considering the audience composition, with instances of ‘mixed booths’ being quite frequent and generally well accepted on the Italian private market.

Chapter 3: MILITARY MISSIONS TO BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AND CROATIA IN THE 1990S

After considering the historical events and growing antagonism related to language that led to the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, we will describe here three military missions deployed to the area ever since 1991, trying to provide an overview of their functioning, aims, scope and reputation, as the main users of interpreters' services. We divided missions into three categories: United Nations missions, European Community/Union Missions, and NATO missions, adding a brief overview of civilian institutions that also employed interpreters.

3.1 United Nations Military Missions

3.1.1 Croatia: UNPROFOR I, UNCRO, UNTAES, UNPSG, UNMOP

At the end of 1991, the fighting in Croatia had already been raging for almost six months, but the UN Security Council only approved the deployment of a peacekeeping operation in Croatia on 15 December 1991. The mission was named United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), in French FORPRONU (*Force de Protection des Nations Unies*), later UNPROFOR I, and was deployed to Croatia for an initial period of 12 months (United Nations,

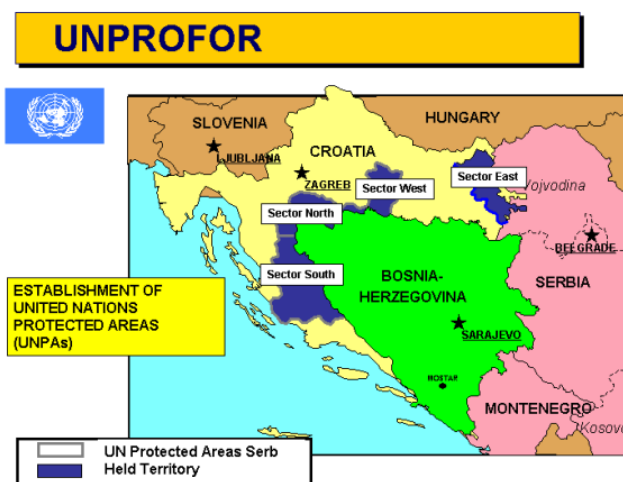


Figure 3: UNPROFOR areas of operation (Wikimedia Commons, 2003)

1996). The mission was initially headquartered in Sarajevo, where the situation in the early months of 1992 was calmer, and then moved to Zagreb in May 1992 until the end of the war.

The goal of UNPROFOR I was to oversee the demilitarization and withdrawal of the Yugoslav Army (JNA), protect the civilian population, especially ethnic minorities, and give diplomacy the time to find a peaceful solution to the conflict (Krsticevic, 1998). To this end, the areas in present-day Croatia which saw actual fighting, i.e. the ethnically mixed ones, were divided

into four sectors called UNPA (United Nations Protected Areas) that corresponded essentially to the *Krajine* (Owen, 2013: 60). During 1992, the UNPROFOR mandate was expanded to monitor areas outside or bordering the UNPAs, the so-called 'Pink Zones' that were under Serb control but featured a Croat majority. In the Pink Zones, UNPROFOR was tasked with custom control activities, monitoring ceasefire agreements and human rights violations, as well as with facilitating the return of refugees and internally displaced persons. UNPROFOR I was authorized with an initial deployment of approximately 14,000 to 15,000 troops (Gow, 1997b: 102) and its mandate was renewed several times until 1995, when Croatian President Franjo Tuđman announced that Croatia would no longer cooperate and invited UNPROFOR to leave the country by June 1995. While acknowledging its role in the withdrawal of the JNA and in

hindering hostilities, the Croats considered that UNPROFOR had not succeeded in demilitarizing the UNPAs and in restoring Croatian authority in the Pink Zones, nor had it facilitated the return of refugees and displaced persons and feared a ‘Cypriotization’ of the situation, that is to say a permanent division of the country (Krsticevic, 1998). This and other reasons led to a reform of UNPROFOR in March 1995: the mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina kept the name UNPROFOR, the one in Macedonia became UNPREDEP (United Nations Preventive Deployment Force), and UNPROFOR I in Croatia became UNCRO (UN Confidence Restoration Operation). UNCRO remained in place until December 1995, later replaced by the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES) and was complemented by the United Nations Police Support Group (UNPSG). The objective of UNTAES was to dismantle the rudimentary Serb state in eastern Croatia, facilitate its reintegration into the Croatian system, create security and support the transition of powers, return of refugees, local governance, and employment. The mission featured 4,000 military personnel, 400 police officers, and 99 military observers and was extended until January 1998, when it was replaced by the UN Police Support Group (UNPSG), active until October 1998 to train the newly formed Croatian police in the east of the country. The Pink Zone on the Prevlaka peninsula became the United Nations Observer Mission in Prevlaka (UNMOP) in February 1996, with 28 military observers, three international representatives, and six local civilian agents, which ended in December 2002 when the foreign ministers of Croatia and the then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia agreed that the peninsula would remain under Croatian control but granted the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia rights over the waters of the Bay of Kotor and later submitted the case for arbitration to the International Court of Justice.

3.1.2 Bosnia and Herzegovina: UNPROFOR II, UNMIBH, UNIPTF

As the fighting moved to Bosnia and Herzegovina, in May 1992, the UNPROFOR mandate was extended to the country, but the first troops to arrive in Sarajevo were immediately withdrawn and redeployed to Croatia when the situation in the city worsened (United Nations, 1996). In June 1992, UNPROFOR returned to the Bosnian capital with a much larger contingent to ensure the security and operation of Sarajevo airport, humanitarian assistance, and to monitor the ceasefire agreement, under the name UNPROFOR II, with headquarters in Zagreb. UNPROFOR, which had by then representative offices also in Serbia²⁹, Montenegro and Slovenia, saw its mandate further expanded in September 1992 to provide support to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Red Cross. In April 1993, the cities of Sarajevo, Tuzla, Žepa, Goražde, and Bihać were officially declared ‘safe areas’ under United Nations control, with Resolutions 819 and 824, while resolution 836, paragraph 9, authorized UNPROFOR troops:

[...] When acting in self-defense, to take the necessary measures, including the use of force, in reply to bombing or armed incursion against the safe areas by any of the parties or in the event

²⁹ Two warehouses with humanitarian aid for Bosnia and Herzegovina were located in Belgrade (Zaccaria, 1994: 95; Suljagić *et al.*, 2010: 54; Nuhanović *et al.*, 2019: 187).

of any deliberate obstruction in or around those areas to the freedom of movement of UNPROFOR and humanitarian convoys. (United Nations, 1993)

The resolution was aimed at preventing further outbreaks of ethnic cleansing rather than at engaging UNPROFOR troops in actual fighting, but it was destined to mark a watershed in UN peacekeeping: the mission operated under Chapter VII of the UN Charter (Akashi, 1995), which allows peacekeepers to take military and nonmilitary action to restore international peace and security, but the interpretation of ‘military action’ was so restricted that cases in which troops on the ground could use force were very limited, almost non-existent. Following the establishment of the Safe Areas, UNPROFOR II, which in September 1992 numbered about 10,000 troops, was beefed up to 22,895 between 1993 and 1995 and complemented with a Rapid Reaction Force of 4,000 French, British and Dutch soldiers at the end of 1995. At its operational peak, it featured about 45,000 men on the ground, coming from about 40 countries (United Nations, 1996).

In October 1992, in cooperation with NATO, the Security Council established Operation Deny Flight, to monitor the No-Fly Zone on the Bosnian airspace whose violations were nevertheless rarely sanctioned until August-September 1995 when, during *Operation Deliberate Force*, a series of attacks on Republika Srpska positions were carried out for the first time. Airstrikes were interrupted in mid-September when the Serbs agreed to remove their weapons to an area of 20 km around Sarajevo, a moment that essentially marked the end of UNPROFOR’s engagement. From that moment on UNPROFOR, which cost about five billion dollars (United Nations, 1996), had a human cost of 167 casualties (three observers, 159 soldiers, one civilian police officer, two international civilians, and two local civilians) and more than 700 wounded, played a containment role until the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement on 21 November 1995, when military responsibility for the area was officially passed onto NATO. The UN continued to be present in Bosnia and Herzegovina with a civilian mission, UNMIBH (United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina), active until 31 December 2020 and with the 1,650 policemen and policewomen of UNIPTF (United Nations International Police Task Force). For several years, the United Nations also had on-site staff from the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), established by Resolution 827 of 25 May 1993 to prosecute crimes in the former Yugoslavia after 1991, which had offices in Zagreb, Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Pristina, and Belgrade.

3.1.3 Functioning and structure of UNPROFOR



Figure 4: UNPROFOR logo (Militarij, 2020)

UN peacekeeping operations generally involve the deployment of a civilian support and a military component, made up of national contingents (Findlay, 2002) and military observers (UNMO – United Nations Military Observers), led by a Chief Military Observer (CMO), usually a Brigadier General or Major General. Following this organization, both components, civilian and military, reported to their Sector Commander, who in turn reported to the Force Commander at Zagreb Headquarters and was in direct contact with the UN Secretary-General. Any decision was authorized following, in reverse order, the same military chain of command, but also required the green light of a parallel

political chain of command in what is called the ‘double key system’ similar to the one in place for nuclear weapons.

Next to UN troops, made up of national contingents, UN mission also deployed **United Nations military observers** (UNMOs), small groups of military observers from different countries living with the local population and considered the “eyes and ears of the Security Council” (Blanko, 2019), as their primary goal was that of collecting information in the field, also through the use of interpreters. UNMOs’ intelligence gathering is not to be understood, nevertheless, as actual intelligence, i.e. information to be used against the enemy (Gonçalves, 2020: 55), but as the collection of general information in the public domain (open-source intelligence) aimed at informing the work of the United Nations. This approach to intelligence gathering has often been criticized by UNPROFOR commanders, as actual intelligence would have made their work easier and safer and allowed more effective delivery of humanitarian aid (Gow, 1997b: 115).

Provided by member states through voluntary call-up procedures, UNMOs were military officers who had been in service for at least five years, they were able to speak, read and write the language of the mission, English (Gonçalves, 2020: 59-61), and were unarmed, to be better accepted by the locals. To that aim, UNMOs shared the same living conditions as local citizens, as they were not housed in military bases or compounds, but in privately rented houses. Each UNMO patrol generally consisted of two observers and one interpreter, while some UNMOs operated alone at observation points. UNMOs also verified and validated attacks (with ‘siterep’, i.e., site reports, and ‘shelrep’, i.e., shell reports) and casualties claimed by the parties, monitored ceasefire violations and evacuation of the wounded (‘casevac’, casualty evacuation) and, thanks to their mediation, it was sometimes possible to temporarily restore essential services such as water or electricity.

It is very difficult to establish the total number of UNMOs deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia over the five years of the war, as their number varied based on needs on the ground, but their number at peak times, was probably around 700 (United Nations, 1996), for the most part stationed in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

3.1.4 Criticism and assessment of UNPROFOR

UNPROFOR has been the subject of much criticism from the warring parties and the international community to the point of being considered the epitome of UN peacekeeping failure. In former Yugoslavian countries, the ‘blue helmets’ did not enjoy a good reputation: Croats and Bosnians blamed them for inaction, while Serbs accused them of persecution, especially after the attacks on Republika Srpska’s positions in 1994 and 1995. It is revealing that in Bosnia and Herzegovina the mission was called SERBOFOR (Matjaž, n.d.), suggesting that their inaction equaled siding with the Serbs (Pirjevec, 2014: 160).

Local criticism was echoed by international public opinion, abashed by UNPROFOR’s inability to put an end to the suffering of the local populations, sieges, bombings, and episodes of genocide, with Srebrenica being the biggest stain on UNPROFOR’s reputation. It should not be forgotten, however, UNPROFOR’s attempts at mediation and the self-sacrifice of many of its men and women who risked their lives to help others, even if it was not enough

to alleviate the suffering of the local population (Cohen & Moens, 1999: 86). UNPROFOR's failure is rather political than military and, according to experts, it is mainly due to three factors: the lack of cooperation of the warring parties, the UNPROFOR Rules of Engagement (ROE), but above all the conflicting interests of UN and NATO member states in the area. As for the first reason, it is uncontested that a peacekeeping mission should be deployed to maintain peace when peace has already been achieved, but in the former Yugoslavia, there was no peace to keep, and while pretending to discuss ceasefires, the warring parties continued in their war-mongering purposes. Secondly, UNPROFOR troops were heavily limited by the concept of self-defense, which allowed them to fire a single directed round only in retaliation of direct incoming fire and when the source of the firing could be clearly identified (Gow, 1997b: 117). Moreover, even if the origin of fire was identified, UNPROFOR troops also needed military and political approval to engage in fire exchanges, an aspect the belligerent parties were fully aware of and exploited to their advantage (Berkowitz, 1994). Resolution 836 complicated the situation, placing UNPROFOR in an uncomfortable no man's land, where the concept of self-defense became even more difficult to interpret, especially since UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali understood it not as 'defense' proper but as 'support' to deter possible attacks. Also, UNPROFOR divisions were lacking the necessary manpower and armaments to counter attacks and were isolated in the enclaves (Gow, 1997b: 302). Finally, approval to the use of force was extremely slow and complicated due to the 'double key system', which required the authorization of the UN and NATO bureaucratic apparatus, as well as of UNPROFOR and NATO commanders. Between a request from the field and its authorization, hours or even days passed, no matter if it was a request to scrap a damaged vehicle (Ibid: 116) or to airstrike military positions. Finally, the third and main reason for UNPROFOR's failure, was the conflicting interests of the international community, with commanders sometimes subject to interference from the UN, NATO, and their own governments at the same time.

The case of **Srebrenica** is perhaps emblematic of the interaction of these three factors: the safe area was guarded by a Dutch UNPROFOR battalion of two to four hundred men (accounts vary here) led by Lieutenant-Colonel Thom Karremans, that had replaced Canadian troops in March 1994. At the beginning of July, the Bosnian Serbs (*Vojska Republike Srpske* – VRS) started tightening their grip on the town and UNPROFOR, unable to fire a single shot lost all their observation posts to Serbian fire. As the VRS advanced, on 9 and 10 July 1995, Colonel Karremans asked and was denied air support by General Bernard Janvier (Human Rights Watch, 1995), a decision supported also by the Pentagon, reflecting the extreme complexity and political pressure exerted by national governments on decision-making (Pirjevec, 2014: 202). On 11 July at 8:00 a.m., upon the entry of Serbian forces into town, the Dutch again asked for close air support, already approved by the Dutch Foreign Minister but the airplanes were first called back due to 'poor visibility', and later 'for lack of fuel', probably after a request of the Dutch Minister of Defense, after the Serb had threatened to bomb the Dutch headquarters in Srebrenica. Without air support, and with a handful of men and two tanks, the Dutch troops could do nothing but obey their governments, the international community, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, and handed over 8000 civilians, who had taken refuge around their base, to their murderers, without firing a single round.

3.2 European Union Missions: ECMM, ALTHEA, EUPM

The decision to establish the European Community Monitor Missions (ECMM) was taken by the CSCE (Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe), later known as Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE), in July 1991, while control of the mission was subsequently handed over to the European Community (Landry, 1999). European diplomacy had been trying to stop the conflict ever since the Briuni Agreement in July 1991, when Croatia and Slovenia's declarations of independence were put on hold for three months while an observatory mission, the ECMM, was deployed to Slovenia to oversee the ceasefire and the withdrawal of the JNA from the country and extended to Croatia at the end of July. ECMM was intended to be the representative of the European Community in the area and acted independently from other military missions, although coordinating its activities and sharing information with the United Nations, NATO, OSCE and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Managed from The Hague, the ECMM headquarters were moved on September 1, 1991, from Ljubljana to the outskirts of Zagreb, at Hotel I, until 1997. The ECMM had regional offices in Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and later opened bases in Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Macedonia (FYROM).

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, it was based in Sarajevo, at Hotel Srbija in the Ilidža district (Doyle, 2018). After the Dayton Agreement and with the improvement of the situation in Croatia, the ECMM Headquarters moved to Sarajevo in 1997 (Stato Maggiore della Difesa, n.d.), while the Belgrade Office was closed from March 1999 to October 2000 during the NATO bombings. On 22 December 2000, the mission was renamed the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM), managed directly by the Council of the European Union, through the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. In the 2000s, the ECMM's attention turned increasingly to Kosovo, Macedonia, and Serbia, completing withdrawal from Croatia in 2004, from Albania in 2006, and from Montenegro in 2007.

3.2.1 Functioning of the ECMM

The Head of the ECMM Mission (HoM) was an ambassador, usually representing the EC country holding the rotating presidency of the Council. ECMM operated through seven regional centers (RCs) in Zagreb, Knin, Zenica, Belgrade, Szeged (Hungary), Sofia, and Tirana, divided into smaller coordination centers (CCs), regional centers, and stand-alone liaison offices (Caruso, 2007). Each CC featured several ECMM teams, generally composed of at least two observers – one was generally a professional military and the other a diplomat – a local driver and an interpreter, sometimes escorted by UNPROFOR's armed detachments (Landry, 1999). The teams' daily reports were sent from the CC to the regional centers, and from there to Zagreb, and were later used to brief the EC Presidency and member states. Observers came from all EC countries and five OSCE countries, Canada, Sweden, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic (Doyle, 2018). Just like UNMOs, ECMM observers were unarmed, and dressed totally in white, to be immediately identified as neutral by the warring factions, and their vehicles were painted in white and carried the EC flag. This peculiar attire

(Figures 5 and 6), probably inspired by the Dutch navy (Pirjevec, 2014: 87), and the ban imposed on observers to go out into the field when fighting was raging, earned the ECMM observers the nickname of *sladoredari*, ice-cream men, who “*niti štete niti koriste*”, do neither harm nor good (Malarić, 2016) and who show up “*samo po lijepom vremenu*”, only when the weather is good (Miškulin, 2010).



Figure 5 (left): Brynjar Wetteland, head of the Norwegian Delegation with observers in Tirana, Albania (Hardy, 2001).



Figure 6 (right): James Collins training observers in southern Croatia (Hardy, 2001)

ECMM personnel generally remained in place for a year, to better get to know the area and local actors, and lived among the locals, ideally to develop an extensive network of contacts and provide accurate and timely information to Brussels (Hardy, 2001). The mission recorded seven casualties: four Italian and one French observer were killed when their helicopter was shot down by a Yugoslav army R-60 air-to-air missile in Novi Marof, in January 1992 (Malarić, 2016), while a Belgian observer was killed in Mostar in May 1992 and another was found dead in unclear circumstances in 1997.

The initial role of ECMM was to implement ceasefire agreements and monitor the withdrawal of the JNA, but it later also monitored border crossings and became responsible in Croatia for the Pink Zones. At the end of 1992, ECMM started to monitor, together with UNPROFOR, the no-fly zone over Bosnia and Herzegovina, a task later transferred to NATO IFOR/SFOR. ECMM's main goal was to inform the EC of events on the ground by sending daily reports that functioned as an early warning system, but also to promote dialogue between the parties by delivering messages and letters and installing hotlines, and to oversee the implementation of the ceasefire agreements. The mission also assisted the various humanitarian organizations on the ground (Caruso, 2007) in providing small-scale direct aid, like distributing letters or locating missing persons, supervising prisoners' exchange, evacuating the wounded with UNPROFOR, and monitoring the return of refugees (Stato Maggiore della Difesa, n.d.). The ECMM was also crucial in protecting the local cultural heritage, monitoring sites of cultural interest in the areas of Vukovar, Osijek, and Mostar (Kaiser, 1993), through the creation of a special unit that informed the Council of Europe directly (Caruso, 2007). Part of the ECMM's work also included monitoring and reporting on the economic, social and infrastructure situation and developing proposals for post-war reconstruction (ECMM – Observers in white, n.d.).

It is very difficult to establish the actual number of observers deployed with the ECMM as no official data is currently available online, archives could not be consulted, and our attempts to contact the persons in charge of the currently active European Union Monitoring Mission in the Republic of Georgia were fruitless. An anonymous former ECMM monitor, in his blog (Ibid) states that there were initially 20 monitors in Slovenia and 50 in Croatia, a number that later increased, for Croatia, to 500 in July 1991 and to 600-700 in September 1991. Colm Doyle, the first head of the ECMM mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1991 talks in his book about an initial contingent of 200 people (Doyle, 2018: 14), 100 observers and 100 civilians, including diplomatic and logistic personnel. Since Doyle led the first ECMM contingent to Sarajevo, we can suppose that ECMM increased in numbers in the following years in Bosnia and Herzegovina, getting to the same number, if not higher, of the observers deployed in Croatia. A rough estimate of ECMM observers in both Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina could be around 1400-1500 observers during the war years.

3.2.2 Criticism and assessment of the ECMM



Figure 7: EC Monitor Mission logo (Worthpoint.com, n.d.)

The relatively small ECMM is not subject to the harsh criticism of UNPROFOR, although the ironic nicknames for the ECMM reported above are an example of locals' disappointment with the mission.

Just like UNPROFOR, the ECMM lacked manpower, armed power, political will and most importantly it was the result of a badly coordinated European policy so that observers often found themselves acting without clear directives from Brussels, like Dutchman Henri Wynaendts, who was sent alone to Osijek to negotiate a ceasefire with local militia leaders without the support or resources needed to achieve any result (Zifciakova, 2010). ECMM observers were also subject to

great pressure from their own governments, as reported by Lieutenant Colonel Landry, a Canadian ECMM observer: "It was well known that monitors from the EU's major powers were reporting directly to their own country, even though they were placing the independence and impartiality of the mission at risk by doing so" (Landry, 1999: 5).

Also, ECMM observers were not allowed to go out on the field until all armed clashes had ceased, which severely limited their ability to act, as they could only try to stabilize the situation as far as possible and usually arrived when violations had already been committed. ECMM observers have on several occasions underlined this aspect to the local authorities, like Jon van der Valk, the first ECMM Head of Mission, who stated that they had "a limited mandate, they cannot force anyone to ceasefire, they are an eminently political and not a military instrument, which needs the creation of a climate of understanding" (Miškulin, 2010).

Finally, observers were stationed in the main cities and only spent one to two weeks in the areas where the fighting took place, not having enough time to fully understand the situation on the ground, or to actively improve relations, often leaving locals with a feeling of 'unfinished business' that felt more like a tourist visit than an attempt at achieving lasting peace. Also, observers rotated every six months, de facto bringing home the acquired skills and knowledge and most of the senior leadership and logistics, creating disruptive effects on the chain of command (Landry, 1999: 4).

Despite these limitations, the ECMM was the first international mission to ever set foot in the area over a year before the UN, often being the first to help the local population, and the cost in terms of human lives it gave to peace should not be forgotten.

3.2.3 Other EU missions: EUFOR and EUPM



Figure 8: EUFOR Logo
(Wikipedia, 2017)

With the end of UNPROFOR and the handover of the peace process to the NATO Implementation (IFOR) and Stabilisation Force (SFOR), the ECMM role decreased, although remaining on the ground until 2007. In 2004, when SFOR commitment was coming to an end, the EU deployed the European Union Force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUFOR), also called *Operation Althea*, which took over all SFOR's stabilization tasks, except for the capture of war criminals, remaining the exclusive responsibility of NATO. In 2012, the mission was reorganized and tasked

with the Capacity Building and Training of the Armed Forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina, although it continued to assist local authorities in maintaining security in the country.

EUFOR has also played a key role in non-proliferation, demilitarization, de-mining and mine awareness programs, providing technical expertise and training to the local population (European Union, 2015). In 2018, Bosnia and Herzegovina was judged a 'security provider' and no longer a 'security consumer', and responsibilities were handed over to local authorities, although EUFOR is still active today under the guidance of general Anton Wessely, an Austrian officer, just like all EUFOR commanders since 2009.

Althea operates in cooperation with NATO, whose Supreme Headquarters of Allied Powers in Europe (SHAPE) are used as its operational headquarters. SHAPE's Deputy Chief of Staff holds the operational command of the mission and works with the European External Action Service, the EU Military Committee, and the EU Military Staff and reports to the EU council. Thanks to this EU-NATO cooperation, EUFOR and NATO have an agreement called Berlin Plus, under which personnel can be augmented, even at short notice, as was done in March 2022 after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Political control and strategic direction of the operation rests entirely within the EU Political and Security Committee, under the responsibility of the Council of the European Union, represented within Althea by the EU Special Representative and Head of the EU Delegation to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ambassador Johann Sattler (European Union, 2020).

Since the transition from SFOR to EUFOR consisted largely of a change of name and commanders, 80% of the SFOR troops remained on the ground and EUFOR initially replicated the same organizational structure as the previous mission. At the time of deployment on 2 December 2004, the mission had 7,000 troops, divided into three contingents: Multinational Task Force (MTF) North, based in Tuzla, Multinational Task Force North-West, based in Banja Luka, and Multinational Task Force South-East (also called Task Force Salamander) based in Mostar. Over the years, however, the bases of the multinational task forces were progressively closed, and the number of units dropped to 1,600 in February 2007, 600 from to 2012 onwards, and increased to 1,100 in March 2022. The main base is Kamp Butmir, in Sarajevo, but various Liaison and Observation Teams (LOTs) are located throughout the country. Twenty EU Member States (Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy,

Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain) and the United Kingdom have participated in the mission, together with Albania, Chile, North Macedonia, Switzerland, and Turkey as non-EU Troop Contributing Countries (TCC) (Ibid). Even for *Operation Althea*, total costs were not available, especially since the mission is still active as we write in January 2023.

Finally, from 2003 to 2012, the European Union was also present in Bosnia and Herzegovina



Figure 9: EUPM logo (Thierry, 2003)

with a police mission, the **EUPM** (European Union Police Mission), as a support to EUFOR. It was the first such mission undertaken by the EU under the Common Foreign and Security Policy, taking over the tasks of the United Nations International Police Task Force, whose mandate ended at the end of 2002.

The EUPM was deployed in Sarajevo, Mostar, and Banja Luka, and in smaller units throughout the country but it also operated at the entity level (the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina

and the Republika Srpska), working with the Ministry of Interior, police academies, cantonal police centers and stations, and with the Brčko district authorities to build a sustainable, professional, and multi-ethnic police force. EUPM was successful in establishing a State Investigation and Protection Agency (SIPA), a joint strategic and operational law enforcement capacity at the state and regional level, and in helping the local police to fulfil all the requirements of the visa liberalization roadmap. EUPM also established two essential services: the emergency telephone number 122 and the crime hotline (European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2013). EUPM contributing countries were Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, and Ukraine. The operational strength of the missions was 889 police officers in 2003, later reduced to 83 in June 2012 (European Union, n.d.). The mission ended on 30 June 2012.

3.3 NATO missions: Implementation Force (IFOR) and Stabilisation Force (SFOR)



Figure 10: IFOR badge (Wikipedia, n.d.)

NATO put boots on the ground in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia only after the Dayton Agreements, with two missions, Implementation Force (IFOR) and Stabilisation Force (SFOR). From 1991 to 1995, NATO had only limitedly assisted UNPROFOR with *Operation Sharp Guard* (since December 1992), which monitored and enforced the UN embargo in the Adriatic Sea. NATO was also in charge of the no-fly zone over Bosnia and Herzegovina, which was only enforced at the end of 1994 and more consistently in the late summer of 1995 when the Bosnian Serb forces were targeted after no-fly zone violations.

A brief mention, for the 1991-1995 period, should be made to *Operation Provide Promise*, carried out by a NATO country, the USA, with the help of the UK, France, Canada, and Germany, although not directly under NATO leadership. From 1 February 1993 to 1 January 1996, the operation oversaw the airdrop delivery of more than 160,000 tons of humanitarian

aid, food, medicines, and supplies to Sarajevo and areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina isolated from the Bosnian Serbs, becoming the longest humanitarian airlift in history (Wentz *et al.*, 1998).

3.3.1 Implementation Force (IFOR)

Following the signing of the Dayton Agreement in 1995, NATO was mandated by the United Nations, through Resolution 1031, to implement the military aspects of the agreement, while the Office of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina oversaw the civilian aspects, and the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) organized the first free elections in 1996. The NATO-led multinational force that replaced UNPROFOR was named Implementation Force (IFOR) and the operation was codenamed *Joint Endeavour*. *Operation Decisive Endeavour*, launched on 6 December 1995, was a sub-operation following in the footsteps of previous surveillance and aerial reconnaissance operations. Implementation Force (IFOR) was deployed on 16 December 1995 only in Bosnia and Herzegovina and replaced by the Stabilisation Force (SFOR) after a year, on 20 December 1996.

IFOR's role was thus to put an end to hostilities, separating the armed forces of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina from those of Republika Srpska, and to create a secure environment for civil and economic reconstruction. More specifically, IFOR guaranteed respect of the ceasefire (Ibid), supervised the transfer of territories, demarcation of borders between entities, removed heavy weapons, and maintained control of the airspace (NATO, 2019). As the situation improved, IFOR began to cooperate with organizations involved in the implementation of the civilian aspects of the peace agreement, such as the Office of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the United Nations, providing logistical support, transport, accommodation, and medical assistance. IFOR also conducted numerous information campaigns, assisted in mine clearance operations, repaired roads and bridges, and worked closely with UNHCR and the investigators of the ICTY.

IFOR military authority was the Supreme Allied Commander NATO Europe (SACEUR) General George Joulwan, who appointed Admiral Leighton Smith Joint Force Commander for the operation (also known as Commander IFOR or COMIFOR), replaced in July 1996 by Admiral Joseph Lopez. NATO IFOR forces were managed jointly from Sarajevo and Naples and counted some 60,000 men, later reduced to 31,000, from 14 NATO countries (Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, the United States, and the United Kingdom) and 19 non-NATO countries (Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, the Czech Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, Russia, and Ukraine). The 20,000 American and 43,000 European soldiers were the bulk of the contingent, supplemented with 2,500 Russians and 4,000 Germans, the latter at their first international deployment in Croatia (Kaufman, 1999).

Troops were organized into three multinational divisions: Division South-East (Salamander), based in Mostar and French-led, featured two French, one Spanish and one Italian brigade, a

Portuguese paratrooper battalion, a logistics and support detachment with Egyptian, Jordanian, and Ukrainian units, and a Moroccan task force.

The UK-led Division South-West in Banja Luka, codenamed *Operation Resolute*, counted a British and a Canadian brigade and some Dutch units while the US-led Division North, based in Tuzla, consisted of two US, one Russian and one Turkish brigade and a multinational brigade with soldiers from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Sweden, and the United States, the Nordic-Polish Brigade.

IFOR also had a civil-military cooperation structure (CIMIC), of approximately 350 experts including lawyers, educators, public transport specialists, engineers, land surveyors, economists, and public health officials who provided technical assistance to civilian organizations, NGOs, and local authorities.

IFOR, like UNPROFOR, was mandated by the UN and operated under Chapter VII of the UN Charter (§ 3.1.2) but enjoyed ‘enhanced’ rules of engagement, which provided for the robust use of force, if necessary, while observing “international legal principles of proportionality, minimum use of force and the requirement to minimize the potential for collateral damage” (Wentz *et al.*, 1998: 27).

3.3.2. Stabilisation Force (SFOR)



Figure 11: SFOR badge (Wikipedia, n.d.)

When, at the end of IFOR's mandate, it became clear that much remained to be done at a civil and political level in Bosnia and Herzegovina, on 12 December 1996 the UN Security Council, with Resolution 1088, authorized NATO's continued participation and on 20 December 1996 IFOR was replaced by the Stabilisation Force (SFOR), codenamed *Joint Guard*. The difference between IFOR and SFOR is reflected in their names: if IFOR had implemented peace, SFOR was called to make it stable.

The mission, initially authorized for 18 months, remained in Bosnia and Herzegovina for a full eight years, albeit with a series of reforms and restructurings: the bases in Mostar and Goražde were closed in 2000, the base in Banja Luka in 2007 (C. Baker, 2012b) and by early 2003 SFOR only counted 12,000 troops. Just like IFOR, SFOR was initially headquartered in the Ilidža district of Sarajevo but moved to Kamp Butmir, in Sarajevo, in 2000. Like IFOR, and later EUFOR Althea, SFOR had three divisions: the Multinational Task Force Southeast (MNTF-SE), headquartered in Mostar with about 1,800 troops, mainly from Albania, France, Germany, Italy, Morocco, and Spain, the Multinational Task Force Northwest (MNTF-NW) headquartered in Banja Luka with about 1,800 troops from Bulgaria, Canada, the Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia and the United Kingdom, and the Multinational Task Force North (MNTF-N) based in Tuzla with about 1,800 troops from Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Sweden, Turkey, and the United States. SFOR also had Support Units of approximately 1,000 men, in different locations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

SFOR was about half the size of IFOR, with a total of 7,000 men, including 50 in Croatia and a hundred in National Support Elements (NSE) and about forty countries contributed to the mission: Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, Albania, Argentina,

Austria, Chile, Jordan, Morocco, Sweden, Egypt, Estonia, Finland, Republic of Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia and Russia. Australia and New Zealand provided personnel to the British contingent under a special agreement with the country.

SFOR was under the political direction and control of NATO, and just like IFOR, military authority was in the hands of NATO's SACEUR, General George Joulwan, who appointed General William Crouch as the first SFOR Commander (COMSFOR).

SFOR had the same rules of engagement as IFOR, which provided for the robust use of force if necessary for the mission's purposes and self-defense, as was the case in 1997 when SFOR was authorized to neutralize Serbian radio and television facilities. SFOR's stated mission was to deter hostilities and stabilize peace, contribute to a secure environment by providing a continuous military presence, and coordinate support to civilian organizations (Findlay, 2002). Specific tasks also included emergency support to the United Nations in Eastern Slavonia (Croatia) and general cooperation with civilian agencies. SFOR also continued to cooperate with the Office of the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the United Nations International Police Task Force (UNIPTF), the Union Police Mission (EUPM), UNHCR and OSCE, especially in organizing the national elections of October 1998 and 2000, the municipal elections of 1997 and 2000, and the 2007 special elections in Republika Srpska. SFOR also provided support to ICTY in locating and bringing to justice war criminals, arresting a total of 29 during its mandate.

3.3.3 Criticism and assessment of IFOR/SFOR

Just like UNPROFOR, NATO has also been criticized for its conduct in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but mainly for the failure to enforce the no-fly zone in the 1991-1995 years, except for *Operation Deliberate Force*, eventually bringing the warring parties to the negotiating table in Dayton in November 1995. IFOR and SFOR had perhaps learned the lessons of UNPROFOR and realized that "if peace was to be maintained and the terms of the Dayton agreement implemented, a more aggressive force had to be deployed" (Kaufman, 1999), which is why they were deployed in a much clearer framework and more suited rules of engagement (Wentz *et al.*, 1998).

It is therefore not easy to assess the actual outcome of these missions, especially as they covered a much longer period than UNPROFOR and operated in a fundamentally more stable context. NATO's role in the disarmament and stabilization of Bosnia and Herzegovina is undeniable and Schindler believes that "a return to the fighting of the 1990s seems impossible today, both culturally and materially, precisely because there are not enough weapons, especially heavy ones, to sustain a war worthy of the name" (Schindler, 2002). NATO also ensured the transfer of territory between the entities on time and helped, in general, to create a safer environment for reconstruction, conducted extensive mine clearance operations, information, and reconstruction campaigns and repaired 50% of the bridges in Bosnia and Herzegovina. On the other hand, however, it is also true that since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement and the end of hostilities, few real reforms have been undertaken (Johnson, 2004), corruption and poverty still affect economic and social development, Bosnia and Herzegovina's application to

become a NATO member state is stalling and the general political situation is still problematic, as outlined in § 1.3.6.

3.4 Other missions and organizations

In addition to military or observation missions, many non-governmental, religious, and humanitarian organizations were deployed in the region from the beginning of the war and remained for many years afterwards.

Some of these were part of the UN family, such as the **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees** (UNHCR) which under the leadership of UN High Commissioner Sadako Ogata, was called in at the request of the Yugoslav authorities as early as October 1991. In the region, UNHCR has faced the most serious humanitarian crisis in Europe since the end of the Second World War: in Croatia, in 1991 alone, over 200,000 people were refugees, and another 350,000 became displaced. Bosnia and Herzegovina counted, by the end of the war in December 1995, 1,3 million displaced persons and over one million refugees in neighboring or European countries, 345,000 of which in Germany (UNHCR, 2000).

UNHCR had to manage this huge flow of refugees and the delivery of humanitarian aid in its first operation in an ongoing conflict, while coordinating the work of various international and national governmental organizations that relied on UNHCR for accreditation and deployment on the ground, including the World Food Program, FAO, UNICEF, and the World Health Organization: during the direst years of the war, over 3,000 UNHCR humanitarian workers and 2,000 vehicles were present in Bosnia and Herzegovina. UNHCR also coordinated the longest airlift of humanitarian aid in history within the *Provide Promise operation*, which was also used to evacuate more than 1,100 wounded civilians on planes that would take off and land under fire and shelling in Sarajevo. Throughout the war, humanitarian operations were hampered by security problems, lack of cooperation by the warring parties, and logistical difficulties: the convoys leaving the warehouses in Zagreb and Belgrade had to pass, at times, up to eighty roadblocks to reach Sarajevo and, despite having all the necessary papers, they were routinely stopped at checkpoints delaying aid delivery by weeks or even months. Humanitarian personnel was also exposed to enemy fire, on roads made impassable by extreme weather conditions and mines and they depended heavily on armed escorts and logistical support from UNPROFOR. Fifty humanitarian workers were killed and several hundred injured during the war years, but the humanitarian mission never stopped, probably in an attempt to offer at least some visible response to the war by the international community (UNHCR, 2000; Hristov, 2018).

The high priority given to humanitarian operations meant that UNHCR also played an important role in international political negotiations and referred frequently to the Security Council. UNHCR was also the only body informing about crimes committed in areas thanks to refugees' testimony, which later represented the core of the ICTY prosecution. The role played by UNHCR is therefore considered generally positive when it comes to the supply of humanitarian aid, although the organization has been harshly criticized for 'accompanying' ethnic cleansing, by providing shelter for fleeing civilians. The issue had already been qualified as critical from an ethical point of view by the then High Commissioner Ogata:

In the context of a conflict whose objective is precisely that of forced population movements, we are faced with a serious dilemma. To what extent should we convince the inhabitants to stay where they are, when this could endanger their lives and freedom? Conversely, if we help them to move, are we not ourselves complicit in ethnic cleansing? (UNHCR, 2000: 222)

At the end of the conflict, UNHCR continued to make efforts to encourage reconciliation and to facilitate the voluntary return of refugees and displaced persons to their towns and areas, even if now dominated by another ethnic group, but the return of refugees is still essentially a dead letter: at the end of 1999, less than 10% of the approximately 300,000 Serbs who fled Croatia had returned to their homes, while less than 5% of the 650,000 Muslims and Croats expelled from western Bosnia and Herzegovina and less than 1% of those expelled from eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina had returned to their homes (Ibid: 232).

Another actor on the ground was the **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)**. ICRC had overseen prisoners exchange in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina at the beginning of November 1991, created a safe area around the hospital in Osijek during the siege and began inspecting detention camps in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the summer of 1992 (Woodward, 1995: 200). The ICRC entered Bosnia and Herzegovina for the first time on 18 March 1992, with a convoy bringing food and medicine to Sarajevo's hospitals, led by Frédéric Maurice, who had just been appointed head of the Sarajevo delegation. Despite the symbol of ICRC being clearly displayed, in open violation of the Geneva Conventions the convoy was attacked before entering the city and Maurice was killed. ICRC temporarily withdrew from Sarajevo and then returned to the country to oversee the application of humanitarian law and the protection of civilians, as required by the IV Geneva Convention of 1949 and its 1977 additional protocols. The ICRC was also responsible for organizing medical care for the wounded on the battlefield, supervising the conditions of prisoners of war and overseeing their exchange, although it was often denied entry to detention camps by the warring parties. The ICRC also offered support in searching for missing persons and acted as a neutral intermediary between the parties to protect the civilian population. In the years following the war, it remained in Bosnia and Herzegovina with various tasks and, between 2010 and 2011, assisted in the establishment of the Bosnian Red Cross.

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), or Doctors Without Borders in English, was also present in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and Croatia from 1991 to 2001. MSF first deployed with a convoy to evacuate 109 wounded from the besieged city of Vukovar on 18 October 1991 and later to support local health systems, as the situation on the battlefield and in hospitals deteriorated, distributing medicines, medical equipment and first aid kits funded by the European Community. From 1992 onwards, MSF European offices, called for more decisive action in the area, especially the French section which refused to deploy to Bosnia and Herzegovina not to support the humanitarian alibi and compared Milošević to Hitler (Médecins Sans Frontières, 2015). From March 1993, an MSF team managed to enter Srebrenica and Goražde and fought its way into other enclaves, regularly denouncing the Bosnian Serb authorities' ostracism of humanitarian aid. MSF also supported UNHCR in the evacuation of

refugees, as they did in August 1995, when Serb refugees left the *Krajine* recaptured by Croatian forces. In the years that followed the war, MSF often acted as a watchdog, denouncing the conditions of the population, documenting uncomfortable situations, collecting evidence of war crimes, and calling for the establishment of ad-hoc commissions to investigate serious episodes of human rights violations.

Chapter 4: INTERPRETING IN CONFLICT ZONES

4.1 Introduction

The role of languages in wars has long been considered a positive, functional, and seemingly innocent element, as if wars were fought among people and armies speaking the same language. In the early 2000s, nevertheless, languages started being regarded as factors that are heavily influenced by their political, social, and cultural context, while war zones became to emerge as contact zones (Ruzich, 2021: 75) where languages and communication play a key role in all phases.

With the ‘cultural turn’ in war historiography - which began to adopt a more multidisciplinary approach and consider the experience of war from a cultural, social, and gender perspective (Lassner, 1998; Summerfield, 2014) - and in translation and interpreting studies, the work of translators and interpreters in conflict zones started attracting scholarly interest. Such reflection was also prompted by the dire fate of locally recruited civilian interpreters in Iraq and Afghanistan, which raised the issue of interpreters’ protection and rights, but also of their peculiar role in violent conflicts.

Research on interpreters in wars and conflicts is mostly referred to as Interpreting in Conflict Zones (hereinafter ICZ) but sometimes also as military interpreting, or interpreting in zones of conflict and war, which sometimes overlaps with humanitarian interpreting³⁰. It emerged primarily within interpreting and translation studies, with important contributions from the history of interpreting and community interpreting, but took a markedly multidisciplinary approach attracting scholars from sciences, military studies, sociology and journalism (Stanković, 2001; Williams & Staub, 2006; Palmer, 2007; Hari, 2008; Juvinal, 2013; Snellman, 2014; 2016; Albaaka, 2020).

The most relevant publications in this field are undoubtedly the Palgrave Studies series, *Languages at War*, counting 16 volumes, although other milestone volumes should be mentioned like *Translating and Interpreting Conflict* (Salama-Carr, 2007) and *Translation and conflict: a narrative account* (M. Baker, 2006). Several journals have devoted special editions to the topic like the 21st issue of The Interpreters’ Newsletter in 2016, edited by Caterina Falbo and Alessandra Riccardi, *Interpreting and interpreters throughout history*, the 15th issue of the *Linguistica Antverpiensia* in 2016, titled *Interpreting in Conflict Situations and in Conflict Zones throughout History* edited by Lucía Ruiz Rosendo and Clementina Persaud, or The Translator’s 16th volume of 2010, devoted to *Translation and Violent Conflict*, edited by Moira Inghilleri.

Over the years, the role and position of interpreters in conflict zones have been considered from different disciplinary points of view: historical (Footitt & Kelly, 2012; Footitt & Tobia, 2013c; Baigorri Jalón, 2019), sociological (Inghilleri, 2008), anthropological (Payàs Puigarnau & Zavala Cepeda, 2014), discursive (Stahuljak, 1999; Baker, 2006), revealing the complexity of

³⁰ Humanitarian interpreting (HI) is described as the interpretation provided by “members of the humanitarian field (aid providers, beneficiaries or both), who work in contexts characterized by human suffering, vulnerability and stark power asymmetries” (Delgado Luchner & Kherbiche, 2018: 424). It is emerging lately (Delgado, Luchner & Kherbiche, 2018; Radicioni, 2021; Haidar Ahmad, 2021; Todorova & Ruiz Rosendo, 2021) as a separate but connected field of research, as humanitarian interpreters usually work for institutions that are deployed as a consequence or during a war and it presents peculiar challenges and ethical implications.

a job which “extends well beyond the translation of spoken utterances and local cultural knowledge practices”(Inghilleri, 2015: 261).

The contribution of history has been particularly useful as it has drawn attention its invisible protagonists, the individuals in “secondary roles” (Ruiz Rosendo & Persaud, 2016: 2), and prompted researchers to “unearth” (Footitt, 2012: 222) references to interpreters, challenging the limits imposed by military confidentiality and interpreters’ invisibility (Bowen *et al.*, 1995: 245), also using “creative documentary sources” (Burke, 2008: 11), or an “eclecticism of sources” (Footitt, 2012: 7).

We will present here an overview of research on interpreting in conflict zones, by providing a historical review, covering conflicts in contemporary history, and a thematic one, analyzing issues like categorization, recruitment, employment, training, risks and protection of interpreters, interpreters’ tasks and skills, and tenants of interpreters’ ethics, like status, neutrality, and confidentiality, a classification that we will use also in Chapter 5 and for the elaboration of results in Chapters 7,8 and 9.

4.2 Historical overview

4.2.1 From the first evidence of interpreters in conflict zones to the early modern period

The presence of interpreters and translators in wars goes back to the dawn of humanity: the first documented evidence concerns the princes of Elephantine, Egypt, in the third millennium B.C. (Kurz, 1985; Harris, 2017), young students who worked as interpreters for the pharaohs (Roland, 1999: 11). In Ancient Greece “the commanders of monolingual armies always had interpreters with them” (Ruiz Rosendo & Persaud, 2016: 9), while the presence of war interpreters is well documented in the Carthage troops (Roland, 1999: 20-22), in the army of Alexander the Great (Bowen *et al.*, 1995: 246; Kellett, 1999) and the Roman Empire (Ruiz Rosendo & Persaud, 2016: 9).

In the Spanish peninsula, in the Middle Ages, the *alfaques* (Baigorri Jalón, 2015) carried out language mediation tasks throughout the Arab occupation (711-1492 AC), while the Crusaders had interpreters to communicate among each other, despite the use of French, and with the local populations (Roland, 1999). It is precisely in Medieval times that the need for language intermediaries for wars prompted the creation of the first schools of languages, like the Toledo (Cáceres-Würsig, 2012; Persaud, 2016: 51) or the French school (Herbert, 1978: 5; Balliu, 2005; Ballard, 2013)³¹, following the Venetians tradition of *giovani di lingua* or *jeunes de langue* who were taught the languages of the Ottoman Empire (Balliu, 2005).

With the birth of nation-states and the development of national languages, recourse to interpreters became more common in European conflicts, and references to their work more explicit (Kellett, 1999). In the age of discoveries and explorations, often real military campaigns, the use of interpreters was unavoidable: on his first trip, Christopher Columbus

³¹ The French school of languages were based in Paris, Constantinople (1248) and Izmir, although the only functioning one was the one near Constantinople.

took with him an interpreter, Luis de Torres, who knew the languages of the Jews, the Chaldeans, and a little Arabic (Delisle & Woodsworth, 1995: 148), while local native Americans - often taken hostage and brought to Europe to learn the language - were later employed as interpreters (Bertone, 1987; Kurz, 1991; Araguás Alonso & Baigorri Jalón, 2005), like the famous Malinche (also called Dona Marina or Malintzin), Hernán Cortés's interpreter between Nahuatl and Maya or Sacajawea (Bowen *et al.*, 1995; Roland, 1999: 73), who accompanied French interpreter and *coureur de bois* Toussaint Charbonneau in his expeditions in North America. Throughout the Spanish conquest of the New World, interpreters were pivotal in the evangelization and administration of colonies (Araguás Alonso & Baigorri Jalón, 2005; Baigorri Jalón & Araguás Alonso, 2007; Sarmiento Pérez, 2011; D'Amore *et al.*, 2016), with Jesuits often becoming interpreters and compiling the first grammars and dictionaries (Roland, 1999).

The use of young local children for language brokerage, often recruited by force, was a fairly frequent practice throughout the history of colonization (Mersmann, 2014): the French army even set up, in the 19th century, language schools for the sons of notable local men, nicknamed *l'École des otages* who had a key role in helping the colonizers manage the local population (Edwards, 2014; Langford, 2014).

4.2.2 From the Napoleonic wars to WWI

Despite interpreters' century-old presence in armies, it is with the Napoleonic wars that their position became well recorded. Napoleon used multilingual officers (Tozzi, 2014) and interpreters in the campaigns of Egypt, Palestine and Russia (Ruiz Rosendo & Persaud, 2016: 14): before invading Egypt, he gathered a number of cultural advisors, scholars, and nine orientalist who were given the title of *interprètes militaires* (Féraud 1876: 21, as quoted in Mopoho, 2002), creating the first modern military interpreters corps (Mopoho, 2002; Behm *et al.*, 2014).

In the East, the first Opium war (1839-1842) saw a well-documented presence of war interpreters (Wang-chi Wong, 2007), both the Chinese *tonshi*, subaltern trade intermediaries with very limited language skills, and western missionaries, like Robert Morrison (1782-1834), Charles Gutzlaff (1803-1851), or John Morrison (1814-1843) who also operated as intelligence officers, political, cultural, and military advisors.

Nevertheless, it is World War I, the first true modern multilingual conflict, that required the systematic deployment of war interpreters to ensure communication within multilingual armies and coalitions (Tozzi, 2014) and to manage the six to eight million Prisoners of war (POWs) throughout Europe (Heimburger, 2014; Wolf, 2019).

The Russian-French units resorted to bilingual officers, noble and clergymen to communicate (Piégais, 2021), while the English-French battalions (Heimburger, 2014a: 48), relied on corps of non-combatant Chinese citizens who mastered both languages (Van Den Noortgate, 2016) and on French official interpreters, and English scouts from both armies (Heimburger, 2012; 2014a). In the African continent, colonial subjects were also used as language and cultural mediators (Samson, 2021), although the topic is still under-researched.

Except for the French, WWI interpreters in other armies were generally picked among the rank and file without any professional training or recognition (Baigorri Jalón *et al.*, 2014) and considered active soldiers, whose language duties went hand in hand with military ones, like propaganda, censorship, espionage and counter-espionage.

4.2.3 *The inter-war years: diplomacy, dictatorships, and the Spanish Civil War*

After WWI, the new world order, the so-called diplomacy by conference, increased the demand for conference services and marked the birth of conference interpreting as a profession (Herbert, 1978: 5; Baigorri Jalón, 2006a: 235;), especially with the establishment of the League of Nations (Kellet, 1999) and the International Labor Organization (ILO), and also due to the progressive replacement of French by English (Herbert, 1978: 5; Baigorri Jalón, 2014: 19). Many of the famous interpreters of those years like Adrien Louis Billot, Edgard F.G. Abraham, Léon Dostert, Germain, Paul Mantoux and Henri Parodi, just to mention a few, had a military background or had worked as military interpreters during WWI (Herbert, 1978: 6), even Jean Herbert, originally a liaison officer with the British Army and an artillery technical advisor to the US army (Baigorri Jalón *et al.*, 2014). For many of these exceptionally skilled men, and very rarely women, bilingualism or multilingualism was also a direct result of war or emigration due to war as affirmed by Elsa Haim, one of the first interpreters at the United Nations: “No me preparé. Nuestra generación no se preparó. Les langues, la vie nous les a apprises. Es la vida la que nos enseñó los idiomas” (Baigorri Jalón, 2008: 462).

Despite their haphazard access to the profession, interpreters between the two wars started to enjoy greater status as essential representatives of diplomacy, even more so in the 1920s, when diplomatic relations came to be managed through face-to-face meetings of (often totalitarian) leaders. Baigorri Jalón defines those interpreters the “interpreters of the dictators”, understood as interpreters in dictatorships but also in liberal democracies, where leaders were often invested with exceptional power (Baigorri Jalón, 2014 *et al.*: 165), while Ivan Ivanji, Tito’s interpreter, prefers the label “interpreters of the powerful” (*jezik moćnika*) (Ivanji, 2002). Among them we find Paul Otto Schmidt, who became Hitler and Ribbentrop’s interpreter for English and French in 1933 (Schmidt & Sutton, 2016); Eugen Dollmann (Dollmann *et al.*, 2017), a German aristocrat who was personal interpreter of Arturo Bocchini, the Fascist police chief, Himmler, and later Mussolini; Arthur H. Birse (Birse, 1967), Churchill’s official interpreter for Russian; Charles E. Bohlen, Roosevelt and Truman’s interpreter into Russian (Bohlen, 1973); Valentin M. Berezhev, Stalin and Molotov’s interpreter into German and English (Berezhev, 1994) and Ji Chaozhu, Mao Zedong’s interpreter into English for two decades and a leading political figure in China’s foreign policy (Ji, 2008).

In those years, a markedly multilingual conflict was the Spanish Civil War, which attracted fighters from different countries: the so-called fascist side counted Spanish, Italian, German (condor Legion) and Muslim troops, while the International Brigades featured volunteers from more than 50 countries. The International Brigades, for example, were forced to set up a complex system of *interpretes espontáneos*, picked “from within” the troops but with no interpreting experience (Rodríguez Espinosa, 2019: 71) and supported by around 200

professional or semi-professional interpreters from the Soviet Union (Ibid: 177). The fascist side employed Spanish court interpreters, present in Morocco since 1859 and in Spain since 1937, tourist guides, whose corps was established in 1909 and the military interpreters of the Condor Legion (Baigorri Jalón, 2019: 164). Interpreters in the Spanish Civil War, among whom figured also women, were well paid (Baigorri Jalón, 2019: 102; 49; 64) and performed a variety of tasks such as on-the-field translation of orders, intelligence operations, censorship, love letter writing, translation of propaganda material and journals (Rodríguez Espinosa, 2019: 73), prisoner exchange organization and provision of medical aid through the International Red cross (Baigorri Jalón, 2019). Interpreters' ideological neutrality was non-existent, while their language neutrality was heavily conditioned by the lack of training and skills, which pushed the International Brigades to also establish a training center under the guidance of Russian interpreter Olga Filipova (Orlova, 2019).

4.2.4 World War II

As a total war, WWII involved almost all countries in the world, saw troops being deployed to the other side of the globe, prisoners of different nationalities in POW and concentration camps, and alliances between countries speaking different languages. WWII was also a war of occupation, and as such was certainly the background for interlanguage communication of all types, although academic research in this field is still fragmented and ongoing. We will try here to put together the different pieces of the complex historical puzzle of interpreting in WWII, considering instances of conflict zone interpreting in the two coalitions, the Tripartite Pact (Germany, Italy, Japan) and the Allies (UK, USSR, US, China), interpreting in POW and concentration camps and interpreting at war tribunals.

4.2.4.1 The Tripartite Pact

In **Germany**, Hitler's government was immediately aware of the power of communication and propaganda and of the need of supporting the war and occupation with language intermediation. The Reich could count on an official Association of Translators and Interpreters, the *Reichsfachschaft für das Dolmetscherwesen (RfD)* (Kieslich, 2016), headed by Otto Monien (Beyda, 2020: 133) which was responsible for most of the troops' language material and guaranteed a steady supply of experienced interpreters. According to Beyda (Ibid: 133), each Nazi military district had an interpreter company or military interpreters (Kujamäki, 2014: 91) and soldiers' language skills were thoroughly evaluated at enrolment: if they had a basic knowledge of a foreign language they were considered 'grey cards' (*Sprachkundiger*, 'language assistant,' or *Divisionsdolmetscher*), if they had fairly good knowledge 'yellow cards'³² (*Übersetzer*), and if they were fluent in the language they were deployed as 'red cards' (*Dolmetscher*)" (Beyda, 2020: 133-134). Prospective interpreters followed specific military and language training before deployment, especially in military terminology, although, when

³² The 'yellow card' nickname for interpreters in the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia is thought to be linked to the color of interpreters' identification cards within UN or NATO mission (C. Baker, 2012a: 23-24; Gonçalves, 2020: 459) but might also come from the Wehrmacht system.

the war broke out in 1939, even those with no specific military training could be deployed as non-commissioned officers (NCO).

The relevant Interpreter Department (*Dolmetscher-Lehrabteilung*) was based in Berlin, within the Supreme High Command of the Wehrmacht, and was divided into language sections that employed famous linguists of the time, like Slavist Maximilian Braun, head of the Russian section. Next to the Wehrmacht's centralised system of interpreters, German citizens with some language knowledge or *émigrés* were also employed in occupied areas: these were often white Russian and czarist soldiers, citizens of Baltic countries with a German ethnic background, or local recruits, as in Finland (Kujamäki, 2016).

No academic research has been carried out so far to investigate the role and use of interpreters during WWII in fascist **Italy**, with the only exception of Silvia Incerti's Master's Degree thesis (Incerti, 2021). Incerti pointed out that, in a country that was still largely illiterate, interpreters were mostly recruited among citizens of Austrian or South Tyrolean origin, and in other border regions, like Slovenia, where both Italian and German were widely spoken. In most cases, they were recruited either by compulsory labor legislation or by force (*rastrellamenti*). Many of them, like Maria Janes, from Scandiano, near Reggio Emilia (Fontanesi, 2009) and Frida Kuntz who worked on the Gothic Line at the Todt section of Macerata Feltria (Incerti, 2021) used their position from within to help their fellow citizens, while others, like Augusta Reiss, who personally searched and interrogated Jews at the Risiera di San Sabba camp, joined the Nazis out of political and ideological affiliation.

No academic research is available so far on how communication was guaranteed between the Resistance and the Allies, and within the Resistance forces themselves, although Incerti points out that bilingual individuals, often Jewish refugees of German or Yugoslav origin probably acted as interpreters (Incerti, 2021), like Rijeka-born Luigi Fleischmann, or Leo Valiani, one of the most prominent leaders of the partisan struggle in Italy, a stateless Jew from Rijeka (Valiani, 1995).

Moving to the far east, the **Japanese** system of military interpreters during the second Sino-Japanese war (1931-1945) has been widely documented by Luo & Zhu (2021) and Luo (2016). During WWII, the Japanese military could probably count on around 5000 military interpreters to liaise with Chinese puppet forces and manage the Japan-occupied areas, but the huge number of interpreters required for occupation forced them to locally recruit civilians in Korea, Taiwan or China who had learned Japanese at school (Luo & Zhu, 2021). After the war, 173 of these Korean and Taiwanese interpreters were convicted as war criminals and 21 executed, while others were sentenced to prison terms for espionage, torture and mistreatment of civilians (Takeda, 2014;2016; Lan, 2016).

4.2.4.2 *The Allied forces*

Most research work about interpreters and translators in WWII has been carried out regarding the **UK**'s response to language issues and preparation (Footitt & Kelly, 2012; Footitt & Tobia, 2013a; 2013b; Tobia, 2012).

Due to a lack of linguists in strategic languages such as German, Italian and Russian (Gómez Amich, 2016: 94) male civilians (Footitt & Kelly, 2012: 24), and later female and foreign citizens, were recruited for intelligence operation at Bletchley Park (Footitt & Kelly, 2013: 29-30). Nevertheless, the British occupation of Europe was disadvantaged by a lack of linguists, as UK authorities initially refused to hire local linguists or linguists that had not been approved by MI5 (usually one out of three candidates). The first pool of military interpreters in British-controlled Germany was created in September 1944 (Footitt & Kelly, 2013), later to be complemented with local civilians, and for both a system for language grading was established. Training was nevertheless insufficient and while the idea of setting up an interpreting school was considered, linguists were only provided a week-long training in Brussels, where they learned mainly practical skills like how to ride a motorbike (Ibid: 170).

The **USSR**, on the contrary, had established a language school (Probirskaja, 2016: 214) within the Red Army where military interpreters began to be trained in 1940, with the school taking the name of Military Institute of Foreign Languages (MIFL)³³ in 1942. At the MIFL, Red army soldiers, recruited mainly among philology students, followed intensive military interpreting/translation and foreign-language training, lasting from six weeks to six months, completed military training and studied the organization and equipment of the enemy's army. Support language tools were also published in those years, like the Russian-German military phrasebook, the interrogation technique textbook and later a German-language textbook for the Red Army, while captured materials and soldiers were used for translation and interpreting practice (Splevins *et al.*, 1981: 54; Sinkliner, 1989: 11, as quoted in Probirskaja, 2016: 215). After graduating, the institute's 4000-5000 military interpreters received the rank of lieutenant, which proves the importance of interpreters within the Red Army, a much-admired language élite both during and after the war. Among them were Vladimir Gall, who participated in the negotiations for the surrender of the Spandau Citadel in Berlin and Elena Rzhnevskaja, a German-language interpreter who was present when the body of Adolf Hitler was found and identified (Rzhnevskaya, 2018).

Research on the **US** management of military interpreters in WWII is very limited, although available accounts show that the US landed in Europe linguistically unprepared, heavily relying on second-generation immigrants (Sawyer, 2016) on a specific request by President Roosevelt who did not want Europeans to perceive Americans as just another occupation (Incerti, 2021). The contacts between the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the US intelligence unit, and the Italian Resistance followed initially a similar pattern and used Italian-American officers for communication. Later, according to Incerti, local partisans were also used, like Guido Blanc Tassinari, Erminio Magnani, Istria-born Antonio Rodolovic, who could interpret into five languages and had been an interpreter before the war, or Gino Mastacchi, who was an interpreter in the Stella Rossa-Lupo brigade, counting around 40 soviet soldiers. Many of these interpreters were women, like Ilse Schoelzel, former prima ballerina of the Dresden Opera Ballet, or Isabella Monticelli from Morciano di Romagna who had learned German at school

³³ The successor of MIFL is today the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the Military University, managed directly by the Defense Ministry of Russia, which provides training in 30 eastern and western languages (Probirskaja, 2016: 215).

and taught herself English and was active as a relay girl (*staffetta partigiana*) and as an interpreter for the Allied Command in Cattolica (Province of Rimini).

Although the Americans had trained Japanese linguists in the US Army's Japanese Language School (Dingman, 2004), their number was insufficient and the US found themselves substantially unprepared for the occupation of Japan. They decided to employ 5000 Japanese Americans, *Niseis* or *Kibeis*³⁴, often conscripted for military service "from behind the barbed wire of internment camps where their families remained confined" (Baigorri Jalón, 2011b: 182) but their language skills were poor and US authorities were forced to recruit local civilians. Recruitment notices in Japanese newspapers for local male interpreters were published no later than eleven days after the arrival of US forces and were later opened to women, whose work for the Americans was a liberating and empowering experience resulting in greater emancipation in Japanese society (Takeda, 2016: 234-235). An Interpreter Training School (ITS) was established in August 1946 to meet the growing demand for linguists and a specific Police Interpreter Training (PIT) School opened in August 1948.

Information on the use of interpreters by the **Chinese** military government(s) during WWII comes from Guo's recent work *Surviving in Violent Conflicts: Chinese Interpreters in the Second Sino-Japanese War, 1931-1945* (Guo, 2016) who masterfully describes the complex environment in which interpreters operated, given the internal competition between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Chinese Kuomintang (KMT) which forced them to serve different interest groups to survive. During the Burma Campaign, the Chinese government was nevertheless forced to recruit over 4,000 interpreters among Chinese and English students in China (Luo, 2016: 149) who contributed greatly to augment the country's combat power. The Kuomintang authorities established, in 1944, a dedicated training institution, the Yan'an Foreign Language School, which provided language, but also ideological training (Guo, 2016).

4.2.4.3 *Interpreting in POW and concentration camps*

Another setting where interpreters were employed in WWII is Prisoner-of-War (POW) and concentration camps, which constitute a sort of parallel, and yet related, field of research. Research on interpreting in POW and concentration camps has been carried out mainly by Kujamäki for Finnish POW camps (Kujamäki, 2014; Kujamäki & Pasanen, 2019), Dorigo (2021) for Yugoslav interpreters in Italian camps, and by Tryuk for Auschwitz-Birkenau (Tryuk, 2011) and Majdanek (Tryuk, 2016) and by Wolf for Mauthausen and Nazi camps in general (Wolf, 2016b; 2019).

In Finnish camps, interpreters into Russian were usually recruited among Karelian refugees who had moved to different parts of Finland from St. Petersburg and the Karelian Isthmus between 1917 and 1939 or among bilingual camp inmates, born in the German-speaking areas of Ukraine or the Baltic countries. These were forced to mediate between the captor and other

³⁴ In the 1940s Japanese immigrants born and educated in the United States were called *Nisei*, while Japanese born in the United States who returned to America after being educated in Japan were called *Kibei*.

captives and to help the Gestapo identify and kill Soviet political commissars, by taking part in intelligence collection and examinations.

As confirmed also by Primo Levi (Levi & Segre, 2015) language knowledge in German concentration camps was essential for inmates to survive but also for the Nazi guards to maintain their “order of terror” (Wolf, 2019: 5). Interpreters formed an extremely heterogeneous group, some were former academics while others managed to attain some knowledge of German to land one of the much-sought-after interpreter jobs (Aschenberg, 2016: 71). Duties included assisting at hearings, acting as camp registrars, messengers or guards, translating the letters of inmates into German, and most importantly translating the ‘welcoming speech’ by the camp commander (Ibid: 128) to new inmates, in consecutive and often with relay to cover more languages. In some camps there were officially appointed camp interpreters (Tryuk, 2010: 131): in Auschwitz, the *Dolmetscher* function was established as early as 1940, in Dachau after 1942, while in Mauthausen there were no ‘official interpreters’ (Tryuk, 2011: 62). Although interpreting was usually carried out by inmates, the SS could also count on staff fluent in Polish or Czech, often citizens of countries under fascist rule, used mainly in prisoner interrogations (Wolf, 2016b: 99).

4.2.4.4 Interpreting at war crimes tribunals

Interpreting at war crimes tribunals, usually set up after conflicts to deliver justice, is another field of research linked to interpreting in conflict zones, as it predominantly discusses military and/or war-related cases, and as tribunals’ interpreters had often worked as military or civilian field interpreters (Elias-Bursac, 2015: 17).

The most famous war tribunals, Nuremberg and Tokyo, were first set up after WWII, while others like International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), would be established in the 1990s and still partly operate today. Other tribunals were established on an ad-hoc basis, like the one trying Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961 (Kaufmann, 2002; Ballardini, 2013).

The Nuremberg tribunal is considered the birthplace of conference interpreting as, for the first time, simultaneous interpreting was used extensively, although the system had been developed in the 1920s by Edward Filene, Gordon-Finlay and Thomas Watson for IBM, and used at LON and ILO conferences (Baigorri Jalón, 2014a), while a similar solution had been tested in the same years in the USSR by Dr Epshtein (Chernov, 2016).

The team of interpreters was put together by President Eisenhower’s interpreter, Colonel Léon Dostert (Bowen & Bowen, 1985) and candidates, initially tested by the war department or the Pentagon, often had a military background (Gaiba, 1998: 41-42): Ignace Schilovsky, for example, was a former czarist officer, Edouard Roditi always showed up in court in uniform (Ibid: 144) and Richard W. Sonnenfeldt was a German Jew who had also worked for the Office of Strategic Service, later the CIA (Baigorri Jalón, 2011a).

In the former Asia-Pacific theatre, war criminals were tried at the International Military Tribunal of the Far East (IMTFE), more commonly known as the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal, where interpreting is widely described by Takeda (2010; 2016; 2021), as an issue that impacted the proceedings and the serving of justice, due to lack of interpreters and their difficulties in rendering culture-related concepts. Interpreting was generally provided in consecutive between English and Japanese³⁵ and only occasionally into Chinese, French, Dutch, German and Mongolian (Takeda, 2010). Interpreters were mostly drawn from the Japanese foreign ministry, the former Imperial Army and *Niseis*, although the latter's language skills were so poor that they were employed as monitors of the local interpreters, who unlike their Nuremberg colleagues, rarely went on to build careers in interpreting after the trial.

Less high-profile trials were also held in the Philippines and 49 Asian-Pacific locations, including Australia, where the lack of qualified interpreters and language skills was such that linguists had to eventually be sent from Japan (Fitzpatrick, 2020).

In all these cases interpreters were confronted with the challenge to translate the “language of war”, a mixture of legal, vernacular and military language, including legal concepts and “the realia for localities and dwellings, clothing, seasons, times of the day, and festivals and religious customs” (Stern, 2020: 172). Their work was complicated by justices and prosecutors' lack of trust, while interpretation and language issues were often exploited by defendants like Goehring (Gaiba, 1998: 108), Milošević and Šešelj (Elias-Bursac, 2015: 83). Finally, interpreters working in war crimes tribunals were also confronted with the psychological challenge of translating for victims and witnesses of violence (Gaiba, 1998; Wiegand, 2000; Elias-Bursac, 2015; McCloskey & Dobricic, 2018) as perfectly portrayed recently by a short movie, *In the flow of words*, by Dutch director Eliane Bots (Bots, 2021), on the psychological repercussions of interpreting at the ICTY, partly emerging from the Resolution 808 project by journalist Jorie Horsthuis and photographer Martino Lombezzì (Horsthuis, 2018).

4.2.5 The Cold War

Works on conflict interpreting during the Cold-war are limited, both for the smaller number of conflicts and the very nature of this war, which was more preparation for war than actual fighting, although interpreters, both diplomatic and military, continued to play a pivotal role (Baigorri Jalón, 2014; Baer, 2014), especially since “cold powers confronted with each other's speeches rather than guns” (Baigorri Jalón, 2014b: 170).

The few instances when conflict did break out, like Vietnam³⁶ and Kuwait, are generally under-researched, except for Korea, for which most contributions have focused on the Korean Armistice Negotiations (Fernández Sánchez, 2010; 2012; Wang & Xu, 2016; Kim, 2021). On that occasion, the US relied on reserve officers who had distinguished themselves as interpreters in WWII, like Richard F. and Horace Underwood, for the English-Korean language combination, and Lieutenant Kenneth Wu and Lieutenant Colonel Richard Ekvall for the

³⁵ Simultaneous interpreting or chuchotage into Russian was provided as a courtesy for the Soviet judge, who spoke no English or Japanese.

³⁶ The only exception is the analysis of the positionality of a South Vietnamese interpreter in US propaganda's post-cards (Fernández Sánchez, 2014).

English-Chinese language combination (Ekvall, 1960). Wang and Xu (Wang & Xu, 2016) applied a micro-historical approach to Ekvall's book, *The Faithful Echo* and claim that “the interpreting activity in the negotiations was part and parcel of the theatre of war”, a second battlefield, in which “words were bullets across the table” (Wang & Xu, 2016: 50-51). As a consequence, interpreters were not expected to be neutral mediators but to be aligned with the national interest and political agenda of their client, resulting in a conflict between the interpreter’s professionalism and the soldier’s absolute obedience to orders (Wang & Xu, 2016).

During US/USSR military occupation of Korea (1945-1948), and the violent confrontation between North and South Korea and their allies (1950-1953) the US Army Military Government relied on a limited number of Korean civilian interpreters that gained so much power that the military government was referred to as the “interpreter’s government” and a “government of, for, and by interpreters” (Taylor, 1948: 372, as quoted in Kim, 2021: 67). Parallely, within the UN command mission in South Korea, Korean military officers were used for language support tasks (Fernández Sánchez, 2012: 118-122), which generated a “zone of uncertainty”: neither United States-Korea Military Advisory Group (KMAG) advisors nor the Republic of Korea Army (ROKA) were certain about how rank and hierarchy should work and interpreting events became “a locus for struggle as both parties sought to assert control over the interpreting habitus” (Kim, 2021: 72).

4.2.6 Kosovo, Iraq, and Afghanistan

Throughout the 1990s, Europe was shaken by interrelated conflicts that erupted after the fall of the Yugoslav Federation, the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia (1991-1995), the object of this dissertation, and the Kosovo war (1998-99).

Interpreting in the **Kosovo** conflict and in the subsequent Macedonian refugee crisis has been approached by Marija Todorova (2014; 2016; 2017; 2020) and a few former officers reflecting on the lessons learned and demanding greater protection for interpreters (Thomas, 1997b; 2003a; Rovegno *et al.*, 2003). Todorova, who was herself an interpreter between the Macedonian police, UNHCR and refugees (Todorova, 2017) described her work as “shuttle interpreting”. where the interpreter transfers the messages between communication parties who are sometimes not present in the same meeting for safety reasons. She therefore underlined how interpreters were not just enablers of communication but became active partners in the process of mediation and advocacy for the vulnerable, and essential for the daily functioning of the mission (Thomas, 1997b).

Finally, interpreting services within the NATO mission in Kosovo were described by NATO linguist Ian Jones and interpreter Louise Askew (Jones & Askew, 2014) who underlined how, just like in Bosnia and Herzegovina, language support was initially improvised, featuring poor working conditions, unacceptable working hours, and below-standard services, especially by interpreters hired through third-party private companies (Ibid: 62-111) until the service was reorganized in 1998.

The use of interpreters in the wars in **Iraq and Afghanistan**, is probably the issue that has attracted most interest in recent years.

Dominant Anglocentrism, poor cultural-strategic planning, and overconfidence in technologies³⁷ (Apter, 2006: 12; Benjamin 2007; Bernardi, 2011: 113) had led military organizations to be substantially unprepared for languages like Arabic, Urdu or Pashtu. If some national contingents could rely on some military interpreters, like Italy (Bernardi, 2011) and others trusted civilians, like Spain (Gómez Amich, 2017; Asensi Gomez, 2020), the US resorted to what is now called the ‘American model’, that is recruitment of interpreters through (sometimes obscure) third-party companies (Cronin, 2006: 112). The system has been criticized for lack of interpreting quality³⁸ (Washburn, 2004; Van Dijk & Soeters, 2008: 321; Mc Hugh, 2008; Vitaliano, 2010; Jones & Askew, 2014), but most importantly for the working conditions it enforced on interpreters who enjoyed no legal protection, healthcare or evacuation rights, as they were hired by private companies, nor by the country or military institutions they worked for (Fitchett, 2019). Even their relatively high salaries - in 2005, the US paid between 4,800 and 12,000 dollars a year for a local interpreter (Juvinal, 2013) - was a tenth of those of linguists from Troop-Contributing Countries (TCC) (Allen, 2012) and it often made interpreters the targets of extortion, kidnapping (Military 03, personal communication, August 28, 2020), and killing by the Taliban. Interpreters in Iraq and Afghanistan were “the largest group of civilian victims of the conflict” (Kahane, 2007) and even though the number of casualties is difficult to obtain, the International Refugee Assistance Project, a nonprofit organization based in New York, estimates that an Afghan interpreter was being killed every 36 hours in 2014 (Frail, 2016). Despite the recognized importance of interpreters (Cronin, 2006: 113; Foust, 2009; Cummings, 2010) as “the glue that holds the whole operation together” (Neacșu, 2014: 42), many of the coalition interpreters, persecuted for their work and confronted with the long bureaucratic procedures to obtain visas by coalition governments, have lived in hiding for years or have taken illegal migration routes out of the country (Juvinal, 2013).

For interpreters at NATO headquarters in Kabul things improved when NATO took over command of the ISAF mission in 2003 (Jones & Askew, 2014: 133) and Jones and Miquelon reorganized the interpreting service and established a three-month training system, but national contingents continued to adopt the method they deemed fit.

Translation and interpreting practitioners and scholars, headed by Linda Fitchett of AIIC (Fitchett, 2014), Maya Heiss and the non-profit organization Red T, and the International Federation of Translators³⁹ have called for specific measures to protect interpreters in conflict zones and launched a series of awareness-raising projects, like the Conflict Zone Field Guide for Civilian Translators/Interpreters and Users of Their Services (AIIC *et al.*, 2011) and the Open Letter Project (Red T, n.d.), which consists in sending letters to heads of state and governments and relevant military authorities to demand greater protections for translators and interpreters. The European parliament organized a hearing on 31 January 2018 (European

³⁷ DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Project Agency) had developed the ‘Diplomat’, a computer-translation program, to communicate in Iraq, which turned out to be completely “unreliable and in the worst cases fatally flawed” (Apter, 2006: 12).

³⁸ Paul Funk, former translator and head of HR at a contracting company, claims that the company rigged interpreters’ entrance language tests to guarantee the US army with a consistent flow of linguists (Rhee & Mosk, 2010).

³⁹ Other organizations that joined the project are the International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters (IAPTI), Critical Link International (CLI), and the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI).

Parliament, 2018), and the Council of Europe also issued written declaration no. 442 calling on the protection of conflict zone interpreters (Council of Europe, 2010).

They were joined by veteran organizations, like No One Left Behind, and journalists who have also taken up the cause of their interpreters, often called “fixers” (M. Baker, 2010), as they perform a variety of roles “sometimes turning into proxies or effective journalists and correspondents” (Palmer & Fontan, 2007).

As a consequence, most output on the topic has focused on interpreters’ safety and protection (Kahane, 2007; Juvinal, 2013; Anderson, 2014; Fitchett, 2014; Tălpaș, 2016; Frail, 2016) - an issue that gained prominence again in 2021 during the evacuation of Kabul when some coalition governments like the US and Canada, left many interpreters behind - but also on interpreters’ perception, positionality and narratives (Kahane, 2007; Villalba Güemes *et al.*, 2017; Gómez Amich, 2017; 2018b), tasks (Tălpaș, 2016; Ruiz Rosendo & Barea Muñoz, 2017), skills (Gómez Amich, 2018a) and risks (Inghilleri, 2010; Plambech & Skov Danstrøm, 2014; Albaaka, 2020).

4.3 Thematic overview

As we have briefly seen in the historical overview on the use of interpreters in conflict zones, throughout history interpreters have been employed in different conflict phases: from diplomacy to intelligence, from occupation to interrogation, demobilisation, and war crimes tribunals (Baigorri Jalón, 2011b). Even if “the norms governing the interpreting trade in situations of conflict are precisely the absence of solid rules that define interpreters’ roles” (Baigorri Jalón, 2011b), we will try and offer here a thematic overview of ICZ that will touch upon the elements briefly outlined in this introduction considering interpreters’ categorization, recruitment, employment, training, risks and protection, tasks and roles, interpreters’ ethics (status, neutrality and confidentiality) and interpreting quality.

4.3.1 Categorization

Interpreters in conflict zones have been referred to as battle-zone interpreters (Thomas, 2004), linguists, language assistants, translators, cultural mediators, fixers, peace interpreters (Thomas, 1997b), interpreters for peace (Monacelli, 2002) and sometimes with the disparaging nicknames of ‘terps’, ‘lips’ and ‘dusties’ (Van Dijk & Soeters, 2008: 315).

Such a terminological variety is probably due to the lack of a professional profile, and the need to distinguish these sometimes ‘accidental linguists’, guides, cultural brokers, liaison officers, journalists and merchants (Baigorri Jalón, 2011b) from professional conference interpreters (Hertog, 2018; Gallai, 2019). Lately, the term ‘interpreters⁴⁰’, at least informally, has come to refer to local civilian language staff (C. Baker, 2010b; Moser-Mercer, 2015: 309) while military interpreters are referred to as *interprètes militaires*, following the tradition established by the French Army, ‘language specialists’ or ‘military linguists’ although the French

⁴⁰ The British Army continues to use terms inherited from the UK civil service sector like ‘colloquial speaker’, ‘linguist’, and, at the higher level, ‘interpreter’ (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 32).

Association Nationale des Officiers de Liaison et des Interprètes de Réserve (ANOLIR) prefers the denomination ‘defense language specialists’ (Ibid: 309-310).

Several categorizations have been proposed for interpreters in conflict zones: Michael Cronin (2002: 393) distinguishes between locally recruited, ‘heteronomous interpreters’ and ‘autonomous interpreters’, brought from the country of the colonizer or military organization. Allen (2012) identifies three categories of interpreters, military linguists, contract interpreters, and humanitarian interpreters while Ruiz Rosendo and Barea Muñoz (2017) identify four categories, that is military linguists/interpreters, interpreters locally recruited by the military among civilians, locally recruited UN language assistants, and freelancers or UN staff working as interpreters in conflict zones. Moser-Mercer (2015: 302) only distinguishes interpreters working with the military, locally recruited or not, from humanitarian interpreters, but admits that more refined categories should be devised. Australian forces distinguish between Contractors, Defence Civilians and Defence locally engaged employees (Albaaka, 2020), while Van Dijk and Soeters (2008: 315) define them as embedded, local and home-based interpreters. The US forces rank conflict zone interpreters as CAT I, II, and III linguists: CAT III linguists are US citizens, often military, with a top-secret security clearance who work with high-ranking officers and in sensitive intelligence operations, CAT II linguists are the US recruited, often second-generation citizens, whose security clearance is the same as the other soldiers in the team, and CAT I linguists are locally hired individuals with no security or intelligence clearance that do most of the interpreting on the field (Rovegno *et al.*, 2003; Hajjar, 2017; Villalba Güemes *et al.*, 2017).

We see here that the cross-cutting difference emerging from the different categorizations is the one between a) military interpreters (colloquial speakers, interpreters, linguists or liaison officers) and civilian interpreters be they a) freelance or staff interpreters working in high-level political and/or military meetings b) civilian interpreters from Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) and c) locally recruited civilian interpreters, a categorization that we will use in this and the following chapters.

4.3.2 Recruitment

The first and preferred option for interpreters’ recruitment in military settings are military linguists, usually staff who knows the language(s) required for study or family reasons (Baker, 2010a; Baker, 2010b; Kelly & Baker, 2013), who range from ‘military interpreters’ with high-level language skills (STANAG⁴¹ 3 or more) or ‘linguists’ with varying degrees of language knowledge (Footitt & Kelly, 2013) who have undergone shorter and more superficial language training (Quinn-Judge, 1995: 21; Dingman, 2004).

They possess high-level security clearance for intelligence operations which is why they are usually highly valuable in counterinsurgency operations, especially by national contingents, as they not only are reliable and vetted, but they are trained soldiers (Lieutenant Colonel Lewis RE, 2012: 65) capable of operating in a high-intensity war context. While they also prove

⁴¹ STANAG (*Standardization Agreement*) is a conventional way of determining processes, terms and conditions for equipment or technical procedure common to all NATO countries. The current language proficiency assessment system is called STANAG 6001, now in its fifth edition, and has five levels: 0 (no proficiency), 1 (survival), 2 (functional proficiency), 3 (professional proficiency), 4 (expert), and 5 (highly skilled native) (NATO, 2014).

irreplaceable in liaison tasks, they are not the most cost-effective nor culturally and linguistically aware option, and their language skills are often below the expectations of their field commanders (Dingman, 2004; Footitt & Kelly, 2013). Accounts nevertheless point, through history, to a general reluctance of soldiers for language tasks, considered less heroic and as offering fewer career opportunities than combat functions (Footitt & Kelly, 2013: 167; Lieutenant Colonel Lewis RE, 2012; Baigorri Jalón *et al.*, 2014; Heimbürger, 2014b: 96; Kelly, 2014: 86) and chance for heroism: WWI interpreters in the French and British armies, for example, were often accused of *embusquage* (Kelly, 2014: 86) although it was showed in 1933, that casualties among interpreters were similar to those in artillery units (Heimbürger, 2014b: 96).

A second recruitment option are civilians from Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) who can be trained on military duty and language/terminology issues (Snellman, 2014) and deployed within specialty units like the US MOS 09L in 2003 (US Army, 2006), the Italian Riserva Selezionata, US National Language Service Corps⁴², or the Finnish and German army interpreters corps (Snellman, 2014; 2016; 2018), usually selected through public notice or internal lists of reservists. Considered by many the second-best option, civilians from TCCs do not always have the necessary clearance to deal with highly confidential military information and missions and despite military training they might not always have the military skills to operate, for example, in counterinsurgency. Also, their ‘embeddedness’ in the local culture and community is considered a double-edged sword so that different military organizations have adopted measures to ‘control’ them or guarantee their loyalty.

The third and last option is the on-site recruitment of civilians, either directly or through subcontracting companies, with the latter usually being a byword for lack of service quality and safety and security for interpreters (Washburn, 2004; Van Dijk & Soeters, 2008: 321; Vitaliano, 2010; Jones & Askew, 2014: 148).

Local interpreters are the cheapest and easiest option for military forces and their cultural background, knowledge of the area and people, and good language skills are undoubtedly an added value. Nevertheless, local interpreters are untrained civilians that can become a burden during active combat, they must be protected from their local communities and they can hardly be trusted with confidential information or intelligence tasks, as their loyalty is difficult to prove (Gallai, 2019). They are usually widely employed in Peacekeeping Operations of low-fighting intensity although in Afghanistan and Iraq they were frequently used also in counterinsurgency. These linguists also lack the language and interpreting skills as a consequence of hasty and unorganized recruitment procedures (Askew & Salama-Carr, 2011; Jones & Askew, 2014; Hajjar, 2017: 100), which are also heavily impacted by the availability of individuals with good language skills and education in the area of operation. In Afghanistan and Iraq, for example, the first option were university-educated people, with a degree in foreign languages (Tipton, 2011: 21) but their number was extremely limited, so that recruitment then turned to other professionals, such as teachers, doctors, tour guides, ex-military and employees

⁴² Established in 2006 in the US to “test the idea of a national corps of individuals who spoke languages other than English to offer their support to Federal agencies during times of crisis, such as relief efforts after hurricanes” (Allen, 2012).

of the Ministry of Information (C. Baker 2010: 216) and finally, when all these were already hired or unavailable, the choice fell on students, sometimes in their teens, cleaning ladies, drivers and anyone “with a smattering of English” (Bernardi, 2011: 113).

4.3.3 Employment

Military linguists are employed by the military institution and, as such, they are military subjects, entitled to the economic and healthcare provisions of soldiers, including evacuation. Civilians by TCCs are granted regular employment contracts, protection, equipment, and health insurance and are evacuated from the country together with the troops. They also enjoy better salaries than locally recruited interpreters: even in the Spanish Civil War, civilian interpreters deployed from the Soviet Union were granted pensions and direct and indirect economic support as veterans (Baigorri Jalón, 2019: 91).

Contracts and hiring procedures for local interpreters, on the contrary, vary greatly according to the mission or organization so that no general rule can be applied. In recent missions, they were hired as ‘language assistants’ within the UN, ‘fixers’ by journalists, but also under very different headings such as ‘administrative staff’, ‘legal assistants’, ‘interpreters’, “buyers/translators”, ‘driver/interpreters’ (Jones & Askew, 2014: 49).

Locally recruited civilians are usually hired with short-term contracts, if any, although so far no researcher has been able to find and analyze contracts for locally hired civilian interpreters. What emerges from the literature, at least in most recent conflicts, is that they are not entitled to social security, healthcare, and evacuation rights, as it was the case for Afghanistan and Iraq, especially if they are hired through third-party companies. Their salaries are generally good for war-torn countries, but much lower than those of civilian interpreters from TCCs: in Afghanistan, for example, local interpreters were paid an average of \$15,000 per year while TCC interpreters could earn as much as \$200,000 per year (Gallai, 2019: 209).

Also, the lack of linguists on the ground often entails competition among different agencies and contingents that try to secure their services by being the highest best-bidders, as it happened in Afghanistan, but also in WWII Finland (Kujamäki, 2014; Kujamäki & Pasanen, 2019). This system leads to increased risk of kidnapping and extortion for interpreters (Military 03, personal communication, August 28, 2020) and to a brain drain that deprives the country of much-needed doctors and engineers.

4.3.4 Training

When discussing training of interpreters in conflict zones, a clear distinction should be made between military linguists, civilians from TCCs and locally hired interpreters.

Military linguists undergo specific language and military training in military schools like, in the past, the US Army’s Japanese Language School in WWII (Dingman, 2004), the Interpreter Training School (ITS) and the Police Interpreter Training (PIT) in occupied Japan (Takeda, 2016), the Russian Military Institute of Foreign Languages (MIFL) (Probirskaja, 2016; Beyda, 2020). Today, relevant military language and interpreting training institutions are the Army Education Centre of Military Intelligence in Colchester and the Defence School of Languages

in Beaconsfield, UK, the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center in Monterey, California, the École interarmées du renseignement et des études linguistiques in Strasbourg, the Royal Danish Defence Academy in Copenhagen, or the Scuola di Lingue Estere dell'Esercito (SLEE) in Perugia, Italy. It should be said, however, that few of these provide actual interpreting classes - with the exception of a English-Serbian interpreting course offered at SLEE in the academic year 1999-2000 (Monacelli, 2002) and the one offered by the Australian Defence Force School of Language (DFSL) (Dehghani, 2020) and in Monterey (Mahasneh & Obeidat, 2018: 69) - which has led military linguists, specialists (Cappelli, 2014) and commanding officers (Thomas, 1995) to call for the creation of special interpreting programs in collaboration with interpreting schools and associations.

Interpreters coming from TCCs, like the Women's Army Corps in WWII (Baigorri Jalón, 2011b: 186) or the Italian Riserva Selezionata undergo some training before deployment, usually focusing on military issues, but available information is limited. Linguists in the already-mentioned US MOS 09L follow Basic Combat Training before deployment which also includes first aid, administrative support, security clearance and uniform use (US Army, 2006).

Finally, training for locally recruited civilian interpreters is almost non-existent in all missions or contexts analyzed, even if the interpreters recruited are rarely professionals (Moser-Mercer & Bali, 2008; Baigorri Jalón, 2011; Allen, 2012). Interpreting scholars have called for specific training for ICZs and some have even formulated training proposals: Albaaka (2020) proposed a training model for interpreters based on a risk assessment model, Mahasneh & Obeidat (2018) one that includes translation, interpreting, and language training, with a special focus on accents, dialects and culture, while Todorova and Ruiz Rosendo (2022) have edited an entire volume for the Routledge Series of Languages at War devoted to different aspects of training for ICZ interpreters, *Interpreter training in conflict and post-conflict scenarios*.

Nevertheless, besides the training organized for NATO headquarters' interpreters in Sarajevo, Pristina and Kabul by Ian Jones (Jones & Askew, 2014), the only existing training for ICZs so far, was developed by the Interpreting Department and the InZone project of the University of Geneva, to train humanitarian and conflict interpreters. The courses issue a certificate of Advanced Studies in Humanitarian interpreting (Mahasneh & Obeidat, 2018: 70) and are organized in collaboration with humanitarian organizations like MSF, UNHCR and ICRC. They feature short, adaptable blended modules, using responsive design technology and take into account the specificity of the setting, such as interpreters' lack of time, internet resources, secured connections, concentration and fighting (Moser-Mercer *et al.*, 2013). They provide training on professional interpreting ethics, core skills for humanitarian and conflict interpreters, interpreting skills, like consecutive interpreting, and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) (Mahasneh & Obeidat, 2018: 70).

Despite scholars having called for psychological support for interpreters working in humanitarian or conflict situations (Todorova & Ruiz Rosendo, 2021: 286), even in low-intensity ones (Snellman, 2014: 66-67), the issue of trauma is still absent from training, with only a few exceptions (Ruiz Rosendo & Persaud, 2016; Ruiz Rosendo & Barea Muñoz, 2017; Bernardi, 2022), just like basic military training. If scholars agree that professionals' reactions

in combat are likely to be different from those of lay-men (Albaaka, 2020), no provisions for basic military training are included in programs for interpreters although officers and service users have repeatedly underlined how these extra skills are essential (Thomas, 2003b: 41) together with knowledge of military culture, hierarchy, rules and etiquette, vocabulary, acronyms and stock phrases (Snellman, 2014: 38-39; Ruiz Rosendo & Persaud, 2019; Albaaka, 2020).

Finally, if communication is a *pas de trois* (Wadensjö, 1998), and the importance of educating service users has been long established for healthcare or court interpreting, there is no mention in the literature on ICZ to the training of military users to work with interpreters. Monacelli claims that commanders in NATO countries are specifically trained to inquiry about the interpreters' life and family, to address their interlocutors directly and to never criticize an interpreter before other speakers (Monacelli, 2002: 186-187) but the examples of best practices are poorly covered in the literature. The only exception is a recent UN training program for peacekeepers (UN Department of Peacekeeping operations, 2002; United Nations, 2010; United Nations, 2014), which includes a short module on the advantages and challenges of working with interpreters and suggestions like talking to the interlocutors and not to the interpreter or to brief interpreters before an assignment.

4.3.5 Risks and protection

4.3.5.1 Risks

Interpreting in conflict zones is a high-risk occupation, with interpreters sharing some of the risks innate to the soldiers' role, while others are specific to interpreters, both civilian and military (Tălpaș, 2016: 256). Albaaka (2020), a former locally recruited civilian interpreter for the Australian forces in Iraq, proposed a risk model for interpreters, based on the one developed by Romanian colonel Pah Petru that classifies risks interpreters face as military, natural, socio-political and economic, which we will follow here with some adjustments.

Military risks are the result of military engagement and may include meeting with (hostile) warlords and armed groups, shelling, bombing, landmines, booby traps (Thomas, 1995: 8) and sniper fire. Other risks, include being kidnapped at checkpoints (Baker, 2012b: 860) as nationals of the country at war, but also rape and abuse for women interpreters, especially when these are used as 'weapons' in a war. Military risks are greater for locally recruited civilians who haven't been trained to perform in war situations, are not usually allowed to carry weapons⁴³ (Gallai, 2019), and sometimes are not even provided with the necessary protection equipment (Thomas, 2003b: 39; M. Baker, 2010: 205; Kelly & Baker, 2013: 71). Among military risks we can include driving on badly manned roads, the exposure to chemicals, often used in warfare although forbidden by international conventions, that have been found to develop illnesses in soldiers years later.

⁴³ Although instances of armed civilian local interpreters were recorded (Anderson, 2014; Villalba Güemes *et al.*, 2017: 109; Albaaka, 2020: 49).

Among natural, or as we prefer to call them, contingent risks we then find weather conditions such as extreme temperatures, snow, sandstorms, droughts, and risks connected to outside camping and sleeping, like wild animals or frostbite, especially since sleeping bags are not always available for locally recruited linguists: “I remember the liaison officer talked to me over the phone and all my friends that we need to bring our blankets or sleeping bags. I told him can you provide us with sleeping bags, he said no these things are only provided to the ADF [Australian Defence Forces]” (Albaaka, 2020: 237).

Interpreters then face socio-political risks, i.e. risks that affect them as individuals in society, like the suspicion and, sometimes, violence from their own communities for their work with the foreign forces or occupiers (Kujamäki, 2016; Takeda, 2016; Incerti, 2021). The French interpreters within British and American troops in WWI, for example, had to stop wearing to their French uniforms and switch to the British khaki, while retaining the French *képi* and the special buttons of the French corps of military interpreters (Kelly, 2014) - an important element of their identity as a group (Heimbürger, 2014b: 98-99) - because they were constantly targeted by the enemy. Despite the use of uniforms, masks⁴⁴, sunglasses, and/or caps to protect their identity (Cronin, 2006; Moreno Bello, 2017; Albaaka, 2020) and the practice of housing linguists in the military base, interpreters - and their friends and families - continue to face threats and actual violence from their own communities and are often forced to live in hiding. Violence can get worse when the war ends and retribution hits former collaborators, whether willingly or unwillingly hired, as we have seen in WWII Finland, Italy, South-East Asia and more recently in Iraq and Afghanistan (Kujamäki, 2016; Takeda, 2016; Incerti, 2021).

Finally, locally recruited interpreters face economic risks, not just because the high salaries they earn in war-torn countries expose them to extortion and kidnapping (Military 03, personal communication, August 28, 2020; Albaaka, 2020: 243-244) but because their contracts are highly unregular and temporary: they interrupt their studies or careers to take better-paid jobs with international forces, but they often struggle, years later, to resume them or re-enter the job market when interpreting and language skills are not required anymore or when the occupying forces have left (C. Baker, 2012b: 860).

4.3.5.2 Protection

Protection of interpreters, especially local ones, in war zones, is one of the most widely discussed issues in the literature on ICZ, which has attracted the interest of political scientists, military experts, interpreters, and international jurists for the complicated facets of the problem. Despite the different measures available, but not always implemented, to protect interpreters like housing them on base⁴⁵, escorting them home after work, and using uniforms, masks, pseudonyms (Footitt & Kelly, 2013: 110; C. Baker, 2019a: 245) and fake accents to protect

⁴⁴ In 2008, the Pentagon banned face masks in Iraq for security issues (Boulet, 2003) leading to many interpreters resigning or baring their faces with great fear (Moreno Bello, 2015).

⁴⁵ This is not always feasible, nor wished for by interpreters, due to personal and family reasons but also to different cultural and religious norms on common living (Albaaka, 2020).

their identity (Albaaka, 2020: 241), interpreters are still the most targeted civilian group in a war.

The most effective measure remains relocation but the visa programs of many western countries have failed, for the limited number of visa and the bureaucracy of the procedure (Juvinal, 2013), which requires interpreters to transmit letters of recommendation (Plambech & Skov Danstrøm, 2014) and documents difficult to obtain in a war zone, especially when interpreters' records are non-existent and full of misspellings. Such a system is probably also the result of a lack of political will and anti-immigration sentiment in some of the countries that hired them.

The situation of interpreters in Iraq and Afghanistan, nevertheless, is also the direct consequence of the interpreters' precarious and blurred position even within International Humanitarian Law (Hereinafter IHL). Unfortunately, interpreters are not clearly mentioned as subjects of rights in IHL although they should be protected as civilians by the VI Geneva Convention (Moser-Mercer, 2015: 304), and the UN Responsibility to Protect principle (UN Security Council Resolution S/RES/1674, 2006).

According to Bartolini (2009), the situation is nevertheless more complicated because, in wars, there are two mutually excluding statuses, that of civilians and that of combatants, i.e. members of a country's armed forces who are bound to respect the principles of military necessity, distinction, proportionality, humanity and honour, and who fall within the provisions of the I Geneva Convention, which grants them access by International Red Cross and the right to be treated as Prisoners of War.

In international conflicts, all those who are not combatants are considered civilians, but in conflicts of a national character, the concept of 'fighter' - an individual with a "continuous combat function" who takes a direct part in hostilities, as defined by art. 51.3 of the First Additional Protocol and art.13.3 of the Second Additional Protocol to the Geneva Convention of 1949 - is ambiguous when it comes to interpreters. The International Red Cross has even drafted a document, listing activities that can be considered as 'combat functions', such as acts of violence against a party to a conflict, surveillance activities over captured personnel, and tactical intelligence operations, including for example the identification of targets. The problem is that some of these activities are sometimes carried out by interpreters, even civilian ones, thus complicating their position.

In the same way, captured interpreters who worked for the armed forces should be either treated as POWs, as they "accompany the armed forces without being members thereof", or as civilians protected by the IV Geneva Convention (Bartolini, 2009), but these provisions are often ignored by belligerent parties and become blurred when interpreters are citizens of the state against which military operations are carried out.

Despite Bartolini's crucial work in pointing out the difficult aspects of interpreters' positions in wars, IHL jurists like Francisco Leandro are critical of such attempts to define interpreters' position, as they further complicate their situation, and claims that in all cases interpreters cannot be considered as combatants, following a large body of legal international humanitarian and customary law and the jurisprudence of several international and national courts (Bernardi & Leandro, in press). Such a claim, shared also by Bartolini (2009), has been supported by the

many organizations representing translators and interpreters worldwide who demand a special category for interpreters, like those of doctors, nurses and journalists. Leandro also supports the idea that protection measures for interpreters should be included in the mission's Rules of Engagement (ROE) or Status-of-forces agreements (SOFAs), imposing on every commander the responsibility to avoid or at least minimize direct and concrete risks for interpreters and their next-of-kin (Bernardi & Leandro, in press).

Veterans have also proposed additional security measures (Plambech & Skov Danstrøm, 2014), including more thorough interpreters' records and the inclusion of interpreters and their dependents in evacuation and visa programs funded with the mission's budget (Thomas, 2003a). General Giorgio Battisti, the first commander of the Italian contingent in Afghanistan, has recently declared that years-long security checks to grant relocation are ridiculous when interpreters have worked side-by-side with Western troops for years (Adnkronos, 2021), while Juvinal (Juvinal, 2013) has proposed to treat interpreters and translators as veterans after the war, an issue on which relies the credibility of the Western military for future missions.

4.3.6 Interpreters' tasks and skills

The tasks and role of interpreters in conflict zones are so heterogeneous that Moser-Mercer (2015) and Kelly (2019) affirmed that "the notion of a clearly defined 'conflict zone interpreter' as one who carries out a specified set of tasks, needs to be abandoned in favor of a coarser categorization that separates interpreters who are members of the military from those who, although they may be working for the military, do not belong to the military" (Moser-Mercer, 2015: 309). Thomas called for a taxonomy of interpreting functions (Thomas, 1995), while Hajjar (2017) used the metaphor of a Swiss Army knife to describe the different tasks required of interpreters in a conflict.

Available literature confirms that interpreters in conflict zones are deployed in a variety of situations that range from warfare to diplomacy, from peacekeeping to humanitarian operations (Baigorri Jalón, 2011: 178) and that, as a result, they are asked to perform a wide range of activities (Baigorri Jalón, 2011b; Cummings, 2012; Footitt & Kelly, 2012; Kelly & Baker, 2013; Moser-Mercer, 2015; Hajjar, 2017; Gómez Amich, 2018a). These include, but are not limited to intelligence/counter-intelligence, liaison with allied troops, translation of documents, interpreting at meetings with military leaders, accompanying troops in raids, foot and vehicle patrols, ambushes, bomb-clearing and base security missions (Moser-Mercer, 2015: 309), managing POWs and assisting in interrogations, depending on the settings and type of operation.

Interpreters in peacekeeping missions, for example, being generally locally recruited civilians, are usually deployed in lower-intensity settings: they are asked to mediate with the local population (Van Dijk & Soeters, 2008), prepare reports on the latest news from the area, and often perform humanitarian and healthcare interpreting, helping in the distribution of humanitarian aid, management of refugees and displaced persons or the evacuation of the wounded (Thomas, 1997b; Todorova, 2016; Delgado Luchner & Kherbiche, 2018). Interpreters accompanying journalists in war zones even perform quasi-journalist tasks

(Palmer, 2007; Palmer & Fontan, 2007) as they don't just arrange interviews, they select the contact, and therefore the story and the content.

Linguists within military units and national contingents, being usually but not only military linguists or civilians from TCC temporarily or permanently embedded in the military structure, might perform the tasks of interpreters in Peace Keeping Operations, but might also, in counterinsurgency and occupation, perform liaison and intelligence tasks, or manage and interrogate prisoners.

In both cases, interpreters can also be called to perform more mundane, or bureaucratic tasks, like working at dinner parties or official ceremonies, providing cultural awareness training to crisis management forces, or again, guide troops, running errands and acting as drivers and guards (Snellman, 2014). In many cases, interpreters have been in charge of bureaucratic procedures, like arranging meetings, answering phone calls (Cummings, 2012) and supervising procurement contracts and financial issues (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 191).

As we have seen, interpreters in conflict zones perform a variety of tasks that often exceed the limitations of interpreters' agency: they are called to act as gate-keepers and go-betweens (Heimbürger, 2012; Wolf, 2019), providers of cultural, situational and geographical knowledge (Cummings, 2012), informants and informed mediators (M. Baker, 2006: 214-215; Inghilleri, 2010: 179) and counsellors (Footitt & Kelly, 2013: 193). Their role as cultural informants is especially valued by the military, especially in counterinsurgency, and it is seen as a cultural weapon that can save the soldiers' lives (Tipton, 2011: 24). In this respect, interpreters have often acted in history as lie detectors in charge of security assessments (Cummings, 2012):

It is precisely this advisory role of the interpreter which proves to be of importance to soldiers in the operational field. Interpreters are experts in understanding the mores of the local culture and in this capacity, they are often more perceptive of signals than soldiers. Being the middleman of two linguistically and culturally different worlds, interpreters are capable of "fine-tuning" the low context approach of western contingents to the need of the high context culture of (most of the) operational areas. (Van Dijk & Soeters, 2008: 316)

This is probably why the job description of interpreters, when available, is vague (C. Baker, 2010b: 157; Tälpaş, 2016; Gómez Amich, 2018b: 33) and usually does not differentiate between translation and interpreting tasks.

This hybridity of the interpreters' role and tasks makes it even harder to determine what kind of skills, meant as a mixture of professional and personal attitudes, interpreters should possess to work in a conflict zone, an aspect that has not been extensively researched. Trustworthiness is generally identified as essential in interpreters by military forces (Inghilleri 2010; Van Dijk *et al.*, 2010; Askew and Salama-Carr 2011; Tipton 2011; Baigorri Jalón 2011; Footitt and Tobia 2013; Hajjar 2017) and journalists (Palmer, 2007) and it is usually the first and most important skill mentioned together with flexibility, courage (Thomas, 1995), and an ability to function in a military setting (Hajjar, 2017).

It seems, from the available literature, that interpreters are expected to possess skills that pertain more to the military world than the interpreting one, as confirmed by Finnish civilian interpreters deployed to Afghanistan who claimed that military training, especially in attitude

and culture, was essential to effectively perform as interpreters (Snellman, 2014). This is probably due to fact that the military equals interpreting competence to language one (Baigorri Jalón, 2011: 176) and takes language and interpreting skills for granted, while expecting civilian interpreters to follow the same ethical guidelines and models of military agents.

4.3.7 Interpreters' ethics: status, neutrality, and confidentiality

With the development of the profession in the 1950s, interpreting scholars and professionals have developed codes of ethics that define interpreters' agency and guide their professional activity. Despite the differences in categorization, they usually list professional ethical tenants such as confidentiality/discretion/professional secrecy, impartiality and/or neutrality, accuracy and faithfulness to the message, respect of the interpreter's position and boundaries in terms of tasks and relationships with service users and, recently, also continuing professional development (Kalina, 2015: 65-66).

Developed initially for conference interpreters, such ethical tenants have been applied to more asymmetrical and challenging interpreting settings, like community interpreting and ICZ, where concepts like neutrality and confidentiality, as we will see, are challenged by military practice and expectations, by the interpreters' cultural embeddedness in the conflict and by the variety of tasks performed.

The approach applied to ethical tenants in ICZ has initially been the traditional deontological one, which prescribes or prohibits particular behaviors on the part of interpreters irrespective of the context (Dean & Pollard, 2011: 157) and judges interpreters' behaviors through that prism (Dragovic-Drouet, 2007). The *Conflict Zone Field Guide for Civilian Translators/Interpreters and Users of Their Services* by FIT, Red T and AIIC (AIIC *et al.*, 2011) goes in that direction, with prescriptions like "interpreters must serve all parties equally without expressing opinions or sympathies" and "must not advocate and declare any conflict of interest".

More recently, while calling for ethics training for interpreters in conflict zones (Salama-Carr, 2007; Tymoczko, 2007; M. Baker, 2015; Boéri & Maier, 2010; 2011), scholars have begun to challenge prescriptions of professional ethics in this context (Inghilleri, 2008; M. Baker, 2010; Snellman, 2016) where interpreters, especially untrained ones, are inclined to exercise ethical judgment within the framework of the military field (Inghilleri, 2010: 180), have a subaltern and often precarious role and find themselves in ethically complicated situations.

Interpreters in prisoners' interrogations, for example, from Nazi-fascist Italy (Incerti, 2021) to Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib (Inghilleri, 2008) operated in a situation that could not be solved through a code of ethics, while tenants like accuracy can sometimes be counter-productive in a conflict zone: a Russian interpreter in the Spanish civil war, for example, recounted that when translating courses on the use of explosive devices, she had to shorten consistently the translation of the trainer's speech, or the bomb would detonate.

A further issue is whether interpreters are required to adopt the ethics of the military structure or of professional interpreters. Cappelli (2022) has described the ethics of military interpreters as a combination of two professional roles, defined by both professions' ethical norms and

discipline while Askew (2011: 226-227) claims that the ethics of representation and the ethics of service⁴⁶ are the most relevant for civilian war-zone interpreters because they represent the two angles from which translator ethics can be viewed in this context: fidelity to the text or utterance and loyalty to the military organization. Nevertheless, the dichotomy remains and linguists working for the international military forces have often been strained between the translators' and the military ethics.

This is why scholars have recently proposed a teleological approach to ethics, in which professionals are trained to evaluate professional decisions in terms of their outcomes (C. Baker, 2015) as guidelines cannot anticipate all the potential situations that may arise (Pena-Díaz, 2018: 101). This is why Moreno Bello (2014; 2015) in her revision to the IFT code of ethics for ICZ includes exceptions to the principles of neutrality, impartiality, and faithfulness aimed at helping the interpreter choose between "taking an active role in communication (mediation) or be faithful to the literacy of the message (neutrality)" (Moreno Bello, 2014: 68). We will briefly focus here on ethical tenants that have proven particularly interesting and challenging in ICZ, that is interpreters' status, neutrality and confidentiality while discussing quality, and therefore accuracy and faithfulness to the message in § 4.3.8.

4.3.7.1 Status

The status of interpreters, that is their contextualization in time, space and relationship to others is traditionally shaped by a series of elements (Panaccione, 2018), like gender, ethnicity, educational background, training, user's perception, motivation, tasks, and place in the power hierarchy (Ficklin & Briony, 2009; Mullings, 1999). In conflicts, it is also influenced by the type of interpreter (military, civilian from TCCs, locally recruited interpreter) and the specific circumstances in which the war takes place (ethnic, religious, civil war, peacekeeping, occupation, etc.).

As a rule, we can affirm that all three categories of war interpreters have generally enjoyed low status: they have traditionally been slaves, prisoners or rank & file soldiers and only in the 20th century they have become military officers, sometimes diplomats (Baigorri Jalón *et al.*, 2014) who nevertheless did not occupy apical positions within the military hierarchy. Even the so-called 'interpreters of dictators' (Ibid) despite playing a powerful role, next to their leaders, had to navigate delicate power-trust relationships with powerful, authoritarian, sometimes despotic principals.

The practice of recruiting local civilians as interpreters continues today to put interpreters in a subaltern position with little prestige, no professional recognition (Gallai, 2019), safety, social security, and lower salaries than their counterparts from TTCs (Allen, 2012; Juvinal, 2013; Fidahić, 2018) and dependency on the military for protection, survival and sometimes training. Very often interpreters are dehumanized and perceived as "tools" by the military institution (Inghilleri, 2010: 179), leaving them to feel as they do not belong to neither of the two worlds:

⁴⁶ Developed by Andrew Chesterman, the ethics of representation means conveying the source text, or the source author's intention accurately without adding, omitting, or changing anything, the ethics of service is focused on translation as a commercial service performed for a client whose instructions the translators has accepted or negotiated (Chesterman, 2001, as quoted in Askew, 2011).

they are not interpreters *tout court*, but neither soldiers (C. Baker, 2014). Exemplary in this regard, is the use of uniforms: on the one hand, it leads interpreters to assume the role that their uniform demands, but on the other, it does not provide them with the power, agency, training or experience to do so and complicates their position with their fellow citizens (C. Baker, 2010a: 142-143).

Finally, in-group rules that interpreters' employers and communities impose upon interpreters place them in a difficult and conflicting position as citizens of an occupied country and employees of the occupier, which brings into questions factors such as west vs. east, foreign vs. local, military vs. civilian, trust vs. mistrust, identification vs. alienation (Gómez Amich, 2018b).

Despite their low status, the reliance of high-rank officials on interpreters, both civilian and military, has created, in some cases, a reversion of the hierarchy described above (Baigorri Jalón, 2011b: 177). In some war zones interpreters have enjoyed, in practice, great and even disproportionate power and status (Aschenberg, 2016: 71; Wolf, 2016a; Beyda, 2020: 137; Kim, 2021; Incerti, 2021) both for their role, that allowed them to participate in or even influence the outcome of the mediated encounter (Stahuljak, 2007; 2009) and for their position, which granted them access to good salaries, food and other staples that in a war may make the difference between life and death. The fact that they often were “the face of occupation” (Kujamäki, 2016) and the possibility of taking personal advantage from their position has sometimes earned interpreters a bad reputation among their community, as emerges from the memories on interpreters in Saint Petersburg by Lidiia Osipova (Budnitskii & Zelenina, 2012, as quoted in Beyda, 2020: 137), one of the last living survivors of the Siege:

Interpreters represent a force and a major one. Most of them are appalling scum, people who care only for themselves and who try to screw out of the population everything that's possible, and often, even things that are impossible. Meanwhile, the population is completely in their hands. (O. V. Budnitskii and G. S. Zelenina, 2012, as quoted in Beyda, 2020: 137)

4.3.7.2 *Neutrality*

Another concept that features prominently in interpreting and military settings is that of interpreters' neutrality, understood in the interpreting world as complete equidistance and impartiality from the parties in the performance of the assignment (Ballardini, 2019).

The history of ICZ is nevertheless dotted with accounts of non-neutral interpreters who pursued their goals, those of their local communities (Dragovic-Drouet, 2007) or their employers: from Ottoman Dragomans to Bletchley park linguists in WWII (Boulet, 2003; Dragovic-Drouet, 2007; Askew, 2014: 236), to Kosovo (Dragovic-Drouet, 2007; Elias-Bursac, 2015) and Afghanistan (Boulet, 2003; Palmer, 2007; Takeda, 2009: 59; Inghilleri, 2010), examples of non-loyal interpreters or interpreters accused thereof have featured consistently in history (Cronin, 2002: 55-58;).

The tenant of neutrality and the deontological approach to it in interpreting in conflict zones, nevertheless, is problematic for two reasons. The first one is that military institutions and

journalists, as well as local communities, understand interpreters' neutrality as trustworthiness and reliability (Palmer, 2007: 16; Inghilleri, 2010; Van Dijk *et al.*, 2010; Askew & Salama-Carr, 2011; Tipton, 2011; Baigorri Jalón, 2011; Footitt & Tobia, 2013; Hajjar, 2017) and expect that their interpreters align with their goals and purposes, in a process called 'enculturation' (Pfau *et al.*, 2004: 76-77; C. Baker, 2010a; Snellman, 2014: 14). This is why military institutions usually prefer 'autonomous' to 'heteronomous' recruitment, although neutrality accusations were made also at military (Stanković, 2001; Takeda, 2009; Snellman, 2014: 58), and TCC interpreters. Glionna & Khalil (2005), for example, report that foreign-born Iraqi linguists in Iraq fought two wars, one against Iraqis who saw them as traitors, and the other against the cultural insensitivity and mistrust by their own units.

In a nutshell, interpreters' neutrality in a war is shaped by the expectations of the parties they work with, who often require non-neutrality of their interpreters, who are consequently unable "to find neutral or linguistically neutral spaces" (Kahane, 2007: 4) because the same parties to the conflict do not recognize the possibility of them occupying neutral in-between spaces.

The second reason why the tenant of interpreters' neutrality in ICZ is problematic is linked to the specific features of a conflict zone: if neutrality can be defined as "absence de parti pris dans une situation de conflit entre 'parties adverses'" (Ballardini, 2019 : 5) in a conflict where the parties are by definition partial, how can the interpreter avoid taking sides?

We have seen that the issue of neutrality has proved complex and even fatal in history from Nazi concentration camps (Wolf, 2016b: 103) to WWII Korean and Japanese ones (Li *et al.*'s, 2016; Luo and Zhu, 2021) who were later tried and sentenced to death for having obeyed orders (Takeda, 2019). In a situation where the act of translation is a choice between life and death and is subject to the setting's violent constraints, interpreters' neutrality becomes a fuzzy concept, especially if an interpreter is a citizen of a country at war (Stahuljak, 1999; Inghilleri, 2008; Inghilleri, 2010).

This is why several scholars have suggested a more teleological approach to this professional tenant, to be considered *en situation* (Morris, 1995; Rudvin, 2002; Hale, 2007; 2008; Inghilleri, 2012; Kalina, 2015) and not as a fixed, immutable assumption (Ballardini, 2019). Some have suggested the concept of 'loyalties' in the plural, understood not as clear-cut categories, but feigned, shifted, divided allegiances (Luo & Zhu, 2021), often the result of conflicting elements and negotiation (Takeda, 2010: 142; Kujamäki, 2014). Snellman has put forward the concept of 'non-neutrality', or 'impartiality' (Snellman, 2016: 266), that is the ability to remain non-loyal to any party or client, while Salama-Carr and Boéri & Maier (Salama-Carr, 2007: 6; Boéri & Maier, 2010) have suggested that of 'responsibility and awareness'.

Other scholars have even begun to wonder if neutrality is at all possible when interpreters are interpreting for people who have killed their friends and family or who are trying to save them (Gómez Amich, 2018a) and that neutrality might not be applicable or even desirable here (Baker & Tobia, 2012: 202-203; Probirskaja, 2016; Gómez Amich, 2018b). In this respect, Mona Baker's work on narratives (M. Baker, 2006; 2010), drawing on the narrative theory of Somers (1997) and Somers & Gibson (1994), provides the theoretical framework for the discussion. Baker defines narratives as the stories we subscribe to, whether willingly or unwillingly, and claims that interpreters and translators, as human beings, cannot stand outside

or between narratives, especially in a war where narratives are characterized by the concept of difference (us vs. them) and homogeneity (all those belonging to one group are indistinguishably good or bad) leaving no room for ambiguity and fluid, or split identities. Some scholars have gone so far as to affirm that “interpreters can scarcely be blamed for pursuing their own interests, no matter how unprofessional or unethical they may seem” (Pym, 2016: 255).

Also, as situated individuals with narratives of their own, interpreters are not just narrated in a war, but also narrators who contribute to shaping the narratives that create the intellectual and moral environment of the conflict (Palmer, 2007; M. Baker, 2012;) so that the tenant of neutrality has even been described as a “violence” because it denies interpreters the very possibility of testifying (Stahuljak, 1999; 2007; 2009).

4.3.7.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is another ethical imperative of interpreters, who are required to keep all information learned during their job confidential even more so in military contexts where operations and sometimes the lives of soldiers and civilians depend on it.

Apparently unproblematic, confidentiality is another complex tenant for interpreters in conflict zones where information is power.

For their language skills and role, interpreters in military settings are often identified as ‘the weak link’ that can be provide information: throughout history interpreters have been pressured to reveal or disclose information from the warring parties, from WWII (Incerti, 2021; Takeda, 2021: 7-9) to Bosnia and Herzegovina (Footitt & Kelly, 2013; Gonçalves, 2020) and Afghanistan (Juvinal, 2013; Inghilleri, 2015).

If the issue is less problematic for military interpreters, who are part of a military structure and subject to Martial law and can breach confidentiality in cases of security threats or to discuss matters with their superiors (Snellman, 2014: 58), the problem of confidentiality arises for civilian interpreters, who are often pressured or threatened to reveal information from their local community.

Once again, a deontological approach fails to consider here the peculiarity of this setting: can interpreters’ confidentiality be breached if the interpreter’s life or that of their family members is threatened? Are interpreters allowed to contravene confidentiality if what they learn could potentially endanger the lives of many? Or are they allowed to inform the news of the mistreatment of prisoners and other acts that represent violations of human rights, or worse war crimes? Can interpreters breach confidentiality to testify in war crime tribunals?⁴⁷

Throughout history some interpreters, as we have seen, have broken confidentiality to help the resistance forces or to save lives, like the German-Italian interpreters in WWII who passed information they learned to the partisans (Incerti, 2021), but what happens when interpreters do it to support what they think is the right cause, which might not be the side we identify as ‘the good one’?

⁴⁷ The issue was raised at the ICTY when interpreters called on the stand refused to answer the judges’ questions on confidentiality grounds but were later compelled to testify (Elias-Bursac, 2015: 70; 235-237; Takeda, 2021: 7-9).

All these questions have unfortunately been left unanswered in the literature and, in the absence of more appropriate rules on confidentiality for this specific context, interpreters have acted following what Monacelli and Punzo (2001) define as “immediate coping strategies”, that is according to their moral compass, the situation and survival chances, rather than wondering how to reconcile interpreting ethics codes with the situation they were facing.

4.3.8 Interpreting quality

The concept of quality in interpreting is a complex one, on which much ink has been spilt in interpreting studies (Kurz, 2001; Kalina, 2002; Pöchhacker, 2002; Hale *et al.*, 2009) and that has been subject to several definitions, also considering different interpreting settings, mainly conference interpreting. Evaluating the quality of interpreting in a setting like ICZ is an even more difficult task, due to the nature of interpreting as an oral activity, but also to the great variability of interpreters employed, ranging from clergy men, diplomats and soldiers to slaves and teachers. However, the quality of interpreters in conflict zones, when mentioned at all, is often described as poor in historical accounts. For example, the language skills achieved by military interpreters was judged insufficient for British linguists in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s (Footitt & Kelly, 2013) and for US Japanese Language Officers deployed in the Pacific in WWII (Dingman, 2004).

Even the language and interpreting skills of second-generation speakers have also been questioned in accounts examined, like those of the American *Niseis* deployed to Japan in WWII (Takeda, 2016), while the skills of locally recruited interpreters in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Iraq and Afghanistan have been criticized on a number of occasions, as we have seen in this chapter (Washburn, 2004; Dragovic-Drouet, 2007; Van Dijk & Soeters, 2008: 321; Vitaliano, 2010).

It should be mentioned, however, that despite being an essential aspect in professional interpreting, quality, understood as high-level language skills, accuracy and faithfulness to the original message, is somewhat considered a secondary aspect in conflict zones, where trustworthiness and loyalty are more paramount parameters (Military 03, personal communication, August 28, 2020). Also, in military settings, it seems that language skills have always somehow equalled interpreting skills and that no system has been established, in the contexts analysed, to verify and control quality, with only a few exceptions, like the *Compilation of the Laws of the Indies* of 1530 which specified that two interpreters had to be present to avoid translation mistakes or intentional manipulation of messages and to ensure accuracy with the original (Takeda & Baigorri Jalón, 2016: 37), a system still in place today in high-level political meetings.

Chapter 5: INTERPRETING IN THE WARS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AND CROATIA

5.1 Introduction

When interest in interpreters in conflict zones emerged in the 2000s, sparked by the Afghan and Iraqi wars, scholars began to investigate interpreting in the then most recent conflict, that is the wars in former Yugoslavia, and more specifically in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia.

The first contributions to the topic come from former interpreters like Zrinka Stahuljak (1999; 2007; 2009; 2010), a Croatian interpreter for the European Community Monitoring Mission (ECMM) in Croatia and today the director of the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at the University of California (Rigondet, 2020), who reflected on her colleagues' experience of neutrality, using the notes that Ivan Magdalenić, a Croatian psychiatrist, had taken during interviews with 25 ECMM Croatian interpreters in 1993. Drawing on Felman's work, she pointed out a contradiction between interpreters' need to testify and the act of interpreting itself, which only allowed interpreters to be neutral intermediaries ultimately creating a "trauma of neutrality" (Stahuljak, 1999).

Another contribution on the topic is that of Mila Dragović-Drouet (2007), a member of the Serbian Translators Association who worked as a translator and interpreter between French and Serbo-Croatian for the EU Embassy in Belgrade, journalists and UN in the 1990s, and later pursued an academic career at the University of Rennes and INALCO, in Paris. She focuses on the role of language as a major element of community identity in former Yugoslavian countries, and heavily criticizes the use of untrained locally recruited interpreters working into their B language, as well as the ideological reasons behind their enrollment.

Another interpreter who contributed to the discussion is Edina Spahić-Šagolj (n.d.; 2002; 2014), former UNPROFOR interpreter and today professor at the Department of Romance Studies at the University of Sarajevo, where she teaches Spanish and Translation Theory. Based on interviews with ten former UNPROFOR interpreters, Spahić-Šagolj's raises issues like risks, recruitment and the psychological strain of interpreting for women victims of war crimes and sexual violence (Spahić-Šagolj, 2014: 83). Finally, ICTY translator Ellen Elias-Bursac (2015) and UNPROFOR and ICTY interpreter and scholar Besmir Fidahić (2018; 2021), partially mention on-the-ground interpreting in their works on the ICTY.

In the mid-2000s, more comprehensive contributions were published by researchers in the newly emerged field of languages and war. The most complete and informative volumes are from the Palgrave's series *Languages at War* like *Languages at War: Policies and Practices of Language Contacts in Conflict* (Footitt & Kelly, 2013), which features two chapters on civilian and military interpreters in Bosnia and Herzegovina and approaches issues like language learning and policies, occupation, fraternization and peace-building. The volume *Interpreting the Peace Operations, Conflict and Language in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Kelly & Baker, 2013) focuses more specifically on Bosnia and Herzegovina and the language issues faced by international peacekeepers while *Languages and the Military Alliances: Occupation and Peace*

Building (Footitt & Kelly, 2012) features two chapters on the topic by Catherine Baker and Louise Askew respectively, who present mainly the British experience with local interpreters. Another interesting volume is *Meeting the language challenges of NATO Operations: policy, practice and professionalization* edited by Ian Jones and Louise Askew (Jones & Askew, 2014) who reorganized NATO language support services in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1998. Louise Askew, as a civilian and language consultant and interpreters' supervisor for the British Ministry of Defense (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 45; 64-65) and later ICTY and NATO SFOR interpreter, also focused on the language policy of the international community in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Askew, 2011; 2019) and on more general issues like neutrality (Askew & Salama-Carr, 2011; Askew, 2014).

The author who has investigated more widely the use, perception, and role of interpreters in the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina is nevertheless Catherine Baker - a senior lecturer in 20th-Century History at the University of Hull - providing most of the information we have on Bosnian interpreters' language learning (C. Baker, 2011a), and their relationship with the military (C. Baker, 2011b; 2012a), training, tasks, pay and working conditions (Kelly & Baker, 2010b; C. Baker, 2012b; 2014; 2015), with a specific focus also on interpreters in Republika Srpska (C. Baker, 2012c). Baker has also considered interpreters as a sociological category and defined their peculiar positioning and status as ad-hoc employees within the military structure (C. Baker, 2011a).

Finally, a more recent set of works are those by Maria Clementina Persaud, whose PhD thesis (Persaud, 2016) focuses on the use of interpreters in EUFOR *operation Althea* in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2004-present day). If some of her considerations on interpreting in conflict zones cannot be applied to the actual war years (1991-1995), Persaud's study has the merit to point out how training, perceptions and expectations of the interpreters' role have improved over the years and to define some of the skills that military representatives expect of interpreters, like psychological stamina and endurance. With Ruiz Rosendo (Ruiz Rosendo & Persaud, 2019) Persaud also explored interpreters' positionality as outsiders and insiders with respect to the forces' personnel and the local communities, challenged the tenant of neutrality, and proposed further potential training goals.

If most of the contributions mentioned here come from interpreting studies or "practice-searchers" (Gilles, as quoted in Takeda & Baigorri Jalón, 2016: XI), a relatively smaller sample of work has been published on the topic from the military side: Wentz (Wentz *et al.*, 1998), identified lessons learned in IFOR while Canadian Major Francis Roy Thomas, a UN Senior Military Observer in Sarajevo, described interpreters' tasks, use and required skills (Thomas, 1994; 1997a; 1997b; 2004) and offered useful suggestions on how to improve their status, training and safety (Thomas, 2003a; 2003b). Finally, Bos & Soeters' (2006) work on interpreters at the SFOR Dutch base in Bugojno, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, showed that interpreters are much more than 'translation machines' and play a supporting, if not diplomatic, role as language mediators in the interaction between peacekeepers and the local communities.

5.2 Thematic Literature Review

We will try and follow in the thematic literature review the same structure adopted in chapter 4, namely: categorization, recruitment, employment - under which we will be discussing interpreters' contracts, payment and benefits, age and gender, ethnicity, and working conditions - training, risks and protection, interpreters' ethics (status, neutrality and confidentiality) and interpreting quality.

5.2.1. *Categorization*

Interpreters in the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina working for the United Nations were generally referred to as 'language assistants', an approach that was criticized both in interpreting (Fidahić, 2018; Gallai, 2019) and military settings (Thomas, 2004) as a way to avoid paying interpreters the salaries and welfare provisions enjoyed by UN interpreters.

Interpreters working for the ECMM, NATO or other organizations were referred to in a variety of ways, that reflected the lack of a centralized approach to language support and categorization at least until the years 2000s. When Jones and Askew arrived in Sarajevo to reorganize and reform the language support service in 1998, half of the interpreters were hired under a variety of headings such as 'legal assistant/interpreter', 'buyer/translator' or 'driver/interpreter' (Jones & Askew, 2014: 54).

More generally, just like in other conflicts, interpreters in the wars in the former Yugoslavia fit into the three broad categories of military interpreters, civilian TCC interpreters, and locally recruited interpreters.

As per the first, when the war broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, the western military was "still largely on a cold-war footing [...] and contained very few personnel who already spoke the language known as Serbo-Croat" (Footitt & Kelly, 2013: 185): the bulk of language training had focused on WWII or cold war languages, like Japanese and Russian, and the western short-sighted approach to the region had led to consider the language as strategic only when the war was already raging.

The **UK**, for example, had four or five Serbo-Croatian heritage speakers⁴⁸, one military interpreter, Captain of the Royal Army Educational Corps, Nick Stanfield⁴⁹, who had studied Serbo-Croatian, and several Russian specialists that took fast-track language courses before deployment, like civilian language consultant Louise Askew (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 45; 64-65), or liaison officers Emma Sayer and Thomas Dibb, who also served as interpreters for the British UNPROFOR battalions in Bosnia (Elias-Bursac, 2015: 230). The **Dutch**, who arrived in 1994, only had two military interpreters who had once left the region as refugees (Bos & Soeters, 2006).

No information is available for the other countries but we can assume that the few military interpreters available were deployed for intelligence and high-profile operations, and put in charge of the local interpreters' teams (C. Baker, 2012a).

⁴⁸ Nikola Andrijasević of the Royal Engineers, the already mentioned Miloš Stanković (deployed as Mike Stanley), Nick Ilić (deployed as Nick Costello), and a corporal in the Royal Anglian Regiment whose real name is unknown (deployed as Nick Abbott) (Stanković, 2001; Kelly & Baker, 2013).

⁴⁹ A Russian specialist, he was later the interpreter of British colonel Bob Stewart, set up the Serbo-Croatian military language course at Beaconsfield and developed language cards and other language materials for the troops (see Chapter 9).

Several military linguists with Russian as a working language underwent intensive Serbo-Croatian programs, the so-called “turbo-Serbian courses” (Quinn-Judge, 1995: 21), but they rarely achieved the language skills required for actual interpreting, as described by a British colloquial speaker of Serbo-Croatian and later head of department at DSL:

People were taken from that course and thrown into Bosnia, and people said “Ah, we’ve got the linguists here.” Sometimes they would even say “We’ve got the interpreters here.” And [...] very often people were asked to do things which were way beyond their level. And I think [...] that people who had the military colloquial speakers working with them sometimes were disappointed with the level of language ability that the individuals displayed. And though they may have been quite happy to sit and talk in very short pieces of language, to use a great deal of circumlocution, and there was a little bit of imagination [to] get meaning across, then that was very different from what sometimes people expected of them. They expected them to be able to say anything (laughs) and understand anything, and it wasn’t like that. (C. Baker, 2012a: 15)

As a consequence, they often struggled to establish their role in their unit (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 60) and to strike a balance between their language and military tasks, especially when their superiors did not have a clear grasp of what they could and could not do and had local interpreters “who could meet most of their more obvious language needs” (Ibid: 59-61).

A second category of interpreters deployed were civilians of Yugoslav origin in the troops’ countries (TCCs interpreters) but according to Dragović-Drouet (2007), such a recruitment option was complicated by the divided loyalties in the members of the Yugoslav diaspora, who often left the country for political reasons and were not willing to come back now that a ‘regime-change’ had occurred. This type of recruitment was nevertheless used by **the Netherlands**, which deployed civilians with the required language skills after minimal military training and later by **Germany** within the NATO IFOR/SFOR missions (Askew, 2019: 237). The recruitment of TCC civilians became a rule within the US-NATO forces, whose available military interpreters had all been destined to intelligence tasks. The **US** deployed civilians recruited through radio and press campaigns among the three ethnic groups of the Yugoslav diaspora in North America (Askew, 2019; Jones & Askew, 2014: 72), very likely without interpreting and translation training (Wentz *et al.*, 1998). These civilians were hired through one or more contracting companies: according to Wentz, a contract for linguist support was awarded on 10 December 1995 to BDM Corporation, which had provided linguist contractor support for operations in Haiti, Somalia, and southwest Asia, eventually supplying a total of 57 U.S. linguists and 439 native linguists for a cost of \$13 million. Apparently, the company was later bought by TWR Incorporated (Later Northrop Grumman) (C. Baker, 2010b: 170), and continued recruiting, testing and training civilians both on-site (category I), and in the US (category II and III).

The third available, and most exploited option was the recruitment of local interpreters on site, although it proved complicated as the massive demand for interpreters by media, international organizations, NGOs, and peace-keeping forces was not met with a sufficient number of interpreters, especially in a country with no translation agencies and interpreting schools, and with just a few professional translators and interpreters with a degree or the necessary work experience (Dragović-Drouet, 2007).

Given the great demand, issues such as professional methodology, ethics and even language competence became secondary (Spahić-Šagolj, 2014) and recruiters turned to language graduates who planned to work as translators or interpreters and to teachers who, at least theoretically, were proficient in the foreign language but had limited or no translation or interpreting skills. Since all these professionals could not meet the urgent need for language services, recruitment was later extended to engineers, doctors and even to university and high-school students attracted by the high pay rates (Ibid: 33-34). Locally hired civilians featured prominently in the Peace Keeping Operations, like UNPROFOR and the ECMM, within UN agencies like UNHCR and journalists, and later also in NATO IFOR and SFOR, although their tasks were different from those of military interpreters and civilians from TCCs.

5.2.2 Recruitment

Ever since the first experiences from the small UNPROFOR and ECMM deployments to Slovenia, Croatia and Sarajevo in 1991, it became immediately clear that at least one interpreter if not more would be necessary for every ECMM or UNPROFOR office, observers' team and military base, as well as interpreters and translators in the missions' headquarters in Sarajevo and Zagreb (Footitt & Kelly, 2013: 185).

While information on the recruitment of military interpreters and civilians from TCCs as well as of ECMM local interpreters is scant, the recruitment of UNPROFOR civilian interpreters, emerges as an ad-hoc and highly informal practice, dictated by the language knowledge and the urgency of the situation. Nick Stanfield, British Captain deployed to Vitez, Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992, remembers that the very first interpreter was hired without any kind of selection:

Luckily Major Alan Abraham, B Squadron Commander, had located a woman who might be able to do the job and so we went around to her flat close to Hotel Vitez. After coffee, she agreed to a salary of 200 Deutschmarks – the best currency to use in Bosnia – and we had our interpreter. (Stewart, 1993: 83, as quoted in Kelly & Baker, 2013: 67)

According to Footitt & Kelly, in the first days, there was no official testing method, at least in British UNPROFOR bases, except for a rudimentary testing system devised by interpreter Dobrila Kalaba and Fred Whitaker, which featured a role-play exercise (Ibid: 18) but was discontinued when Dobrila was killed.

It seems that, as time passed and UNPROFOR was deployed permanently, a centralized recruitment test for language assistants was introduced, although information on it is limited and sometimes contradictory.

The test, which came from Zagreb and/or Sarajevo, was compulsory to receive an employment contract but sometimes it could take several months before the interpreters could sit the test, because of fighting, road blockage or lack of people capable of administering it⁵⁰. In the

⁵⁰ Except for Stanfield and Askew, bases often did not have people trained to recruit interpreters or evaluate their language and/or interpreting skills (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 67; Spahić-Šagolj, 2014: 80; Askew, 2019).

meantime, interpreters were hired informally with payment in kind, on the understanding that they would be fired if they eventually failed the test. Some sources claim that the test was a written one (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 97; Spahić-Šagolj, 2014: 80), while others support that it included an oral interview “en las que la intuición del entrevistador era muchas veces el factor decisivo en la selección del candidato” (Spahić-Šagolj, 2014: 80). Anida Tabenković Pappenkort, recruited by UNPROFOR in Sarajevo, affirmed to have taken a liaison interpreting and a written translation test from and into English, while Hasan Nuhanović, a UNPROFOR interpreter in Srebrenica, mentions a written translation from and into Bosnian to be completed in 45 minutes (Nuhanović *et al.*, 2019: 296-297).

Apparently, the test determined the language assistant’s employment level (C. Baker, 2010b), which could range from GS-2 to GS-5 (Thomas, 1995), with 2 being the minimum score (Nuhanović *et al.*, 2019: 296-297) although unit officers could exercise flexibility in determining the pass level (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 97). According to Baker, on occasions, the testing process could also be influenced by the region’s ethicized language policy: if the linguist evaluating the test was a Croat, for example, Serbian words and constructions could be marked down, even if appropriate and vice-versa (C. Baker, 2010b: 160). In any case, the tests rarely evaluated translation and interpreting skills or any other interpersonal and personal skill (Thomas, 1995) and therefore gave little idea of the actual strengths and weaknesses in the candidates’ knowledge of the languages at play (C. Baker, 2012c).

The language assistants to escort ICTY investigators were recruited, according to Fidahić, following a slightly different method, through examinations organized by the tribunal’s Conference and Language Services Section (CLSS) until 2000 and later by the Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) and they consisted in one sight translation into English, one written summary in English, a 5-minute interpreting roleplay, and an interview in English (Fidahić, 2018: 209).

When UNPROFOR was replaced by NATO IFOR and SFOR, despite high-quality language services in the NATO command structure, it appears that none of the linguistic or management expertise was used on the ground in the recruitment of local interpreters, at least until 1998 (Jones & Askew, 2014). Literature shows that each HQ, division and contingent recruited translators and interpreters independently, without a centralized approach to deployment, let alone recruitment, and that the UN test had been discarded after 1995 (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 97).

As a result, recruitment was even patchier than in UNPROFOR times: Tarik Begović, an interpreter for SFOR and later EUFOR in Tuzla mentions a TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) test while Vera Andrassy, who was hired in Zagreb by IFOR at the end of 1995, was only required to sit in an oral interview (Jones & Askew, 2014: 54-55). According to Askew, many linguists were recruited because of nonlinguistic attributes such as gender or physical appearance, which resulted in improvised, disorganized and low-quality language services (Askew, 2019: 232). If some of the translators and interpreters who had been tested and acquired experience with UNPROFOR continued to work for IFOR and SFOR, many of them quit after the war, and even if a lot of interpreters who did not meet the necessary requirements were fired, unqualified personnel often continued to serve with the same level of skills (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 97).

5.2.3 *Employment*

Given the fragmented organization of language services in the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, defining how, when and under which working conditions interpreters were deployed is particularly hard. It is difficult to figure out even how many interpreters were employed, as no official figures are available: Kelly and Baker claim that each British UNPROFOR base could rely on more or less 30-40 interpreters, and each company on three to seven interpreters (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 88), while according to Bos & Soeters, in 2003, the SFOR Dutch contingent in Bugojno had 62 interpreters (Bos & Soeters, 2006: 263). Catherine Baker estimated that the number of interpreters employed by all missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina varied from a couple of hundred to almost 2000 in peak times, even after 1994 (Kelly & Baker, 2013).

We will try to define here the specific features of interpreters' deployment focusing namely on their contracts, payment, benefits, age and gender, ethnicity, and working conditions, based on information available in the literature. It should be mentioned, however, that the heterogeneous situation presented here changed when the NATO Chief of Staff asked Jan Jones to reorganize NATO language support, completed in 2001, by centralizing the language service in Sarajevo and appointing Louise Askew and Steve Blackaby as Chief and Deputy Chief of Linguistic services respectively. They introduced a system for the evaluation of skills, clearer job descriptions, a translation revision system⁵¹, and training in both language and professional skills (Jones & Askew, 2014) but most importantly employment contracts based on interpreters' skills and experience, with more consistent working conditions.

5.2.3.1 *Contracts*

Scant information is available on contractual conditions of ECMM interpreters, in Croatia, and especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, although Stahuljak (1999; 2009), claims that Croatian ECMM interpreters were mostly volunteers who did not receive any payment for their work and therefore had no contract, at least until the fall of 1992 (Ibid: 408).

UNPROFOR interpreters, as we have seen, were employed as 'language assistants' under the Special Service Agreements for Local Staff and/or Individual Contractors, a type of contract in the UN system, establishing a legal relationship between the Organization and an individual contractor or supplier of services, rather than a staff member. This approach has been criticised by former UNPROFOR interpreter Besmir Fidahić, who claims that the UN always hired language assistants from conflict areas in lower category positions than international citizens, despite their qualifications⁵² to save money and have them perform a host of language and non-language-related duties (Fidahić, 2018: 184).

⁵¹ In Gornji Vakuf, one officer claims that there was a proofreading system for translations, but this was not the case in Sarajevo, according to another interpreter, probably due to the sheer volume of material or the low priority given to the task, which suggests that each base had its own organization (Baker, 2019a: 93-94).

⁵² GS category personnel are not required to have a university degree (Fidahić, 2018: 164) and yet interpreters performed tasks that required one.

Depending on their previous work experience and education (Edwards, 2002: 7) language assistants were graded between the General Service and related Categories⁵³ (GS category).

GS categories for language assistants varied from GS-2 (Thomas, 1995; Nuhanović *et al.*, 2019: 296-297) to GS-5 (Thomas, 1995; C. Baker, 2012c), although scant information is available on their contractual provisions, levels and advancements, if any. Thomas (1995) mentions that contracts were drafted according to the United Nations Personnel Directive No. 9/59, *Policy For the Recruitment and Promotion of Translators and Translator-Precis-Writer Trainees*, the *United Nations Special Service Agreement For An Individual Contractor (standard form)* and that recruitment was based on the *United Nations Protection Force, Standards For the Recruitment And Grading of Language Assistants* but none of these documents are described in the literature, nor are available in the UN documentation.

Contracts were usually short-term and renewed every six, three or even one month (Thomas, 1995), as the UNPROFOR mission was renewed annually and contracts often covered sickness/vacation or even travelling abroad for OPTAG exercises of other interpreters (C. Baker, 2012c: 140).

It seems that such a system was abandoned by IFOR/SFOR forces, although contracts remained short-term and scarcely guaranteed any rights:

I really think that, if I could turn back the time now, and with that knowledge, I would never have worked for them. At least not with that kind of contract. There were certain people in the camp, for example, interpreters, and they had a lawyer's educational background. They were telling us 'My God,' they were looking at the contract, they would say with such a contract in UK, every single employer would lose a lawsuit in the court. Easily. Easily. Because you can't employ anybody without health insurance, without pensions. They were telling us, sue them, go on, sue them, raise a lawsuit. No. But then, I told you, for the one position of interpreter there were like a hundred others waiting. (C. Baker, 2012c: 26)

No further information is available in the literature on contracts during the IFOR/SFOR years although, very likely, they varied greatly from one contingent, base or unit to another, at least until the Sarajevo HQ Language support service was reorganized (Jones & Askew, 2014). On that occasion, a special policy for civilians recruited for IFOR and SFOR was developed which provided for two categories of personnel: civilians recruited from outside the theatre, known as International Civilian Consultants (ICCs), and locally-recruited civilians known as Local Civilian Hires (LCHs). ICCs could be hired in three grades (1, 2, 3), each subdivided into three subgrades (1A, 1B, 1C, etc.) for a total of nine grades, while LCHs were divided into eight grades, that mirrored as closely as possible the structure of NATO linguists, with enormous salary difference between ICCs and LCHs (Ibid: 60).

5.2.3.2 *Payment and benefits*

If ECMM interpreters worked for free, and no information is available on how much they earned when they were finally getting paid, at UNPROFOR, interpreters who had a contract

⁵³ GS-L is one of the three categories of UN personnel, together with Professional and Higher Categories (P-level category) and Field Service Category (FS-level category). It ranks between GS-1 and GS-7 and comprises a series of roles like language teachers, public information assistants and security officers.

were paid in dollars or Deutsche Marks (DM)⁵⁴, although determining how much is a hard task almost thirty years later. Catherine Baker (2012b) estimates that, between 1991 and 1995, interpreters working for the British troops in Bosnia and Herzegovina earned 400-500 DM a month, UNPROFOR in Sarajevo paid \$300-\$400 in 1993, while in Pale two UNPROFOR interpreters claim to have earned \$600-\$800.

With IFOR and SFOR, recruitment and employment were managed directly by national contingents and so was payment (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 67): when British troops were replaced, for example, by the Danes and later by the Poles in the late 1990s interpreters experienced a significant pay cut (C. Baker, 2010b: 164-165).

According to Baker, in the late 1990s, SFOR interpreters were paid at least 1000 DM a month, sometimes up to 1800 DM at the highest pay grades: IFOR/SFOR headquarters paid interpreters \$900 in 1996 and \$1,100 in 1998 (C. Baker, 2011a). After the reorganization of NATO SFOR language support, a headquarters interpreter hired at the lowest NATO grade (LCH 4) could expect a starting salary of around 1,500 Convertible Marks⁵⁵ (KM) (around 750 euros) with biennial increments during their first twelve years of employment (C. Baker, 2012b).

Next to these relatively high salaries, especially in a country at war, interpreters also enjoyed other benefits, like access to basic supplies that were difficult to find even on the black market like flour, sugar, medicines, and fuel. They also enjoyed greater mobility than the local inhabitants (Baker, 2012: 865; Imamović & Džanić, 2016: 19) and they were sometimes permitted to travel abroad for training and courses (Kelly & Baker, 2013).

Nevertheless, despite good payment and ancillary benefits, interpreters were not entitled to any welfare provision, even with official contracts, both in UNPROFOR and IFOR/SFOR. Leaves were rare and unofficially granted (Thomas, 2003b: 44) and, until the late 1990s, when women interpreters lobbied the divisional personnel unit, maternity leave was the standard 14-day sick leave foreseen by all contracts (C. Baker, 2012b; 2012c; 2014): interpreters who were wounded or gave birth to a child were thus faced with the choice of coming back to work after 14 days or quitting their job (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 110).

An issue that became particularly relevant was that of health insurance, especially when interpreters got injured in the line of duty. Even though all citizens of the former Yugoslavian countries were entitled to free healthcare, the ability of the healthcare systems to provide good healthcare treatment was low, especially in besieged areas. Interpreters, if hurt, were not entitled to the same treatment as foreign troops in military hospitals (C. Baker, 2012b: 860-861), nor were always evacuated to better facilities. The story of Emina is a case in point: she broke her leg in an on-duty accident due to the careless driving of the Canadian military in 1996, but she was taken to the local hospital, not the military hospital in Zagreb with Canadian soldiers, where there were more serious cases waiting for an operation. She had therefore to resort to private care abroad, and the Canadian soldiers collected money to pay for her leg operation, but she was nevertheless fired for taking too many sick days (C. Baker, 2012c).

⁵⁴ At the time, 1000 DMs corresponded to about 500 euros.

⁵⁵ Convertible Marks, *Konvertibilna Marka (KM)* is the single Bosnian currency adopted in 1998. Initially, it was pegged to the Deutsche mark, and since the replacement of the German mark by the euro in 2002, it uses the same fixed exchange rate to the euro that the German mark had (one euro = 1.95583 KM).

Finally, in the literature there is no mention of pension schemes, with the justification that longer contracts could not be offered as no one knew until when the mission would be renewed. The issue is especially prominent in Baker's interviews, if we consider that many interpreters in Bosnia and Herzegovina worked for foreign missions for almost twenty years (C. Baker, 2012b).

Also, when NATO bases were closed and interpreters made redundant (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 116), some of them applied for jobs in civilian organizations or even the UN in Iraq and Afghanistan (C. Baker, 2012b: 867), but most found it hard to re-enter the job market, as it was too late to resume their careers (Bos & Soeters, 2006: 263), adapt to a job market that ran on *veze* (connections) rather than merit, or to use the skills learned in their position. Their inability to fit in is explained very well by this interpreter interviewed by Baker:

We all, we still have a problem to fit in. Still. We talked the other day, a few interpreters last Saturday met for coffee. And we all said we still have a problem to fit in, because of people's behaviour. You expect the same behaviour, you don't get it. [...] In our country, the boss has a closed door, and you have to write an email or ask him or... arrange a meeting, and he is next door to me. Completely different. (C. Baker, 2012b: 146-147)

All in all, although enjoying great prosperity or "projectariat", defined by Baker as the ability to access the best-remunerated jobs, language development, social networks and finances that facilitated mobility abroad, interpreters were, at the same time, also subject to "precariat" and to all forms of labor insecurity (C. Baker, 2014b: 98; 100), thus occupying a position of power and fragility at the same time.

5.2.3.3 Age and gender

When it comes to age and gender composition, it seems that interpreters were predominantly women: Major Roy Thomas claims that over 70% (Thomas, 1995: 12) of his interpreters in Sarajevo were female, and Baker states that about 40% of interpreters employed in Bosnia and Herzegovina were male, with a higher women-ratio at headquarters (C. Baker, 2012: 867-868). According to Bos & Soeters, at the beginning of the conflict almost only women applied for interpreting jobs, either because they were escaping from the fighting or not engaged in them, whereas after the Dayton Agreement, the gender distribution was more evenly balanced in the Dutch base, with 34 female and 28 male interpreters in 2003 (Bos & Soeters, 2006: 263).

The literature also shows that a consistent number of interpreters were very young, in the 20/30-year-old bracket, especially women, while the age of male interpreters covered the full age spectrum (Thomas, 1995: 12). Interpreters were sometimes even in their teens (C. Baker, 2014b: 10): Thomas claims that his best interpreter was an 18-year-old girl still in high school, who mediated in the confrontation with the mob of women at Hadžići as well as in protracted negotiations with various brigade commanders (Thomas, 1995).

The age and gender of interpreters, and the conditions in which they worked had obvious repercussions on their family and work life, not to mention on their perception by both the military and their communities. If reconciling on- and off-duty was hard for female interpreters,

they were often judged and gossiped about by their fellow citizens and always had to ensure their actions were morally acceptable. This led to a series of measures, like showing up in groups or with a male friend when British forces started recruiting in Banja Luka in 1995 (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 79), or live off the base, although they were not always able to protect their reputation from gossiping and judgement. At the same time though, female interpreters' high salaries had turned them into the only breadwinners for entire families and extended families, reversing the normative household models both along gender and age lines (C. Baker, 2012b: 864). Women and people in their twenties came to provide for parents, grandparents, and husbands, and therefore felt more empowered to make their voices heard, especially in remote rural areas, upsetting the masculine head-of-household role (C. Baker, 2012b).

At the same time though, the sometimes problematic encounter between feminine gendering of language skills with the masculine gendering of the military, emerges from the available literature and interviews, with sleeping outside and travelling arrangements being frequently mentioned by women interpreters as particularly uncomfortable, while military accounts often mention interpreters' attractiveness, distracting male interlocutors: "The women could not resist doing everything they could to make themselves as attractive as possible. We would often see them arrive for work having devoted hours to their hair and elaborate make-up." (Barry, 2008: 71, as quoted in C. Baker, 2010a).

Military personnel considered the issue problematic because it made it harder to disguise interpreters as military and therefore protect them, but also because the co-existence of men and women led to fraternization issues. Accounts report that this often resulted in relationships, marriages and divorces to the point that the commanding officer of the British Coldstream 1 regiment in Vitez had to lay down very strict rules on fraternization, including repatriation for soldiers found in bed with local women (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 80-81).

Nevertheless, no mention is made in the available literature of the preferred gender of the interpreters, and Thomas states that his colleagues in Sarajevo had contrasting opinions: some felt that male interpreters were most suited for critical sessions with local commanders, while others insisted on female interpreters for the same type of meeting (Thomas, 1995). Male interpreters, on the one side, were considered a better option for their previous military training, if any, their ability to suffer hardship and live outdoors at observation posts (Kelly & Baker, 2013), but on the other, they were seen as more suspicious both by the foreign forces and their local communities (C. Baker, 2012b: 859) who turned them into objects of contempt and scorn for being the 'cowards' who hid in UN offices instead of fighting in the trenches.

5.2.3.4 Ethnicity

Having the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia often been described as ethnic or ethnoreligious, it is not clear from the literature if the choice to hire and/or appoint an interpreter was influenced by ethnicity.

If ECMM were all Croatian citizens, but not all ethnic Croats (Stahuljak, 2009: 396), in UNPROFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina interpreters were hired from the three ethnic groups

to communicate with their respective sides (C. Baker, 2010b). At the first British Army base in Bosnia and Herzegovina, outside Vitez, the first group of interpreters even nicknamed themselves ‘Tito’s children’, an allusion to the team’s multi-ethnic composition and the multi-ethnicity of pre-war Yugoslavia (C. Baker, 2011a).

Available accounts underline that at some point peacekeepers realized that local leaders collaborated better with an interpreter of their own ethnic group and that interpreters would be less scared to follow them into ‘their own area’ as described by a US reporter who got close to Inter-Entity Boundary Line (IEBL)⁵⁶ in 1996 with a female interpreter:

[S]he gripped the steering wheel and she looked at us and she said, you would bring me this close? And I said, oh no no no, they’re gone. And she wasn’t even listening, she was furious, and she was shaking. And all of a sudden you began to know what they meant by rape is a weapon. And [. . .] and she didn’t talk to us the rest of the way back to Tuzla, and we had to promise her that we would never take her close to Serbs again. (Ibid: 161-162)

It seems that interpreters did not like crossing into the other ethnic group’s territory and when they did, they changed their names to ethnically appropriate ones to protect their identity:

Anyway, my first job was a visit to the 5th Corps (laughs) in Sanski Most. It was a Muslim army, and I can’t say I was happy (laughs). It wasn’t pleasant. But the British soldiers, they reassured me that they would protect me, because I’m wearing British uniform, and they would be eligible to shoot if somebody wanted to harm me. Because I’m wearing their uniform, and that would be an attack on Great Britain. So we went there, I introduced myself as Selma [...] I didn’t have the courage to say that my name was [Slađana]. (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 134)

The choice to pick an interpreter from the same ethnic group as the speaker, other than to facilitate communication and protect the interpreter’s life, was also dictated, according to Thomas, by an attempt to split the economic benefits of UN salaries for the three groups (Thomas, 1995b). According to Spahić-Šagolj, it was also the rule in especially traumatic circumstances, like with women who were victims of sexual violence, when interpreters were almost always from the same gender and/or ethnic group (Spahić-Šagolj, 2014: 82).

Nevertheless, despite the armed forces being aware that an interpreter from the wrong ethnic or religious background created friction (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 134), no official policy about ethnically-based recruitment and deployment of interpreters seems to have been in place in UNPROFOR and NATO. The decision was left to the military unit or the supervisors of interpreters’ teams (C. Baker, 2012c: 136-137) and depended on the resources available and the area of deployment.

5.2.3.5 *Working conditions*

Just like recruitment and deployment, the working conditions of interpreters varied greatly in ECMM, UNPROFOR and SFOR/IFOR, among different units and contingents, but sometimes also within the same national contingent (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 93).

⁵⁶ The administrative border separating the Republika Srpska from the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Unfortunately, there is no information whatsoever about ECMM interpreters' working conditions besides the fact that they lived in Zagreb and/or Sarajevo and took field trips with monitors that could last between one day and two weeks (Stahuljak, 2009).

More information is available on UNPROFOR's interpreters, who generally lived in their own homes and were picked up in the morning for field patrols or were required to show up at the military building, base, or compound. Sometimes they were accommodated within the military base in the same Corimec containers as soldiers (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 67), if there were security threats or if they came from far away, like the interpreters who worked in the Republika Srpska but were originally from Belgrade mentioned by Baker (2012b: 857-858).

At any time of the day, according to the mission's needs, interpreters could be called to escort the military personnel, usually on an Armored Personnel Carrier (APC), to an area where a violation was reported or fighting was on, while less urgent visits could be carried out during the day when interpreters would be available in the interpreters' room or office.

UNPROFOR interpreters often worked long shifts, travelled frequently and endured difficult living arrangements, especially for women with small children (C. Baker, 2012c: 140-141). Physical hardship, sleep deprivation and improvised outdoor living were constant features of the job (C. Baker, 2010a).

Also, according to the literature, most of the time, interpreters had no idea about the meeting they were going to interpret for security reasons (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 69) and were therefore given no briefing.

Just like accommodation, food and meals arrangement for interpreters were usually left to the decision of the duty commander and varied greatly based on the security policies of the national contingent or unit. In Vitez, for example, UNPROFOR interpreters with the UK contingent had access to the military canteen, while in Bugojno they had not (Ibid: 77).

Interpreters were often managed by a supervisor, generally a military officer - who was not necessarily an interpreter or knew the local language/s - less often by a civilian interpreter from the same country as the troops, who spoke the language at play or a similar one like Russian (Ibid: 64; 89; 92). With a few exceptions, like Louise Askew, supervisors could usually provide only administrative supervision and little training and support, especially since their tours lasted about six months (C. Baker, 2010b). When supervisors spoke another Slavic language, like Russian, they were asked to control interpreters' performances:

Russian was very useful, of course, because when I later moved to Yugoslavia, although I can't in any sense speak or write Serbo-Croat, there was enough commonality between the two languages for me to be able to work out what was being said to me, before the interpreter interpreted it, and for me to be clear on whether or not the interpreter was translating what I was trying to say or was using his or her own interpretation or just literally cutting things out. (C. Baker, 2012a: 13-14)

Among the challenges of the job, we find terminology issues related to the different types of weapons, grades and especially acronyms:

You think you speak English, and you go into the Army, and I remember my first patrol or second patrol. [...] a journalist came to interview the sergeant-major, [...] 'when you collect the weapons, where are you going to store the weapons? And he said oh, we will store the weapons in MG.

MG, good God! MG. MG sounds like nothing. It's just the abbreviation of Mrkonjić grad. It's a small town outside of Banja Luka. And so many things like that. And after a while you start speaking in abbreviations. Army, CO, OC, officer in command, CO, commanding officer, sergeant-major, CSM. They use so many abbreviations. And then you go for a meeting in the hospital and then you forget the words you have to use. You start speaking in abbreviations. So it's a different language when you get into the Army. (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 184)

This was made harder by a lack of consistency in terminology (Thomas, 2003: 44), as peacekeepers from different countries called things differently, not to mention the enormous cultural differences in military observers that came from 31 countries (Thomas, 1995), whose knowledge of English would sometimes be inadequate, complicating the interpreters' job and affecting the mission (Thomas, 1997a) as reported by Stahuljak whose colleagues claimed that "the most difficult situation is when monitors speak poor English and then sometimes blame me for what they didn't understand" and that "among monitors there are those who are not up to the occasion, also with poor language control, unfamiliar with translation techniques" (Stahuljak, 2007: 44).

5.2.4 Training

5.2.4.1 Training of interpreters

As mentioned above, there were no interpreting schools in the former Yugoslavian countries, (Dragovic-Drouet, 2007; Spahić-Šagolj, n.d.; 2014; Fidahić, 2018) and those who did have a degree in translation or interpreting had either obtained it abroad or through experience after a language degree at the Faculties of Philology, as it is often still the case today (Spahić-Šagolj, 2014).

Due to the high demand for interpreters, teachers, other professionals and students, sometimes even under-age, were recruited for the job among civilians (C. Baker, 2010a; Footitt & Kelly, 2013: 185), usually without any training.

Of the 28 interpreters interviewed by Baker, nine were still in high school when they started working for UNPROFOR and 19 were in university; of these only 10 had a degree in languages, while seven had studied for other professions, mainly engineering (C. Baker, 2012a). Very often interpreters had acquired language skills outside traditional learning establishments because in SFRY schools, although it was legally possible to learn English, French, German and Russian from the mid-1950s (C. Baker, 2011a; Imamović & Džanić, 2016), most students were unable to choose⁵⁷ the language they wanted to learn because of a lack of teachers for languages other than Russian. Given the immense popularity of English among the Western-oriented urban youth in the 1980s, many young Yugoslavs learned English through private classes, travelling, au pairing, work or even time in the Yugoslav army (C. Baker, 2011a). This 'autonomous' learning of English emerges, among others, from the words of Sinan Halilović, who started to work with the Duke of Wellington's Regiment in Bugojno and Goražde when he was eighteen:

⁵⁷ In Imamović and Džanić's interviews on the role of English in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 35% of interviewees stated that English was not offered at all in their school and only half of those who wanted to learn English, only 35% actually had the opportunity to (Imamović & Džanić, 2016).

We were able to pick up some English [...] to the level sufficient to get a job. They were not trained, really. I wasn't trained. I was – I had to do it myself. I had no one who would sit me down and say, 'Listen, this is how you do things'. 'I'm not trained to be an interpreter, I'm just, you know... this probably wouldn't be my career if there was no war. Probably not. Definitely not. (Footitt & Kelly, 2013: 188)

Locally recruited civilian interpreters may have had, therefore, general language education but lacked the socialization, and most importantly the training that produces professional interpreters (Baker, 2012a: 18-19), with neither employers nor employees realizing how highly skilled a profession it was (Baker, 2012b: 857-858), as one interpreter working in Bihać clearly states:

Nobody had experiences like being an interpreter in the war - or even in the post-war reconstruction and reshaping of the country. To learn how to be an interpreter in the war, current and former holders of the post – or owners of the identity - would have preferred training or briefing to support them through the initial disorientation of their first weeks. Local interpreters received neither professional or cultural training; yet, embodied as native speakers in field exercises, they were the training all troops received before deployment. (C. Baker, 2012c: 33)

Interpreters, therefore, learned the crafts of the profession on-the-job (Spahić-Šagolj, n.d.), thus confirming Baigorri Jalón's claim that "wars have been and - unfortunately - continue to be schools of interpreters" (Baigorri Jalón, 2011), especially since there was no time nor competent personnel to organize training (Spahić-Šagolj, 2014: 81; 238).

The only exception was Louise Askew, who organized role-play training during the quiet times (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 70), while a Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers officer who had voluntarily learned Serbian before deploying to Bosnia and Herzegovina had taught his interpreters to use the first person singular when relaying what had been said by the parties (C. Baker, 2012a: 13-14).

Next to training in language, interpreting and translation skills, locally recruited civilians were also lacking any specific military training before deployment and had to rely on the military's experience (Persaud, 2016: 199) to learn how to 'behave' in a theatre of war, especially those who did not do military service in the JNA (C. Baker, 2010a).

As per military linguists, the only information available comes from the UK where they were required to follow refresher Serbo-Croatian courses (see Chapter 4), and training that included the 'acting' of Bosnian scenarios at the Salisbury Plain and in other locations in Germany, where military linguists would also be called in to act as interpreters (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 48-49). Nevertheless, it seems that no specific instructions were provided, even to military interpreters and that the more complex skills of inter-language mediation were not addressed in the training with the result that, when they were called on to provide formal interpreting, military linguists were often ill-equipped to respond (Ibid: 57). Even heritage speakers employed as interpreters within national contingents, like UK military officer and interpreter Miloš Stanković, report lack of specialistic and technical terminology as "Pass the bread mom hardly prepares you for anti-aircraft artillery" (Stanković, 2001: 76).

The training of civilian interpreters hired from TCCs is shrouded in secrecy as it is their recruitment, although Baker posits that they probably underwent no interpreting training and only in some cases, a military one: civilians hired through the TWR contract agency in the US only underwent training in ‘military culture’ at Fort Benning, to prepare “for life in a combat zone and Army life” (C. Baker, 2010b: 170-171).

The situation changed, as already mentioned in this chapter, when NATO reorganized language support services in 1998, and training in English, consecutive, note-taking and even simultaneous was provided to headquarters’ interpreters (Jones & Askew, 2014: 73-74) by Louise Askew, Steve Blackaby, Vera Andrassy, a professional interpreter and lecturer, and Anida Tabenković Pappenkort who had worked at Sarajevo UNPROFOR HQ. Professionalization was also carried out through feedback on the translations by the newly created ‘revision branch’ and by offering interpreters the chance to work alongside professional freelance interpreters outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as they did when they were sent to work in meetings at the NATO School in Oberammergau, Germany.

In this respect, the reform of the HQ SFOR Language Service was important because it gave translators and interpreters greater standing in the eyes of the military, who began to perceive them as professionals (Askew & Salama-Carr, 2011: 105) and increased service quality (Jones & Askew, 2014).

This general improvement is confirmed within mission Althea by Persaud (2016) who also identifies potential areas for enhancement underlined by interpreters and military officers, such as military terminology, stock phrases, equipment terms and techniques, training in cultural awareness and military behavior, including military etiquette, diplomacy, and tact (Ibid: 191), history, mission background, and negotiation skills (Ibid: 254-259).

According to other authors, interpreters lacked training to develop psychological stamina and physical endurance (Edwards, 2002: 194-195; Bos & Soeters, 2006; C. Baker, 2010b), flexibility (Edwards, 2002: 194-195; Persaud, 2016), and military competence, highlighted as crucial by several authors (Ruiz Rosendo & Persaud, 2019). Thomas even states that his interpreters in Bosnia and Herzegovina should have been trained to use radio and communication tools, perform first aid, and drive military vehicles because “if the two UN military observers on a patrol became casualties, then the third member of the team, the interpreter, had to be able to drive and use the radio to obtain assistance” (Thomas, 2003b: 41).

5.2.4.2 Training of service users

Little information was found on the training of peacekeepers and military officers on how to work with interpreters. Edwards (2002: 8) claims that Canadian Forces have development programs to make the military aware of the cultural issues in communication and Thomas (2004: 7) affirms that the British and Canadian military have videos demonstrating the use of interpreters but is not clear if any of this were already available in the 1990s. The training courses for UN peacekeepers available online, the *United Nations Civil-Military Coordination Specialized Training Materials* (United Nations, 2014) and the *UN Peacekeeping PDT Standards, Specialized Training Material for Military Experts on Mission* (United Nations, 2010) feature sections on how to facilitate interpreter-mediated communication and protect

interpreters, but again, no such material was found for the period object of this dissertation, despite having made inquiries with the UN libraries in New York and Geneva.

Footitt and Kelly state that from 1992 onwards, the British field exercises for units deploying to Bosnia and Herzegovina featured simulations of real-war situations, which also included using interpreters, so that troops acquired some experience of hearing a conversation between two speakers of another incomprehensible language and were presented with the alienating effect of being a monolingual participant in an interpreted conversation, also learning to trust a language intermediary (Footitt & Kelly, 2013: 120). Despite this isolated example, what emerges from the available literature is nevertheless a lack of training, on the military side, on how to best communicate with interpreters at least in the ECMM and UNPROFOR mission, but also in NATO IFOR and SFOR, which probably left military representatives to resort to either improvisation or the experience acquired in previous field missions.

5.2.5 Risks and protection

5.2.5.1 Risks

As we have seen in § 4.3.5.1, for their work with the military, interpreters face a series of risks, that can be classified as military, contingent, socio-political, and economic risks.

As per military risks, interpreters who worked in the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, especially civilians, were not only exposed to shelling, bombing, sniper fire, ethnic cleansing, and murder, like their fellow citizens, but also to the risks resulting from their work with international forces. These included the risk of mines in no man's land (Thomas, 2004), sniper activity and retaliatory fire often directed at military teams, including interpreters (Thomas, 1995), as well as direct targeting: although an isolated case, Dobrila Kalaba, an interpreter with the British troops in Vitez was killed by a sniper in the summer of 1993 (C. Baker, 2010b: 158-159).

Interpreters, especially locally-recruited civilian ones, often worked on the separation lines, crossing checkpoints manned by different warring factions and risked being kidnapped or arrested (C. Baker, 2012b: 860; Spahić-Šagolj, n.d.) despite their UN or NATO accreditation:

[...] Three Serbian soldiers appeared, fully armed, they turned to me, but at the same moment I slipped under the ramp back to the base, practically that ramp separated me from death. They respected the ramp and did not enter the UN protected zone. I had the UN accreditation, but I don't think it meant anything to them. (Spahić-Šagolj, n.d.: 6 [my translation])

The perception of risk was probably increased by the fact that interpreters' temporary status made it difficult for UN military observers and interpreters' supervisors to obtain protective equipment like flak jackets and blue helmets for them, although they were mandatory for most patrols in Sarajevo in 1993 (Thomas, 1997b; Kelly & Baker, 2013: 71), and by the lack of medical assistance mentioned in § 4.2.3.2.

Some of these risks also concerned military interpreters, although deployed under false names, who were equally afraid to be discovered or that their families, in the country or at home, would become the object of retribution, as Miloš Stanković, British military interpreter states: "And

then quietly Ian Abbott was blown after three months there. The Croats found out who he was, threatened to kill him, just because he was a Serb. He was removed from theatre within twenty-four hours. He never came back” (Stanković, 2001: 32-33). Military risks, which one might expect to have lessened after Dayton, were still very much present, even after 1995, in the accounts of interpreters who felt that working for the military “still exposed them to dangers average Bosnian civilians would not face, particularly the risk of accidents in military vehicles if soldiers were driving negligently or had not noticed a landmine” (C. Baker, 2012b: 860-861).

Among contingent risks, we find the physical danger resulting from travelling around on badly manned military vehicles, in difficult driving conditions and on roads covered with snow, ice and full of craters. The possibility of traffic accidents was particularly scary (C. Baker, 2012b: 860-861), especially since most UN troops saw snow for the first time (Thomas, 1995: 10) and some had trouble passing driver’s licence testing in Zagreb (Gonçalves, 2020). Baker goes as far as to claim that, in her research, “serious injuries caused by the poor driving of military vehicles were the single greatest source of resentment toward the foreign force expressed by Bosnian interpreters” (C. Baker, 2011b: 148).

Among socio-political risks, we find those deriving from interpreters’ in-between position: Stahuljak (2009) and Edwards (2002: 7-8) claim that “in Bosnia, interpreters were subject to threats, intimidation, and reprisals against themselves or family members”, although Jones states he never heard of any of the linguists becoming potential targets for hostile action” (Jones & Askew, 2014: 58). According to Thomas (1995), disapproval of friends and neighbours was a constant, which at times took the form of violence (Thomas, 2003: 39), especially as the UN and ECMM missions failed to stop the war and protect civilians. The literature also mentions that interpreters were under great pressure from local authorities to act as intelligence sources or obstruct peacekeepers’ work, as reported by interpreters in Srebrenica, Goražde, and Pale (C. Baker, 2010b: 160). Many interpreters had husbands, boyfriends, fathers, and brothers in the trenches, and may have been exposed to such pressure, particularly when the international teams they worked with were close to obtaining information that could become public. This is probably why the warring parties often asked for information on the interpreter’s address at police or military roadblocks (Thomas, 1995): the Bosnian Army military command in Goražde, for example, was so suspicious of local interpreters’ frequent crossing of front lines and contacts with the VRS, that they harassed one female interpreter into quitting her job and imprisoned two male interpreters in the spring of 1995 (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 75).

Finally, interpreters’ high salaries led to economic risks that took different forms and concerned both interpreters and their society. Interference of local authorities to place their relatives or trusted persons into interpreters’ jobs, both for economic profit and to ‘have ears’ within the international organization was common and often resulted in greater pressure for interpreters who ‘were permitted’ to work for the UN but were consequently blackmailed.

The local authorities in Bugojno forced the UN to pay half the local employees’ salary to the town hall on the pretext of reducing the disturbance to the town’s economy, while the town council of Srebrenica is thought to have controlled most employment with the Dutch

UNPROFOR battalion, privileging existing residents and imposing a six-month limit on selected employees (C. Baker, 2012b: 859; Kelly & Baker, 2013: 75).

Interpreters also risked being blackmailed and kidnapped for their high salaries, while the competition among international agencies and NGOs to secure qualified local staff created, in turn, a brain drain of qualified professionals in the local economy, because the judges and editors of tomorrow became the drivers and interpreters of today at wages higher than those of cabinet ministers (C. Baker, 2010: 172-173).

5.2.5.2 Protection

In Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the issue of interpreters' protection was not as pressing as it was in Iraq and Afghanistan in the years 2000s and it is only marginally mentioned in the literature. Despite the risks described above, it seems, nevertheless, that no official measures for interpreters' protection were in place in UNPROFOR or in the first years of IFOR/SFOR, and that it was left to the individual commander or unit to devise them.

One of the most common protection strategies was to accommodate interpreters within the base or in rented and surveilled houses (C. Baker, 2010b; Kelly & Baker, 2013), or to pick them up in the morning and escort them home with military vehicles for those who did not have a military base, like the UNMOs (Thomas, 2003: 39). Another measure is the issuing of uniforms (Thomas, 2003; C. Baker, 2010a; C. Baker, 2010b; Jones & Askew, 2014): according to Baker, interpreters working for UNPROFOR battalions wore the same uniforms as soldiers while those working for UNMOs did not have a specific uniform and were far less militarized (C. Baker, 2010a).

Although blurring the symbolic distinction between international soldiers and local civilians, uniforms protected interpreters from harassment from the warring parties (Jones & Askew, 2014) and reduced the chances of being singled out and targeted (C. Baker, 2010a; 2010b), although military representatives point out that interpreters would always stand out as civilians because of the casual way they wore their uniforms (C. Baker, 2010a).

Askew claims that such an attire uniformed the body and reduced the distracting effect that women interpreters had on their military colleagues (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 80-81) but when Jan Jones arrived in Sarajevo to reorganize the language services he was very concerned by the fact that interpreters all wore fatigues, which could contribute to their identification as combatants. He, therefore, required an opinion on the issue from the NATO legal office, which finally replied that interpreters could wear uniforms and not be identified as combatants as uniforms would qualify, in this case, as "appropriate working attire" (Ibid: 59).

Next to uniforms, interpreters were issued protective equipment, consisting of a flak jacket and a helmet, although reports state that it was sometimes hard in the UNPROFOR years to obtain it for interpreters (Thomas, 1997b; Kelly & Baker, 2013: 71). Sometimes it was interpreters themselves who refused to wear such equipment not to be identified as members of the military by their local communities (Footitt & Kelly, 2013: 189) or sold the jacket's metal plates to support their families. Boba Vukojević, who worked as an interpreter for foreign journalists, for example, refused to wear the jacket when talking to his fellow citizens: "They knew I was

from Sarajevo, from the same city, and for me it was really – I would be ashamed to wear a bullet-proof jacket in front of them” (Ibid: 207-208).

A final issue raised in the literature is that of the protection of interpreters and their dependents, that is children, spouses and family, an aspect that in the former Yugoslavia, as well as in Iraq and Afghanistan, was sadly neglected. This is why Thomas exhorts including interpreters and their dependents in evacuation and medical plans and to guarantee them the same long-term protection usually offered to people in a witness protection program (Thomas, 2003b).

5.2.6 *Interpreters’ tasks and skills*

5.2.6.1 Interpreters’ tasks

Like interpreters in other conflicts, those working in the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina were also asked to perform tasks that went beyond their traditional job description, if any (C. Baker, 2010b: 157) and these varied greatly depending on the type of position covered, the mission and unit they were deployed to, and also on their recruitment and status within the mission.

Civilian interpreters working with UNMOs and UNPROFOR attended and interpreted all types of meetings, from the ones in mudded trenches to those in governmental palaces, helped their employers verify the respect of established boundaries and violations, and were often among the first ones to arrive on the site of shelling and bombing to evaluate the damage, compile reports and count casualties (Thomas, 1997a). They were also called in to supervise prisoner and casualty exchange, assist medical evacuation with UNMO vehicles when ambulances had no fuel, or the fighting was too intense (Ibid: 251) and assist doctors in validating Medevac requests from besieged cities and enclaves.

Next to these tasks, which we could define as ‘military’ but also as ‘healthcare interpreting’, interpreters working for UNMO teams in Sarajevo (Thomas, 1995; Thomas, 1997b) also carried out “community interpreting tasks” (Thomas, 1997b: 250) like gathering community information for UNMOs and aid agencies, smoothing over crises that arose within the society and distribute aid and fuel. They also monitored food-dropping areas and sometimes supported UNMOs’ community initiatives, like the garbage collection in Sarajevo at the end of 1995, the building of wooden cabins in the Žepa pocket or the attempt to develop a "civilian" police force in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Thomas, 1997b: 252-253).

Interpreters also provided telephone assistance to their employer (Ibid: 251), arranged meetings, performed written translations and summarized the content of TV/radio broadcasts and transmissions (Thomas, 1995).

When IFOR and SFOR settled in 1995 and 1996 respectively, interpreters’ tasks remained initially the same as in UNPROFOR times (Jones & Askew, 2014): they continued to escort international troops in patrols to supervise the demilitarization of the Zone of Separation between Bosnia and Herzegovina’s two new political entities and assisted in other peacekeeping tasks, such as the search for arms, security during public and sensitive events like elections or

mass grave excavations, and refugees escort (C. Baker, 2012c). According to interpreter Anida Tabaković Pappenkort, with IFOR and SFOR, interpreters' work also became more heterogeneous (Jones & Askew, 2014: 43) as they accompanied foreign officers to meetings of the Joint Military Commissions (Ruiz Rosendo & Persaud, 2019), set up and translated exchanges with local religious and civil leaders, and also took VIP military leaders on guided tours of the area. Interpreters continued to liaise with media and analyse media content, but they would also play a key role in logistics, human intelligence, and CIMIC (civilian-military cooperation) including demining, mine awareness courses with the local population (Bos & Soeters, 2006: 264), and reconstruction of bridges, roads and schools. Given the more peaceful context, often interpreters would also take care of procurements and related administrative and financial work (C. Baker, 2012c; Jones & Askew, 2014: 50; Persaud, 2016: 474-475).

During both UNPROFOR and IFOR/SFOR, military interpreters and civilians from TCCs, mainly undertook intelligence and human intelligence tasks (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 55) forbidden to locally recruited interpreters as belonging "to one of the Bosnian 'factions'" (C. Baker, 2010: 170), although information is limited due to the secrecy that surrounds intelligence operations (Baker, 2012c: 135-136).

Military interpreters and linguists also carried out tasks similar to their civilian counterparts, like interpreting for the top-brass, mediating with the local population, reading the local press, participating in meetings, and providing tactical support to commanders. They also assisted in the capture of war criminals and the collection of documents and information for the ICTY, although interrogation was led by a civilian international court (C. Baker, 2010b: 167).

Military interpreters' responsibilities were often even more unpredictable and varied than those of local civilian interpreters and they coincided with the problem-solver or fixer role attributed to locally recruited interpreters for media outlets, to the point that Nick Stanfield, interpreter of British Colonel Bob Steward, considered himself "his driver, interpreter, aide, and confidante" (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 60). If some military interpreters perceived this jack-of-all-trade position as a demotion (Stanković, 2001), others described it as advantageous "since they were more likely to gain recognition and promotion for their contribution to military objectives than for their specifically linguistic expertise" (Ibid: 61).

5.2.6.2 Interpreters' skills

As we have seen not many scholars have considered what kind of skills interpreters should possess to work in a conflict zone, let alone in the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. Thomas stresses the need for flexibility, courage and a gift for persuasion (Thomas, 1995), intended as the ability to use language and interpersonal contacts to achieve the mission's aims, which he explains with an example from his days in Sarajevo in the 1990s:

The authorities granted me the necessary clearance to go to Eastern Bosnia (the UN had to obtain such clearances). However, in what looked like a deliberate attempt to keep me there, no clearance was given to leave this pocket to return to Sarajevo where my headquarters were located. Accompanied only by this interpreter, I managed to go from Gorazde to Sarajevo without clearances solely on this man's gift of persuasion at the checkpoints. He demonstrated this gift for a friend under even more challenging circumstances. He persuaded an army truck driver to

come and recover an UNMO vehicle stuck in the mud, under mortar fire. Some UNMO interpreters more than others had a special gift. (Thomas, 1995: 10-11)

To survive in such a context, Thomas believes interpreters also need the ability to perform first aid, drive military vehicles or manage radio and communication systems.

Military representatives of the EUFOR Althea mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina interviewed by Persaud (Persaud, 2016) list, in order of importance: language skills, cultural awareness and non-verbal communication together with flexibility, empathy, military etiquette, psychological stamina, and physical endurance. Consecutive, translation or interpreting skills, and interpreters' awareness of professional codes and ethics are rarely mentioned by Persaud's interviewees and in the available literature, although interpreters were required to perform whispered, liaison and sometimes consecutive (Spahić-Šagolj, 2014: 80-81) or semi-consecutive interpreting⁵⁸ (Thomas, 1995), even on very technical matters, from and into their B language.

5.2.7 Interpreters' ethics: status, neutrality, confidentiality

As we have seen in Chapter 4, the discussion on the ethics of interpreting in conflict zones has attracted the interest of interpreting scholars and practitioners, wondering what ethics should be applied to interpreters in conflict zones, whether those of the military institution or of interpreting settings, and even in the latter case, challenging the application of traditional interpreting tenants in a deontological way. We will follow here the same structure presented in chapter 4 and discuss how interpreters in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia have dealt with their difficult ethical position, by considering their status, neutrality and confidentiality and, later, quality in § 5.2.8.

5.2.7.1 Status

The status of interpreters, especially locally recruited ones, in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, just like in previous wars, alternated between power and fragility, or to use Baker's words "projectariat and precariat" (Baker, 2014). If interpreters "were elevated above fellow citizens" through the privileges that came from their job, like access to urgent commodities and high salaries, they still experienced a power inequality in their relation to international soldiers (C. Baker, 2010a) and were in an extremely fragile situation for the reasons listed in the previous paragraphs.

On the one side, they earned more than a head of state, were aware of information that was not necessarily in the public domain, had access to commodities like food and cigarettes, and their opinion was often valued by their military employers (Stahuljak, 1999; Bos & Soeters, 2006; Persaud, 2016).

On the other, interpreters received less than the going rate in the force's home country (C. Baker, 2010a), had no healthcare nor social security provision, often went on the field unprotected and took enormous risks. As civilians from the countries at war they were often

⁵⁸ Understood by Thomas (1995) as sentence-by-sentence translation performed on informal occasions or when the interpreter was tired after a long day of work.

treated as tools by their employers, and not as professionals whose skills and roles should be respected and valued (C. Baker, 2012a: 20).

Interpreter's gender, young age and lack of military background also put them in a disadvantageous position in their relationship with military personnel (Ruiz Rosendo & Persaud, 2019) which alternated between friendship/camaraderie and an office-job approach often perceived by interpreters as dehumanizing (C. Baker, 2010a).

In this respect, civilian interpreters complain that they were not made part of the team (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 60), that they were treated as "translation machines" (C. Baker, 2010b: 164), and referred to with disparaging nicknames like 'mouthpieces', 'lips' (C. Baker, 2012a: 9-10) or 'yellow cards', from the color of local employees' identification cards (C. Baker, 2012a: 22-23; 2012b: 260). They also felt offended by the soldiers' lack of knowledge on the area (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 119) and preconceptions that depicted them as under-developed savages. This "patronizing colonial approach" (C. Baker, 2012c) was also reported by ECMM interpreters who felt they had to correct the monitors' Western dominant narrative of "wild Balkan people" (Stahuljak, 2010).

Such a complex position was occupied also by military interpreters or civilian interpreters from TCCs: interpreters hired and trained in the Netherlands and deployed with officer ranks claim to have experienced several problems in their interaction with their fellow soldiers in Bosnia and Herzegovina who did not think their rank was well deserved (Bos & Soeters, 2006: 263). The same paternalizing approach was addressed at UK military officer and interpreter Miloš Stanković by his fellow soldiers:

Don't go native out here. We don't want to lose you. [...] I hate the expression going native. It's dirty. It belongs to the last century, to the Raj, going native – what does it really mean? You tell me. [...] I'll tell you what it means. To my enemies, to my detractors, to most people who don't know me, including these Keystone Corps, it means "siding with the Serbs". That's what they'll tell you because it's a natural conclusion, a racist one, to jump to. Being partisan. That was and is their spin. [...] but to me it means something else. Sure, I did go native, I admit it, native as they come. But it's not entirely my fault and it's not what people think. I went native all right, but in a weird way. You won't ever understand. You're English. (Stanković, 2001: 82-83)

If interpreters' relationship with the military forces was complex, so was the one with their community, as reported by this civilian interpreter for the British forces in Brčko in 1999:

I mean, the interpreter wears the uniform, but it's quite visible that there is a distinction between the soldier and the interpreter. So, when we were walking past those protestors, all the insults were directed to me. You would get that the people spit at you, that they throw all sorts of things at you. Personally, I understand their motive. And they are considering me as someone who is a traitor, for them I have... disrespect to my roots, to the interests of the nation, and I have gone to work for the local occupiers. (C. Baker, 2012c: 145)

A similar experience is described also by Croatian ECMM interpreters: "It affects me that [Croatians] identify us with the monitors, so that sometimes waiters refuse to serve us, children yell or throw stones at us" (Stahuljak, 2009: 407).

Interpreters became the visible voice of the international forces and took the blame for their inability to help the local population, sometimes perceiving it as their responsibility and failure:

They would ask ‘So what do you need?’ For example ‘what do you need in this village?’ And the headmaster would say, well ok, we need new desks, and equipment in, a blackboard in, the school’. ‘OK, we’ll see what we can do’. That was, those sentences ‘ we cannot promise anything, but we’ll see’. And four months later, six months later, you come and they say ‘ so what do you need?’ And the headmaster is like ‘I’ve said this before but I know you can’t promise anything, but you’ll do your best, I know I know’. And, you know, after some time you start to become – I was in a few situations very embarrassed, because I felt it’s my responsibility. It wasn’t; I’m just a machine to translate to, you know, to transform English to Serbian, Serbian to English but I just felt: this is pointless. (Ibid: 128)

In these conflicting expectations and without the training, professionalisation and support of a professional community that could have guided or helped them (Inghilleri, 2010: 179), interpreters found themselves occupying a negative trope in the post-Yugoslav societies: they are completely absent today from popular and traditional representation of the conflict and have been denied any type of recognition of their work both from their country and their former employers (C. Baker, 2014b: 99), thus still occupying an insider-outsider position (Ruiz Rosendo & Persaud, 2019).

5.2.7.2 *Neutrality*

As outlined in Chapter 4, interpreting as a profession demands neutrality and impartiality, but in conflicts, users and employers of interpreters demand trustworthiness and loyalty from their mediators who find themselves strained between military and interpreting ethics, and between their personal, community and ethnical narratives and their professional ones.

Even in the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina suspicion about interpreters’ lack of neutrality⁵⁹- whether locally recruited, members of the military or security-cleared civilians from TCCs - was a constant, which can also be found in ICTY trials where interpreters’ testimonies were routinely discredited by the defense on those grounds (Elias-Bursac, 2015: 235).

A case in point is that of ECMM interpreters, hired in Croatia by the Croatian Liaison Office, who are described in the literature as untrustworthy representatives of their government for their volunteerism. According to Dragovic-Drouet, when foreign journalists arrived in Zagreb in 1991-1992, they were immediately assigned ‘pro-active’ spokespersons, publicists and translators, who she even defines “manipulators of western media”(Dragovic-Drouet, 2007: 35). This general suspicion was felt by Croatian interpreters in their daily work, and it emerges as a source of shock and offence from the interviews published by Stahuljak:

Interpreter C: “A Czech monitor searched my belongings, looking for spying equipment, and he did the same to another [female] interpreter”.

Interpreter D: “Some think that we were “assigned” to this job – they consider us to be official representatives of the Republic of Croatia”.

⁵⁹ It is not clear if UNPROFOR and ECMM interpreters were security cleared to make sure that they did not have political roles and were not linked to war criminals. NATO initially checked their backgrounds although after Dayton it became impossible to exclude all those who had taken part in the defense forces or had family links with military, policemen or politicians, due to the extreme militarization of the society at the time (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 149).

Interpreter U: “Some of them are intelligence officers, and so they think we are too – one of them invited me to talk as ‘colleagues’. One of the monitors admitted to an interpreter that he searched her personal belonging for spying equipment...some monitors think that I moonlight as a spy”.
Interpreter V: “The most difficult situation is when the team leader mistrusts the interpreter, thinking that, as a Croat, he will be partial”. (Stahuljak, 2009: 406-407)

Despite the general opinion, interpreters claim to have initially taken great pride in the accuracy of their interpreting and professionalism, even in cases when they were personally offended (Ibid: 398-399). Nevertheless, as time passed, Croatia started considering the UE and UN missions’ neutrality as tacit support in favor of its aggressor, and interpreters felt compelled to ‘switch’ to the role of testimonies during official mediated encounters with deliberate distortions and intervention, often leading to reprimands (Ibid: 403-404) and increased suspicion by the ECMM: “Regardless of the official function, I try to play the role of an unofficial representative of the Republic of Croatia, I explain the situation in this part of the world to the monitors” (Ibid: 400-401).

Croatian interpreters were also accused of influencing the monitors outside the translation structure, by providing their opinion and their cultural and situational evaluation, although, as Stahuljak reminds us these were often required by their employers (Stahuljak, 2010: 262-263):

When conversations and negotiations with locals were unclear, the military asked the interpreter’s opinion about the interaction that took place, and interpreters expressed their judgements about what had happened, explaining any doubts observed in the answers of the locals and ‘translating’ the body language and facial expressions of those they talked to. These opinions were not always accepted at face value, but the military usually listened carefully and trusted the interpreters, who were considered valuable in such situations. (Bos & Soeters, 2006: 265)

Instances like this, or simply the fear of mistranslation, in the absence of control mechanisms, led military officers to avoid briefing interpreters for security reasons (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 69), censor conversations in their presence (C. Baker, 2010a) and to a certain distance, also physical, in the compounds (Bos & Soeters, 2006: 266).

Interpreters, on their side, both local and military ones, had to gradually gain the trust of the military unit they worked for, an operation that had to be repeated every six months, when troops rotated out of the country and new commanders and soldiers arrived (Baker, 2010b: 154).

If interpreters in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia were considered unneutral by their employers, they were also seen as untrustworthy by their communities for their work with forces that, in their mind, were not neutral at all: the Croats, for example, accused the ECMM and UNPROFOR of inactivity, and thus of siding with the Serbs, while the Serbs considered the international missions as siding with the Croats and the Bosnians. During the war, the Croatian Education Minister of the time (probably Ljilja Vokić) publicly defined the patriotism of Croatian interpreters as questionable (Stahuljak, 2009: 409), a statement that provoked strong public reactions from various associations of interpreters in Croatia.

Mitch, one of the longest-serving interpreters for the British forces in the Republika Srpska, perfectly epitomizes the complex issue of neutrality for interpreters in the war when he states that he had to “reconcile loyalty to his NATO employers with sympathy towards relatives and other members of his ethnic group who had suffered as a result of NATO airstrikes, as well as

with his own political views that placed him in opposition to the Milošević regime” (Footitt & Kelly, 2013: 204). Sinan, an interpreter for the British forces in Goražde even affirms that, even when he resorted to un-neutral behaviors, like softening confrontational sentences and statements to protect himself or the parties, it was not due to a political or ethnical goal but for security reasons, as the parties “would have probably shot at each other and then shoot [me]” (C. Baker, 2012a: 22-23).

5.2.7.3 Confidentiality

We have seen that, in the absence of professional identity, training and socialization, locally hired field interpreters were left to develop their own ethical and professional values, often resembling military ones (C. Baker, 2012a), and deployed what Monacelli and Punzo define as “immediate coping strategies” (Monacelli & Punzo, 2001), in an ever-shifting context where abstract ethical rules no longer apply. As far as confidentiality is concerned, there is no information as to whether interpreters were bound to any restrictions or regulations, whereas with the reform of NATO language support services they were obliged to sign the following confidentiality declaration:

I solemnly undertake to exercise in all loyalty, discretion, and conscience the functions entrusted to me as a staff member of SFOR, and to discharge these functions with the interest of SFOR only in view. I undertake not to seek or accept instructions in regard to the performance of my duties from any other authority other than HQ SFOR. (Askew, 2011)

Despite the existence of specific provisions binding interpreters to confidentiality, it emerges from the literature that interpreters in the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia were under pressure by the belligerent parties to pass information (C. Baker, 2010b: 160; Elias-Bursac, 2015: 235) throughout the entire deployment of international missions, especially in the 1991-1995 years. Nevertheless, the literature on the topic reports no or a few cases of interpreters dismissed for breaching confidentiality in ECMM and UNPROFOR - probably because they did not deal with confidential material and/or intelligence in the typical sense of the term (Thomas, 2003b: 40)- while no such episode is mentioned for NATO missions. At the same time, however, no further information is available on potential confidentiality agreements and, most importantly, whether a system was in place to make sure that they respected it and what the procedures were if interpreters were threatened to obtain information from them by the belligerent parties.

5.2.8 Interpreting quality

The quality of interpreting in the ECMM and UNPROFOR missions is generally described as poor by scholars like Dragović-Drouet (2007) and Jones and Askew based on their assessment of the existing interpreters’ workforce when they arrived in Sarajevo to restructure the service in 1998 (Askew, 2019: 232). As we have seen, their reform was aimed at improving interpreting and translation quality through better selection procedures, training, supervising, and an editing system for translations.

This general improvement in interpreters' quality is confirmed by Persaud's study on EUFOR Althea interpreters from 2004 (Persaud, 2016) who found that all interpreters working for the international mission had received training in interpreting, were offered guidance on the role they were supposed to play - including ethical issues, verbal, non-verbal skills and soft skills – and most importantly that service users were generally satisfied with their service.

Nevertheless, before that date, no system to verify that interpreters provided quality and accurate interpretations of meetings is reported in the literature, besides the occasional supervision by military speakers of Serbo-Croatian or other Slavic languages (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 64; 89; 92).

As we have seen in the previous paragraph, accounts show that the principle of interpreters' accuracy was sometimes trumped to promote communication and guarantee the interpreters' safety like in the case of Sinan, the interpreter for the British forces mentioned above, while interpreting especially confrontational meetings in Goražde in 1994:

But I would be softening these things, in order to make these people continue talking to each other, so that was my... contribution to maintaining the peace [...] But, don't get me wrong, people could understand. Although they couldn't understand the words, they could understand the facial expressions. You can't hide the hate on a face. You cannot hide that there is a sentence of twenty words, and you are just saying how are you. Of course, I couldn't fool anyone. They could see, the British could see that there was something going on. But I would be just dropping these things, for the communication to continue. That was the main thing. (C. Baker, 2012a: 22-23)

Other interpreters interviewed by Baker also reported that, when they wished to distance themselves from the words and actions of the foreign soldiers and win the trust of the locals, they used reported speech or left out abusive remarks to 'soften' a tense situation (Ibid: 20-21). Other than these scant accounts, no further information is nevertheless available on interpreters' quality and the decisions they took to juggle a complicated, often hostile and complex environment.

Chapter 6: RESEARCH METHODS

6.1 Research method employed in this research project

For the study of interpreting during the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia in the 1990s we decided to adopt a historical method, rooted in microhistory (Ginzburg, 2019; Ginzburg, J. Tedeschi & A. Tedeschi, 1993), without disregarding the bigger socio-historical and cultural picture (Araguás Alonso, 2008: 437).

Interests of interpreting and translation scholars for the history of their profession (Santoyo, 2006: 22) emerged in the 1960s and 1970s (Bandia, 2006), but despite the increased number of historical contributions (Kurz, 1985; 1991; Gaiba, 1998; Roland, 1999; Araguás Alonso & Baigorri Jalón, 2005; Kaufmann, 2005; Peretz, 2006; Baigorri Jalón & Araguás Alonso, 2007; Lung, 2011; Baigorri Jalón, 2014) only a few scholars have adopted a strictly historical method, except for Pym (2014) and historian and interpreter Baigorri Jalón (Baigorri Jalón & Barr, 2004; Baigorri Jalón, 2003; 2014a; 2019). On this point, Delisle claims that “la majorité des travaux sont produits par des traductologues généralistes ou des spécialistes d'autres disciplines, rarement par des historiens de formation rompus aux techniques de recherche en histoire” (Delisle, 1997: 23).

He also affirms that most research appears methodologically fragmented and written as “mere journalism, recounting the past events as innumerable anecdotes found in secondary sources” (Delisle, 1997; Santoyo, 2006: 22) and calls on translation and interpreting scholars with an interest in history to view themselves as historians (Bandia, 2006: 46) and to learn more about historical research and its methodology (Delisle, 1997)⁶⁰. Parallely, Rundle and Sturge have proposed an “outward-looking approach to history” (Rundle & Sturge, 2010: 3) where contextualization is essential to obtain a reliable vision of a historical reality, if the history of an interpreter or group of interpreters is assumed as representing an entire category and the product of a profession (Pym, 2014: 160).

Given the above, we decided to adopt here an historical method, guided primarily by the example of Jesus Baigorri Jalón (2006; 2016; 2019) who theorizes, in the *Charting the future of translation history* (Baigorri Jalón, 2006), the application of the historical method to interpreting studies, using the example of 20th-century lawyer and ILO interpreter Joseph Belleau. By cross-referencing ILO and UN documents, including peripheral ones, pictures and personal archives, Baigorri Jalón (2005) reconstructed the biography of this interpreter, not as an end in itself, but as a way to understand how Belleau's ideas, daily practice and working conditions connected to the evolution of the profession and to wider topics, like the status of English after World War I, or the importance of interpretation at the ILO.

⁶⁰ For example, in *The Art of Translation*, Theodore Savory (1968) supports that the bombing of Hiroshima was due to a mistake in the translation of the word *mokusatsu* but, as Delisle rightly points out, Savory does not mention where the information comes from, if he consulted official documents or was present at the time of the response, hence such a historical claim can only be considered as an anecdote not complying with the requirements of the historical method.

6.1.1 The historical method

Discussion on the historical method, meant as the hypothetic-deductive practice of trial and error, developed between the 17th and the 19th century and came to be defined as the historian's description of "what actually happened" or "how things really are" (Rusen, 1990), where sources, meant as written documents held in archives, are to be approached rigorously (Langlois & Seignobos, 1898). In the 20th century, the discussion was heavily influenced by post-modernism (Yilmaz, 2007) and new approaches to history like social, cultural, visual, women and micro-history that led to a broader concept of sources and methodologies⁶¹ (Gunn & Faire, 2016).

The method, which distinguishes history "from other disciplines that also have an interest in the past, such as archaeology or English studies" (Baldazzi, 2017), revolves around two elements, what we call here the historical reasoning, which is the procedure that historians follow, and the search and criticism of sources to obtain scientifically valid results.

6.1.1.1 Historical reasoning

Historical reasoning is very similar to the approach followed by scientists in natural sciences, and it is the result of history's *rapprochement* to the scientific method. There are various theorizations on its different steps, which differ slightly in their categorization among historians, but they can be mainly identified as 1) reflection 2) hypothesis, 3) evidence and 4) writing.

The first step involves preliminary reflection and research on the topic at hand (Saucier Lundy, 2008), which includes reading relevant literature, listening to the main ideas about the phenomenon or event and reflecting on the researcher's interest and potential bias towards the topic.

The second step involves developing hypotheses or research questions and identifying a theoretical perspective to guide the data collection process and the interpretation of results.

The third step consists in collecting, analyzing, and selecting evidence to support or reject the working hypothesis. Sources of information must be fact-checked, and their validity and reliability evaluated to be later analytically interpreted in relation to the historical hypothesis formulated by picking the facts, creating links and identifying meanings, which also extends to missing data and analysis of the causes of historical events (Carr & Davies, 1986: 98-99).

Although some scholars, like the Scottish historian Behan McCullagh (1984), have tried to provide a framework for inferences, in modern history, interpretation is not aimed at including every possible element or known piece of information (Baldazzi, 2017: 569) but allows for a more subjective analysis of the historical process. This does not mean, however, that historians, to use Sir George Clark's words, should not distinguish between "the hardcore facts from the

⁶¹ Although sometimes used interchangeably, method and methodology are slightly different concepts: method is the collection of techniques and approaches that historians use to study and write history, while methodology refers to the larger principles which underpin the tools and techniques and justify their usage (Gunn & Faire, 2016: 21-22), or better the conceptual or epistemological reference framework regulating the techniques, methods and tools the historian uses (Baldazzi, 2017: 27). The study of the nature and features of methodology is discussed in the sub-field of historical epistemology, while the study of the historical method is known as historiography.

surrounding pulp of disputable events” (Carr and Davies 1986, 12; 16) or reinvent the past as they please:

Un historien est objectif s'il rapporte les faits sans les manipuler, ni dissimuler ceux qui risqueraient d'infirmier sa thèse, et s'il retient les bons faits, c'est-à-dire les plus pertinents selon son hypothèse de départ. Il lui faut être capable aussi de dépasser la vision étroite que lui imposent sa société et sa culture, d'éviter de projeter ses idées, ses sentiments, ses préoccupations d'homme du XXe siècle dans les esprits et les cœurs des hommes et des femmes d'un autre temps. (Delisle, 1997: 9-10)

Once evidence is examined and inferences are drawn, the historian’s hypothesis can become a thesis statement that will validate or refute the initial hypothesis, which represents the fourth step, the writing of the historical account. The final writing shall make the research itinerary as transparent as possible and communicate the most important results while establishing a connection with previous literature and, possibly, suggesting new lines of research (Rinaldi, 2009).

6.1.1.2 Collection of sources

In historical reasoning the third and most important phase is that of the collection and analysis of sources, to verify and support the interpretation of historical events. Sources are submitted here to two types of criticism: hermeneutic (or external) criticism and heuristic (or internal) criticism.

Hermeneutic or external criticism of sources is aimed at establishing the authenticity and credibility of the document or artifact considering its provenance, author, purpose, explicit and implicit statements, and consistency with other evidence. This phase can sometimes also foresee verification by calligraphy and language experts or by any professional whose skills can help the historian verify the document’s authenticity, integrity, and credibility. In this respect, provenance, and original order⁶² are very important archival principles, as they may provide information about the context of a document or source and the classification used by the author of the records.

Internal criticism focusses on the reliability of the document or source’s content, based on the meaning in the data, and consists of evaluating the way the text is organized and presented and the context from which it was derived (Saucier Lundy, 2008). In this phase, researchers ask the source questions such as: what kind of structure does it follow? What are the goals of the author? What kind of document is it? Does the author take a stance? What is the author’s main argument?

Historians are also called to interrogate themselves here on the author’s possible biases and

⁶² According to original order, a group of records should be maintained in the same order as they were placed by the record's creator (Society of American Archivists, n.d.). Original order encourages the archivist to remain neutral (Munday, 2014) but it might also reflect the archivist’s bias. Provenance is a more ambiguous concept (Sweeney, 2008) and it generally refers to the information on the transmission of ownership of a source, which is supposed to guarantee a chain of custody and therefore authenticity.

perceptions of the event, on their role as primary or secondary witnesses and include missing accounts, lack of relevant viewpoints and of mentions of persons involved in events.

It should also be mentioned that not all sources have traditionally been considered equal but that in the **hierarchy of sources** (Baldazzi, 2017: 507-508) there has traditionally been a distinction between primary and secondary sources. A **primary source** is firsthand evidence of an event and is produced or created at the same time⁶³ or very near to the time of the event by a first-hand witness, thus holding the greatest value in the validity and reliability of the historical analysis. Primary sources can also be created at a later date by a participant in the events (as in the case of memoirs), and they are the product of either the experience of person(s) involved in the event or of direct eyewitness (Saucier Lundy, 2008).

Examples of primary sources are speeches, letters, comics/cartoons, songs, legislation, court decisions, journals/diaries, interviews, autobiographies, statistics, experiments, manuscripts, archival records, and photographs but also speeches, poetry, music, art, and artifacts, like clothing and pottery.

However, although primary sources are critical, they cannot be relied upon uncritically, especially since “history is written by the winners” (Orwell, 1944) and people who had little power like women, members of the lower classes and minorities have produced few primary sources.

Secondary sources are created when the event at play is investigated by someone who was not an eyewitness to the event, usually based on primary sources, and they constitute a description or an interpretation of primary sources. Examples of secondary sources are biographies and accounts written many years after the event (e.g., a first-person account of a child written as an adult) or by others, such as articles, dictionaries, magazines, encyclopedias, the internet, textbooks and scholarly or popular books that interpret or review research work by other authors. Critical analysis of secondary sources follows the same criteria as that of primary ones and, despite the widest possible sampling, researchers should assume that many documents and data sources have been lost or deliberately distorted.

Sometimes, secondary sources can become primary ones, depending on how these are used: for example, if a newspaper article is used to report current events, it is considered a primary source, if it is used to report events of the past, and/or the author's intentions or analysis, it is a secondary one (MacDougall, 2022).

The example above nevertheless shows that there are some common grey areas in the definition of primary and secondary sources like newspapers/magazines, encyclopedias and history texts (Munday, 2014), but also that more modern sources, like television, literature, photographs, oral memoirs, interviews and social media posts are often still considered as secondary sources when they are actually primary ones. Also, some authors have criticized the traditional preference for written archival sources and accused archives of being a locus of power (Claus & Marriott, 2017: 425) where the choice of what is to be retained, organized and made available

⁶³ Proximity is another key concept of the doctrine of sources - a source close in time to the historical event is considered more reliable than one distant from it (Vidyapati, 2014: 43) - just like independency, for which authors directly linked to a specific party or power are considered less reliable than independent ones, although some degree of subjectivity is now acknowledged for every source, and it is up to the historian to decide whether or not to include a specific one (Chabod & Firpo, 2021: 3).

is man-made and influenced by the archival institution, usually representing white western men (Ghosh, 2005). For all these reasons, historians have lately called for a broader concept of archive in historical research, to include alternative sites of historical memory, like private archives (Schwartz, 2002: 157; Baigorri Jalón, 2016), artefacts, visual materials and oral interviews.

6.2 Collection and selection of sources employed in this research project

Having chosen to adopt an historical method for this research project, as described in § 6.1, we initially decided to collect sources from official historical records and archives, but we were immediately confronted with the “archival invisibility” of interpreters in historical and military events (Footitt, 2012) and with barriers to archive consultation in military settings.

Since UN, ECMM and NATO IFORF/SFOR archives were still classified at the time of data collection or difficult to consult⁶⁴, we decided to “challenge the archives”(Footitt, 2019: 139-144), and extend the concept of archival sources to “less traditional” ones (Burke, 2008: 11) including **oral accounts**, that is **interviews** – with three categories of subjects: interpreters, military representatives and military language trainers from the Scuola di Lingue Estere dell’Esercito in Perugia, Italy - **memoirs of interpreters and service users, newspapers, and multimedia sources like audios, videos, and pictures** (Baigorri Jalón & Barr, 2004; Araguás Alonso, 2008)⁶⁵.

Next to a wider approach to sources, this research also adopts an **interdisciplinary approach**: for example, we used methods pertaining to media and semiotics to analyze pictures, following the path set by Baigorri Jalón (2016), Araguás Alonso and Baigorri Jalón (2005) and by Fernandez-Ocampo and Wolf (2014) in *Framing the interpreter*, who posit that “as carefully constructed social objects, [...] visual reproductions, like photographs, contribute significantly to the interpretation of a specific historical moment ” (Edwards, 2014b: 19) especially in war contexts. Photographs are also useful to understand the relationships between the photographed persons/institution and the interpreter and the geographical and historical context in which interpreters worked (Footitt, 2014) provided that researchers are aware that they may be ideologically compromised and they therefore ‘disentangle’ their meanings (Barthes, 1997: 147-148, as quoted in Edwards, 2014b: 20-21; Kelly, 2014: 87) and apply the same methodological rigor used for other sources (Burke, 2008; Brothers, 2011).

We also used semi-structured interviews, a method borrowed from social sciences, which has been successfully employed in many research works on ICZ (C. Baker, 2010; Askew & Salama-Carr, 2011; Gómez Amich, 2016; 2017; Baigorri Jalón, 2016; C. Baker, 2019) although they are never “a direct recovery of what the speaker experienced at the time” (Baker, 2019) and are influenced by memory, the unconscious portrayal of the self, and less effective to obtain precise “dates or financial data such as rates of pay” (Brownlie, 2017: 13, as quoted in C. Baker,

⁶⁴ Archival access was also heavily hindered by the Covid-19 pandemic.

⁶⁵ Although the use of memoirs poses problems of confidentiality (Thiéry, 1985) and objectivity (Bowen, 1994; Schmidt & Sutton, 2016) they give interpreters a visibility or audibility that is absent in other sources, but should be the object of even more rigorous critique (Baigorri Jalón, 2011: 510).

2019: 166). Interview transcriptions were analyzed with **Thematic Qualitative Analysis** (TCA) as we were more interested in what interviewees said, and recurring patterns and themes, rather than in the way they said it.

Videos of interpreter-mediated interactions were also used as historical sources and transcribed following Gay Jefferson's model (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984) of **conversation analysis** (CA), although this was employed very loosely because video quality was often too poor and turn-taking too incomplete to note verbal and non-verbal behavior in detail, and because some interactions were more monological than dialogical. We followed a descriptive rather than pure conversation analysis method, mainly focused on turn formulation and on interaction patterns only when made possible by the video quality, framing, and the number of overlapping participants.

Video transcriptions were analysed employing Wadensjö's taxonomy of renditions (Wadensjö, 1998) featuring close, expanded, reduced, substituted, summarized, multi-part renditions, non-renditions and zero renditions⁶⁶. We also considered the category added by Merlini & Favaron (2005), divergent renditions (phatic, emphatic, explanatory additions), that is when renditions of the interpreters are different from the original and allow researchers to understand the "potential interactional functions" performed by different kinds of interpreters' utterances (Ibid: 286).

Finally, if the objectivity of historians is essential to the historical method, it is also true that researchers of history, as human beings, have opinions, feelings, and biases and the way they hierarchize, interpret, and arrange sources can be subjective. This is why it is important for authors to evaluate their positionality (self-reflexivity), especially in qualitative research where the scholar's own positions and experiences might contribute to their interpretations of people's lived experiences.

It should be clearly stated that the author never worked in a war zone, nor in the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina as she was a child at the time. She is a professional conference interpreter, trained in Italy, Belgium, and Croatia, although she did work as a liaison interpreter in the ER of an Italian hospital for five years, a situation that shares some points in common with ICZ, namely urgency and vicarious traumatization of interpreters.

As per the author's ethnical background she is Italian, although she has a special connection to Croatia as the place where she lived and studied for many years and where many of her friends and colleagues live, some of them providing the contacts needed to reach out to the research subjects in this study. Although, in general, she shares the interviewees' language, she speaks it with a markedly Croatian accent, an aspect that led to choosing English as the language of interviews.

⁶⁶ Close renditions are ones when the propositional content of the original is explicitly expressed with approximately the same style; expanded renditions are ones when interpreters express the content more explicitly than the original; reduced renditions are when interpreters express the content less explicitly than the original; substituted renditions, a combination of expanded and reduced renditions; summarized renditions, when one rendition corresponds to two or more prior originals; multi-part renditions are when two interpreter utterances correspond to one original; non-renditions are interpreters' autonomous contributions, while zero renditions are when the originals are left untranslated.

Since the objectivity of history is not an absolute concept but a goal (Kalimonov *et al.*, 2017), the author tried to bracket any bias that might influence the presentation of historical events in favour of one ethnic group or to defend fellow interpreters, although it is possible that professional and life experiences might have influenced our interpretations of the data. This is why these findings are to be considered only as one possible interpretation of these individuals' experiences based on the author's standpoint which was revealed either directly or indirectly to everyone interviewed.

6.2.1 Interviews

6.2.1.1 Interview sampling

The sampling of interviewees for this research work was problematic because thirty years have passed since the events and for the sensitive nature of the topic. Even when found and contacted, many respondents were not willing to participate in the study for security reasons or not to revive painful memories (especially interpreters). Each interview required several weeks or months of correspondence to establish a relationship with interviewees, getting them to trust us and reassuring them that the information disclosed was anonymous and would be used for research purposes only. Questions were first sent to the interviewees together with a project presentation and were re-sent the day before the scheduled interview to allow them to prepare. If a subject had agreed to participate in the interview but stopped replying to our emails, we usually sent two reminders and then respected the subject's decision not to participate.

Participation requirements were: (a) for military representatives to have served in the areas belonging to what now constitutes Bosnia and Herzegovina and/or Croatia during the wars (1991-1995) or in the following years (1996-2006) and to have worked with interpreters; (b) for interpreters, to have worked during the said period and years either for UN, EC, or NATO institutions.

A total of 29 subjects were interviewed between 2020 and 2021: 12 interpreters, two military language trainers⁶⁷, and 15 military officers, a sample that is in line with micro-historical, small sample studies and oral interviews literature, provided that theoretical saturation is achieved (Beitin, 2012; Flick, 2014). We believe that the sample obtained was satisfactory, especially considering the security, bureaucratic and emotional barriers encountered.

6.2.1.2 Interviewee enrollment

Military subjects were easier to enroll than interpreters because they usually remain connected to the military or Peacekeeping Centres structure even after retirement, and they are often members of veterans' associations. Therefore, we first contacted the main veterans' associations around the world and in the countries that participated in the missions in the former Yugoslavia, like the Danish Veteran Institute and the World Veterans Federation, that published our call in their monthly bulletin in June and July 2020 respectively. The Memory

⁶⁷ Interviews with military language trainers did not aim at saturation as they were simply aimed at gathering information on an unresearched topic in Italy. They were contacted through the Scuola di Lingue Estere dell'Esercito in Perugia.

Project, a Canadian not-for-profit organization, also passed our request to their members who had experience in the former Yugoslavia.

We then contacted the public information offices of the Ministry of Defense of Italy, the UK, France, Austria, Spain, the Netherlands, Denmark, and Germany. Only the Italian *Stato Maggiore della Difesa* agreed to collaborate, after a security clearance procedure that lasted about a year and a half.

Following a suggestion by one of the interviewees, we also contacted, by email or letter, the United Nations Training Centers around the world, whose addresses were publicly available, that is those of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Malesia, Egypt, Cambogia, Brazil, Finland, Jordan, Canada, Italy (Brindisi), Ghana, Morocco, UK, France, Spain, Austria, Sweden, Belgium, the Netherlands, Portugal, and the USA.

These centralized institutions also proved useful in explaining and reassuring interviewees of the confidentiality and non-sensitivity of the interview.

Subjects that had written memoirs used for this research work were also contacted through social media and more subjects were recruited through snowball sampling, asking enrolled interviewees if they knew colleagues meeting the sampling requirements.

Out of 15 interviewees, four were recruited through veterans' associations, two through personal contacts and social media, two through snowball sampling, one through the *Stato Maggiore della Difesa* and six through Peacekeeping training centres.

As per the sample demographics, all military interviewees had officers' ranks (10 retired and five still in service), 12 were deployed between 1991 and 1995 within UNPROFOR as either UNMOs (10) or within national contingents (two), one within the ECMM, and two with IFOR/SFOR after 1995 while seven of them were deployed on subsequent tours to the area within different missions both before and after 1995. The sample was particularly heterogenous with officers representing different cultures and approaches: two from Portugal, two from Canada, one from Malesia, one from Sweden, one from the UK, two from Italy, three from Ghana, one from Brazil, one from Ireland, and one from Morocco.

Enrollment of military language trainers was entirely based on convenience, as a list of trainers for Serbo-Croatian, Croatian and or Serbian had been provided by the *Scuola Maggiore di Lingue Estere dell'Esercito* in Perugia, of which two agreed to be interviewed: one who had worked during the war and one who was hired after the war.

Enrolment of interpreters was more complicated, as UNPROFOR and NATO archives are still confidential and many of them were not formally recruited (Jones & Askew, 2014: 54) or worked on a pro-bono basis (Baker, 2014). We first contacted the professional associations of translators and interpreters in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, and all European member states, as well as in non-European countries with a high presence of former Yugoslav diasporas, like south American countries, Canada and Australia, as we considered that interpreters might have moved as a result of their multilingual experience during the war (C. Baker, 2014: 100). We also contacted the ICTY interpreters and the Croatian interpreting Unit at DG SCIC.

The fact that many interpreters were often teachers, engineers and doctors (Dragovic-Drouet, 2007: 33-34) who probably went back to their original professions after the war represented a

significant problem as it basically amounted to finding a needle in a haystack⁶⁸. We, therefore, shifted to convenience and snowball sampling and used social media to recruit a wider number of subjects, more specifically LinkedIn, where a search with the keywords ‘language assistant’ and/or ‘interpreter’ at UNPROFOR and/or the UN identified 42 people, who had publicly stated having worked in that position at the time and who were all contacted through the social network.

Out of 12 interviewees, four were recruited through social media, two through personal contacts, one through snowball sampling, and five through professional associations. Among interpreters, seven operated mainly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, two in Croatia, and three in both areas; five worked only in the war years (1991-1995), three only in the post-war years (1996-today) and four both during and after the war.

6.2.1.3 Interview questions

Three different lists of questions for the semi-structured interviews were prepared for military representatives, interpreters, and military language trainers, based on the analysis of the available literature. Questions were pilot tested and then submitted to obtain approval by the Privacy Department and the Ethical Committee of the University of Bologna, which was granted with protocol no. 0129375 of 24 February 2020⁶⁹.

The list of questions asked to military language trainers featured 16 items, subdivided into four parts: introduction (two), the teaching of the language/s (seven), interpreter training (four), and future perspectives (five) and were different from those submitted to military representatives and interpreters.

The list of questions for military officers and interpreters featured 25 and 21 items respectively, which were conceived as specular to compare results and opinions on the same topics among different groups. Both sets of questions featured an introductory part, where interpreters and officers were asked one general biographical question to gather background information (time and place of deployment, education and career choice) and to break the ice (C. Baker, 2019b). Part two focused, in both groups, on the job of interpreters, discussing issues like training, employment, and relations with employers and the local community, while part three was consecrated to the interpreting practice, that is tasks performed, briefing/debriefing, type of interpreting expected/provided. In part four, we addressed ethical issues like confidentiality and neutrality and, finally, part five was devoted to future perspectives to understand how their experience could be used to improve interpreting services in future missions, and left interviewees free to express their views on the topic. A list of questions asked to the three interviewee groups is attached to this work in Annex B.

6.2.1.4 Interview mode

⁶⁸ We considered contacting all professional associations of doctors, engineers and teachers in those countries and abroad, but such sampling would have been too dispersive and time-consuming.

⁶⁹ The Scuola di Lingue Estere dell'Esercito and the Stato Maggiore della Difesa carried out their own privacy, security, and ethical evaluation procedure and required that interviewees were assisted by their relevant Public Information officer (PI) even though the only interviewee in this group did not need a PI in as he was a PI himself.

We opted for semi-structured interviews, as they are considered the best way to build a relationship and allow respondents time to open up about sensitive issues. Our initial idea was to carry out interviews in person to improve participant disclosure and data quality (Duncombe & Jessop, 2012; Morgan *et al.*, 2020) but due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we had to switch to remote interviewing despite the lack of interpersonal interaction and technical barriers underlined in the literature (Evans *et al.*, 2008). The use of voice and video remote meeting technologies, nevertheless, allowed flexibility, reduced distraction, made the prospect of an interview on such sensitive topics “less daunting” (Weller, 2015) and helped us access interviewees (Evans *et al.*, 2008) from different countries and continents, whom it would have been impossible, both logistically and financially, to interview in person. We let them choose among different platform and phone interview and, to make the experience as technologically smooth as possible for interviewees across all age brackets, we provided them with instructions to access the researcher’s Zoom, Skype, or Microsoft Teams suggested in the literature (Hanna, 2012; Deakin & Wakefield, 2014).

Out of 29 interviewees, one picked the phone call mode, two Skype, one Teams and the rest Zoom. We did not encounter major technical issues⁷⁰, which is probably the result of such platforms having been widely used for educational and business purposes during the pandemic, other than the *décalage* due to transmission modes and connection issues, which made it more difficult to ask follow-up questions (Morgan *et al.*, 2020) and the occasional overlapping, false starts, and repetitions.

It should be mentioned that, despite our intentions to only carry out online face-to-face semi-structured interviews, both in military representatives and interpreters groups some subjects only accepted to participate if they could reply in writing - due to security concerns or because they believed that the written medium helped them gather their thoughts about a distant and painful event on and/or control the information to be disclosed - while others first replied in writing and then discussed the relevant points in the online face-to-face interview. We agreed to both variations since “survey interviewing” belongs to interviewing techniques (Singleton & Straits, 2012: 77), although it is less interactive and rich in information.

Only seven interviewees replied only in writing (two interpreters and five military representatives), three chose written answers followed by an interview (all military), while 19 took part in the interview only (10 interpreters and seven military representatives and two military language trainers) and one interpreter also sent additional written observations after the interview.

Some interviewees also expressed the preference not to switch on their cameras, an issue that has been linked in the literature with the uncomfortableness of having the researcher see the interviewee’s reactions to their responses (Weller, 2015) but which, in this case, was probably due to security concerns.

⁷⁰ In a couple of interviews, despite precautions taken, due to stress on the bandwidth for the high number of people online during the pandemic, there were connection issues that partially broke the flow of conversation and made transcription more difficult (Seitz, 2016). Due to a computer glitch in the interview with M06, the recording was lost, but the researcher immediately reconstructed the content of the interview with the help of notes, which were later submitted for approval to the interviewee.

Out of 29 interviewees, nearly half switched on their cameras, which allowed us to at least note down physical reactions or non-verbal expressions and include them in the transcription, even though non-verbal behavior was not analyzed in this research. For those who kept the camera switched off, despite the lack of visual cues, we nevertheless believe that we managed to establish a good relationship and that the lack of video input did not affect the quality of disclosure, mainly thanks to preparatory work, which built the type of relationship needed to promote content disclosure (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Seitz, 2016).

Despite the loss of intimacy of online interviews documented in the literature, interviewees managed to discuss even emotionally charged topics, thus resulting in “data as reliable and in-depth as that produced during face-to-face encounters” (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014).

Following CLARIN’s guidelines⁷¹, each interview was numbered and dated, and the interview length, file dimension and language were marked. Since interviews were anonymous, each was marked with letters and progressive numbers (M for military, I for Interpreter, T for language trainer).

Interviewees’ personal data were stored on a separate, password-protected file in compliance with GDPR regulations and, if during the interviews, the name of the interviewee or a third person emerged, it was replaced with a pseudonym. Just like Catherine Baker (2019b: 166) we struggled when the interviewee, or any other person mentioned, was the only one who had performed a particular role at a particular time and place, as providing too much context would risk identifying them, but eliminating too much information would deprive the work of any scientific value and make it difficult to draw granular conclusions. Nevertheless, the responsibility towards the interviewees guided our work, as specified also by the guidelines from the Oral History Association (Sommer & Quinlan, 2009: 104), and even when interviewees were willing to have their names disclosed or whenever less than three or more people covered a specific role or position in that specific time and place, the reference was either removed or generalized.

6.2.1.5 *Interview language(s)*

English, as the language of the mission and interoperability (see § 8.5), was chosen as the language of the interview by nearly all military subjects (12), except for two Italian interviewees who picked Italian and one Moroccan officer who preferred French. Among interpreters, all chose English (10) except for one choosing Italian and one Bosnian while the two military language trainers preferred Italian. The issue of the language of the interview was carefully pondered for interpreters and trainers, not because we were interested in language-related research, but because language can promote and/or hinder exchange, especially if it has assumed, like in the former Yugoslavia, a political role. Although the interviewee and the interviewer shared a common language(s) we did not want to impose it, as we feared that the interviewer’s markedly Croatian way of speaking could affect the relationships with interviewees from outside Croatia; therefore we let interviewees chose between the local

⁷¹ CLARIN is an ESFRI (European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures) research group which produced a *Vademecum for the use of oral sources*, a collective work still in course of refinement, by representatives of universities, public administration, and scientific associations in Italy.

language(s), Italian and English, although the local language(s) was/were used for introductory and final comments outside the interview or random words.

In line with what was observed by C. Baker (2019b: 175) English, which was also the interpreters' working language during the war, was often picked as a neutral field, free from national and political considerations, despite an intrinsic loss in language spontaneity and idiomaticity, although the fact that the researcher's first language is not English probably relieved interviewees of the hyper-correctness burden often reported in literature.

6.2.1.6 Interview transcription: what and how

When deciding **what** to transcribe, we carefully considered the relevant literature, as there is “no single generally accepted way to represent speech on page” (Johnstone, 2009: 23) and approaches vary according to the research topic and objectives, and on the interpretive and representational choices by the transcriber/scholar (Niemants, 2012) who can decide to transcribe what is uttered, how and by whom, including pauses, turn-taking (Niemants, 2015: 422) as well as kinesics elements. Since no transcription is faithful, untouched or unadulterated (Hale & Napier, 2013), we referred to oral history practices where “maintaining integrity to what a person said takes precedence over ensuring every word makes the page” (Oregon Department of Transportation Research Section, 2010, 1) rather than to interpreting studies, where transcription approaches are more influenced by CA and DA. We, therefore, opted for a word-for-word transcription of content so that it was as readable as possible⁷², removing ‘ums’ and ‘ahs’ and crutch words like ‘you know’ and ‘like’ that did not reflect a speech pattern and hindered understanding, but we preserved false starts, simultaneous speech and unfinished sentences (Boger, 2008). For non-native speakers of English, only major grammar mistakes that prevented understanding were corrected while non-verbal sounds were noted in square brackets like **[laughter]**, **[crying]**, **[sighting]** and sentences or words pronounced in a higher pitch were marked in **[CAPITAL LETTERS]**.

Although the video input was not recorded for security reasons, the researcher also took notes throughout the interview of gestures that conveyed or changed substantially the meaning of what was being said and noted it in square brackets and small caps. Off-topic comments by the interviewer or the interviewees, interruptions or potentially sensitive exchanges were removed and marked as **[uninfluential]**. Silences and pauses over three seconds were also noted in the transcription, as an indicator of a refusal to answer (intentional silence) or a psychological inability to answer or deal with a topic (non-intentional silence) (Kurzon, 1998) which “point to aspects of experience not fully mediated by group interpretation of past events” (Cándida Smith, 2003: 205). Pauses, identified with a program called Audacity, were later analyzed

⁷² This approach is also put forward by the guidelines of the Center for Oral History at the Science History Institute, the Canadian Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling, the Guilford College, AISO (Associazione Italiana di Storia Orale), and Rebecca Borger's guidelines (Boger, 2008), which incorporate style guides from the Baylor University Institute for Oral History, the T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History, and the Minnesota Historical Society Oral History Office and was supported also in the AISO's workshops “La trascrizione come atto interpretativo nella pratica della storia orale” held in 2020 and 2021.

manually to retain those with potential meaning and exclude the ones due to the interviewee’s mode of communication and connection or platform issues.

As per the **how**, interviews were transcribed with the use of the speech-to-text feature in Word for Mac and later verified manually by the researcher for a total of about 18.5 hours. Once transcribed, interviews were sent to the interviewees who checked them, marked any information they wanted to be omitted or modified and approved them.

6.2.1.7 Interview analysis

Interviews and oral recordings can be analyzed using different types of qualitative content analysis (Schilling, 2006), such as narrative analysis, grounded theory, discourse analysis, content analysis and thematic analysis.

We decided here to analyze our interviews from a historical point of view using **Thematic Qualitative Analysis** (TCA) (Anderson, 2007), which was preferred to content analysis, with which it shares many similarities (Sandelowski & Leeman, 2012) as we were more interested in themes and patterns, rather than in quantification of data frequency (Vaismoradi *et al.*, 2013) and also because we could already rely on lists of questions that had been structured around the macro themes emerging from the literature review in Chapters 4 and 5 (namely categorization, recruitment, employment, training, risks and protection, tasks and skills, interpreting ethics - status, neutrality, and confidentiality – and quality). In the interviews such themes were raised in different questions for interpreters and military: categorization (question 4 for military), recruitment (question 1 for interpreter and questions 5 and 6 for military), training (questions 4 and 2 for interpreters and questions 7 and 14 for military), status (question 5 for interpreters and 8 for military), risks (question 7 for interpreters and 12 for military), ethnicity (question 8 for interpreters and 13 for military), payment & bonuses (question 9 for interpreters and 9 for military), tasks (questions 3, 10, 13 for interpreters and questions 10, 17

MILITARY INTERVIEWEES	
Training	<p>M01: There was no prior training nor consideration even given to interpreter training even after I had gone and interpreters had subsequently become special UN employees.</p> <p>M02: N/A</p> <p>M03: I don't think so. Their training was On The Job (OJT). They were just someone that could speak, read and write English and were available to help the UN (most of the times they were better in English than some of the UN military officers they worked for)</p> <p>M04: Well, in 93-94 it was probably lack of training and experience. My understanding of the interpreters that we had were people who spoke English and were willing to help out, right? So, they weren't trained as interpreters, they just were good people that wanted to help out and they saw an opportunity because they spoke English to be of help, right?</p> <p>I am not aware of any training they may have received for either mission.</p>
Recruitment	<p>M01: The interpreters were recruited by the UN on a personal contract basis during my time there.</p> <p>M02: N/A</p>

Figure 12 – Example of table used for manual coding.

for military), mode & type of interpreting (question 12 for interpreters and 16 for military), briefing (question 14 for interpreters and 18 for military), neutrality (question 15 for interpreters and questions 19, 20 for military), quality (questions 16, 18 for interpreters and 15, 21 for military), confidentiality (question 17 for interpreters and 22 for military) and skills⁷³ (question 19 for interpreters and questions 23, 11 for military). These generally corresponded to the macro themes identified, although in some cases were merged for the sake of results presentation (for example, mode of interpreting and briefing were presented as ‘working conditions’).

⁷³ The question on gender preference in an interpreter was only asked to the military, as well as the one aimed at categorization, as all interpreters fitted into the local civilian category.

After familiarizing ourselves with the transcribed data (Gavioli & Mansfield 1990, as quoted in Niemants, 2020), these were coded manually⁷⁴ following the coding described above, with the use of tables, as the ones described in figure 12 on the left. As we can see, for each macro or micro topic we reported the answer, if any (in case of no answer we marked it as N/A) provided by each interviewee, either in writing, in the oral interview or in both and kept the two sets of interviewees (interpreters and military representatives) separate, to later compare the results. The same was done for the separate set of data regarding the two military language trainers.

We then analyzed the interview once again to understand if an answer, or specific topic emerged before or after the relevant question in the interview or as an association with other questions.

Although the questions already provided a framework of macro and micro thematic areas, we adopted a deductive approach to data and let themes that had not been initially considered in the questions emerge like abuse, trauma, and financial and pension issues. We finally verified data obtained from the interviews, submitting it to internal and external criticism.

6.2.2 Archives

6.2.2.1 Military and state archives

The search for documentary sources, intended as dispatches, lists, maps, official and unofficial documents, and memoirs, both primary and secondary, was carried out first by identifying available archives both at a national and international level, including the archives of the relevant military missions (UNPROFOR, ECMM, NATO IFOR and SFOR, EU's EUFOR) and the state archives of the countries involved, by contacting them directly through their public offices. Despite the archives existing for military/peacekeeping missions, they were all inaccessible: NATO IFOR and SFOR archives have not been declassified yet, although the mandatory 30 years have passed, as public disclosure can take up to 35 years.

UNPROFOR archives, held mainly in the UN archives in New York, are also classified, and only a few documents are now available online in an archive that we searched with the search words 'interpreter', 'translator', and 'language assistant' for the relevant period (1991-1995). We obtained a total of 12 documents mainly about official meetings at the UN headquarters. denominated as UNAR (UNAR01; UNAR02; UNAR03; UNAR04; UNAR05; UNAR06; UNAR07; UNAR08; UNAR09; UNAR10; UNAR11 and UNAR12).

Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 travel restrictions, it was not possible to visit such archives to verify the presence of other documents, but our inquiries showed that potential documents in the UN archives are usually about procedural issues and official conference proceeding rather than locally recruited language assistants. The UN also has partially digitized online photographic archives (Takeda & Baigorri Jalón, 2016), which we searched with our three search words retrieving a total of only two pictures (PIC01; PIC02).

⁷⁴ We initially wanted to use Nvivo, which guarantees replicability and quality of elaboration, but we eventually decided against it as the software was not available in our University Department.

EUFOR archives are inaccessible as the mission is still active, as are those of the Italian army, Italian Navy, and Italian Airforce, as well as many relevant archives contacted in other European states (France, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands, the UK, the Archives du Service Historique de la Défense Française, Biblioteca Virtual de la Defensa, Military Heritage Archives of Canada). Other archives, like the *Bundesarchiv* or the Dutch National Archives, were searched but with no results given our lack of language knowledge to sift through the results.

The archives of the European Community Monitor Mission (ECMM) have recently been transferred to the Croatian National Archives (*Hrvatski Državni Arhiv*) in Zagreb, which features a fund that brings together documents of the Croatian office within the ECMM (*Hrvatski Ured pri Promatračkoj Misiji Europske Zajednice*). The archives were visited personally in September 2021, but documents could not be consulted due to bureaucratic issues. No documents on interpreters were available in the Croatian Memorial and Documentation Centre of the war of independence, at the *Muzejski Dokumentacijski Centar* in Zagreb, at *Sense Centar* in Pola, a reference point for all documentation about the conflict, nor in the War independence Museums in Dubrovnik and Split. According to our inquiries, no documents on interpreters were held at the Bosnian Institute, the Bosnian National Library, the archives of the Republika Srpska, and the National Archives of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The United States National Archives, which are freely searchable online, feature 10 pictures of interpreters of which nine were retained (PIC03; PIC04; PIC05; PIC06; PIC07; PIC08; PIC09; PIC10; PIC11), all from the SFOR and IFOR years, while two official documents were found on the online repository of the Croatian Gazette (DOC01; DOC02).

Finally, ICTY archives were also searched for the search words ‘interpreter’, ‘translator’, and ‘language assistant’, but the archives’ online repository do not function properly: trial records often cannot be visualized, and video recordings are unavailable. Also, going through all the transcripts containing the search words would have taken too much time, as the tribunal’s interpreters are often mentioned in the proceedings. We, therefore, decided to use ICTY trial records as a secondary source to verify stories or information from other sources, retaining 11 documents (ICTY01; ICTY02; ICTY03; ICTY04; ICTY05; ICTY06; ICTY07; ICTY08; ICTY09; ICTY10; ICTY11).

6.2.2.2 Media archives

Our second step was to look for references to interpreters in the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina within media outlets and newspapers. We expected to find both written references (news articles) and audiovisual ones (audio, photographs, and footage) as the conflict was among the first ones to have been fully filmed and broadcasted on TV. We first searched online archives of major international news organizations, using the same keywords indicated above, and then moved to the main national-coverage newspapers and outlets in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia, as well as those of the main European states and the US. One of the main issues here was that only a few news outlets have digitized their archives completely,

while the rest have a searchable database of their paper archives, if any, but many of these could not be visited due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

We were able to find relevant documents in the online digitized archives of Associate Press, a NY-based non-profit news agency, featuring four videos portraying interpreters (VID04; VID05; VID06; VID07). Interesting articles were also found in the online archives of the *New York Times* (NWS04 01; NWS 05; NWS17), *La Stampa* (NWS03), *Toronto Star* (NWS07), *Le Monde* (NWS15; NWS16), *Al Jazeera Balkan*, (NWS18), the *BBC* (NWS21) and *NBC News* (NWS28).

We then focused on news outlets and newspapers in the area, both national and regional ones with consistent circulation, but many, such as *Liljan*, *Večernje Novine*, *Vjesnik*, *Slobodni Tjednik*, *Feral Tribune* are out of print today and their archives are difficult to locate and access⁷⁵ while most of those still in print do not have digitized archives that go back to the 1990s. The only news site with a searchable online digital archive is that of the Croatian newspaper *Slobodna Dalmacija*, which we searched for the search words *prevoditelj/prevodilac*⁷⁶/*prevodjenje/ jezični asistent* ('language assistant') obtaining a total of five articles from 1991 and 1992 (NWS08; NWS09; NWS10; NWS11; NWS12). Other news articles were found on *infobiro*, a repository established by media researchers and journalists which contains digitalized issues of the most important media in Bosnia and Herzegovina including *Oslobođenje*, *Dnevni list*, *Nezavisne novine*, *Dani*, *Start*, *Slobodna Bosna*, *Liljan*, etc. Articles from Sarajevo's *Oslobođenje* were provided by the National Library of Sarajevo (NWS01; NWS02; NWS06; NWS14), while other articles were obtained from news portals online, by searching the internet with Boolean operators: *Slobodna Europa* (NWS19), *BNP portal* (NWS13), *Politika* (NWS22), *Vreme* (NWS27), *Metroportal.hr* (NWS25), *Nin* (NWS23), *Jutarnji List* (NWS24), *Kurir.rs* (NWS29), and *Žurnal* (NWS26). Two videos were retrieved from the Croatian online news outlet *Dnevno.Hr* (VID01; VID02) and one from *YouTube* (VID03) that were used either as primary and/or secondary sources.

Finally, a useful media archive was the one of the Imperial War Museum (IWM) in London, containing footage from UN-TV donated by the UN to the museum when it stopped operating at the end of 1996⁷⁷. Established in early 1994 to improve UNPROFOR's credibility, this small film unit became a proper television led by Roy Head and could report from both sides of the confrontation line. Between July 1994 and January 1996, UNTV made 211 feature films and 91 video letters to help people find their loved ones and documented atrocities with evidence that was brought to international attention (Bardgett, 2021). The IWM holds 1197 videos for the 1990-2000 period, all catalogued and searchable, although not completely digitized. The search with our search words gave 19 results but only 12 videos had been digitized and could

⁷⁵ For example, *Liljan*, a Muslim Bosnian weekly news political and cultural magazine, considered the official bulletin of Izetbegović's SDA is almost impossible to find. Even though copies should be held at the Central National Library of Sarajevo, our requests for specific issues and articles could not be met.

⁷⁶ Although the term *prevodilac* by 1991 was probably already out of use in Croatia.

⁷⁷ Our special thanks go to Catherine Baker for having shared with us this piece of information. Baker, a renowned scholar from the University of Hull, is currently investigating the UN TV material in detail with a Research Networking Grant funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (Imperial War Museum, n.d.).

be purchased, of which six were relevant for this research (VID08; VID09; VID10; VID11; VID12; VID13).

6.2.2.3 Private archives and memoirs

Given the relatively scarce availability of official public documents and media accounts on interpreters, we also considered private accounts and memoirs, which are not indicated with a reference number, but quoted as literature.

Personal accounts written by direct witnesses to the event, like interpreters and military officers were randomly selected, meaning that we resorted to internet search with relevant search words and word of mouth to gather as many of them as possible.

Four accounts by interpreters were retrieved: the ones by Hasan Nuhanović (2019) and Emir Suljagić (2010), two Srebrenica interpreters, the one by Veselin Gatalo (2004), an SFOR interpreter in Mostar, and one by British military interpreter Miloš Stanković (2001), complemented by three newspaper articles/documents/interviews on interpreters Zrinka Stahuljak (Rigondet, 2020), Marijana Nikolić (Pavetić-Dickey, 2012) and Leila Dizdarevic (Barber Capt., 2002).

Memoirs from military subjects were more numerous, such as those by UNPROFOR commander Michael Rose (1999), by the Head of ECMM in Bosnia, Colm Doyle (2018), by UNPROFOR soldiers Fred Doucette (Doucette & Dallaire, 2009), Paulo Gonçalves (2020), Husum, S.B (1998) and by three Portuguese UNMOS, whose book features an article by former UNMO Francisco Leandro on interpreters (2018). Particularly rich in information were also the numerous papers by Major Roy Thomas, a senior military observer in Sarajevo in 1993-1994 (1997a; 1997b; 2003a; 2003b; 2004; 2016).

The analysis of memoirs, as a subgenre of autobiographical texts, poses several interpretative and methodological challenges for their simultaneous nature as historical documents and personal elaboration of events (see § 6.3.5). As multifaceted texts, they require researchers “to reflect on narrative tropes, social-historical contexts, rhetorical aims and narrative shifts within the historical or chronical trajectory of the text” (Smith & Watson, 2010: 10), this is why many a scholar have analyzed memoirs using theorizations or frameworks.

We nevertheless decided here to use them ‘only’ as historical sources, as many historians before us have done, considering them on equal footing with oral history. They were analyzed using the same Thematic Qualitative Analysis used for interviews, by marking out bits that referred to interpreters and organizing them under the previously described coding references.

Finally, a crucial step in data collection was the access to private archives, that is documents interviewees shared with us. These included language material (LM) like language glossaries or guides (LM01; LM02; LM03; LM05; LM06), or unpublished documents in the possession of single journalists (AUD01), like the partial audio recording of interpreter Darko Močibob⁷⁸

⁷⁸ For the Bosnian television, the ceremony was translated by interpreter Darko Močibob (AUD01; NWS19), a former Croatian surgeon from Sarajevo who had also worked for UNPROFOR and General Rose (Rose, 1999). Darko Močibob joined the United Nations Iraq Program in 1997 and has worked for the UN with a focus on Iraq ever since (United Nations, 2012, as quoted in C. Baker, 2015: 249).

translating the peace declaration of Tuđman, Izetbegović and Milošević at Dayton, aired by Bosnian television.

The most important set of documents from private archives came from military officers (COR 01; COR 02; COR 03; COR 04; COR 05; COR 06; COR 07; COR 08; COR 09; COR 10; COR 11).

6.3 Criticism of sources employed in this research project

What follows is source criticism divided by category, as it would have been virtually impossible to fit into this chapter the reasoning and background checks carried out for each source. For the full list of sources used in this dissertation please refer to Annex C where sources are presented by type and cataloguing number, included for memoirs and academic articles which are quoted as any other published work in this dissertation and included also in the final references. Sometimes progressive order of source cataloguing is interrupted because the source was either non-useful for the purpose of this dissertation or historically unreliable.

6.3.1 Correspondence and private archives

Correspondence and private archives material represented the basis of our research work and consisted of 11 letters, memos and dispatches written and/or received during the UN peacekeeping mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1993 and 1994 (COR series) and in five language support manuals or materials from either UNPROFOR or NATO IFOR/SFOR (LM material).

The correspondence, which was classified as COR with a progressive number, consists of communications between a single officer and his higher-ranking colleagues to gather information on how to employ interpreters (COR01, COR02, COR05, COR06, COR07) or between the said officer and his colleagues to coordinate and solve problems in interpreters' management (COR03, COR08, COR09). Two letters exchanged between the author of this work and the military officer were also included (COR10, COR11).

For source criticism, we first verified the identity of the person providing the documents against several secondary sources (not provided here for privacy reasons) and of the recipients and senders of communication, as well as the dates and events mentioned. They were all written at the time of the event and are all typewritten on official UN paper with the UNPROFOR logo or the logo of the national battalion the soldier belonged to, and they were duly signed - except for memos (COR03, COR09) and the request for commendation for a specific interpreter (COR02) – which confirms their authenticity.

As for the documents' content, it is important to note that they were meant for internal communication and not for the public, although no confidential information is disclosed, which makes them more reliable and informative. Communication is in line with military style, as it is short, explicit, informative, and implicitly confirms issues faced by commanders in managing interpreters in such an unregulated situation. The documents were all considered valid and useful for this dissertation as was the content they presented.

Among language support materials are soldiers' language manuals and phrasebooks (LM01, LM03, LM06), UN language cards for Dutch soldiers (LM05) and the IFOR list of useful expressions (LM02). Limited background information was available for LM02 and LM05, which were obtained through a Facebook group for veterans of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and external and internal criticism could only rely on the card's layout, style, and language, while provenance could only be guessed.

The other language support material consisted of official publications by the army or mission the officers belonged to and carried the official logo of the army or mission, place and year of publication, and name of the author(s) which attest to their authenticity, as does the fact that some of these language phrases show signs of wear and tear as they were carried to the war zone by their owners.

6.3.2 Documents from official archives

Under the heading of documents from official archives are catalogued documents that we obtained from official sources, like the UN archives, or state institutions.

In the first batch of official documents are those retrieved in the UN online archives, listed as UNAR with progressive numbers (from 01 to 12), of which only UNAR 11, 12, 01, 03, and 05 were used in the data analysis. The documents, which have been recently declassified, have all been produced by the UN headquarters' offices between 1991 and 1995, originally on paper support, and they have been archived indicating the document's series, box, file number, and ACC (archive number). They are all typewritten and always feature the UN letterhead and in case of correspondence, they all carry a stamp with the filing number and date and the scanned picture of the envelope they were sent in, thus proving their authenticity. Again, documents were meant to be confidential and written with the purpose of updating UN officials on the progress of war talks, and we can assume that their content did not have any specific propaganda purpose and can therefore be trusted after double-checking the information they contain. Content-wise, almost all documents are reports of the meetings held with Yugoslav officials and politicians at the UN headquarters in New York which were useful here as they always state the name of interpreters, except for UNAR05, UNAR12; and UNAR13 which are reports and UNAR09 a cable sent by officials on the ground to update the UN on the situation.

Another set of official documents are two Croatian pieces of legislation (DOC01 and 02) passed in 1998 and 2002 respectively, published in the Croatian Official Gazette and available online, which proves their authenticity and truthfulness as historical sources for legal purposes. The content of both documents has also been verified: for DOC02, which lists some of the ECMM interpreters' names, we were able to identify some of the interpreters we interviewed, while for DOC01 the decision to appoint Vera Varga, former supervisor of Croatian ECMM interpreters as head of the office for European integration has also been verified with two of our interviewees. Two other pieces of legislation mentioned in this thesis are those specifying the requisites to obtain the status of veterans in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia (Federacija BiH, 2004; Republika Hrvatska, 2017).

6.3.3 Videos

Videos filmed by the UNTV crews in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and catalogued with VID plus progressive numbers (VID08, VID09, VID10, VID11, VID12, VID13) were mainly obtained through the Imperial War Museum of London, which categorized and digitized them since they were originally in VHS format. The videos were filmed mainly in Croatia, in the areas around Knin in 1995, and some footage was taken only a couple of days after *Operation Storm*, while one was filmed in a military hospital in Zagreb. Each video features only an archival number and the logo of the IWM but production time and date, name of filmmaker, technical details and the names of the institutions and subjects mentioned are provided in the IWM online archive files, and they have been checked with secondary sources. External criticism confirms the reliability of the video sources, while internal criticism urged the researcher to bear in mind that they are the result of putting together scrap footage and bits of filmed material, and that they are sometimes partial, although this does not affect their coverage of events and their reliability as primary historical sources. Their incompleteness and bad sound quality are the reasons why the researcher applied Conversation Analysis of the interpreted events and language recorded in the videos only at a superficial content level: in VID09 and VID10, for example, the interpreter-mediated speech is often interrupted in the footage to the point where it is not possible to decide if the adjacent turns are respected and therefore to evaluate them. Content-wise, the facts expressed in the videos were checked when possible, when not, just like for memoirs, we considered that the stories told by interviewees might be true, but also influenced by their own narrative and that of the filmmaker, although this does not affect their value for the language analysis carried out here.

As for videos that did not belong to UNTV used in this dissertation, they were obtained through the Associated Press online archives (VID03; VID04; VID05; VID06). They all have been filmed in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1994 and 1995 by journalists and filmmakers whose names have been checked and verified with other sources, as well as places and dates appearing on the video screen and the related descriptions. Just like UNTV videos, they are sometimes of poor quality, partial, and filmed by individual journalists that might have had their opinion on the situation and as such their content was carefully considered before using them as historical sources.

Finally, in our language and historical analysis, we used one video which was first published by the Croatian online magazine *Dnevno.Hr* (VID01) in 2018. The video was filmed in a school functioning as a refugee camp in the Croatian *Krajine* the day after Operation Storm by Dražen Travaš, who worked for World Television News as a cameraman at the time. The VHS tape does not feature any information, like place or date, as it probably never went as far as pre-production and was never aired, although a careful analysis of visual elements, language and details (like the interpreter's identification card) confirms its authenticity. Just like the other two sets of videos, this video also features poor to medium quality although the part we used for the analysis of the interpreted event allowed for a full transcription of the language content. As per internal historical criticism, we considered it as a source, although being fully aware that their content reliability might be biased. In this respect, we had to take into account that the video was only published in 2018, that the footage was cut and sewn together by the

filmmaker, whose political aim could also have been to discredit UN interpreters and protect the image of Croatian soldiers who liberated the area.

6.3.4 Pictures

Pictures of interpreters in the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, classified as PIC with a progressive number, were obtained from UN Archives (PIC 01 & 02), the US National Archives (PIC 03 to 11) and from private archives, of which only one has been included in our analysis (PIC13). Except for PIC13, all pictures used were generally taken by professional army photographers following UN and IFOR and SFOR troops in Bosnia and Herzegovina. They were all catalogued with dates, place names, operation names, names of subjects portrayed including interpreters (although our verification showed these are probably fake names to protect interpreters' identities) and credits to the photographer. While their authenticity seems certain, internal criticism of pictures points out that they might have been taken or staged to express a particular sentiment, or as propaganda tools to gather public support (Fernández Ocampo & Wolf, 2014).

A special case is PIC13, a picture we obtained from one of our military interviewees, taken at the Tuzla airbase in the summer of 1995 by the interviewee's colleague, whose name was verified but remains hidden for privacy reasons. The picture, which was sent to us in a scanned version, looks authentic, as proven by the soldiers' epaulettes and grades, the ID card hanging on the interpreter's neck, and the UN headquarters sign on the door behind the subjects. It portrays the officer and his interpreter, whose name was verified but will remain undisclosed for privacy reasons as well. Here, the picture was not meant to be shown to the public or convey a message, but probably only to record a special moment and/or bond between the two, which improves its content reliability.

6.3.5 Memoirs, academic articles and publications

In this dissertation, we used several memoirs written by interpreters (Stanković, 2001; Woodhead, 2002; Gatalo, 2004; Suljagić *et al.*, 2010; Ivanji, 2014; Nuhanović *et al.*, 2019; Badnjević-Orazi, 2019; Rigondet, 2020) and military representatives (Husum, 1998; Rose, 1999; Doucette & Dallaire, 2009; Doyle, 2018; Baschiera, 2019; Gonçalves, 2020). They lived the event of the war in the first person and can therefore be considered primary sources, even though some were published some twenty years after the events and might have been influenced by memory and personal writing narratives.

Memoirs are by definition personal and individual and might be written to accuse, defend oneself, or present one's opinion of a specific event (Schmidt & Sutton, 2016), but as we have seen, they can be used in historical research provided that they are submitted to careful analysis. Therefore, for each of them, we carefully analyzed the background information on the author, their life and career trajectory, stances and opinions, as well as many of the events mentioned against secondary sources like ICTY trial records, newspapers articles, academic articles, and other memoirs, when available.

If understood as pieces of the historical puzzle that provide partial, but valuable insight and they can be considered reliable for the part of the information on which they relay: former UK

officer and interpreter Miloš Stanković, for example, wrote his memoirs after being accused of colluding with the Serbs and having left the UK army. That does not mean, however, that his observations on interpreting are necessarily misleading: he might try to downplay his role and presence in certain events, but the information he provides on military interpreters' deployment, in general, is confirmed by other sources.

For example, for Srebrenica interpreter Hasan Nuhanović, several documents were available as secondary sources including a documentary by Leslie Woodhead, *A cry from the grave* on the fall of Srebrenica (Woodhead, 2002). When in doubt about an item or affirmation, we contacted the author directly if possible, like we did, for example, with Gatalo, and left it out if it could not be verified.

An exception to this is Baschiera's (2019) book which brings together reports and cables from the Italian Folgore units deployed to Sarajevo in 1996 and 1997. The military communication could of course not be double-checked, but we verified the author's background and some of the events mentioned.

A somewhat different set of memoirs are the ones used for chapter 9, as they come from a series of articles published in the monthly bulletins of the Croatian Association of Conference Interpreters (Hrvatsko Društvo Konferencijskih prevoditelja, 2012; 2013; 2014), an article by Belgrade Interpreter Nikola-Kolja Čajkanović in *Prevodilac* (Z. Jovanović, 2006), books (Ivanji, 2014) or presentations (Ivanji, 2002; Ašperger, 2007). In all these cases the historical criticism of sources considered issues like objectives of disclosure, time distance and memory. It took a long time to verify the facts used for historical reconstruction, using secondary sources, like members' profiles on Professional Associations' pages, online articles, interviews, and pictures.

The same procedure was followed for academic articles even though the validity and reliability of academic research should be already guaranteed. For each article, we gathered information on the author and double-checked every event mentioned, often contacting the authors directly, as we did with Zrinka Stahuljak who confirmed she had wrongly reported the year when Croatian ECMM interpreters started to be paid for their services in one of her articles. Although trusting the professionalism of fellow academics and the publishers, this procedure proved essential as sometimes, even the most quoted academic articles relay information that cannot be used as historical evidence. A case in point is that of the mistranslation by a Croatian interpreter in a TV program from October 1993 described by Dragović-Drouet in her most famous article (Dragovic-Drouet, 2007) and explained in § 8.2.2.

6.3.6 Newspapers articles

Newspapers can serve as useful primary sources for historical research as they provide a glimpse into society at the time they were created and have been identified in the literature as the "most important" and "most used" type of material (Tibbo, 2002) although they were often shunned as historical sources (Knudson, 1993). We used here 21 newspaper articles listed as NWS with a progressive number (NWS01 to NWS 21), mostly from the 1991-1995 period, which were published in local and international newspapers.

Although aware that newspapers, just like videos, might be authentic in their reporting of information, but also biased in their presentation and interpretation of facts, we included them here because we believe that the perception of an event, in this case by the press, is as crucial as the facts pertaining to the event itself. However, this required careful analysis of the information presented, as it was virtually impossible, for some articles, to verify if the news was reported from first-hand or second-hand witnesses. We nevertheless tried, when possible, to check the content with other sources and online information and, most importantly, we ran background checks of the editorial line of the newspaper, or journalist (when specified). For example, many of the articles were taken from *Slobodna Dalmacija* which was a Croatian newspaper and therefore adopted an anti-Serb stance, just like New York Times' author Roger Cohen, who had a particularly envenomed pen towards general Rose and what he considered his 'Serb penchant'.

6.3.7 Interviews

When used as historical sources, interviews should also be subject to internal and external criticism, although criticism was mainly internal here, as the document (the interview) was created by the author and its authenticity was taken for granted.

Before using any type of data obtained in the interviews we, therefore, verified their content carefully, either with questions asked during the interview or afterwards or by double-checking events and people mentioned. If verification was possible for some events and anecdotes recounted, for others, belonging to the daily life of subaltern protagonists of history, it was simply impossible, as they did not make the pages of a newspaper nor left any public traces.

In that case, anecdotes were used with a grain of salt – they were included if they seemed plausible and if the general recollection of the interviewee seemed verifiable, authentic and independent - and always presented as personal opinions of the interpreters, not historical facts. We also considered that the events discussed here happened some thirty years ago and that interviews are “the contingent product of memory that filters recollections of the past through a speaker’s self-presentation years later”(C. Baker, 2019b: 160) and that they could be heavily impacted by memory and remembering, shifted allegiances, conscious and/or subconscious narratives, or the respondents knowing each other and having worked with interpreters in other missions.

Chapter 7: LIAISON INTERPRETING IN THE WARS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AND CROATIA: PERI-PROCESS ASPECTS

In the next three chapters we will be presenting the original results of this PhD project, obtained through interviews with military representatives, interpreters, and military language trainers and the analysis of historical documents, pictures, written accounts, videos, and newspaper articles.

The first two chapters (Chapters 7 and 8) will be presenting the bulk of results and focus primarily on locally recruited civilian liaison interpreters who worked on the ground for UNPROFOR, ECMM, and NATO during the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia⁷⁹. Interpreters working at the higher-political level, usually in peace talks and in simultaneous mode will be discussed in Chapter 9.

In a few instances we will be referring here to civilian interpreters from TCCs, liaison officers⁸⁰ or military interpreters, but their experience is underrepresented due to the lack of information for security reasons, although we believe that, should they happen to read this work, they would confirm that some of the points raised here applied to them as well.

Results will be presented following the same structure adopted in the thematic literature review of Chapters 4 and 5, splitting the analysis into peri-process and in-process aspects, loosely inspired by Kalina's (2006) categorization for greater clarity. In Chapter 7, we will be discussing categorization, recruitment, employment (contracts and benefits, payment, age and gender, ethnicity, working conditions), training, and risks and protection. In Chapter 8 we will be considering interpreters' tasks and skills, interpreting quality, interpreters' ethics (including status, neutrality, and confidentiality), trauma and, finally, the BCMS language question.

7.1 Categorization

The analysis of documents collected and the results emerging from our interviews with both military representatives and interpreters do not yield new results as per the categorization of interpreters in the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s.

They generally confirm that liaison interpreters were referred to as 'language assistants' within the UNPROFOR mission and connected agencies, a label that has been criticized in the literature (Thomas, 2004; Fidahić, 2018; Gallai, 2019) for being a bureaucratic *escamotage* that denied local interpreters the salaries, welfare provisions and protection granted to UN interpreters in the UN headquarters and offices in the US and Europe.

This approach seems to emerge also from one of the documents retrieved, dated September 16, 1994 (COR04) in which the Chief of the Local Staff Unit at HQ UNPROFOR explained to a Military Officer in Sarajevo who inquired about interpreters' management, that he had no idea

⁷⁹ Most interpreters interviewed (nine) worked during the war years (1991-1995) and only three only after 1996 %. Five worked for UNPROFOR, two for UN agencies like UNHCR or UN International Police, two for NATO one for foreign media.

⁸⁰ Liaison officers guarantee contact or intercommunication between elements of military forces or other agencies to ensure mutual understanding and unity of purpose and action; they usually speak one or more languages and often act as interpreters for their commanding officers.

how the term language assistants came to be used. He sustains that “it has the value to be a generic term denoting someone working as an interpreter or translator while avoiding potential confusion with the standards expected of local staff and UN professional Interpreters/Translators”.

It seems, therefore, that such a categorization was adopted to account for the very broad and varied description of tasks that locally-recruited civilian interpreters performed, rather than a way to deny those interpreters the rights and perks that came with their position, although it might be just a front explanation, as it is unlikely that a UNPROFOR manager would state on an official document that the reason behind such system was to save money on local staff.

If the official community of interpreters has criticized this system, however, what emerges from the documents we analyzed, and from interpreters interviewed is that they did not seem to be bothered by such a categorization. They seem to accept the fact that they belonged, at least at the time, to a subaltern category that was very different from the UN and even former Yugoslav conference interpreters described in Chapter 9. I01 even claims that ‘language assistant’ was the perfect description for their job, as it better reflected the plethora of roles and tasks they covered and goes as far as to suggest that the simple term ‘assistant’ would have, at times, fit even better with their actual duties.

I04, who later went to work for ICTY interrogators and the ICTY itself and became a professional conference interpreter, also agrees that the term ‘language’ should be dropped, and that the institution of ‘language assistants’ should be abolished and replaced with a more general job description that is not necessarily focussed on languages and reflects the variety of tasks performed and the lack of professionalisation.

As per the NATO years, no specific information was found in the documents or interviews on the categorization of interpreters and their official titles, which seems to suggest that each contingent within NATO IFOR/SFOR employed a plethora of different headings, with some having little to do with interpreting, as supported in the available literature: when NATO language experts Ian Jones and Louise Askew arrived in Sarajevo to reorganize NATO language support services they found that half of the interpreters were employed as ‘administrative staff’, ‘legal assistants’, ‘interpreters’, ‘buyers/translators’, ‘driver/interpreters’ (Jones & Askew, 2014: 49).

7.2 Recruitment

As we have seen in Chapter 5, information on the recruitment of local civilians is almost non-existent in the literature for the ECMM and very fragmented for UNPROFOR, whose recruitment procedures were initially ad-hoc and only later underwent some standardization (Kelly & Baker, 2013). More information is available on the recruitment of interpreters by NATO IFOR and SFOR, especially since 1998 when Ian Jones and Louise Askew (2014) reorganized the NATO language support service in Sarajevo, therefore the information presented here, obtained through interviews and documents, concerns primarily the ECMM and UNPROFOR.

7.2.1 European Community Monitoring Mission (ECMM)

The recruitment of interpreters for the ECMM (European Community Monitoring Missions) in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia seems to have been organized by local authorities, that is the newly formed Croatian and Bosnian governments, through liaison offices. M13, who was one of the first officers to arrive in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the ECMM claims that all his interpreters were already there when he arrived and that they were provided by the Bosnian government. This is confirmed by Irish colonel Colm Doyle, the first commander of ECMM, in Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1991 to 1992 (Doyle, 2018) whose three interpreters Rade Kosić, the director of an electronic import-export company, Vera Ljubičić and lawyer Darko Ivić were all provided by the BiH government and headed by Hajrudin Somun, a senior advisor to Bosnian President Alija Izetbegović, who sometimes also translated into English. This is also confirmed by I11 who worked for the ECMM in Sarajevo, and although information is scant and documentation still inaccessible we can conclude that the ECMM relied in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the local government to recruit interpreters.

The same system was in place in Croatia, where interpreters were recruited through the Croatian Liaison Office⁸¹ (*Hrvatski Ured pri Promatračkoj Misiji Europske Zajednice*) as supported by Stahuljak (2009; Rigondet, 2020) and by the two Croatian ECMM interpreters we interviewed (I02; I07). Since we did not manage to access the ECMM archive in Zagreb, we have no more information on the recruitment procedures, but we learned from interpreters that there was no official recruitment system and that interpreters learned about the job almost by chance, through relatives and friends (I07) or public calls (I02), of which we, unfortunately, found no trace. Since the ECMM was supposed to remain in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina only for a short amount of time, as it had in Slovenia, an ad-hoc recruitment approach was probably adopted to cater for the most urgent language needs, at least in the first months of the mission. As time passed, these ad-hoc recruitment procedures were made permanent and systematized, according to the two interpreters interviewed, by Vera Varga who became the administrative head of interpreters in Croatia and oversaw recruitment procedures.

Their testimony is confirmed by two documents retrieved: DOC02, published in the Croatian Official Gazette (*Narodne Novine* 87/2002) lists Vera Varga's name, together with that of 37 interpreters, in the list of people decorated by the Croatian government with the Homeland War Memorial Medal in 2006 (Predsjednik Republike Hrvatske, 2002)⁸². Another Official Gazette document from 1998, DOC01 (*Narodne Novine* 62/1998), titled *Appointment of Vera Varga as representative of the office for European integration* [my translation] (Vlada Republike Hrvatske, 1998) confirms that she played a key management role in the ECMM, as head of the interpreters' section, which later earned her such an important position when Croatia prepared to enter the European Union. Unfortunately, it was impossible to contact Vera Varga and inquire more about recruitment procedures, as her presence on the internet is almost non-existent, and because, as I07 told us, she currently lives in a retirement facility due to old age

⁸¹ Later called Croatian Assistance Team (I02).

⁸² The document lists 200 people by name (sometimes patronymic), surname, a 13-digit number (probably OIB, the Croatian tax identification number), and the unit they served in during the war. The names of the 38 interpreters are at the bottom of the list and there is no mention of their position, which we inferred because we recognized the name of Zrinka Stahuljak, former ECMM interpreter and scholar who has written at length on the topic in the list. We thank I07 for helping us retrieve the document.

and healthcare issues. However, we would like to stress here that the Croatian ECMM interpreters interviewed remember with appreciation the efforts made by Vera Varga, although with “a lot of on-the-job learning” (I02), to coordinate and recruit interpreters but also to protect them and listen to their needs.

As per recruitment itself, according to I07, the procedure consisted of an interview to investigate the motivations of the interpreters, who later went through a probation period in which they were asked to translate written newspaper and military articles into English, before qualifying for “actual interpreting” (I07). I07 also recounts that both English-speaking monitors and the office led by Vera Varga checked the translation content to guarantee some sort of quality before assigning an interpreter to on-the-field work.

This type of filtering procedure, according to I07, was necessary because of the great number of people with no skills that applied for interpreting jobs sometimes only guided by voluntarism or acquaintances: “there were some people who came into the office maybe they had some local politicians recommending them, but I remember one girl she couldn’t make a word in English, and she was there for three days or so hanging there but eventually she was fired” (I07).

To conclude, the ECMM, both in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia seems to have relied on local governments to provide interpreters that were hired through word-of-mouth and public notices, and very likely, at least in Croatia, selected with an interview and a probation translation period and managed through a central office. Unfortunately, information is scant for Bosnia and Herzegovina, for which further research is necessary, also to verify if, in the two countries at play here, the mission adopted different recruitment strategies or if general centralized European Community guidelines were provided in this respect.

7.2.2 United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR)

If the information on ECMM recruitment is still incomplete, we managed to gather precise and unprecedented information on UNPROFOR interpreters’ recruitment, thanks to the greater number of UNPROFOR soldiers and interpreters interviewed and documents obtained from private archives.

The literature tells us that in the first months of the war, UNPROFOR recruited interpreters on an ad-hoc and highly informal basis (C. Baker 2010b; Kelly & Baker, 2013) through recommendations and connections, spurred by the urgency to find language intermediaries for the legions of UN personnel.

Such ad-hoc recruitment is confirmed also by the accounts of two Srebrenica interpreters, Hasan Nuhanović (2019) and Emir Suljagić (2010) who were hired because they happened to be walking around the Canadian Battalion compound and started chatting with the guards. Suljagić had used the English he had learned in school and through movies to talk with the Canadian guard outside the compound about the lakes in Ontario when the guard realized his superior had been desperately looking for English interpreters in the enclave (Suljagić *et al.*, 2010: 73-75). Nuhanović’s, who had taught himself English during the siege, was hired when he asked for a cigarette to the Canadian guards, even though he could “grasp every third word” of what they said (Nuhanović *et al.*, 2019: 291).

Interpreters and soldiers interviewed confirm that the UN had initially no recruiting procedure or standing arrangement for interpreters and that jobs were given to people without careful evaluation of their language skills, as underlined by one of the military officers interviewed in this research project: “They basically picked the guys or ladies who could speak English, you can speak English, you can walk, if you speak English and you can walk then you can do it” (M05). I04, an interpreter for UNPROFOR told us something along the same lines when he described recruitment procedures: “I think everybody in Bosnia who could say cowboy or Marlboro got a job as an interpreter or as a translator“ (I04).

Interpreting assignments were initially given to people who showed up at the base, or that learned about the job through connections and recommendations (I01; I03; I06; I08) or public notice posted at the local institutions and newspapers (I05; COR08)⁸³, while mobility from within forces seemed to initially work through recommendation from former commanders or employers (I05; I09).

The literature also states that **testing procedures** varied among the different units and that UK UNPROFOR troops, for example, had no official testing system, except for the one devised by interpreter Dobrila Kalaba and military language trainer Fred Whitaker, which featured a role-play and an interview, and which was discontinued when Dobrila was killed by a sniper (Footitt & Kelly, 2013: 18).

Here our findings disagree with the literature as all UNPROFOR interpreters interviewed (I01, I06, I08, I09) affirm that they were all tested at recruitment although the personnel evaluating them was initially not competent, as confirmed by other authors (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 67; Spahić-Šagolj, 2014: 80; Askew, 2019) and testing was not always organized straight away. This was especially the case for inaccessible outposts or enclaves, like Srebrenica or Goražde, where interpreters were hired informally, like Suljagić or Nuhanović, with payment in kind, on the understanding that they would be tested and receive a contract when they passed their examination.

As per the nature and type of testing, we found no reference to the system devised by Dobrila Kalaba (Footitt & Kelly, 2013: 18) but I06, initially a translator at the Zagreb HQ and later an interpreter, mentions that recruitment involved a brief interview and an essay in English. Nuhanović recounts that his test consisted in a written translation from and into English to be completed in 45 minutes with the use of a dictionary (Nuhanović *et al.*, 2019: 296-297). Former UNPROFOR interpreter Edina Spahić-Šagolj mentions an oral interview (Spahić-Šagolj, n.d.), and Anida Tabenković Pappenkort, recruited in the last months of UNPROFOR in Sarajevo, talks about written translation and a liaison interpreting exercise “administered by a professional testing team from the UN headquarters, one native speaker of the local languages and one native speaker of English” (Jones & Askew, 2014: 53-54).

These accounts of heterogeneous testing systems contradict statements by the military subjects interviewed, who claim that interpreters were hired through a consistent and centralized procedure managed by UNPROFOR HQ (M01; M04; M05; M07; M08), through the Sector

⁸³ The only public call for interpreters we found is one by the Red Cross in *Slobodna Dalmacija* from July 26, 1992 (NWS11), for the hiring of *terenski službenik/prevoditelj* (field agent/interpreter) with good knowledge of English and, possibly, French.

headquarters, which tested candidates' language skills and fluency in English, similar to the one described by Nuhanović (Nuhanović *et al.*, 2019: 296-297).

ORAL TEST: LANGUAGE ASSISTANT

Name of Candidate: _____

Language(s) Tested: _____

Assessment: Please rate the candidate "satisfactory" or "not satisfactory" for each of the following:

1. Ability to comprehend spoken material:
2. Ability to retain spoken material and to repeat back accurately:
3. Range of and accuracy of relevant vocabulary:
4. Fluency:

Overall Assessment: _____

Name of Examiner: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Figure 13: COR 06 - Attachment 2. Oral test sample form for evaluation of interpreters (UNPROFOR, 1994)

In this respect, the UN Documents we obtained have the merit of shedding some light on testing procedures: in COR09 - a draft letter with no head letter sent by a Commander of Military Observers in Sarajevo to several of his superiors probably sometime in the summer of 1994 - the officer asks about interpreters' training, protection, educational background, and selection requirements⁸⁴. COR04, is the reply by the Chief of the Local Staff Unit at HQ UNPROFOR to his request, dated September 16, 1994, which confirms that, as described by interpreters (I01; I06; I08; I09) a more or less centralized testing procedure existed before 1994, but that this was patchy and heavily dependent on arrangements on the ground.

What is interesting in COR04 though, is that the Chief of the Local Staff Unit informs the military observer that in a few months, a new recruitment procedure and grading standards would be introduced for language assistants, with this being the result of a systemization effort, probably undertaken when it became clear that the war would not end soon.

Document COR04 comes with an attachment (COR06) that provides useful and unprecedented information of the testing procedure (1) and a testing evaluation sample for the oral test (2) (Figure 13).

The testing procedure (1) is called "Standards for the Recruitment and Grading of Language Assistants" and is described as an oral and a written test followed by an interview "in the language(s) in which they are required to work".

The first step of the testing procedure was therefore an oral test which consisted of a "presentation of a written text that the candidate must orally translate immediately" and of a question-and-answer session "designed to test the candidate's knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, recall, ability to rephrase and convey the meaning accurately".

If the second part of the oral test is clear in its requirement to read, summarize and reply orally to questions on the written text, it is not clear what it is meant by "orally translate immediately" a text in the first part of the description.

We believe it refers to an oral summary of the text, rather than to sight translation of its content (ST), as it seems unlikely that untrained interpreters would be expected to perform ST, which was still (reductively) used (Ballardini, 1998) as a propaedeutic exercise to simultaneous interpreting at the time (Spilka, 1966; Falbo, 1995), and especially since sight translation has

⁸⁴ He also contacted interpreting scholars and universities and in one of his letters to his successors in Sarajevo (COR03) he provides information on training institutions for the Serbian-English language combination.

never been mentioned as a required skill in documents analyzed nor in the literature on the topic.

As per the skills evaluated in the oral test, attachment 2 proves (Figure 13) interesting as it presents the standard form used for interpreters' oral test evaluation performed by "UN Personnel designated by the Sector Personnel Assistant".

The document is valuable for our purposes, because it tells us what skills were evaluated at the oral test, namely 1) the ability to comprehend spoken/written material; 2) the ability to retain spoken material and to repeat back accurately; 3) the range of and the accuracy of relevant vocabulary, and 4) fluency.

It is interesting to note that the skills and competencies evaluated at the oral test are the ones that figure most frequently in interpreters' assessment, and that if some of them were general language-related skills, like comprehension and fluency in the working languages, the other skills evaluated were eminently professional like memory and reformulation, knowledge of the relevant military and political terminology and accuracy. This point is particularly relevant as it proves that the test, or at least the evaluation of it, was prepared by someone with some kind of knowledge of interpreting and what skills interpreters should possess to perform their work, although no information is available as per to whom devised such a testing procedure. Also, it is remarkable that professional interpreting skills were prioritized even though almost all locally recruited interpreters had no previous interpreting training nor experience (C. Baker, 2010; Footitt & Kelly, 2013: 185).

Satisfactory rating on all elements was necessary to pass the oral test and have access to the written test prepared by the Civilian Personnel Section in Zagreb. According to Attachment 1, the written test consisted in a translation from the candidate's native language into the working and/or the missions' language (s). Sector Personnel Assistant ensured that the test paper was marked with a numeric code corresponding to the candidate and then forwarded with the decode sheet to Chief Local Staff Unit, Civilian Personnel Section in Zagreb for evaluation, probably to avoid the rigging of results, given the fact that interpreting jobs were highly coveted positions, as we will see in the following chapters (§8.2.1.1).

In Zagreb, "spelling, grammar, syntax and accuracy of translation" were evaluated with a mark that could be pass, marginal (pass with reservations) or fail.

If the written test was passed successfully or with reservations the candidate sat an oral interview with their prospective supervisor and Sector Personnel Assistant and/or designated of the Sector Administration, conceived as "a supplementary test of language skills" a "means of eliciting further relevant information about the background of the candidate" and to "assess self-confidence and maturity" (COR06).

To be successfully hired candidates needed to pass all three tests although Attachment 1 specifies that exceptions could be made in cases of "demonstrated difficulty in recruiting fully qualified language assistants in the required language". Such exceptions were probably responsible for the heterogeneous level of language assistants recorded in the literature (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 97) and that Jones and Askew found upon their arrival in Sarajevo years later (Jones & Askew, 2014).

It is impossible to gauge the level of difficulty of the test, although Nuhanović reports, in his memoirs, that he considered the test extremely difficult for his level of English and that only a small percentage of candidates passed the centralized test (Nuhanović, 2019).

This is confirmed also by COR08, the commander of the UNPROFOR Battalion in Visoko in December 1994, who wrote to his colleague in Sarajevo that they had decided to submit their interpreters to short-written exam and a brief interview conducted by the second in command of the Headquarters squadron and the battalion's senior translator to screen candidates before formal testing with the Sector South Command. The system was conceived, he continued in the letter, as a first selection of the many candidates "who cannot even conduct a conversation in English, let alone facilitate communication", and was considered useful "since taking this initiative, 90 % of the candidates referred to Gornji Vakuf pass their entrance exams, compared to less than 10 %". COR08 is also valuable, as it confirms that the passing rate for centralized testing were extremely low, around 10%, which is not surprising considering that the test was aimed at evaluating professional skills, like accuracy, memory, reformulation and specific military vocabulary, and that most interpreters had no previous interpreting training nor experience and had often learned English on their own (§ 7.4).

The documents described here are historically important because they provide detailed information on a fairly consistent recruitment process for language assistants introduced in 1994 and contradict the literature's claim that no centralized testing system existed (C. Baker 2010b; Kelly & Baker, 2013). Also, they refute the assumption that, if anything, testing procedures gave "little idea of the actual strengths and weaknesses in the candidates' knowledge of the language/s" (C. Baker, 2012c), as the procedure described above takes into account translation skills, albeit written, as well as oral language skills and some interpreting skills, like reformulation or memorization, although others like note and turn-taking are left out of the picture.

We nevertheless believe that no role-plays, like the ones mentioned by Pappenkort (Jones & Askew, 2014: 53-54) were used, at least in this stage, especially since the use of role-plays as a pedagogical tool in interpreters' training became established at the end of the 1990s, beginning of 2000s, as proven by the numerous publications on the topic (Ballardini, 2006; Rudvin & Tomassini, 2011; Niemants & Cirillo, 2017). At the same time, if self-confidence and maturity were evaluated in the interview, other personality traits that interpreting studies have identified as recommended in interpreters, like self-control and ability to work under time and physical stress, teamwork skills (Seleskovitch, 1968; Henderson, 1980; Rudvin & Tomassini, 2011), emotional stability (Bontempo & Napier, 2011), extraversion (Seleskovitch, 1968) and curiosity (Seleskovitch, 1968; Henderson, 1980) were not taken into account. This reflects a general lack of understanding as per what the skills and personality traits are required in an interpreter in conflict zones, also emerging from ICZ literature (§ 4.3.6), especially among military representatives who seem to require from their interpreters, military rather than interpreting skills, an aspect that will be approached in detail in later paragraphs (§7.4.1 and 8.1.2).

7.2.3 NATO Implementation (IFOR) and Stabilisation Force (SFOR)

According to available literature, NATO-led missions IFOR and SFOR, which replaced UNPROFOR in 1996 and 1997, did not use any of the linguistic expertise of the NATO command structure or the testing procedure developed by UNPROFOR (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 97) and, as described above, it wasn't used until at least the reorganization of language support services in NATO HQ in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1998 (Jones and Askew, 2014). Before that date each HQ, division and contingent recruited translators and interpreters independently, often for nonlinguistic attributes such as gender or physical appearance, which resulted in recruitment procedures that were patchier than in UNPROFOR times (Askew, 2019: 232). Tarik Begović, an interpreter for SFOR and later EUFOR in Tuzla mentions a TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) test, while Vera Andrassy who was hired in Zagreb by IFOR at the end of 1995 was only required to sit an oral interview (Jones & Askew, 2014: 54-55). Veselin Gatalo, former SFOR interpreter for the French-led Division South in Mostar recounts, in his book, that he was required, at hiring, to produce a written translation into French and to translate some sentences into English and that he was hired even though his performance was initially poor (Gatalo, 2004: 13-19).

Military interviewees M10 and M12, deployed within NATO IFOR and SFOR, with the Italian and Moroccan contingent respectively, confirm that recruitment and selection were managed by the national contingent and that each contingent adopted the procedure they deemed fit.

For example, the Italian forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina had a habit to recruit interpreters straight from universities – according to M10 many of their interpreters had either studied Italian in Banja Luka at the Faculty of Philosophy or had learned the language by living in Italy as refugees – to make sure that at least their language skills were up to the task. The Italian army evaluated their interpreters with an interview in Italian, aimed at screening the candidate's security background, an oral test, which consisted in reading a newspaper article or text in Italian, about “10-15 centimeter long” (probably around 15-20 lines) and in answering to questions on the said text, and with a written translation into Italian.

Here too, language needs on the ground and the specific situation of each interpreter were considered at recruitment: M10 remembers that an interpreter was hired even though her Italian was poor, as securing the job as an interpreter was her only option to support her family, but that the interpreter worked hard to improve her language skills, achieving excellent results.

What is interesting here is that the recruitment procedure of the Italian contingent is very similar, if not identical, to the recruitment procedure that UNPROFOR adopted after 1994 and described in the documents above. Although we do not know how interpreters' tests were evaluated, and according to which skills, this contradicts the available literature (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 97) and seems to suggest that the previous experience gained by UNPROFOR was not discarded altogether but that some elements of it remained in some national contingents. This is further supported by the description of the recruited procedure at the French-led SFOR unit in Mostar provided by Gatalo (2004: 13-19).

Despite discrepancies in the literature and our data, it seems nevertheless that the situation at SFOR HQ Sarajevo was extremely patchy in terms of recruitment when NATO experts Ian Jones and Louise Askew arrived in 1998 to reorganize language support services, which they judged disorganized and low-quality (Askew, 2019: 232). The two language experts set to work

to centralize and harmonize recruitment procedures in Camp Butmir, in Sarajevo, for the whole of Bosnia and Herzegovina, establishing a common selection procedure for both new hires and existing employees, which included short consecutive or liaison interpreting tests and an interview to evaluate skills and appropriateness for the job.

7.3 Employment

This section aims at completing the fragmented information available in the literature and presented in Chapter 5 on the employment of locally recruited interpreters, focusing on issues such as contracts and benefits, payment, age and gender, ethnicity and working conditions.

Before detailing the employment conditions of interpreters on the ground, we tried to calculate the total number of interpreter employed throughout the UNPROFOR, ECMM and IFOR/SFOR missions, an aspect that is still considered unclear in the literature, with estimates up to 2000 interpreters in peak times (Kelly & Baker, 2013).

Nevertheless, without access to official missions archives, the task proved difficult, and the information collected remains patchy with differences emerging in the numbers of interpreters used in the 1991-1995 missions as opposed to the post-1995 ones, as well as in different units. M3, who led a UNMO team of 10/12 observers in Sarajevo in 1993, for example, claims to have counted on six interpreters, while Major Roy Thomas⁸⁵, who served as a Senior Military Observer in Sarajevo, states that he relied on 50 interpreters working for his 150-200 UNMOs in Sarajevo in 1993 (Thomas, 2004).

This seems to indicate that a rough proportion of 0.5/0.3 interpreters per UNMO were employed in the 1992-1995 period. Since, as we have seen in Chapter 3, 700-800 UNMOs were deployed to the area in UNPROFOR times, we can estimate that the number of interpreters employed by UNMOs only ranged between 250 and 400.

For other units, included UNPROFOR national contingents, it is difficult to estimate the interpreting needs, as some needed little communication, while others that performed tasks more connected with the local population probably required a higher number of interpreters: for example, a demining unit, would need few or almost no interpreters, whereas a contingent tasked with the collection of human intelligence or communication, probably needed a higher number of interpreters to function.

Taking this into account, if we applied this to the approximate contingent deployed by UNPROFOR (30.000 men) (§ 3.1.1; 3.1.2 & 3.1.3), a prudent proportion of one interpreter per 30 soldiers, we can confirm the overall estimate of 2000 interpreters by Kelly & Baker (2013) although it is almost impossible to establish accurate ratios⁸⁶.

After 1995, with the IFOR and SFOR missions, and at least until the beginning of the 2000s, the number of troops increased consistently and probably also that of interpreters. According to Baschiera (2019: 62) the International Police Task Force in Grbavica, Sarajevo counted 40

⁸⁵ Major Francis Roy Thomas contributed to the debate on interpreters with many articles that have been quoted on several occasions in this dissertation and his stories are corroborated by at least five ICTY proceedings consulted as secondary sources (ICTY01; ICTY02; ICTY03; ICTY04; ICTY05).

⁸⁶ Interpreting needs also varied according to the language spoken by the national contingent. In Sarajevo, for example, M01 reports that the Egyptian Battalion had interpreters from Arabic into English and from English into the local language, whereas the Russians and Ukrainians battalions did not use any interpreters (§ 8.5).

policemen and 40 interpreters in July 1996, thus suggesting a 1:1 soldier/interpreter ratio, although here with differences from one unit to another.

The calculations drafted here are just an attempt to estimate the interpreting needs of the time, as providing a comprehensive figure is still a difficult task, given the different needs of organizations involved, that varied at different moments in the wars (M01). We can conclude nevertheless, that in each of the two countries at war the total number of locally recruited interpreters ranged between 2000 and 3000 in the 1991-1995 period and probably increased in the first years of IFOR/SFOR, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina where the bulk of the NATO troops were deployed, to later go down when the local bases were closed following an improvement in the situation in the country.

It should also be mentioned that non-military organizations were also deployed to the area, such as UNHCR, the Red Cross, the World Food Program, Médecins sans Frontières, and ICTY investigators, which probably more than doubled the need for interpreters.

7.3.1 Contracts and benefits

Information on interpreters' contracts and benefits is extremely scant in the literature for all three missions (UNPROFOR, ECMM and NATO/SFOR).

If ECMM interpreters were generally volunteers with no contract (Stahuljak, 1999; 2009), UNPROFOR language assistants seemed to have been employed under the Special Service Agreements for Local Staff and/or Individual Contractor (Edwards, 2002: 7) and graded according to General Service and related Categories from GS 2 to GS 5 (Thomas, 1995; C. Baker, 2012c; Nuhanović *et al.*, 2019: 296-297). Thomas (1995a) mentions that contracts were drafted following the United Nations Personnel Directive No. 9/59, Policy for the Recruitment and Promotion of Translators and Translator-Precis-Writer Trainees and that interpreters signed a United Nations Special Service Agreement for an Individual Contractor (standard form) but none of these documents are publicly available nor were ever retrieved by scholars. In the same way information on IFOR/SFOR's contracts during the NATO peacekeeping missions is also almost non-existent and still classified.

In the next subparagraph, we will be providing more precise information on interpreters' employment, which finally offers a clear picture of interpreters' contractual conditions, especially for those working in UNPROFOR and SFOR, with contract specimens and provisions.

7.3.1.1 European Community Monitoring Mission (ECMM)

Interviews with two ECMM interpreters confirm, that interpreters were not paid nor had any contract that stated their rights and entitlements (I02; I07) and that their only benefits were free hotel accommodation and food (I02; I07) and in some cases a daily allowance to cover for food and minor travel expenses or food coupons and cigarettes (I11).

Interpreters interviewed claim that they had no right to welfare provisions and that the years they worked for the ECMM were unaccounted for in their pension scheme: "So for these four years I think it was, almost 4 years, I have no record that I have ever worked anywhere, so it's not counted you know, for my pension years or anything, I mean I have a letter from my former

boss and so on that I was a good worker and so on but I have no formal recognition that I did anything in these four years at all” (I02).

Similarly, no sick or maternity leave seems to have been in place: “If I had had a baby, for example, I simply would not have worked, there would actually be no change in my status because there had been no status” (I02). The situation changed in 1994, when interpreters began to be paid as we will see in § 7.3.2, but no copy of those contracts, if any, were found.

7.3.1.2 United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR)

Information acquired on interpreters’ contracts and benefits at UNPROFOR should be divided into two periods, before and after 1994, that is when the reform mentioned in COR06 above entered into force, probably between the end of 1994 and the beginning of 1995.

Interviewees confirm that in the **1991-1994 years**, interpreters worked under short-term contracts (if any). Hasan Nuhanović and Emir Suljagić, in Srebrenica, for example, did not have any contract for the first six months of work and were occasionally paid with food and cigarettes (Suljagić *et al.*, 2010). According to the Swedish officer who managed to have them sit the UN test and grant them accreditation, ultimately saving their life in 1995, this was due to the fact that no interpreting needs had initially been foreseen for enclaves and when they emerged these areas were already difficult to reach, and bureaucratic needs had to be put aside until conditions improved.

On the contrary, interpreters working in big cities had contracts ranging from one to three or six months (Thomas, 1995) although provisions like maternity, sick leave and pensions were not included (I04), while some sort of weekly leave or days off were granted on the basis of specific arrangements with their military supervisors (M04; I08).

On this point, I04 tells the incredible story of a Srebrenica interpreter named Emir⁸⁷, who later died in a car accident, who in July 1995, when the Serbs entered Srebrenica, decided to leave the city on foot and walked for ten days in the woods, without food or water, to reach Tuzla. When he finally got there, he was notified by the UN administration that the ten days he had been trying to escape genocide were considered unaccounted for and would be deducted from his holidays.

Even if contracts probably granted 14-days medical leave (C. Baker, 2012b; 2012c; 2014b), the issue of sick leave and medical insurance emerges as particularly problematic for interpreters interviewed, especially after a Sarajevo interpreter, Emina, hurt her leg while working for the Canadians and was not flown to the main hospital in Zagreb as her military colleagues would have been (I04) (§ 7.3.1). Two similar stories are told by Thomas: one about a Serb woman in Pale who got seriously wounded when working as an interpreter for the UN and received medical care only thanks to a charity (Thomas, 2003: 44), and one about a male Serb interpreter working in Sarajevo who was not accepted by the local hospitals and was treated in Ancona, Italy only thanks to the intercession of his military officers. I01 and I04, confirm this story and

⁸⁷ Emir is described by Nuhanović, as an interpreter with a good level of English and a dictionary always in his hand (Nuhanović *et al.*, 2019: 194). Suljagić confirms the story, although the interpreter is called Senad Alić, who walked for 38 days to reach Tuzla and was denied any days off by the UN until the end of the year (Suljagić *et al.*, 2010: 153-154).

state that the interpreter's supervisors went against their chain of command to evacuate him to Italy, ultimately saving his leg (Thomas, 2003b: 40).

Interpreters interviewed point out that the main problem was not the absence of medical insurance - as healthcare was free in Yugoslavia and in the states emerging from its dissolution - but the actual ability of healthcare institutions to provide medical services in besieged areas that were already struggling to find personnel and drugs. This meant that if interpreters needed medical assistance that could not be provided in Bosnia and Herzegovina, or even in Zagreb, they were abandoned to their destiny or had to rely on their employer's willingness to bend the UN rules to be evacuated, and on their charity to pay for medical expenses. If the injury required several months, or years to recover from, they would lose their job, and see their employability chances reduced as a result.

I04 claims that, for this reason, UNPROFOR interpreters demanded at some point a hazard bonus⁸⁸ and went on strike in Croatia but not in Bosnia and Herzegovina, although no confirmation has been found in other sources.

In the absence of a comprehensive and centralised policy, the military units were often left to compensate as much as they could for the lack of healthcare provisions for their interpreters: in COR 05, a senior military observer in Sarajevo asks his superiors if there was any kind of medical insurance for the Goražde interpreters and mentions having required UN legal assistance on the matter, while in COR08 the commander of the Visoko battalion states that their language assistants could receive basic out-patient medical services from their medical facility, but that its capability was that of a "western small country hospital".

Ultimately, our findings confirm Baker's statement on this point (C. Baker, 2012b: 860-861) and underline a general lack of healthcare provisions for UNPROFOR interpreters who could be treated in civilian and local military facilities (if any), but were not entitled, as foreign troops were, to evacuation for medical reasons, which generally depended on ad-hoc arrangements with their supervisors and chance.

More specific and unprecedented information on interpreters' contracts and benefits in the UNPROFOR years can be found in a copy of the Special Service Agreement for individual contractors of the United Nations that we retrieved from a private archive.

The contract, which resembles the one described by Thomas (1995), is a standard two-page blank document, very likely from the 1992-1994 period, as it was attached in the communication sent by the Chief Local Staff Unit Manager to a military officer dated 16 September 1994 (COR04). It confirms that, until 1994, interpreters were hired as General Service staff (GS) or General Service Staff Level (GSL), that is staff non-headquartered in duty stations.

On the first page of the contract (Figure 14), in the bottom left part there is information about the employer (department, allotment account code, agreement and index no.) and the employee (personal information, address). It then features, in the centre of the page, information on the type of job, to be selected by ticking the box corresponding to one of the different services listed, such as interpreting, translating, proofreading, guiding, training, editing, and again radio

⁸⁸ Indemnification paid for working in dangerous situations that international personnel received. It is currently defined by the UN International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) as 'danger pay' (International Civil Service Commission (ICSC, n.d.).

TV research, clerical work, illustration and narration/voice. The language(s) from and into which linguists are called to translate and/or interpret are then listed with the hourly, weekly or daily fee agreed upon and the currency of payment.

This part of the contract raises two important points: the first is that the standard agreement

The form is titled 'SPECIAL SERVICE AGREEMENT FOR AN INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTOR' and is issued by the United Nations. It contains the following sections:

- Header:** UNITED NATIONS / NATIONS UNIES
- Form Fields:** DEPARTMENT, ALLOCATION ACCOUNT CODE, M.O.D. NO., YEAR, TYPE, SERIAL NO., AGREEMENT NO., INDEX NO., JOB NO. (29)
- Address:** ADDRESS, TEL. NO.
- Work Assignment:** WORK ASSIGNMENT (INCLUDE ANY TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS); THE INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTOR SHALL CARRY OUT THE FOLLOWING FUNCTIONS; JOB NO.; DELIVERY DATE
- Nature of Services:** A grid of checkboxes for tasks: DRAFT, ADAPT, EDIT, PROOFREAD, TYPE, INTERPRET, TRANSLATE, REVISE, CONCORD, INDEX, TRAIN, GUIDE, SECRETARIAL, CLERICAL, RESEARCH, SCRYFF/FEATURE/WRITE, NARRATE/VOICE, ILLUSTRATE, RADIO/TV RESEARCH.
- Title of Document:** TITLE OF DOCUMENT
- Language:** LANGUAGES: FROM TO NO. OF WORDS
- Form to be Submitted:** FORM TO WHICH MATERIAL SHALL BE SUBMITTED
- Commencement and Expiry:** THIS AGREEMENT SHALL COMMENCE ON THE DAY OF '88 AND SHALL EXPIRE ON THE SATISFACTORY COMPLETION OF THE SERVICES DESCRIBED ABOVE, BUT NOT LATER THAN THE DAY OF '89 UNLESS SOONER TERMINATED UNDER THE TERMS OF THIS AGREEMENT.
- Conditions:** THIS AGREEMENT IS SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON THE REVERSE
- Consideration:** AS FULL CONSIDERATION FOR THE SERVICES PERFORMED BY THE INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTOR UNDER THE TERMS OF THIS AGREEMENT THE UNITED NATIONS SHALL PAY THE INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTOR UPON CERTIFICATION BY THE ABOVE-NAMED DEPARTMENT THAT THE SERVICES HAVE BEEN SATISFACTORYLY PERFORMED.
- Payment Options:** (A) A FEE OF MONTHLY DAILY WEEKLY CURRENCY; (B) A FEE OF PER THOUSAND WORDS LUMP SUM INSTALLMENT FEE TOTAL FEE; (C) WHERE TWO CURRENCIES ARE INVOLVED, THE RATE OF EXCHANGE SHALL BE THE OFFICIAL RATE APPLIED BY THE UNITED NATIONS ON THE DAY THE UNITED NATIONS INSTRUCTS ITS BANKERS TO EFFECT THE PAYMENTS; (D) THE FEE IS PAYABLE IN INSTALLMENTS UPON CERTIFICATION OF SATISFACTORY PERFORMANCE AT EACH PHASE.
- Table:** A table with columns for PHASE and AMOUNT.
- Signature:** PROPOSED BY HEAD OF SUBSTANTIVE OFFICE; SIGNATURE; DATE; BY AUTHORIZED CERTIFYING OFFICER; SIGNATURE AND NAME; ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED NATIONS; DATE; I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I HAVE READ THE CONDITIONS ON THE REVERSE; INDIVIDUAL CONTRACTOR; DATE.

Figure 14: UN Special Service Agreement for individual contractor (UNPROFOR, 1994)

was used for several professional profiles, not just interpreters, with some being very different and somehow less problematic, in terms of risk and working conditions from field interpreting. For example, its provisions might be acceptable for someone doing voice/video editing or clerical work for the UN local offices but appear inadequate for interpreters who went out into the field and were exposed to harm and injury. Secondly, the interpreting position indicated here only broadly and very vaguely covers the set of tasks that interpreters, or better ‘language assistants’ performed, and offers a very limited job description. Also, the fact that interpreting is listed here with many other ancillary professions, might be the reason why, when Jones and Askew arrived in Sarajevo in 1998, found interpreters hired under a plethora of titles, like buyers or drivers (Jones & Askew, 2014: 49).

The second page of the contract lists, in ten paragraphs (legal status, obligations, title rights, termination of contract, travel, insurance, service incurred death, injury or illness, arbitration, taxation, other provisions), interpreters’ contractual provisions. Paragraph one, legal status, clarifies that individual contractors are neither representatives of the organization nor staff members or officials, but they may be granted immunities, the status of ‘experts on mission’ and travel certificates. This is probably what gave interpreters the chance to travel through checkpoints, and sometimes abroad, and the immunity that saved the two Srebrenica interpreters although, this was not always respected by the belligerent parties (see § 7.5).

The termination clause is also quite disadvantageous for interpreters who could be fired at any time and on short notice: the contract could be ended by the employer at any time before its expiry date, with written notice sent five days before that date, for contracts up to two months, and fourteen days for contracts over two months. Even if the employee was entitled to compensation in case of contract termination by the employer before its expiry date, this was only limited to the actual amount of work performed and, if the employee decided to terminate the contract before its expiration date, the costs of termination of the agreement would be withheld from their salary.

Paragraph 6, insurance, confirms the lack of healthcare, life and pension provisions emerging from interviews and the literature, as the contract clearly states that “individual contractors are fully responsible for arranging, at their own expenses, such life, health and other forms of

insurance covering the period of their service for the United Nations as they consider appropriate and are in no way entitled to insurance scheme available to United Nations staff members”.

If no sick and maternity leave nor healthcare support was provided, paragraph 7 specifies that only in the event of death, injury or illness “attributable to the performance of service on behalf of the United Nations, in travel status or while working in an Office”, interpreters would be entitled to the same compensation paid, under Appendix D to the Staff Rules of the United Nations/ST/SGB/Staff Rules/Appendix O/Rev.1 to a staff member performing similar functions.

Although the amounts and provisions of such a document can be easily found online, we do not know if such indemnities were actually paid for accidents and injuries to interpreters. On the contrary, it seems that, despite the provision existing in the contract, this was rarely enforced in such difficult and confused times, where interpreters, or their families, were in a disadvantaged position to bargain with the UN, as specified in the many instances of interpreters being left to pay or organize treatment abroad (Thomas, 2003a; 2003b; 2003b; Baker, 2012b; 2012c; 2014b). For example, according to the documents retrieved, the parents of Dobrila Kalaba, a local civilian interpreter killed in 1993 while working for the British contingent of UNPROFOR “never received an official account of her death or any financial compensation or award“ (Forgrave, 2002) so that UNPROFOR troops started a fundraiser for Dobrila’s family (Friends of Dobrila, n.d.).

In paragraph 8, the contract specifies that the UN “undertake no liability for taxes, duty or other contribution payable by the individual contractor on payments made under this contract” and that “no statement of earnings will be issued by the United Nations to the individual contractor”, thus confirming that no contributions to pension plans nor severance packages were foreseen. Finally, while no compensation for overtime is mentioned, the contract states that interpreters were entitled to 2.5 days off per month, although needs on the ground might have affected the actual enjoyment of that right.

The contractual situation described above changed **after 1994** (COR04; Thomas, 1995: 11-2) when new standards for the recruitment and grading of language assistants were implemented, in line with the 300 Series Staff Rules: interpreters were no longer employed against Special Service Agreements as individual contractors but they were now identified, and protected, as UN staff (Ibid: 11-12).

In COR04 we learn that the reform introduced better working conditions and financial and social security provisions for interpreters: it guaranteed 2.5 days annual leave accrual per month (1.5 days for an initial three-month appointment), 2.0. sick days per month, compensation for overtime and access, after the first three months of service, to a Medical Insurance Plan funded by the employee and the employer, contributing 1% and 3% of net pay respectively. This is probably the same UN medical plan mentioned in document COR08, dated December 28, 1994, and written by the Visoko commander, who states that they forced their interpreters to contribute to the medical plan with three percent of their salary.

This system might have also worked as a pension plan, because I08, who had worked for UNPROFOR in Sarajevo from the early years of the war, states that at the end of 1994, they started receiving the “SSN [Social Security Numbers] from the UN with proper contracts,

pension funds, etc.”, although no other mention was found to pension schemes in the data obtained.

The duration of the contracts was still limited and “consistent with the length of the UNPROFOR mandate” although it was extended to a minimum of three months while no bonuses were granted for knowledge of more than one language.

The reform also updated interpreters’ grading system which was determined, before 1994, by the mark obtained at the entrance examination (C. Baker, 2010b), and could range from GSL-2 to GSL-5 (Thomas, 1995; Nuhanović *et al.*, 2019: 296-297; I06). In COR04 we learn nevertheless that, before 1994, GSL 4 was the highest possible position for language assistants, as confirmed by I06 who was denied a promotion to GSL5 level by her Zagreb HQ supervisor. Military officers themselves resented this system and in COR05, a document dated May 14, 1994, a military observer wrote to his Senior Administrative Officer that “a considerable number of interpreters were hired at the GS2 level, but they could function at higher levels” and required testing to upgrade their position.

The 1994 reform introduced posts at the GSL-5 level for language assistants, and requirements for each level were duly described, as reported in COR06.

The **GSL2**, ‘associated language assistant’ post, is described as “the position reserved to people without experience and education or with low scores in testing”. Required qualifications were a high school diploma or equivalent and one year of relevant work experience, which could be replaced by directly related post-secondary education. To be hired, candidates had to pass the oral test, obtain a satisfactory rating at the interview and at least a marginal one on the written test and they could re-take the written exam in six months in case of failure or to upgrade their position. They were entitled to Recruitment Allowance A, on which almost no information was found, but which should refer, judging by its description on the UN official site, to an allowance to cover potential housing and relocation costs.

‘Language Assistant’ at **GSL 3** was “the normal entry level for Language Assistants”, it required a high school diploma or equivalent and two years of relevant work experience outside the UN or one year with the UN, but the non-UN relevant experience could be replaced with a directly related university degree. The candidate had to obtain a passing score in both written and oral tests and have a satisfactory interview rating. GSL3 language assistants were entitled to Recruitment Allowance A and “after 12 months of certified satisfactory performance” they could be issued a new appointment at GSL4 with Recruitment Allowance A.

GSL4 was “the advanced entry level for those who have qualifications in excess of those required at the normal entry-level” or for staff who “have successfully performed for at least twelve months as a fully qualified Language Assistants at the GSL3 level”. GSL4 level required candidates to have a high school diploma or equivalent and at least four years of relevant experience outside the UN or two within the UN, but again, non-UN relevant experience could be replaced by a directly related university degree. They had to obtain a passing score in both the written and oral test and have a satisfactory interview rating. GSL4 positions were entitled to Allowance A, and after 12 months of successful work, if in possession of a certified performance evaluation, they could obtain the next level of Recruitment Allowance (probably B or C), but they could not be automatically promoted to GSL5 level.

This is because **GSL5** level contracts were ‘senior language assistant positions’ usually covered by the pool of interpreters at the headquarters that worked for the top military echelon: “the Force Commander, Sector Commanders, the Civil affairs special delegate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), the Civil affair coordinator in sectors, the Sector Civpol Chief and the Sector Military Observer Chief”.

In COR 08, the UNPROFOR Visoko Commander states that three of his interpreters were hired at the GSL2 level, 12 at the GSL3 level, four at the GSL4 level and only one at the GSL5 level, probably the commander’s interpreter, which tells us that GSL5 was a position demanding extreme responsibility and expertise.

Required qualifications were a high school diploma or equivalent - which could be replaced by two years of non-UN relevant work experience - and six years of relevant experience outside the UN or three within the UN, which could be replaced by a directly related university degree. Here it is specified that a university degree in a relevant language and experience at GSL5 level were “preferred qualifications”. Oral and written tests had to be passed but no interview is mentioned here, probably taken for granted since GSL5 language assistants had already been screened and interviewed at lower positions. Interpreters at GSL5 were entitled to Recruitment Allowance A, and after 12 months of successful certified performances, they could move to the next level of Recruitment Allowance, always within a GSL5 contract.

These categorizations are important as they created a value system for language assistants, devised to improve the quality of the service and established possibilities of advancement. At the same time, we believe that the weakness of this system resides in the fact that education is put on the same level as relevant experience: for example, a graduate fresh out of university could be hired in the same position as a language assistant with years of experience on the field. Also, the “relevant university degree” is a vague formulation that equals interpreting degrees to general language or foreign literature ones, each of them developing a different set of skills, although we understand that such vague formulations (we also find in different points in the document “directly related university degree”, or “degree in the language relevant for the job”) was probably chosen because there were no interpreting schools in the former Yugoslavian countries (see § 9.1.2.1), and because it could probably be bypassed or stretched, if the need for interpreters on the ground was pressing.

7.3.1.3 NATO Implementation (IFOR) and Stabilisation Force (SFOR)

Information on employment conditions of NATO IFOR and SFOR interpreters is scant in the literature because NATO archives are still classified, and most interpreters interviewed worked for UNPROFOR. It seems, nevertheless, that each contingent adopted its own employment system at least until the reform of NATO language support services by Jones and Askew (2014) in 1998. I05 and I10, who worked for the American and Italian armed forces respectively, confirm they signed a contract and received fair payment from the contingent’s NATO budget (M12). No information could be found on contract length but in a collection of dispatches and notes by the Italian Army, put together by Baschiera (2019: 142), a G5 CIMIC officer wrote, on March 6 1997, that the Explosive Unit required an interpreter for prolonged operation in

Ustiprača, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that a specific two-month contract could be drafted, suggesting that contracts probably varied according to the activity required.

The only NATO contract retrieved is the one used as a style device to intersperse narration in the semi-autobiographical account written by former SFOR interpreter Veselin Gatalo, *Siesta Fiesta Orgasmo Riposo: roman* (Gatalo, 2004) already mentioned in this Chapter. It is hard to prove the contract's authenticity, especially since its structure probably had to be changed to fit the book's font and layout, but the author told us in a personal communication that the contract included in the book is his original one, as proven by the date (March 29, 2002) and reference number (094/2002), although the names of the employee and the employer were removed for privacy issues.

In the book, the contract is presented in the local language, called here Serbo-Croatian, although the author told us that the original version was in French, and that he translated it for publication.

The contract states that the interpreter is hired as a *prevodilac* (translator/interpreter)⁸⁹ at level 2, probably the lowest of the five employment levels mentioned for interpreters' posts in Article 8 of the contract. It is not clear how and according to which rationale these five *stupanja*, employment levels, were organized as they are not listed nor described in the contract, but this is further proof that the UN system introduced after 1994, with five GSL levels was not completely lost and that it had at least established a hierarchy of interpreters and upgrading opportunities.

On advancement, the contract specifies that promotions to a higher employment level came with a salary increase of 5% for each level and that these were granted automatically every two years in French SFOR. M10, an officer deployed with the Italian IFOR and SFOR contingent after 1995, affirms that, in Italian units, promotions were demanded by the interpreter's supervisor and came with a raise in salary of 50-100 euros per month. Here too, it is likely that the salary increase mentioned by M10 corresponded to the 5% increase in Gatalo's contract, although it is difficult to verify it, since the officer could not remember the standard salaries his interpreters touched at the time, that were surely not in euros.

Gatalo's contract also specifies that contracts were renewed every year, a fact that is often described throughout the book as a source of anxiety for local staff who feared that they would not be able to support their families if the contract was ended. The contract could be legally terminated by the employer in case of serious mistakes, unsatisfactory probation period, security reasons, old age (65 years) but also if the troops left or if the interpreter was "found physically unable", with non-used day offs and overtime paid to the employee at the termination of the contract. The contract granted days off for national and/or religious holidays, for a maximum of 24 days per year although extra days could be granted in case of the death of a close relative, wedding (two days), and childbirth (two days).

Physical fitness is the most important aspect in the narration of SFOR interpreter Veselin Gatalo, who was involved in a car accident while travelling with his military commander and was subsequently hospitalised for months for the injuries suffered. According to the contract, in case of illness, only the first eight days of absence from work were paid, whereas three more

⁸⁹ For more information on the distinction between translator and interpreter in the local language(s) see § 9.1.2.

months could be granted for accidents on the job (probably unpaid) after which the interpreter could be legally fired without any compensation due.

It is specifically for this reason that interpreter Veselin Gatalo later sued SFOR: when he was obliged to go back to work after three months, with a plastered hand and suffering brain damage and PTSD, he complained with his supervisors who were nevertheless forced to follow the provisions foreseen in the contract: they offered him monetary compensation⁹⁰ which he refused and was fired (Ibid: 92).

As per healthcare provisions and social security, article 11, specifies that no healthcare or social security contributions were paid by SFOR, and we do not know if they provided any type of alternative healthcare support. Healthcare arrangements probably varied from one national contingent to another: the Italian contingent, for example, treated interpreters in Italian hospitals in Bosnia and Herzegovina or evacuated them to Italy and usually granted sick leave (M10) as we can also read in a journal entry by the commander of the Italian IFOR contingent from 28 September 1996: “In questo momento siamo in crisi con le interpreti. Due su quattro sono ammalate e una si congeda il 30 settembre⁹¹” (Baschiera, 2019: 170).

No reference is made in Gatalo’s contract nor in any of the documents retrieved to maternity leave, which still consisted in 1995/1996, according to interpreters and military officers interviewed (I08; I10; M10) in a couple of days off at best. Maternity provisions were probably improved over the years, as Biljana J, a former SFOR interpreter interviewed by Al Jazeera Balkan, claims to have had right to two pre-birth weeks and four post-birth weeks of maternity leave (Mulić-Softić, 2017).

Finally, in Gatalo’s contract it is clearly stated that, under the agreement with the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina, interpreters’ salary was tax-free and that no employee severance indemnity provision and/or pension was due from the employer.

The Italian SFOR officer interviewed (M10) states that some sort of severance indemnity provision for those who had worked for many years for the Italian contingent were paid (he claims around 3000 euros for those who had worked for over 10 years) although it seems that it was more of a national arrangement rather than a standard NATO provision.

The lack of a pension scheme was also mentioned by ECMM (I02) and UNHCR (I08) interpreters interviewed and is supported in many of the documents retrieved, like NWS 13 (Dušanka, 2018) and NWS18 (Mulić-Softić, 2017). According to these, NATO only started paying pensions and healthcare provisions after 2006 and before that date social security was borne by the employees themselves.

The issue has taken center stage in the last few years in Bosnia and Herzegovina where about 700 local SFOR and EUFOR workers, including interpreters, some having worked for 10 or 15 years in NATO bases, have sued NATO and EUFOR asking for social security, healthcare and other bonuses from before 2006 to be retroactively paid, for an estimated value of five to 25.000 euros per worker (Dušanka, 2018), and a total of tens of millions of euros (Mulić-Softić, 2017). The two lawyers that represent locally hired NATO workers, Avdo Salihbegović and Hajrudin

⁹⁰ Gatalo recounts that his colleague Peđa, probably Feda Pošković, mentioned in an article on former NATO workers in BiH for suing his employers for unpaid social security (Mulić-Softić, 2017), was shot in his hand by a French soldier and obtained compensation of 1500 (we do not know if Dollars, Francs or Deutsche Marks) (Gatalo, 2004: 92).

⁹¹ [Right now, we are in a crisis with interpreters. Two out of four are sick and one is taking leave on September 30 – my translation].

Kapetanović, claim that in Bosnia and Herzegovina and NATO countries, such expenses are to be borne by the employer by law, but the procedure to obtain them is a long and slow one, especially since BiH courts are not competent to resolve disputes with international organizations. Since 2010, some 300 workers have been compensated but others are still fighting for their rights and a group of them even protested before the Camp Butmir base in Sarajevo in 2018, threatening to bring the issue before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

7.3.2 Payment

As stated before (§ 7.3.1.1), ECMM interpreters worked for free (Stahuljak, 1999; 2007; 2009; I02; I07) and were only entitled, in Croatia, to free hotel accommodation when travelling with monitors and free lunches at Hotel I in the neighbourhood of Remetinec, Zagreb (I07), where the ECMM was stationed. I02 also mentions a daily allowance for field missions of 10 DM (Deutsche Marks) per day to cover food and minor travel expenses. I11, the only interpreter interviewed who worked for the ECMM mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (I11) confirmed that he was also a volunteer “symbolically paid in almost worthless food coupons and cigarettes”.

Stahuljak claims that ECMM interpreters started to receive compensation for their work in the fall of 1992 (Stahuljak, 2009: 408) but in one of our communications with the author in August/September 2022, she confirmed what was also stated by I02, who worked for the ECMM in Croatia from 1992 to 1995, that is that interpreters started getting paid in 1994 when Germany took over the rotating presidency of the European Union (July-December) and decided to settle the matter.

As per UNPROFOR’s interpreters, documents we retrieved confirm the rates mentioned by Catherine Baker, varying between 300 and 800 Deutsche Marks (DM), but most likely around 400-500 DM per month (C. Baker, 2011a).

Data collected provides more detailed information on this point: in COR 08, the Commander of the Visoko battalion provides the detailed pay scale for language assistants according to their GSL level probably adopted throughout UNPROFOR, especially after 1994. Interpreters hired at GSL2 level earned 566.92 USD per month, those at GSL3 643.75 USD, at GSL4 731.58 USD and GSL5 level 830.92 USD per month.

Interestingly, the way salaries were delivered and whether they were timely received was heavily affected by conditions on the ground and accounts mention that UNPROFOR officers often withdrew the salary on behalf of interpreters living in the enclaves with no access to banks or ATMs (Gonçalves, 2020: 310-311; M03; M05). This is also confirmed by COR 05, in which a Military Officer in 1994 asked his Sector Administrative Officer (SAO) “blanket clearance for UNMOs in Sarajevo to draw pay for interpreters in Goražde and make it available to them in a timely manner”.

For NATO IFOR and SFOR, it is once again difficult to determine with certainty a salary, as each contingent had a different system and granted interpreters different salaries (M10; M14), sometimes leading to competition among contingents, as can be inferred by a comment by an

Italian SFOR officer from January 6 1997: “per una oculata gestione finanziaria dei civili è necessario controllare il livello degli stipendi e non giocare al rialzo⁹²” (Baschiera, 2019: 37, vol. 2).

Baker states that salaries of interpreters working with national SFOR contingents were lower than those in HQ (C. Baker, 2012b) and that they increased, when the local currency grew stronger after 1995-1996, to 1000 DM or 1800 DM at the highest paygrades (C. Baker, 2011a), as confirmed by M10 who claims that his interpreters earned, in the beginning, 200-400 euros but those with education could later earn up to 1200 euros.

Gatalo’s contract does not mention his actual salary but the author states several times in the book that it amounted to 1000 DM (about 500 euros) (Gatalo, 2004: 55) which was quite a high sum for the time and made him feel very happy: “Hodao sam kao čovjek koji će imati platu kao tri kirurga, kao dva gradonačelnika, kao četiri predsjednika općine”⁹³ (Ibid: 35).

What is interesting in his contract though, is that the working week of 42 hours could be extended to 52 hours to cover for travelling, but that the first ten hours of overtime were not paid, while all the extra hours after the first ten were converted into days off.

We can therefore conclude that interpreters earned between 500 and 900 euros a month in the UNPROFOR years, depending on their GSL level, and up to 1500 in the SFOR years, an amount that was very high if compared to local monthly salaries which ranged, during the war, between ten and 100 euros (C. Baker, 2010: 158; Imamović & Džanić, 2016). Even after the war, the pay differential between interpreters and local professionals was consistent: in 2000, the average pay in Republika Srpska was below the poverty line, at around 440 Convertible Marks (KM), but interpreters’ salaries were at least two to three times higher and equal, in 2009, to that of a member of the Bosnian national presidency (C. Baker, 2012: 864-865) and double that of a neurologist (C. Baker, 2010b).

High salaries are probably one of the reasons for the bad reputation of interpreters in their own countries even today (C. Baker, 2014: 93; 2012b) as we will discuss in more detail in paragraph § 8.2.1.

7.3.3 Age and gender

Literature on civilian interpreters in the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as we have seen in chapter 5, establishes that interpreters were generally very young high-school and university students, often women and only occasionally men, usually professors or other professionals, like engineers and doctors (Thomas, 1995: 12; Dragovic-Drouet, 2007: 33-34; C. Baker 2010b: 158;). This seems to be confirmed in our data, as six out of 14 military interviewees (M04; M05; M07; M10; M14; M15), active both in UNPROFOR and IFOR/SFOR, claim that most of their interpreters were women, with an 80% vs. 20% rate in IFOR and SFOR (M10), and a 90% vs.10% rate in UNPROFOR (M05), while interpreter I02 believes the proportion was roughly 70% vs. 30% at the ECMM.

⁹² [For prudent financial management of civilians, it is necessary to control the level of salaries and not up the bidding continuously – my translation].

⁹³ [I walked as a man who would get paid as three surgeons, two majors and four heads of the local district – my translation].

Although this is one of the first cases when such a high number of women were employed as interpreters by military peacekeeping institutions (see Chapter 4), it is nevertheless not surprising, as when the wars broke out, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia had no proper army and recruited any male volunteer willing to fight, to make up for the lost JNA force (see Chapter 1).

However, M03, an UNPROFOR UNMO, points out that in Serbia proper and on the Bosnian Serb side, the interpreters were all women, as the Serb authorities were extremely suspicious of young men who were not in the army, whereas on the Sarajevo side of the confrontation line several young men could also be found. Document COR08 by the UNPROFOR Visoko battalion provides useful information on this point: out of 20 interpreters employed there, only four were male and 16 female interpreters, while the average age was 26.5 years. If the document confirms a stark prevalence of women, it also suggests that the average age range was higher than the one posited in the literature (the youngest interpreter was 19 and the oldest 38).

The Croatian ECMM interpreters, seemed to have featured a higher number of men: in the list of the 38 ECMM interpreters decorated with the Croatian Homeland War Memorial medal in 2002 (DOC02) we find 18 women and 20 men, thus reversing the proportion described above and in the literature. While keeping in mind that the list of ECMM interpreters is incomplete, we could hypothesize that the higher number of men among Croatian ECMM interpreters could be due to the fact that the general mobilization of draft-age men had eased in 1992 in Croatia, while the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina was such that any help was still very much needed (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 1993).

Other than age and gender composition, we wondered what gender relationships looked like, especially in a male-dominated setting like the military - which was only recently opened to women - and if interviewees' answers could be influenced by dominant perceptions of femininity and masculinity.

We therefore asked military interviewees in question 11 if they preferred a male or female interpreter and, if so, why. Contrary to popular belief, traditional gender-related preconceptions are generally absent from the answers collected and almost half of the respondents (six out of 15) claim that they did not see any difference in having a female or a male interpreter, as both sexes performed equally and were "both extremely brave" (M01). They sustain that the main differences were related to age, maturity, skills, interests, and personality traits rather than gender.

Interestingly, even when the local leaders preferred male interpreters (M10; M11), either because they were believed to convey more "toughness" and "decisiveness" (M04) or for cultural preconceptions against working women, military interviewees resisted that approach (M01; M04). In their remarks, they stated proudly that they managed to impose on their interlocutors the interpreter they considered the most effective for the job, regardless of their gender: "My approach was like, I don't care how tough you are this is the person that is speaking on my behalf, and you will respect her, or we are leaving"(M04).

Even when military respondents affirmed to prefer one genre, it was usually for practical considerations: interviewees who preferred male interpreters (four out of nine), claimed it was because men were less problematic to bring to the confrontation lines, which required travelling long distances and camping outside, without toilets, in difficult weather and security conditions (M06) or for more physically demanding tasks, like foot patrol (M05).

This point is also made in COR08 by the commander in Visoko who writes that gender is not an issue, but austere living conditions (like sleeping in a tent or military vehicle), predicate the use of female interpreters on a limited basis. M06 and M14 preferred men as they were less at risk of rape and sexual violence, M04 because they had gone through compulsory conscription, while M03 thinks they were more suitable to interview shocked combatants having sometimes experienced combat stress themselves. Another argument for the deployment of male interpreters is that female interpreters “attract attention from the male soldiers and commanders” (M01) thus disturbing the conversation, and that working with them can lead to romance, relationships (and divorces), which complicate the working relation (M03), although this could hardly be related to interpreters’ skills and attitudes.

Female interpreters were preferred by five out of the nine interviewees as they were perceived as more neutral and less threatening in the local culture, where women were not conscripted, and it was less likely that they worked as undercover military agents (M05; M08). Female interpreters were also preferred because they were thought to promote communication, they were able to “break the ice” and speakers “would open up” more easily to them (M08; M11). Military interviewees also claim that female interpreters were smarter and had a sort of sixth sense, that is an ability to quickly put things together that in several instances identified real dangers and guaranteed the unit’s safety (M08; M15).

Despite not being asked directly about gender issues like military interviewees, three female interpreters interviewed raised it themselves. While some comments are related to the practical side of living and working with the military for a woman, like camping for days and travelling on less-than-comfortable vehicles in areas without toilets, which was particularly troubling during menstruation days (I10), others refer to what both I02 and I03 call “Me 2 situations”, that is gender-based insults or episodes of harassment by foreign monitors and journalists, respectively.

I02, who worked for the ECMM in Croatia, recounts having received unwelcome sexual attention from one monitor and having reported him to her supervisor who only managed to stop him by threatening to inform the monitor’s embassy. I03, who travelled with foreign journalists to the front line, remembers having felt insulted by the comment of one of the French journalists she accompanied who told her “Tu ne vaux rien, tu ne vaux rien, tu es juste bonne en position allongée” (I03).

UK military interpreter Miloš Stanković also reported a similar issue in his book claiming that interpreter Dobrila Kalaba had one of the British officers “sleepwalk” into her room at night once, although she did not report the issue (Stanković, 2001: 141).

Question 8 (What kind of relationship did you have with your interpreters?), which was initially aimed, on our side, on assessing what kind of collaboration and rapport interpreters had established with their employers and vice-versa, surprisingly, was almost always understood

by military respondents as related to men-women relationships. This is probably proof that not only “the feminine gendering of language skills conflicted with the masculine gendering of the military”⁹⁴ (Baker, 2012b: 867) but that it further complicated the interpreter-soldier relationship. According to I02, this is because:

The position of the female interpreter in peace missions has additional complications. In a way, she is triply subordinate – as an interpreter, because interpreting is seen as a kind of subordinate profession, as a female in a traditionally male-dominated setting (war), and as belonging to a community that is seen by peacekeepers, even if they do not openly say so or are even not fully aware of it themselves, as somehow inferior on the civilizational scale. I believe it is very much so in peace missions in Africa or the Middle East, it certainly was so in ex-Yugoslavia, with all the familiar views of Europeans and North Americans regarding these areas [...] because many members of various kinds of peace missions, especially coming from Europe and North America, come with an air of superiority to any country in conflict. Conflict itself is seen as proof of a lesser civilization, and they, coming from developed, peaceful etc. countries are seen as those who will bring peace and order, in some way ‘civilize’ the local community. (I02)

This approach was defined by both I02 and I03 as “colonial” using the same words of the interpreters interviewed by Baker (2012c), who talk about a “patronizing colonial approach”, and Stahuljak (2010). According to interpreters, they not only had to correct the monitors’ Western dominant narrative of wild ‘Balkan’ people (Ivi) but also there was also the idea that foreign officers were a sort of prize for local women (I02) which gave them the ease to behave quite differently than they would have in their home countries.

The issue was also complicated, according to interviewees, both military and interpreters, by the many relationships that developed between military officers and local female interpreters (M01; M03; M10; M15; I10; I02; I06). Accounts report a great number of affairs, divorces and marriages, especially at the beginning of the war, when fraternization rules were not systematically implemented (M13; M04) and depended very much on the superior and the unit (Kelly & Baker, 2013).

Many of our military interviewees do not hide their disappointment at their colleagues, other try to explain how difficult, and natural, it is for such relationships to develop in that environment, while interpreters I10 and I06 blamed their colleagues for some uncomfortable situations as they “did not take their profession seriously” (I06).

Despite a few instances of gender discrimination and mild harassment, nevertheless, most female interpreters state that foreign officers “always treated them gallantly” and that both international and local representatives, after initial amusement and wariness at having women talk about such a male business as war, recognized their professionalism and established trust and collaboration.

On an opposite note, male interpreters were not spared from gender discrimination, as they often received adverse comments from belligerents: their decision to fight not with weapons, but with words, was difficult to understand in a moment of total militarization of societies and they were often labelled as “cowards and “chickens” (Baker, 2012b: 859; M01) by local

⁹⁴ Especially since accounts show that, despite wearing a military uniform (if any) interpreters continued to look very feminine and nothing like soldiers (C. Baker, 2010b: 161)

commanders and fellow citizens or seen with increased suspicion as spies. Nevertheless, none of the five male interpreters interviewed mentioned gender discrimination or harassment for their choice to work as interpreters instead of joining the army, the only episode reported is based on religious grounds: I04, a Muslim, who worked for Jordanian (Muslim) troops, remembers having been discriminated, and reprimanded, by his military employers, as he, and in general the Bosnian Muslims, did not follow Muslim customs and, for example, drank alcohol.

7.3.4 Ethnicity

In a war where ethnicity (§ 1.2.1 & 1.2.5) was presented as paramount, and heavily influenced public discourse and propaganda, the literature only marginally considers the issue of interpreters' ethnicity in the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. Baker states that no official policy about ethnically based recruitment was in place and that the decision was left to the military unit or the supervisors of interpreter teams (C. Baker, 2012c) but she points out that interpreters were hired from all three ethnic groups, which earned them the nickname "Tito's children" (C. Baker, 2011a). She also underlines how this put a lot of stress on interpreters who often had to use fake names when operating in the opposite ethnic group's area (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 134).

As per our results, interpreters and their employers differ in their answers to the question on ethnic-based recruitment and employment.

Interpreters working for UNPROFOR, UN agencies, ECMM, NATO and even journalists, claim that no provision on ethnicity was in place, which sometimes created awkward situations and fear in interpreters, like I03 who was extremely scared to follow the TV crews into Mostar at a time when there was a lot of resentment towards the Croats. In only a few cases interpreters recount having been replaced due to their ethnic origin (I08; I10), like I08, a half-Serb who was asked to step down from her duty in Srebrenica, only a couple of months after the genocide.

In general, interpreters seem oblivious to the ethnic issue and some of them proudly stress that they managed to work in different ethnic areas or parts of the city held by the opposite ethnical group. It seems, especially for those working in Sarajevo, that the sense of belonging to the city or the country trumped all ethical considerations, as I10 tells us: "this is my country I can talk to anyone".

Interpreters nevertheless underline how they had to "get used to the ethnic slurs" (I08), which, as we have seen in chapter 1, were often related to history and ethnical belonging, like *Ustaše* (for Croats), *Chetniks* (for Serbs) and *Balija* (for Bosnian Muslims).

On the military side, on the contrary, ethnicity seems to have played a crucial role in assigning an interpreter to a specific task or patrol for most officers interviewed, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina (M15) in on-the-ground operations in the war years, while the few who claim that ethnicity did not matter in the choice of interpreters either worked at the higher political level or after 1995.

They nevertheless confirm that such attention to ethnicity was not a statutory requirement but derived more from the awareness that the team leader or officer in charge had developed on

the ground, to guarantee the safety of the interpreter (M03; M04) and the success of the meeting (M10; M14):

I serbi di pale ricordo quando si andava a parlare con il comandante della quinta brigata Zvornik lui non voleva vedere interpreti musulmani di Sarajevo, ma non li faceva neanche entrare, prima gli faceva un interrogatorio di terzo grado poi gli diceva "tu non sei serba, vai!" e tanti cadevano in questa problematica⁹⁵. (M10)

The issue related to interpreters' safety emerges as prevalent: M03 forbade interpreters to go on an assignment on the other side of the confrontation line if the situation was risky for them, while M01 only used interpreters from units or posts close to the investigation site, so not to have his interpreters travel from Sarajevo, with only one interpreter, a Serb from Sarajevo, who worked across lines.

This is because any movement outside and inside Sarajevo meant crossing checkpoints manned by both Bosnian and Serb forces thus increasing the chances for the interpreter to be harassed, kidnapped, or denied entry (M04). Therefore, in Sarajevo, Muslim and Croat interpreters usually worked on one side of the confrontation line (Papa)⁹⁶, and Serb interpreters on the other (Lima) (M01; M02; M04; M15).

M10 and other officers report that the practice had developed also because, if it was not possible to find an interpreter of the corresponding ethnic group, and an interpreter of the opposite one was picked to go with the troops, the interpreters themselves did not want to go, put their foot down and refused the task (Gonçalves, 2020: 426-428):

Laddove non c'era disponibilità di interpreti, perché come ti dicevo noi stavamo attenti a portare in zona serba interpreti serbi e a volte obbligati [...] dovevamo portare un musulmano di Sarajevo e lì cominciano a puntare i piedi "non ci voglio andare che sono bastardi hanno fatto questo, hanno fatto quell'altro". Questa era, diciamo la manifestazione di base dove questi si lamentavano, non volevano andare "lì è pericoloso questi mi sgozzano mi scannano come hanno fatto la mia famiglia"⁹⁷.

Such attention to ethnicity is reported also in official documents: in document COR05, sent on May 14 1994 from a Sarajevo UN military observer to his Senior Administrative Officer, the observer lists, among basic requirements for interpreters' deployment, that one interpreter of "acceptable ethnic origin" is available for each patrol of two UNMOs and outlines the requirements for each of the positions they controlled at the time, specifying the number and ethnic origin of their interpreters as follows: Sarajevo East (three Bosnians and three Serbians), Sarajevo West (three Bosnians and four Serbians), Sarajevo South (three Bosnians and three Serbians) and Sarajevo North (five Serbians) teams, Grbavica (two Bosnians and three

⁹⁵ [The Pale Serbs, I remember when you went to talk to the commander of the fifth brigade in Zvornik, he didn't want to see Muslim interpreters from Sarajevo, but he wouldn't even let them in, first he would give them a third-degree interrogation, then he would say "You are not a Serb, go home!" and so many had this issue – my translation].

⁹⁶ Papa and Lima were the names used by UNPROFOR troops to designate the two sides of the confrontation line around Sarajevo for reasons of convenience. Accordingly, post in the Serb-held area could be Lima1, Lima2, Lima3 and so on.

⁹⁷ [When there was no availability of interpreters, because as I was telling you, we were careful to bring Serbian interpreters to the Serbian area and sometimes we were obliged [...]to bring a Muslim from Sarajevo and then they would start dragging their feet "I don't want to go there they are bastards they did this, they did that". This was, let's say the typical demonstration, these people were complaining, they didn't want to go "it's dangerous, these people will slit my throat, they will slaughter me like they did my family" - my translation].

Serbians), Gorazde (two Bosnians and seven Serbians) and Žepa (four Bosnians but when patrols are allowed on the Serb side two Serbian interpreters are required), for a total of 19 Bosnian and 30 Serbian interpreters working in 1994 by this unit.

A similar approach was adopted also in Visoko (COR08) where the UNPROFOR Battalion had 20 interpreters, 12 Bosnians, two Croats and six Serbs, two of them living on the Serb side of the confrontation line.

To conclude, we can say that even if interpreters did not perceive it as a requirement, probably because they were less permeable to the dominant ethnic divisions in their countries, ethnic assignment was an unofficial but well-established practice on the military side, for the success of talks and most importantly the safety of interpreters.

It was also partly motivated by the will of international organizations to promote reconciliation and share the income of working for international organizations across all the three ethnic groups, which became a statutory NATO policy in 1996 for all types of local staff (cooks, maintenance people, interpreters), as confirmed by M10 and M12, although they admit that this system created management problems, as fights broke out frequently among members of different ethnic groups.

7.3.5 Working conditions

The data we collected confirm that working conditions varied greatly among different units and contingents, but sometimes also from place to place within the same national contingent (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 93).

The main difference in working conditions between the ECMM and UNPROFOR/NATO/IFOR interpreters is that ECMM interpreters only worked on a field trip basis: they were usually based in Zagreb, escorted monitors on two-week trips throughout the country (I02; I07) and went back home at the end of their shift.



Figure 15: UNMO and his interpreter at Sector Northeast UN Headquarters, Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina, summer of 1995 (Private archive, 1995)

UNPROFOR and NATO interpreters, even though going on field trips and patrols, were usually based in a military office or base where they were required to show up in the morning (M01; I01; I04) waiting in an office for their services to be required. In Figure 15 (PIC13), we see a Portuguese UNMO, and his female interpreter stand in front of a door with a sign reading “Sector NE Headquarters’ interpreters”, which is proof that interpreters did have their own office from which they were pulled out for assignments. Teams that had interpreters (M03) could therefore call them directly from the office, while those that didn’t, could put forward a request to the HQ pool of interpreters,

or to the closest team on the side of the confrontation line where an incident had occurred (M01).

ECMM, UNPROFOR and NATO interpreters usually lived at their premises, but they were sometimes accommodated in the base in prefabricated containers (M01; M10; M14) if there were security issues or their house had been destroyed (M01). Sometimes interpreters were picked up and escorted home if there were security concerns in a specific neighborhood or area (M09; M14). Interpreters working for UNPROFOR UNMOs often shared the same accommodation as the monitors who, as we have seen in Chapter 3, were required to live among the local population.

Despite some differences, common elements can be found in all missions like long working hours, as I10, among others, states: “C'erano orari di lavoro improbabili, sapevo sempre quando parto mai quando torno e se torno”⁹⁸.

On this point, no mention is made in the UNPROFOR contract to working hours, but documents obtained seem to confirm that interpreters had to be available all around the clock (COR05) as “crises are not restricted to normal working hours”.

It is reasonable to assume that they probably worked on a shift system from 6 am to 6 pm during the day and from 6 pm to 6 am during the night, also on weekends (M01; M15) and that, if needed, they would be called on, probably using an on-duty system. This means that interpreters worked irregular hours as confirmed by document NWS11, a public call by the Red Cross on *Slobodna Dalmacija* from August 26, 1992, for a field agent/interpreter, where the job description clearly states that irregular working hours are part of the job.

In Veselin Gatalo's SFOR contract, we read that interpreters worked from 42 hours (travelling not included) to a maximum of 60 hours per week (Gatalo, 2004) with a cap of six consecutive working days and 18 consecutive hours, although no information is available on actual working hours per week for ECMM and UNPROFOR interpreters.

Working conditions were reportedly tough, with interpreters often operating in cold temperatures, travelling on badly manned and mined roads, and camping outside with no amenities.

As per board and food, the literature points out that policies varied according to the national contingent (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 77), but our interviewees claim that food was generally provided while on duty (M05; M06; M12; I07) even to ECMM interpreters (I07), although no such provision is mentioned in the contracts analysed.

Interviewees also confirm that interpreters were usually supervised by a military officer, not necessarily an interpreter or a linguist, who sometimes spoke the local language or a similar one, like Russian (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 64; 89; 92), the only exception being Vera Varga at the Croatian ECMM liaison office who organized rotations to make sure that interpreters enjoyed the best possible working conditions and had time to psychologically decompress (I02; I07). In this case, the role of Vera Varga is an exception to the rule and points to the importance of interpreters being managed by someone who understood their work and would try and accommodate their needs for the smooth functioning of the service.

⁹⁸ [Working hours were unthinkable. I always knew what time I left in the morning, but I never knew when I would be home and if I would be home – my translation].

Finally, if the literature states that interpreters were rarely briefed for security reasons (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 69), our data show that military officers understood the importance of briefing and interpreters were generally briefed before patrols or field missions (I02; I08; I10; I11; I09; M07; M08; M09; M06; M11; M03; M05; M01; M15) both in UNPROFOR, ECMM, UNHCR and NATO. The briefing often consisted in participating in the organization of work (I08), or in a very informal exchange on the way to a meeting to tell interpreters who, when, what and where they would interpret, and when they would be back (I02; I09). When the briefing was not provided, it was due to lack of time (I102) or security reasons: in that case, interpreters were not briefed, as many military officers underlined, not because they did not trust them, but rather to protect them from information that could have put their lives at risk (M03; M05; M10).

7.4 Training

7.4.1 Training of interpreters

We have seen in Chapter 4 and we will see later in chapter 9, that former Yugoslavian countries did not have a system of interpreting schools (Spahić-Šagolj, n.d.; Dragovic-Drouet, 2007; Spahić-Šagolj, 2014; Fidahić, 2021) but that training opportunities for interpreters were offered by professional associations, and that two markets of interpretation were present: conference interpreters covered the high-level meeting, while untrained linguists guaranteed inter-language understanding on the ground (C. Baker, 2010; Footitt & Kelly, 2013: 185).

In this respect, our findings confirm what is described in the literature, i.e. that locally recruited liaison interpreters' language knowledge was acquired through schooling and university, but very often also through experiences abroad and extra-school learning, since not all high schools offered English as a foreign language (C. Baker, 2011; Imamović & Džanić, 2016).

All 12 interpreters interviewed had no interpreting degree and only one (I06) had a translation degree from a foreign university at recruitment; four of them were studying languages or had studied languages in university (I02; I03; I04, I08) while the remaining eight were either straight out of high school or had been studying for, or practicing, different careers (engineer, lawyer, architect, secretary).

Only three interpreters had spent time in an English-speaking country for educational purposes (I07; I06; I08) and Srebrenica interpreter Hasan Nuhanović had learned English on his own during the siege using an old book (Nuhanović *et al.*, 2019).

As per previous interpreting experience, if I11 had briefly worked as an interpreter during the Olympic games in Sarajevo in 1984, all interpreters interviewed had no professional experience and one of them, I05, even had to look up the word 'interpreter' in a dictionary when she saw a call for interpreters by the UN police in a local newspaper to know what an interpreter was (M05).

In this respect, document COR08, by the commander of the Visoko battalion provides detailed information on the educational background of interpreters who, he claims "were attending university until outbreak of hostilities or had recently graduated". In the table the commander attaches to his communication, we see that out of 20 interpreters, one had completed high school, five had a university degree (two in languages, one in economics, one in Art, and one

in civil engineering), while the rest were still in university (11) or technical school (2)⁹⁹. The document confirms the lack of training in translation and interpreting but also suggests that interpreters had a generally high or good educational level, even if not relevant to the job, as also underlined by M01, M03 and I02.

Despite good general knowledge, the lack of interpreting training is judged as problematic by interpreters' employers, who remember that they were very often "OJT" (On-the-Job Trained) (M03) and that this led, at least initially, to a lack of fluency in English, poor accuracy and understanding of military terminology.

One of the documents we analyzed, COR03, dated September 22, 1994, a memorandum by a military officer for colleagues that would replace him in Sarajevo, provides information he gathered on university training for interpreters in the English/Serbian combination as well as the addresses, names, and phone numbers of the directors of the institutions that offered such courses (the University of Trieste in Italy, Deakin university in Australia and the University of Vienna).

The document suggests that commanders were acutely aware of the lack of training in interpreters, which was not provided by either the ECMM, the UN or NATO until 1998, probably due to the lack of competent personnel (Spahić-Šagolj, 2014: 81; 238), the fact that service providers did not realize how skilled a profession it was (C. Baker, 2012b) and the difficult conditions on the ground.

The only exception was UK civilian military consultant and interpreter Louise Askew, deployed with the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, who organized role-play training when conditions allowed it (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 70) and taught her interpreters to use the first person singular (C. Baker, 2012a: 13-14).

Similar makeshift training solutions also emerge from our data, like the *Vademecum* with military terminology given by Italian SFOR contingents to newly hired interpreters (M10), or the system adopted by the Croatian Office within the ECMM, where the seven or eight people who had been there the longest and had translation education, had drafted instructions for newly hired interpreters:

[...] Just general kind of instructions on translation and interpreting and conduct and so forth and they were very clear: no, you are not allowed to change anything. [...] People coming from other professions they had no idea at all what interpreting meant and some of them thought, you know, it's fine just sort of comment, put your own comments in between the sentences you translate, so they had to be sort of instructed not to do this and to stick to what was being said. [There were] technical instruction as well, like if you can't remember words... (I02)

Some interpreters, like I06, who worked at UNPROFOR HQ in Zagreb, also benefited from ad-hoc training from official UN interpreters working for HQ generals, one of whom was also a trainer in an American interpreting school and taught them the basics of consecutive and note-taking in her free time:

⁹⁹ We believe it refers here to post-secondary vocational training.

She would [...] bring us texts, give speeches and it was like a real thing and so yes I mean, I was really lucky and fortunate to have worked with her and this other colleague who was French and that made everything so much easier, and you know she would listen to us, comment on our English and also on the technique. (I06)

Unfortunately, the training needs of interpreters would only be consistently met after 1998 when Ian Jones and Louise Askew¹⁰⁰ reformed the NATO HQ language support services in Bosnia and Herzegovina (see § 6.2.4). The two linguists, on their arrival in Sarajevo immediately organized emergency training sessions, later followed by a more structured training system that included courses in English, consecutive, note taking, and in some cases simultaneous training, together with an editing system for written translation that also provided feedback to translators (Jones & Askew, 2014).

The improvements introduced by the reform are acknowledged by subsequent studies on the topic, like Persaud's research on EUFOR interpreters (Persaud, 2016), carried out in the mid-2000s, in which service providers and interpreters claim to be now satisfied with the quality of interpretation.

According to military interviewees, interpreters, especially women or young men who had not done compulsory military service, besides language and interpreting skills, also lacked the survival or behavioral skills acquired through **military training**, like how to properly wear a flak jacket and helmet, take cover, embark and disembark military vehicles.

Military interviewees believe that 'military' rather than 'language' or 'interpreting' training was the most needed by their interpreters: M14 states that they should have been given the same type of combat training provided to journalists accompanying troops and, in general, performed drills to deal with life-endangering situations. In one of his articles on the topic, Major Roy Thomas, suggests that interpreters should have been trained to also perform first aid, drive military vehicles and manage radio communications, especially when travelling alone with one military observer, and to be able to take care of their colleagues if they were wounded or unable to drive (Thomas, 1995). Driving military vehicles is confirmed as a key skill by document COR05, dated May 14, 1994, where a military observer inquires with his superiors if a proper license issuing procedure could be put in place for interpreters in Sarajevo for emergencies, as interpreters in Sector South were apparently already driving.

This lack of military and survival skills in interpreters created, in military officers a sense of anxiety and accrued responsibility (M01; M03; M04) and some of them affirm that they took extreme risks to protect their interpreters (M04).

On the interpreters' side, when asked what kind of training they wished they had received, they reply that they were undertrained in interpreting techniques, especially consecutive (Stanković, 2001: 33-34; 76; 238; I01; I03) - which emerges as one of the most difficult aspects of the job - military terminology¹⁰¹ (Suljagić *et al.*, 2010: 73) and on the ethical and psychological aspects of the job (I02; I08).

¹⁰⁰ With the help of Steve Blackaby, who had worked for NGOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the professional local interpreter and lecturer Vera Andrassy.

¹⁰¹ Especially since military representatives expected their interpreters not just to know the exact translation for 'minobacač', 'mine thrower', or 'top', 'cannon', but to identify and recognize them (M10).

Nevertheless, despite their total or partial lack of training, locally hired interpreters seem to be oddly aware of some of the professional and ethical requirements usually taught to interpreters in professional training institutions like neutrality and confidentiality (§ 5.2.7.2 & 5.2.7.3) and the use of the first person singular, traditionally preferred to convey the sense of unmediated communication and facilitate the interpreters' job (Harris, 1990; Angermeyer, 2009). If the use of the third person singular in interpreting has long been linked to non-professional ad-hoc interpreting, research has shown lately that several professionals and non-professionals deviate from it, wittingly or unwittingly (Wadensjö, 1998; Bot, 2005; Angermeyer, 2009; Berk-Seligson, 2017) in a variety of cases¹⁰², including those where there are stark power asymmetries (Ng, 2018) like this one. Nevertheless, in the analyzed interactions, interpreters always use first-person speech, except in a few cases (VID01; VID09; VID11) which will be analyzed in § 8.2.2. when discussing the issue of neutrality.

7.4.2 Training of service users

If interpreters received no training, the situation with military officers was not necessarily brighter: although training of service users has been recognized as instrumental for the success of interpreted communication in settings like healthcare or court interpreting (Rudvin, 2014; Woll *et al.*, 2020)¹⁰³, only six out of 14 military representatives interviewed declared to have received instructions or training on how to work with interpreters before deployment (M04; M06; M07; M08; M12; M15). Of these, only two of them were provided training that had direct relation to interpreters: M15, a Ghanian UNMO, described his training on interpreters as “verbal and written notes on how to treat interpreters with little emphasis on the Sexual Exploitation Act (SEA)”¹⁰⁴, while M06, a Nordic UNMO, seem to have received more relevant instructions like:

having the interpreter standing next to us, don't look at him, look at the person you are talking to, make short sentences and pauses when you speak and this kind of things. We also had exercises with interpreters present, before deployment, and at the end you had feedback on how you did it.

¹⁰² Third-person use is also suggested in traumatic situations to avoid secondary traumatization (Bancroft *et al.*, 2015; Crezee *et al.*, 2015).

¹⁰³ The Red-T *Conflict Zone Field Guide for Civilian Translators/Interpreters, and Users of their Services* (§ 4.2.6) also includes a paragraph about the responsibilities of service users.

¹⁰⁴ We think he refers here to general provisions to avoid sexual exploitation within the UN or other official organizations, as we could not find this specific piece of legislation.

position in the team is etc. This not only helps avoid misunderstanding and tension but also prepares the mission members to treat the interpreters with greater respect for their work. (I02)

7.5 Risks and protection

7.5.1 Risks

We have seen in Chapter 5 that the security situation of interpreters in the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s was not as dire as the one in Afghanistan and Iraq, although interpreters worked in a risky environment (Thomas, 1995; 2003a; 2003b; 2004; C. Baker, 2012b; Spahić-Šagolj, n.d.). Interviews with both interpreters and military representatives confirm that interpreters were exposed to several risks, ranging from kidnapping to heavy shelling in the 1991-1995 period, and the interviewees who claimed (M08; M09; M10; M13; I06; I12) interpreters did not face risks either worked at HQ or political level during the war or were deployed after 1995.

Dobriša Kalaba, a Serbian English teacher from Novi Travnik who had studied English at the Novi Sad university was the only interpreter killed during the war, in Vitez, Bosnia and Herzegovina (Stanković, 2001; Forgrave, 2002; Footitt & Kelly, 2013: 18), where she worked for British Captain Bob Stewart¹⁰⁶. She was shot in the head on 5 July 1993 (Slovenska Tiskovna Agencija, 1993; ICTY07) and died of the wounds shortly after but due to heavy fighting, she had to be buried hurriedly and in secret at night and her grave was left unmarked (Stanković, 2001: 191).

According to an interview that Colonel Forgrave gave to *The Times* in 2002, Dobriša “was deliberately targeted for being an interpreter” in the aftermath of the Ahmići massacre¹⁰⁷ where her role as the interpreter of Bob Stewart made her the voice and the face of condemnation of the crimes nationally and internationally (Forgrave, 2002). Years later, the operational team of the Republic of Srpska for tracing missions persons exhumated her body, although the record on their site is wrong as per year of death (1998) and profession (SFOR interpreter) (operational team of the Republic of Srpska for Tracing missing persons, n.d.). On April 16, 2022, on the anniversary of the Ahmići massacre, Dobriša's service and life were commemorated and memorialized with a commemorative table in the village mosque with over 40 former British peacekeepers and interpreters present.

Even though the case of Dobriša was, as far as we know, the only deliberate killing of an interpreter, military interviewees state that interpreters were exposed to the same risks as soldiers for “the general risk of being in a war, where you could be hit by a sniper or blown up by artillery at any time” (M04) and where even going for coffee was “a life-threatening choice”

¹⁰⁶ Working with Dobriša was also her boyfriend, Edi Letić, a Muslim from Novi Travnik and medical student Suzana Hubjar (Stanković, 2001: 101-102), the latter was invited to continue her studies in the UK where she is now a practicing GP (Stanković, 2007). Dobriša's supervisor was UK military interpreter Miloš Stanković.

¹⁰⁷ The Ahmići massacre was the murder of approximately 120 Bosniak civilians by members of the Croatian Defense Council in April 1993, during the Croat-Bosniak War. It was discovered by UNPROFOR 1st Battalion, Cheshire Regiment, under the command of British Colonel Bob Stewart.

(Leandro, 2018) but they were also exposed, according to M04, to increased risk for their role as interpreters, like being targeted as collaborators or for “saying the wrong thing at the wrong time to the wrong person” (M03). To analyse in more detail the risks run by interpreters we divided them into military, contingent, socio-political, and economic risks, following the structure outlined in § 4.3.5. & 5.2.5.

7.5.1.1 Military Risks

As we have seen in Chapters 4 and 5, military risks are the typical risks of working in a war zone, among which we find, in this case, sniper activity or operations in areas that were “booby-trapped, mined or harbouring a machine-gun nest” (Thomas, 2004). These are confirmed not only by the interviews with both interpreters and soldiers, but also by newspaper analyzed: *Slobodna Dalmacija*, in an article from July 26, 1992, writes that the previous Thursday, at around 19:10, 12 kilometers from Goražde, an armed UN vehicle drove over a mine, its windshield was shattered and the interpreter, a woman from Bosnia and Herzegovina, got several cuts in her head (NWS09).

Interpreters also faced increased risk when crossing checkpoints into the other side of the confrontation line, where they could be kidnapped or arrested by the opposite ethnic group or even their own, like the Bosnian Serb interpreters captured by Bosnian Serb forces when NATO bombed their targets near Goražde, in April 1994 (Thomas, 1995: 8).

The military representatives remember episodes of pure fear in interpreters when they had to cross the confrontation line, which some interpreters utterly refused to do (M10; M14): former UNMO Paulo Gonçalves, recounts in his book how they were once tasked to give a lift to three female interpreters to Sarajevo, one Muslim, one Croat and one Serb and they had to change the entire patrol route as the Muslim and Croat interpreters were scared to go through Serbian checkpoints (Gonçalves, 2020: 426-428). Being taken hostage was a feared prospect even for British military interpreters, like Miloš Stanković, who were afraid to be discovered and that their families, in the country or at home, would become targets too (Stanković, 2001).

Nuhanović and Suljagić mention in their accounts that interpreters were particularly at risk of being kidnapped if they didn't have a UN identification card or if it was taken from them, even if a UN ID was not always a guarantee of safety.

We found several recorded cases of kidnapping: the daily Bosnian newspaper *Oslobodjenje* (NWS 01) writes on February 22, 1995, that the day before, in Goražde, an unnamed UNPROFOR interpreter had been captured and that the UN was unable to obtain an explanation for the arrest from the Bosnian military command. In an article from February 22, 1995 (NWS02), we learn that the interpreter was called Goran Posvandžić¹⁰⁸ and that he was still incarcerated and was not granted visiting rights although the doctors of the International Red Cross had visited him.

A UN document from the public information department declassified in 2009 and dated March 22, 1995, which summarizes the latest news from the Bosnian war for the NY Department of Peacekeeping (UNAR11), mentions a meeting between Yasushi Akashi, then UN Under-

¹⁰⁸ No further information was found on this interpreter.

Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator and Bosnian-Serb leader Radovan Karadžić to discuss the release of Russian UN observers and an interpreter. A similar mention is found in another document by the Department of Peacekeeping (UNAR12) from April 07, 1995, which states that “a UNPROFOR interpreter, detained by the BSA since March 14 was released on 1st April” although we don’t know if he is the same interpreter mentioned by *Oslobođenje*. On September 1 1995, the Italian newspaper *La Stampa* (NWS03) mentioned that five ECMM observers, one driver and a local interpreter were captured in Pale by Bosnian Serb forces and again, *Oslobođenje*, on October 28 1994 reported that four UN soldiers and a woman interpreter were captured around Tomislavgrad in Western Herzegovina and held in the Serb police station of Kupres (NWS06), while Veselin Gatalo writes that his colleague Peđa was taken by the local police in Mostar and detained for almost 24 hours for unspecified reasons (Gatalo, 2004: 87-88). Being taken hostage was riskier for women interpreters who feared gender violence, which was systematically used throughout the war (Calic & Geyer, 2019: 304-305).

7.5.1.2 Contingent risks

Interpreters were also exposed to contingent risks, resulting from travelling with military representatives on badly manned and mined roads, and in bad weather conditions (C. Baker, 2011b: 148).

Accidents were so common that the Translation Unit at Zagreb HQ was initially created as “a big claim unit” to translate police reports and compensation claims for UNPROFOR vehicles (I06). SFOR interpreter Veselin Gatalo describes his experiences as an interpreter for French forces in Mostar as revolving around a car accident due to the bad driving of the commander’s German driver (Gatalo, 2004). Dobrila Kabila was also involved in an accident when the British troops’ Land Rover skidded off the road, knocked her out and earned her several stitches to her head (Stanković, 2001: 141), while a similar episode is mentioned in the daily reports by the Italian IFOR contingent in December 1996 (Baschiera, 2019: 290).

M09, a radio operator/instructor of the British Army, recounts with pain the death of his interpreter, Alex, a young Serb whose parents had worked for some time in Malesia and then moved back to Bosnia and Herzegovina after the war, in an accident outside Donja Kozica (Sanski Most) when the 432 Armored Ambulance came off the road and ended upside down in a river.

7.5.1.3 Socio-political risks

Socio-political risks can be defined as threats, intimidation, and reprisals against interpreters and/or their families for their work with foreign peacekeepers. Unlike Afghanistan, it seems that interpreters were subject here to threats, pressure and reprisals (Edwards, 2002; Stahuljak, 2009) rather than hostile action and attacks (Jones & Askew, 2014: 58), mainly to obtain information (Baker, 2010b: 160; Kelly & Baker, 2013: 75; M14; M05; M03).

M01 remembers that one of his interpreters had her apartment broken into and he suspects that only her brother’s position in the military echelon saved her from more serious consequences. I09, who worked for UNHCR after the war, was told by the authorities of the Zvornik

municipality that she was a “persona non grata” for “bringing non-Serbs back” through her work and I10 was once told by a local commander that “girls like her had their hairs shaved after WWII” [my translation], alluding to the treatment reserved to collaborators of fascists.

Moreover, in a war where ethnicity was presented as paramount, interpreters were also caught in the narratives of the ‘us vs. them’ and they faced increased risk due to their ethnic belonging on the front lines. The role of ethnicity also represented a risk in employment issues, and Baker reports that the interpreters’ testing process could be influenced by the region’s ethicized language policy: if the linguist evaluating the test was a Croat, for example, Serbian words could be marked down, even if appropriate and vice-versa (C. Baker, 2010b: 160).

Ethnicity represented an increased risk also in the access to medical assistance, as proved by the story of the wounded Serb interpreter from Sarajevo whom all hospitals refused to treat and whose leg was saved only because his commander contravened official orders and put him on a UN plane to Ancona (Doucette & Dallaire, 2009; M01; M04).

Finally, among the socio-political risks for interpreters working in the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, we should mention the risk of isolation since interpreters were perceived as collaborators and war profiteers, for the high salaries resulting from their work with foreign military institutions (see § 7.3.2). If they do not report instances of outright violence from their own community, most interpreters interviewed mention a sense of disappointment towards their work, especially when the public opinion started to realize that the presence of foreign peacekeepers would not stop the war (I02). They report having been seen with suspicion by local authorities and recount that many of their friends disappeared (I08), while people would try to befriend them for “reasons other than friendship” (I08) so that they had to be “extra careful whom they hung out with” (I05), which resulted in interpreters isolating themselves from their acquaintances and friends.

7.5.1.4 Economic risks

Finally, we know that interpreters also faced economic risks for their job with the military and their high salaries, which exposed them to blackmail and pressure from the local authorities. When troops pulled out interpreters were also at risk of unemployment, as they had interrupted their careers many years before and it was sometimes too late to resume them, while the set of skills they had acquired working for international institutions was no longer in demand (Bos & Soeters, 2006; C. Baker, 2012b).

If the risk of blackmailing and pressure from local authorities is confirmed in our results, at least in the war years, our data contradicts Baker’s findings regarding unemployment risk, although we did not ask a specific question about career trajectories after the war.

Nevertheless, interpreters interviewed seemed to have easily found their place in the job market after their experience with peacekeepers: five out of 12 interpreters continued to work after the war as translators and/or interpreters, at different levels, some also at the ICTY or the EU, in many cases completing or perfecting their education.

Three of them, who had worked in fields nonrelated to languages, translation or interpreting, resumed their original careers achieving very good working or academic positions, and four

obtained positions within the Ministry of foreign affairs, governmental or international organizations that, although not directly related to interpreting required good language skills. One interpreter (I05) even obtained a scholarship to enroll in a US university, thanks to the American Army they worked for during the SFOR years.

Interpreters interviewed for this research, therefore, do not report difficulties in re-entering the job market. This could be because most interpreters interviewed only worked in the war years, or for a few years after 1995, unlike interpreters interviewed by Baker, who stayed with IFOR and SFOR sometimes even for twenty years, thus missing out on the opportunity to resume their original careers or obtain additional training or education. This is especially true of interpreters in Croatia where, unlike Bosnia and Herzegovina, the foreign missions left the country almost immediately after 1995 and the transition from wartime to peacetime employment was quicker (see § 1.3.5).

Another explanation for the discrepancy in our findings, as opposed to Baker's, could also be the fact that Catherine Baker carried out her interviews in the years 2010s, when peacekeeping missions were still active in Bosnia and Herzegovina or had just been downsized (see § 1.3.5), while our interviews were recorded almost ten years later, and meanwhile interpreters may have had the time to find other employment opportunities or acquire new professional skills.

7.5.2 Protection

In Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, as we have seen, interpreters' lives were not as threatened as in the most recent Middle Eastern conflicts (see § 4.3.5.1), although kidnapping, blackmailing and intimidation were frequent. Nevertheless, it seems that no official measure was in place to guarantee interpreters' protection, which was left to the single unit (M03; M04; M14) or individual commander (M04; M10).

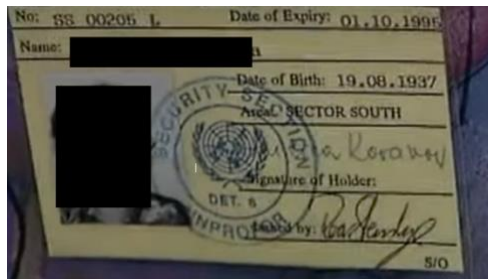


Figure 18: Interpreter identification card (Dnevno.hr, 2018)

A common measure emerging from the data was to accommodate them within the base or in rented and surveilled houses (C. Baker, 2010b; Kelly & Baker, 2013), or to pick up and escort interpreters home with military vehicles (Thomas, 2003b: 39; M01; M14).

Other measures were the issuing of identification cards¹⁰⁹ (Suljagić *et al.*, 2010; Nuhanović *et al.*, 2019) like the one in Figure 18 on the left, taken from the video clips filmed in Knin and published by *Dnevno.hr* (VID 01 and VID 02).

Another measure were uniforms (Thomas, 2003; C. Baker, 2010a; C. 2010b; Jones & Askew, 2014; M04;) to protect interpreters from harassment from the warring parties (Jones & Askew, 2014) and to reduce the chances of interpreters being singled out and targeted (C. Baker, 2010a; 2010b). The commander of the Visoko unit, in COR08, perfectly explains the rationale behind uniforms:

¹⁰⁹ The yellow color of interpreters' identification cards earned them the nickname of 'yellow cards', as reported in the literature (Branco *et al.*, 2018: 211; Gonçalves, 2020: 246), although, as we have seen in Chapter 4 that it could also originate from the Wehrmacht's system for ranking interpreters (Beyda, 2020).

All our interpreters wear combat clothing, as is the practice for most other military forces. This clearly identifies them as part of the [national adjective hidden] contingent, enhances their credibility with belligerent forces, helps to diffuse the other party's hostility directed at the interpreter as a person back to the UN, and reduce the likelihood of being singled out by snipers. Interpreters did not have names strapped to their uniforms and were called with their name or pet name, never their full name. (M14)



Figure 19: Local Bosnian police forces, interpreters, Slovakian, American and other multinational team members wait for the signal to enter a residence in search of information regarding a suspected war criminal (US National Archives, 2014)

The use of uniforms was still a common practice in IFOR and SFOR, as can be seen in Figure 19 (PIC10), from the SFOR *Operation Joint Forge* (1997-2004) where the male and female interpreters wear fatigues, with no straps nor recognition epaulettes.

Such a protection measure was nevertheless impossible to implement for UNPROFOR UNMOS and ECMM, as monitors wore their national uniforms or were dressed in white and had no way of obtaining a national or common uniform for interpreters. This is why in all the

pictures of UNMOs and ECMM monitors collected (Husum, 1998; Doucette and Dallaire, 2009; Miškulin, 2010; Branco *et al.*, 2018; Leandro, 2018) interpreters wear civilian clothes and their yellow identification cards, as can be seen also in figure 15. This problem is also raised in COR05, where a UNMO in Sarajevo states:

Both British and Canadian battalions have given their interpreters uniforms as this decreases the risk from snipers (we were shot yesterday in Gorazde and interpreter was at risk as not being readily identifiable as UN). Interpreters working for the UNMOs require a UN uniform. Can you advise on feasibility soonest as this is a matter of safety particularly for the Gorazde interpreters.

Interpreters' wearing of fatigues shocked Ian Jones when he arrived in Sarajevo in 1998 to reform NATO language services and, although it was occasionally opposed by interpreters who did not want to be identified as members of the military (Footitt & Kelly, 2013: 189), evidence suggests that it was generally appreciated. I07, who worked for the ECMM remembers that not wearing a uniform was a source of daily concern for interpreters:

I remember one episode in Sunja, we went to the frontline in the truck and the two monitors dressed in white, they went outside to check something and they left me in the car [...] I was alone in the car, not dressed in white, [...] I remember one soldier came very close [...] I was really scared and I felt better if I had white clothes at the time. [After] maybe 5 minutes they came back, I don't know where they went but these five [minutes], it was really scary because [...] I was not marked or dressed in white or had any protection, visual or otherwise to be seen as a part of this European monitor mission. (I07)

Interpreters interviewed also wished they had received protection equipment (I03; I07), flak jackets and helmets which some of them obtained only after considerable efforts by their commanders (Thomas, 1997b; Kelly & Baker, 2013: 71; M01; M05; M06; M07).

Other measures to protect interpreters, as we have seen, included bringing an interpreter of the same ethnic group as the belligerent parties to meetings (M01; M03; M05; M06; M10), and not sharing confidential military information with them, like operational codes, passwords, and locations (M03; M05), to avoid blackmail and to protect the unit from interpreters potentially acting as spies (Gonçalves, 2020: 210-11):

It is not a good idea to have the interpreter having access to all the information, for his own sake, because if it is known outside that the interpreter knows as much as you do, you have just signed the certificate of death for that interpreter, because then [...] that interpreter has got a very big problem to deal. (M03)

In our research we have also realized that interpreters were also, when possible, protected ‘from the media’, meaning that it was standard practice to avoid, when possible, photographs being taken of interpreters, and videos screened. For example, all the pictures used to identify community tasks carried out by interpreters in NATO SFOR, use stylistic devices to portray interpreters only partially, from a lateral angle, with a hand, or a child casually covering their face, probably to make recognizing them harder. In the same way, in the videos analyzed, at least those by UNTV interpreters are never in the frame, or when they are they are filmed from far away or from a lateral angle so that their face is less visible. In VID12, we even hear the camera operator explain to one of his colleagues that since footage cannot be cut in post-production, interpreters should not be filmed at all as a security measure.

Finally, in the documents consulted and in the interviews carried out, no mention is made concerning plans for the evacuation of interpreters¹¹⁰ although UNPROFOR interpreters were, in some cases, like Srebrenica, evacuated with UN personnel (C. Baker, 2010b: 160) although the provision was only officially implemented after the Language Assistant reform of 1994 (§ 7.2.2).

However, no measures were in place for the evacuation interpreters’ dependents (family members), an issue that was raised by former Srebrenica interpreter Hasan Nuhanović who won, in 2013, a case before the Dutch Supreme court against the Netherlands and UNPROFOR that abandoned his family to the Bosnian Serbs (The Netherlands v. Hasan Nuhanović, 2013).

In the absence of clear-cut indications, it seems that the armed forces had to resort to ad-hoc measures, connections and chance, as they operated in a legislative vacuum. This responsibility to protect their interpreters, especially if they were women and had no military training (M11; M05) emerges in the interviews with military representatives, as a cause of great distress, pain and guilt and it is judged extremely dangerous by military interviewees, because sometimes they admit to having taken procedural, but also physical risks that went against training and common sense to protect their interpreters (M01; M05).

¹¹⁰ The only mention was found in the collection of Italian IFOR daily reports, where a commander wonders if there is an Evacuation and Emergency plan for the 40 International Police Task Force interpreters in Grbavica, Sarajevo, in 1996 and commits to preparing it after having consulted the Division Commander (Baschiera, 2019: 62).

Chapter 8: LIAISON INTERPRETING IN THE WARS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AND CROATIA: IN-PROCESS ASPECTS

8.1 Interpreters' tasks and skills

8.1.1 Interpreters' tasks

The available literature reports that interpreters in the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia performed a wide array of tasks, which went well beyond the 'simple' act of translating and interpreting (C. Baker, 2010b: 157), often varying greatly depending on the mission, unit, area of deployment and status within the mission (§ 5.2.6), so that no comprehensive job description can be provided.

Our data confirm that interpreters' tasks were different and diversified, because the needs on the ground dictated the duties required of interpreters, but they provide more granularity as per the actual duties carried out by UNPROFOR interpreters, although these considerations can also be applied to ECMM ones.

In COR08, for example, the Visoko commander details the tasks carried out by his interpreters who were required to "translate different types of documents", provide "in person or telephone" interpretation but also "military liaison and negotiation, coordination of humanitarian assistance, clinical treatment of medical patients¹¹¹, contractual negotiations, conferences and briefings concerning all the above".

This short description gives us an idea of the different tasks performed by interpreters, and we will comment on some of them based on our results, although it should be kept in mind, as our interviewees reminded us on more than one occasion, that for interpreters "every day was unique" (M01; M04).

Interpreters' main duty was to provide oral translation at meetings and encounters where two people or groups of people did not speak the same language. As we have seen in § 7.3.1.2., high-level meetings were covered by interpreters at GSL4 or GSL5 level, while medium or lower-level meetings could be interpreted by GSL2 or GSL3 interpreters. The latter were probably the ones experiencing the wider set of interpreting situations, as such meetings could range from encounters with the top brass to local-level government officials (I05; I10; M06), from heads of small military units to local leaders or food suppliers.

As we have seen in Chapter 3, both the ECMM and UNPROFOR had different but overlapping tasks which can be generally defined as overseeing the respect of cease-fire agreements, no-fly zones and withdrawal of demilitarized zones, the protection of civilians in enclaves and highly mixed zones and of the population in general, and the support in humanitarian aid.

Interpreters helped military observers carry out these tasks that we could define as **military tasks**¹¹², such as the verification of shelling and the evaluation of damage caused, counting

¹¹¹ Understood as medical interpreting when the local battalion medical staff treated injured locals.

¹¹² A different experience is that of I03 who was a guide, a fixer for foreign journalists (J. Palmer, 2007; L. Palmer, 2018) who was supposed to "find the news" for them: "it's more of a journalistic job than a translation, [...] this fixer is sort of a producer,

casualties at the scene of a massacre (M06), and often carrying out crater analysis¹¹³ (Leandro, 2018; M07). With UNMOs, interpreters also wrote reports, supervised cease-fire breaches (M02), identified sniper locations (M01; M02) and oversaw prisoners' exchange. Interpreters were also key in interviewing the survivors or witnesses to a massacre (M04) and in calming them down to obtain information for the prosecutors.

They were essential during patrols and travelling, as they negotiated safe passage at checkpoints (M01; M03; M04) where their negotiation skills and ability to defuse a situation were often crucial (Thomas, 1997; Stanković, 2001: 82-83; Thomas, 2003; Correia, 2018: 418; Gonçalves, 2020; M03; M04).

An example is that of a Serb interpreter who received a commendation, as we can see in COR02, a request of commendation by a Swedish UN commander, and COR01, the actual letter of commendation by UNPROFOR headquarters. COR01 states that the interpreter received a commendation for his "bravery, calmness, and ability to act successfully in a hostile environment and under the pressure of a direct physical threat" and that he showed "persuasion and assertive negotiation skills".

In the request for commendation (COR02), we learn that this interpreter rescued French General Philippe Morillon from an incident involving 3000 women in Hadžići¹¹⁴ in 1992, but that he was awarded this special mention because in July 1993 he saved his fellow UNMOs from the Serb *milicija* who wanted to kill them. In that case the interpreter was able to calm down the Serb soldiers and have them release him and his colleagues, which gives us an idea of the importance of words and the power language knowledge that interpreters exerted.

Next to performing quasi-military tasks, interpreters acted, although informally, as **cultural mediators**: they were early alert systems (M04; M05) who recognized the signs and informed monitors if a situation was particularly dangerous, for example, and they were important sources of knowledge (I02; M02; M05; M15), real "encyclopedias on the local culture and politics" (M05).

They would often be asked to act as situational or political advisers and tell monitors "what to expect and how to be culturally acceptable" (Husum, 1998; M14; M15) or to provide background information on local politics and people:

I needed an explanation for this bizarre state of affairs [of the Bihac pocket] and Jasmina, our interpreter, who had worked for the UNMOs since the outbreak of war and therefore had an impressive knowledge of recent local history, was able to provide me with one. (Husum, 1998: 146)

Although going well beyond their job description, and interpreters' codes of ethics, it was exactly this ability to act as cultural informants, as we have seen in Chapter 5, that peacekeepers appreciated and expected of interpreters (M. Baker, 2006: 214-215; Inghilleri, 2010: 179).

[...] you have to find accommodation, you have to find the interview, you have to follow the political situation, know what's going on, who is the best person to ask, what, where to go, what to do" (I03).

¹¹³ Analysis of the crater created by a weapon, to determine from where it was fired and, consequently, by whom.

¹¹⁴ In Hadžići, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbian women tried to pressure the UN into releasing their relatives held by the Bosnian forces by forming a human blockade around UN personnel and vehicles (Thomas, 1997; Stanković, 2001).

In the interaction between the peacekeepers and the local communities, interpreters were therefore more than simple intermediaries and played a key role, almost a diplomatic one (Bos & Soeters, 2006), which sometimes turned them into ‘proxies’ of the institution they worked for, as I01 tells us, blurring the border between interpreter and UN observer:

I would have to explain to a newcomer what was happening and where we were going, [...] He drives us there and we get to the location, and then during the meeting, I translate from the local guy to the UN guy and then the UN guy asks me in English “What should I answer” [...] And I tell the UN “Ok, you answer this and this” and then I translate and then I tell the local guy, you understand? So basically, the local guy was talking to me [...] Without being aware he was talking to me.[...] I tried to save the face of the individual and of the organization I was working for. (I01)

Interpreters also acted as guides (I01; I10; I12; M01; M15), especially given the bad state of roads and maps, and felt the duty to guide soldiers in what was their land, their city and their country although this is probably truer for interpreters who worked in an area like Sarajevo than those who travelled to the front line from the main cities, like ECMM interpreters.

It was also probably motivated by the need to guarantee, as much as possible, their own safety, since road accidents were so common (§ 7.5.1.2): I10, for example, recounts that she was sent on a patrol with a SFOR soldier one day, who refused to listen to her directions and got lost in the woods for hours. When they finally found their way home she threatened her superior to resign if she was sent again on patrol with that specific officer who “had put her life at risk”.

As stated in COR08 above, interpreters also covered a set of **humanitarian** and medical tasks. Among medical tasks we find the counting of bodies on sites of massacres and shelling, providing language assistance during hospital visits (M02; Leandro, 2018), prisoners and casualty exchange, and in military medical evacuation, as UNPROFOR troops or UNMOs where often called to evacuate the wounded when local ambulances had no fuel, or the fighting was too heavy.

Interpreter Emir Suljagić recounts that, in Srebrenica, he was also asked to validate, with a doctor, Medevac (medical evacuation) requests for those that would be allowed to leave the enclave:

Due settimane dopo avevo già cominciato a lavorare come interprete, [...] l’ONU evacuava i feriti gravi e io, l’ultimo giorno dell’evacuazione sanitaria, facevo da interprete a una coppia di dottori responsabili della selezione. [...] Io consegnavo il foglio a quelli che erano feriti in modo abbastanza grave, mi sporgevo al di là del tavolo e dicevo: “oggi alle due al campo da calcio!” da dove gli elicotteri con i feriti decollavano per Tuzla. Molti di quelli che non venivano accettati piangevano, alcuni si avvicinavano a me, mi offrivano soldi, facevano appello alla nostra coscienza, chiedevano il salvifico foglietto bianco che li avrebbe portati via da Srebrenica. A tutti dicevo che non potevo aiutarli, che se fosse dipeso da me, avrei messo tutti sull’elicottero e li avrei spediti via¹¹⁵. (Suljagić *et al.*, 2010: 71-72)

¹¹⁵ [Two weeks later I had already started working as an interpreter, [...] the UN was evacuating the severely wounded, and I, on the last day of the medical evacuation, was acting as an interpreter for a couple of doctors in charge of selection. [...] I would hand the paper to those who were wounded quite seriously, lean across the table and say, “Today at two o’clock at the soccer field!” from where the helicopters with the wounded took off for Tuzla. Many of those who were not accepted would cry, and some would come up to me, offer me money, appeal to our conscience, and ask for the saving little white paper that

Interpreters also carried out humanitarian work, like coordinating humanitarian aid, getting passage and/or escorting humanitarian convoys stuck at roadblocks (M04; M06; M13), investigating violations of human rights (I05; I08), and helping to accommodate civilians in bases during intense shelling (M05). Canadian Major Roy Thomas defines these tasks as “community interpreting” ones (Thomas, 1997) and mentions that his interpreters in Sarajevo and in the Žepa pocket helped the UNMOs encourage community initiatives, like garbage collection in Sarajevo or the building of wooden huts for refugees in Žepa (Ibid: 252-253).

Interpreters also carried out the so-called **open intelligence tasks**, collecting available public information (as we have seen in Chapter 1, UNPROFOR only dealt with open intelligence), which means that they listened to television and radio programs and read newspapers and then provided a summarized account of the events in the area to the monitors (Gonçalves, 2020: 81; M10; I01; I07).

Finally, interpreters were also acting as **translators**, from Serbo-Croatian into English and vice-versa and translated several types of written documents like insurance claims (I06) and ceasefire agreements (I06), contracts, offers of service, military correspondence between the commander and local authorities, legal, para-legal and government documents, as we learn from the detailed description in COR08.

Next to these tasks, which already hardly fit into the traditional interpreter’s job description, interviews and accounts show that interpreters also carried out a plethora of **ancillary tasks**: those working for UNMOs, for example, unofficially helped them in their domestic affairs, like cooking and shopping for food, wood, or basic supplies (M03, M05; M07; M15; I02; I08) or helping them to find places to rent or cleaning ladies.

Often interpreters carried out administrative tasks (Askew, 2019): they organized meetings, copied documents, took notes and drafted reports (I01; I09), prepared materials for meetings (I11) and sometimes even functioned as drivers (I01; I11). In Pale, for example, interpreters replaced UN staff when UN troops were lifted out for security issues in the spring of 1995 (Gonçalves, 2020: 310-311).

Interpreters contracted the delivery of food and equipment from local suppliers (M14), escorted monitors and or guests to religious buildings or monuments (M12), and managed hotel reservations (I02; I08). Military interpreter Miloš Stanković was even asked to fix his superiors’ haircuts and deck shoes and to accompany them on skiing and fishing trips (Stanković, 2001: 316-317).

These extra tasks are defined as an “abuse” and “exploitation” by I01 and I02 respectively, as UN superiors used the local staff to carry out tasks that went well beyond their job description, often “taking credit for it, because they were a costless option, willing to be exploited to help their country” (I01).

would get them out of Srebrenica. I told them all that I could not help them, that if it was up to me, I would put everyone on the helicopter and send them away – my translation].

Nevertheless, most interpreters interviewed claim that these out-of-the-job situations were not frequent and that they didn't mind carrying out these tasks as a personal favor to the monitors, because they were part of the same team (I02; I07; I08).

I02 and I08 underline how it was often male interpreters who volunteered to carry out ancillary tasks and struggled to accept the interpreter's supposedly 'passive role', probably because they felt they had a duty to contribute more actively to the war effort, even if they hadn't taken up arms.

Even though the set of tasks performed by interpreters described above seems to be cross-cutting in all missions, as time went by and UNPROFOR and the ECMM were replaced by NATO IFOR and SFOR, as we have seen in Chapter 5, even the tasks performed by interpreters began to change.

As the security situation improved, military tasks were more and more frequently replaced by community tasks: interpreters thus translated more often meetings with local civilian leaders,



Figures 20 and 21: US National Archives, an interpreter (right), conducts a puppet show on mine awareness and is assisted by a US Army soldier (left) at Pčelica Kindergarten in Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina (US National Archives, 1997)

like mayors and headmasters (M10; M14; I05; I10), rather than military leaders; they helped in reconstruction, demining, and reconciliation activities, like promoting awareness raising or organizing charity events in schools and local venues.

Visits to orphanages and schools were mentioned by M09, who remembers one organized by the UK SFOR contingent in Sanski Most, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with children from the three ethnic groups, which “would not have worked if the interpreters weren't there to help”.

Similar events are also represented in Figures 20 and 21 (PIC07 and PIC08 respectively), where an interpreter, Admir Corhodzic¹¹⁶ interpreted for children in a Kindergarten in Tuzla, within a mine awareness initiative disguised as a puppet show, as we can see in Figure 20.

In both pictures, the centrality of the interpreter for the initiative is clear in the intention of the photographer: the interpreter is the focus of the pictures, not just for taking center stage in the composition and for being at the crossroad of the pictures' vectors, but because in both of them all eyes are turned to him, so that even in PIC07 (Figure 20), where the interpreter's face is covered by the little boy, we are nevertheless forced to look at the interpreter as his military colleague is looking at him, just like children in PIC08 (Figure 21).

¹¹⁶ No information was found online for this interpreter nor the one in Figure 22, the names were probably changed to protect their identity.

Although it is not the point here, by portraying the interpreter with a lateral angle, as in figure 21, or without showing us his full face, as in figure 20, the photographer might pursue a twofold aim, on the one side telling us that that person is not fully part of their world, but nevertheless plays a key part in it (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996: 144), and on the other trying to conceal his identity.

Despite the clear propagandist aim of these pictures, which were supposed to prove to (American) public opinion the efficiency and humanity of the SFOR mission, they managed to capture the interpreter's human involvement, while the contrast between his big, uniformed body and the children's bright clothes, reminds the viewer of the paradox of war.



Figure 22: US Army Reserve, Corporal (CPL) Keith Brown (left), 11th Psychological Operations Company, Task Force Eagle (US National Archives, 1997)

A similar activity emerges also from another picture retrieved, in Figure 22 (PIC06). This time US SFOR troops organized educational activities in a school: we learn from the caption that US Army Reserve Corporal, Keith Brown, on the left, has been teaching English to Bosnian children with the help of his interpreter, Sasha Vidic, in 1997. The interpreter appears here in a very relaxed pose, with his legs crossed and an arm touching his face, once again not fully visible. He is probably a civilian, as his uniform does not carry name straps nor epaulettes, and as

he wears a civilian watch. Although he appears less central here in the picture composition than his colleague in the pictures above, his relaxed body language - which contrasts with the more plastic pose of the US officer and the children - his arm on the table and his enigmatic smile and way of gazing at the camera make him stand out and, once again, convey the idea that the interpreter was central both in the picture and in the activity this represents.

8.1.2 Interpreters' skills

When discussing interpreters' skills in peacekeeping and war contexts, the literature, as we have seen, has put forward a limited number of contributions that underline, however, how interpreters are called to act as cultural, diplomatic and political intermediaries (Bos & Soeters, 2006; C. Baker, 2010b; Ingold, 2014; Vieira, 2014; Persaud, 2016; Gómez Amich, 2017; Hajjar, 2017), be trustworthy, loyal and reliable (Inghilleri, 2010; Van Dijk, Soeters & de Ridder, 2010; Askew & Salama-Carr, 2011; Tipton, 2011; Baigorri Jalón, 2011; Hajjar, 2017), flexible, brave, and possess psychological stamina and physical endurance (Thomas, 1995). When it comes to interpreters active in the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, we have seen that Major Roy Thomas found that military skills, flexibility, courage and a gift for persuasion were crucial in interpreters (Thomas, 1995), while Persaud (2016) has underlined the importance of language skills, cultural awareness and non-verbal communication together with flexibility, empathy, military etiquette, psychological stamina, and physical endurance.

Given this very broad skills outline, which does not consider language and interpreting competencies, for example, we asked interpreters and military officers what skills interpreters should possess to work in such a setting based on their experience in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, whose answers can be ideally into divided into skills understood as personality traits and as professional features.

Among personality traits considered important we find **courage** (M01; M02; I03) - understood not just as the courage to work in a war zone, but also to stand up to interlocutors and ask them to speak more clearly or slow down (M13) -, **empathy** (M03; M05; I05), especially when talking to people who had losses in conflicts (I05), **situational awareness** (I05) and **honesty** (M11; I01; I08). Other behavioral features mentioned are **unobtrusiveness**, defined as the ability of interpreters to stay in the background and do their job without dominating the conversation (M13), the **capacity to adapt** (I06), to **remain calm** and cool-headed even when the situation heats up (M04; I09; I10), to **take care of oneself** (I05; I08) and, last but not least, **trust** (M03; M05; M06; M07; M10; M12; M15), understood as an alignment with the military mission's conversational and ideological goals, a concept military interviewees often relate with accuracy (M04; M06; M07; M09; I08).

On a professional level, interpreters are expected to **possess cultural mediation skills** (M01; M03; M05; M13; I05; I07; I07; I10) to act as cultural informants/gatekeepers and **negotiation skills** (M01; M13), to **master military terminology** and key military concepts (M06; M07; M10; M11; M12), **adopt a "military behavior"** (M14) understood as the instinctive bodily responses soldiers obtain through training (Albaaka, 2020) and have **good language skills** (M04; M11; M12; I04; I05; I06; I10)

On a personality level, it is interesting to note that most of the traits wished for in an interpreter, besides unobtrusiveness and resilience, do not fit with the traditional interpreters' code of ethics, especially with the tenant of neutrality (an issue that we will discuss more in detail in § 8.2.2), on the contrary they are in open contrast to it, as they depict an interpreter who is empathic, trustable, honest and courageous, who therefore takes the initiative and actively operates for the cause.

On a professional level, if good language skills are judged as pivotal in interpreters by both groups of respondents, professional skills usually acquired through interpreting training are barely mentioned here, except for memory (M13). It is interesting to note that there is no reference whatsoever to interpreting skills like notetaking, reformulation, communication, diction, or consecutive/chuchotage in both groups, which fail to understand that to correctly, and therefore neutrally, articulate nuances and shades of meaning language command and mediation experience are essential.

This lack of attention to interpreting skills is probably also due to the fact that the most common **interpreting mode** was liaison or short consecutive without notes (M10) as we can see in almost all the UN TV videos collected (VID01; VID02; VID08; VID09; VID10) and in the Associated Press video (VID03), which shows a young Emir Suljagić with the Dutch

commander at Srebrenica and Ratko Mladic, standing outside a hut and interpreting with no notepad in short sentences.

All these mediated interactions can be qualified as *dialogue interpreting*, as they feature no notetaking, short turns and all the typical characteristics of multi-party dialogical conversation, like false starts, reformulations, overlapping of speakers and co-construction.

The only exception is, in a way, VID09 from UN TV where the interpreter's rendition looks more like consecutive interpreting: the interpreter is on stage, next to a UN Press and Information officer who explains to Serb refugees held in a UN refugee camp the procedures to go back to their houses. The speaker/interpreter alternation is carefully respected here, in a seemingly monologic interaction, also reinforced by the fact that the interpreter has a megaphone that gives him more voice and conversational power than the UN officer, although, here too, the interpreter does not use a notepad nor takes notes.

We can conclude that *consecutive* was rarely used, although interviewees mention it frequently (I02; I03; I08; I09), often as a source of stress (I01; I03), as interpreters were not trained and were scared of not being able to provide a precise rendition, especially in a context where "every single word was important, journalists needed a good quote, commanders were on edge, and there was even more pressure on the interpreter to convey the exact words" (I03).

Chuchotage is only mentioned twice (I11; M10), while *simultaneous* is absent from our interviews and accounts, and we know that it was only provided by professional conference interpreters at the time (see Chapter 9), at least until the NATO language reform of 1998 (Askew, 2019; I10).

Telephone interpreting, as we have seen in COR05 and in the literature (Thomas, 1997; Stanković, 2001; Gonçalves, 2020) emerges, on the contrary, as a relevant interpreting mode. Already quite popular on the civilian market in the 1990s (Kelly, 2008) telephone interpretation was widely used in the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia for it offered the chance to reach remote areas or avoid movement on unsafe roads.

To this aim, one interpreter always remained at the station or base to receive phone calls and requests for help (Gonçalves, 2020: 251), arrange meetings, and solve problems, to the point that British military interpreter Stanković describes his job as "answering the phone and solving problems" (Stanković, 2001).

A variation of telephone interpretation was *radio interpretation* (M05) when communication occurred through radio frequencies or when interpreters were asked to translate in real-time for the latest radio news (I01; M05). In both phone and radio interpreting, conditions and quality differed consistently from the private market, as the line was disturbed by interferences, wiretapping, use of geo-satellites and, most importantly, yelling, ambulances and shelling. In this respect, two videos from the Associated Press archive (VID05; VID06), dated 26 and 29 November 1994 respectively, are an example of the conditions in which interpreters worked. If we only see a map of the city of Bihać in the videos, we can nevertheless hear the Mayor of this besieged Bosnian town, Handija Kabiljajic, on the phone with the United Nations authorities asking them to save his people from slaughter at the hands of Serb troops and bitterly criticizing UN and NATO for their inaction. The audio quality is so bad that it is impossible to distinguish all the words of this 10-minute tirade against the UN and reflect on the interpreter's rendition - which seems to be way shorter and more neutral than the original - but these

documents prove how bad the audio quality was and how hard the interpreters' job must have been, with background interference, line interruptions, heavy shelling and grenades that at times cover completely the Mayor's voice.

8.2 Interpreters' ethics: status, neutrality, confidentiality

As we have done in Chapters 4 and 5, we will be discussing here some of the ethical imperatives of interpreting that have attracted the interest of scholars and practitioners for their difficult or complex implementation in conflict zones, namely interpreters' status, neutrality and confidentiality, to later discuss quality in § 8.3.

8.2.1 Status

Data we collected through interviews and accounts show that interpreters' status in the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia was a complex alternation between power, that is "the ability of people to control the behaviour and material lives of others" (Fowler, 1965: 61, as quoted in Merlini & Favaron, 2003) and fragility, or to use Catherine Baker's words "projectariat and precariat" (C. Baker, 2014b).

This oscillation between protagonism and invisibility can be also observed by looking closely at the different pictures and videos of interpreters we gathered: in some, interpreters take centre stage, both in two-people and group pictures, standing out in their often-civilian clothes (PIC03; PIC04; PIC05; PIC06; PIC07; PIC08; PIC10; VID01; VID02; VID11), probably a hint to the fact that their communicative function was fundamental. In others, we can barely see them in the background, like accessory figures one step behind real protagonists, or not even in the frame (PIC01; PIC02; PIC09; PIC10; VID03; VID04; VID08) for their lack of importance or for security reasons. We will be explaining below what we mean with power and fragility, providing concrete examples from research data.

8.2.1.1 Power

As established in § 7.3.2, locally recruited interpreters in the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia in the 1990s, had **salaries** that were very high for a country where employment figures had plummeted, and they had access to food products and essential goods that were impossible to find or too expensive on the black market, thanks to their daily connection with foreign officers (Suljagić *et al.*, 2010; Nuhanović *et al.* 2019; M05). This gave interpreters the 'power' to survive and provide for their families, with young women often supporting entire extended families, "reversing the normative household models both along gender and age lines" (C. Baker, 2012b: 864).

Such a position and connections allowed some interpreters to engage in black-market activities, commonly referred to as *ratno profiterstvo* (war profiteering) as Suljagić recounts in his book:

Uno degli interpreti locali fu arrestato con l'accusa di avere preso una bustarella per "combinare un carico" su un camion per conto di un altro [ndr. Per lasciare Srebrenica nel marzo 1993]. L'arrestato negò, ma il poliziotto perquisendolo, gli trovò in tasca 200 marchi tedeschi; l'accusato

sostenne che una donna gli aveva semplicemente ficcato i soldi in tasca, ma era troppo tardi. In prigione ebbe un trattamento speciale: i poliziotti lo tennero in isolamento e lo picchiarono spietatamente. Un po' per invidia, un po' perché ritenevano il suo atto particolarmente ripugnante¹¹⁷ (Suljagić *et al.*, 2010: 69).

This aspect was also underlined by Baker, pointing out how, the privileged, powerful position that we have seen interpreters occupy in other wars (Baigorri Jalón, 2014), allowed them to benefit from the wartime extra-legal economy, although none of the interpreters she and we interviewed, put themselves on record as profiteering from the war (C. Baker, 2012: 865).

Interpreters also enjoyed **mobility** within the country, unlike their fellow countrymen, which was especially important for those living in besieged areas (C. Baker, 2012b: 865; Imamović & Džanić, 2016: 19) as explained by I02: “As interpreters, we did have special status. We were allowed to go with our ECMM team to areas other Croatian citizens could not go to, like the occupied areas of Croatia, because we were treated as ECMM staff”.

This also meant mobility abroad, as sometimes interpreters had the chance spend time in the employer's country for training or holidaying, as supported by several authors (Stanković, 2001; C. Baker, 2012b; Kelly & Baker, 2013), and as confirmed by M12.

As already underlined by Baker (C. Baker, 2012b), this type of mobility continued even after the war ended, as interpreters had developed the language and professional skills, as well as the human connections to start a life abroad when the war was over: M05, for example, studied in the US thanks to her job for the US forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina after 1995.

Interpreters' proximity to the troops also meant that they had better chances of getting to a safe place if in dire need: both M01 and M04 talk about having helped a few of their interpreters whose lives were at risk or who could not be medically treated to escape Sarajevo:

We had an interpreter [...] his family was in Italy, was in Ancona, and of course, interpreters were not supposed to go on UN aircrafts or whatever, we had flights that would come into Sarajevo and commuted to Italy on a regular basis, [...] we just picked him up, we said ok this is the flight you're gonna go on, we're gonna get you out of here, and we just picked him up, [...] we took him to the airport, and he was, I think we said he was UN, like a member of the UN, or whatever, and we put him on a flight and out he went to Italy because he was, I am not sure whether he had been targeted or, whatever. (M04)

Connection to foreign monitors also meant having the chance to get better **medical treatment**, at least for those contingents that had their own hospitals or that, like the Italians, flew everyone home for healthcare issues (I10). On this point, as interpreters often assisted in the medical evaluation of those who could be evacuated (Suljagić *et al.*, 2010: 71-72) we can easily understand how their fellow citizens would see them as holding great power, the power to decide, or influence an evaluation that made the difference between life and death, just like

¹¹⁷ [One of the local interpreters was arrested on charges of taking a bribe to 'arrange a load' on a truck for another person [meaning to leave Srebrenica in March 1993]. The arrested man denied it, but the policeman searched him and found 200 Deutschmarks in his pocket; the accused claimed that a woman had simply shoved the money into his pocket, but it was too late. In prison he got special treatment: the policemen kept him in solitary confinement and beat him mercilessly. Partly out of envy, partly because they found his act particularly repugnant – my translation].

many other interpreters before them had done in occupied Leningrad (O. V. Budnitskii and G. S. Zelenina, 2012, as quoted in Beyda, 2020) or in concentration camps (Tryuk, 2016b).

Next to economic advantages and mobility, interpreters held great power in influencing the outcome of mediated **conversations**, being the ears and mouths of those who could have stopped the war and protected the local population, or at least that was the dominant idea in their communities.

A Bosnian journalist who worked in Sarajevo during the siege told us that, at a press conference, when BiH government officials were asked the number of Bosnian victims in the war, they could not answer the question and asked it back to their interpreter who replied that Bosnia and Herzegovina had suffered 200.000 casualties, and that was the figure that went down in history.

We do not know if the story is true, nor we could historically prove it, but it serves as an example of the power interpreters could exert within the mediated interaction, which can also be seen in some of the videos that we transcribed and analysed here.

In VID11 for example, a UN human rights officer, Edward J Flynn, interviews four women through an interpreter, to inquire about human rights violations in the village of Grubori, Croatia. In this short interpreter-mediated interaction, out of 60 conversational turns, eight are uttered by the UN officer and 14 by the interpreter, of which four are initiated by the interpreter, keeping the UN officer in the dark. The interpreter emerges as a powerful participant (Fairclough, 1992) selecting himself as the next speaker, extending turns and giving the floor throughout the exchange, thus acting at the same time as an advocate, gate-keeper and, most importantly, co-principal (Merlini & Favaron, 2003).

Other examples that give us an idea of the conversational power interpreters held come from VID09 and VID10, where an interpreter translates, in a UN refugee camp in Knin, Croatia the speech by a UN Press and Information officer, informing Serb refugees about the latest agreements between the Croatian government and the UN for their return home.

After the UN officers have finished their explanation, they take answers from the crowd, and it is the interpreter with a megaphone in his hand who selects the questions, thus yielding the power to decide whose doubts and problems would be solved.

The same is true for VID08, filmed in the same area as VID11, where a UN Human Rights officer speaks through an interpreter to elderly Serb villagers inside a house, urging realism in their demands to the Croatian authorities that have taken back the area after August 5, 1995. Although we cannot see participants, as the video is filmed from the back, we hear the interpreter's voice stand out, this time not initiating turns or conducting side conversations with the village elders but exerting a clear gatekeeping role in selecting the questions from the crowd. In turn 24, when the elders start speaking all at the same time and interrupt the female UN officer, the interpreter intervenes, by saying "*Čekajte gospodine, dozvolite gospodu da završi*" [Please Sir, let the lady finish – my translation] further marking his role as a gatekeeper and conversation manager.

8.2.1.2 Fragility

Despite the advantages, being an interpreter for foreign peacekeepers in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia in the 1990s also came with a series of disadvantages that put interpreters simultaneously in a position of power, but also of fragility. Interpreters, both male and female, faced judgement, sometimes threats and, less frequently, attacks from their local communities. Interpreters' jobs, as we have seen, were risky and highly insecure, and while the local institutions counted on the fact that the international missions would take full responsibility for their employment rights, these in turn expected that the interpreter was covered by local laws and labour regulations (I02), resulting in a legal and labour vacuum. Interpreters had thus to pay medical expenses, meals and transportation, they could not obtain a loan at the bank as temporary workers (Mulić-Softić, 2017), had no pension payments and were left on their own if hurt or injured in the line of fire (see § 7.3.1).

In their relation to international soldiers, their position was a subordinate one (C. Baker, 2010a), as proven by the derogatory names attributed to them, like 'translation machines' (C. Baker, 2010b: 164) 'lips' (C. Baker, 2012a: 9-10) or 'yellow cards', (C. Baker, 2012a: 260; 2012b: 22-23), the disparaging comments sometimes made to their face (I01; I02; I08; I10) and the constant suspicion directed at them, as I08 recounts:

My mother went to school with the Mayor of Tuzla at that time and I went to school with his son and we, I mean, Tuzla is a small place so everybody knows everybody so we went to a meeting and [...] and then the Mayor asks me how were my parents and what's up, you know, the usual, I got like, after this meeting I was told that I'm not educated to talk, my job is just to interpret what she says, that you know I speak only when she speaks and things like that. (I08)

At the same time, by being local citizens, they were often treated with a 'semi-colonial' attitude, (Stanković, 2001: 82-83; I02; I03), could be victim of gender, ethnic or religious discrimination (see § 7.3.3) but there was not much they could do as they were the local employees in a country at war of powerful military international organizations.

This subaltern, fragile position towards the foreign soldiers is epitomized by the ultimate experience of betrayal experienced by I01, when his military colleagues abandoned his family to the Serbs in Srebrenica, proving that the interpreters' powerful position was only apparent, as they did not have the power to save their loved ones:

I was one of the best interpreters ever that the UN could hire for this job [...] and this was an additional reason [...] why I felt so betrayed when they handed over my family to the Serbs who killed them [...]. I was loyal to the United Nations: I never refused any job, any task, [...] I never said "No, I am not going to do it", I never for example refused when they asked me to join them on the Serb side which involved very high risk for my life, I even joined them on foot patrols and it happened that several times we walked through a minefield, [...] I always tried to, you know... my primary task as I understood it was that two sides talking to each other through me have a fruitful meaning and that the communication or language barrier is breached through me. (I01)

Even though all interpreters declared that their relationship with peacekeepers was good or very good, their position was an extremely fragile one as they felt that they were not considered as being fully part of the military team, but at the same time their work for peacekeepers set

them out from their fellow citizens: “you were and you weren’t really an integral part of the team [...] you were ‘in between’, neither this nor that” (I02):

Interpreters [...] are both part of the international mission, but also do not really belong with them entirely, as they are “locals”. They are part of the local community, but also have a foot outside it. They see the situation both through the eyes of the local community they belong to a party in conflict, so, from the inside, but also from the outside, through the eyes of the international mission they work with/for. They inhabit both worlds and belong to neither entirely. This makes them somehow suspicious to both, it is kind of unnerving to both sides. And if there are tensions between these two worlds, as there almost always are, they are inescapably caught in the middle, and constantly must negotiate their position. (I02)

Interpreters’ comments, in this respect, clash with the perception of soldiers, who considered interpreters as “part of the team”, “one of us” (M15), or “*camarades*” (M12) for the unique bond and time they shared. They describe very good relationships with interpreters in all accounts (Thomas 2003; Leandro, 2018) and interviews, and define them as cooperative, friendly, professional, and familial (M12). Some soldiers even considered interpreters as their children (M04), are extremely appreciative and grateful for their work to this date and some are still in touch with their interpreters.

If interpreters were somehow subaltern to their foreign employers, the situation was even worse with local commanders and units, especially the most dreaded ones from the opposite ethnic group, as interpreters’ indefinite status within the foreign missions, as have seen, did not always guarantee protection (Bartolini, 2009).

This can be clearly seen in VID03 from Associated Press where Bosnian-Serb colonel Ratko Mladić talks to the commander of UN forces in Srebrenica, Dutch colonel Thom Karremans through a young Emir Suljagić on July 11, 1995, the night before the city fell. Although we cannot see their faces, and despite the interpreter’s ability to appear professional, we can imagine that he must have been very scared: after all he was a Bosnian Muslim refugee, trapped in Srebrenica, while Mladić controlled the army that had been shelling the city for years and that had the potential to swipe it away. This fear is patent in the interpreters’ body language and positioning: his hands are crossed behind his back in a very static and frozen pose and betray his fear and suspiciousness at what his body recognizes as a threat (Navarro, 2009).

In a second video from Associated Press, VID04, filmed on July 27, 1995, two days after the fall of Žepa, the same Ratko Mladić gets on a bus full of refugee Bosnian women headed to Kladanj, tagged along by a CNN journalist and a female interpreter.

The situation here is already heavily unbalanced and propagandistic, as the women are asked by the CNN journalist if Bosnian-Serb soldiers have molested them in front of Ratko Mladić, who has the power to decide if they can leave the enclave or be killed on the spot.

The interpreter translating the exchange is a young woman - who we barely see and about whom we do not have any information - finding herself in an equally fragile position. The interpreter struggles to even find time and space to translate the remarks by the journalist to Mladić, to have her voice be heard, let alone address the power imbalance between the women and the soldier.

Her subaltern status emerges even more starkly at the end of the interaction when Mladić calls her twice with the patronizing, chauvinist expression ‘*mala*’ (“*Mala je prevoditeljica*”, “*Mala dođi!*” - “The little one is the translator”, “Little one, come here! [my translation]), meaning literally little one, young woman but used only in very familiar contexts, and employed here to remind her that she occupies a triply lower position, as an interpreter, a woman, and, probably, a Bosnian citizen (see § 7.3.3).

Finally, interpreters’ status within their communities was a powerful and yet disadvantaged one as they had, both in Croatia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a **negative reputation**.

The Croatian Education Minister of the time (probably Ljilja Vokić) publicly defined the patriotism of Croatian interpreters as “questionable” (Stahuljak, 2009: 409) and we have already mentioned the two videos (VID01 and VID02), published in 2018 by a Croatian on-line magazine (Dnevno.hr, 2018) that claim to prove that local UN interpreters in Croatia had ulterior motives.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, although we found no trace of public statements against interpreters, reading through the comments under an article by a local news outlet online, NWS13 (RTV BN 2016) on the attempt of NATO and EUFOR employees to have their pension schemes paid, we can perceive public contempt at interpreters even today.

Such a perception also emerges from ICTY trials, where the witnessing of local interpreters was routinely discredited by defence lawyers claiming that they were all spies (Elias-Bursac, 2015: 235).

Among interpreters interviewed, three defined their relationship with the local community as generally good, especially when they enjoyed the same living conditions and helped them or interceded for them (I01; I03; I09) while five (I02; I05; I06; I08; I10) describe it as conflicting, particularly after 1992-1993, when “the perception of the international community changed, going from expectations that they would stop the war to disappointment” (I02; I05).

Consequently, the perception of interpreters also changed, and they would occasionally get comments like “those guys of yours you know, they’re here to do... they’re here on the Serb side” (I06), or “Whom do you work for? Are you working for us or are you working for them?” (I05).

I08 uses the word ‘hate’ to describe the mood toward interpreters, while others point out that in the local language ‘*mržnja*’, hate, is maybe too strong a word (I01), but that generalized dislike was aimed at them from their fellow citizens, envious of their job for the UN, the ECMM or NATO, as the comments in NWS13 seem to confirm (“They worked for years for enormous sums of money”, “Most of them worked in the interest of NATO and SFOR like spies, I wouldn’t pay them a penny”).

It is no surprise that local authorities were very suspicious of them and that they run the risk of being arrested while even their closest contacts resented their work for international peacekeepers, resulting in a situation of isolation for interpreters (§ see 7.5.1).

When not publicly accused, interpreters’ work was completely forgotten in both countries, even when provided on a volunteer basis, like for ECMM interpreters.

Interpreters are today completely absent, unlike veterans and refugees, from post-Yugoslav fiction, cinema or political debate (C. Baker, 2014: 93), they have only attracted scholarly

interest from foreigners or expats (C. Baker, 2010a; 2010b; 2011a; 2014; Dragovic-Drouet, 2007; Persaud, 2016) and were never considered for veteran status (*branitelj/branilac*)¹¹⁸, which goes with public recognition and financial support, with the “partial¹¹⁹” exception of the ECMM interpreters who received the Croatian Homeland War Memorial Medal in 2002.

One of the two Croatian ECMM interpreters interviewed describes this lack of recognition as a ‘wound’:

These people I worked with really worked for the noblest motives, they did their best, they went into dangerous situations, they were students who could party and instead of going to clubs they went on the field, working day and night, really people did their best emotionally, physically and intellectually and they didn't expect a reward then, none of us expected a reward then, but we do have a sort of bitter feeling in the mouth, like that was nothing. (I02)

This ‘removal’ from the public scene even today has never been fully investigated, this is why we will try and put forward here an analysis of the elements that might have influenced it.

Firstly, interpreters’ bad reputation might surely derive from their association with their employers, which came to represent the failure of the international community to provide a consistent and effective response to the conflict (Gow, 1997b). It was probably reinforced by the interpreters’ apparently powerful position within the mission, whispering in the ears of commanders, so that when these failed to deliver, the blame fell harder on interpreters as local citizens. A second reason for the criticism towards interpreters can be found in their salaries, which had made their job a coveted one (I01) and turned interpreters, into people who “don’t care, they are making money anyway” (I02), especially when cases of interpreters engaging in black-market activities were reported. Also, the fact that local authorities often tried to push into interpreters’ positions their own people and relatives (C. Baker, 2012a: 859), might have contributed to the interpreters’ reputation as *political protegés* who benefited from age-old nepotism practices by war and political elites. The third reason behind interpreters’ bad reputation can be found in the reversal of gender balance that their work implied: representing most of the interpreting workforce, women became the bread-winners of their families and sometimes extended families (C. Baker, 2010b: 162) which gave them unprecedented decision-making power over their fathers, fathers-in-law, brothers and husbands and possibly undermined their traditional dominant role, as Mark Ferguson, a UK officer deployed to Bosnia and Herzegovina, recounts:

On a Saturday morning, if you took a walk around town, [...] you’d know the women, but their husbands would sort of stare at you in rather a sort of, ‘M-m-m, my wife goes up to your camp, I’m not entirely sure what she does all day, you know, m-m-m, I’m not sure I like this, because she’s in control, she’s got the money.’ And you could really feel a sort of tension there. (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 152-153)

¹¹⁸ Nor will ever have a chance to obtain it, from a general reading of the Croatian and Bosnian laws on veteran status and subsequent amendments (DOC03; DOC04).

¹¹⁹ It should be said though that not only their role as interpreters is not marked on the list, but not all interpreters received the medal, just the ones that had been there from the beginning, and the ceremony was not covered by the local press (Stahuljak, personal communication, 2021).

Also, these young women who worked with foreign military men probably ended up on the negative side of the ‘saint-whore complex’, especially in the most rural and traditional areas: I10 mentions the “traditional and chauvinist prejudices of her neighbours about her work” and that she was once asked by a local commander “How does a woman who speaks a lot of languages kiss? [my translation]”.

Finally, the popular representation of translators and interpreters as either ‘native spies’ or ‘treacherous collaborators’, epitomized by the motto *traduttore-traditore*, probably placed interpreters on the negative side of the ‘victim vs. villain’ dimension they are usually framed with (M. Baker, 2012), especially in a war, where fitting the traditional representation of neutral and invisible conduits seems all the more impossible (Lambert, 2018: 269).

Any interpreter’s agency was therefore conceived as treachery, or as being the result of unethical compromises and the interpreters’ otherness became even more problematic in a society where the choice was between us or them.

Last but not least, in a conflict where ethnicity was central, or made to appear as such, and where people were forced to choose their ethnic group and align homogeneously, the negative perception imposed on interpreters because of their ethnicity could also overlap on their professional one, as proven by the cases of supposedly ethnic-based mistranslation reported in the literature (Dragovic-Drouet, 2007; Dnevno.hr, 2018).

8.2.2 Neutrality

As we have seen in Chapters 4 and 5, if neutrality is considered as a crucial professional tenant in many interpreting settings, in conflicts zones, its implementation is highly problematic as it is shaped, on the one side, by the expectations of the parties that interpreters work with, who often require non-neutrality of them, and on the other by the setting’s violent constraints and its narratives.

And yet, as anticipated in Chapter 5, the literature reports several cases of unneutral interpreters in the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia in the 1990s, accused of being moles, spies, and double agents (Kelly & Baker, 2013; Elias-Bursac, 2015) by both their own community and their employers.

Accusations are usually made on the ground that interpreters used their position and job to alter the content of a speech or message so that it fit the political objectives or ideas of the ethnic group they belonged to.

For example, an article in *Slobodna Dalmacija* from June 3, 1992 (NWS12) reports that the interpreter of Lieutenant-General Satish Nambiar, the Indian UNPROFOR commander from March 1992 to March 1993, during a press conference in Belgrade willingly omitted from his rendition into Serbian any reference to ethnic cleansing and violence towards the Croats and he was later replaced after protests by the press.

Such concerns about interpreters’ lack of neutrality and its link to ethnical belonging did not spare even military interpreters: British officer and interpreter, Miloš Stanković, was initially accused of siding with the Serbs by international newspapers, especially by Roger Cohen from the New York Times (Stanković, 2001: 371-372; 403; NWS04; NWS05) and by local papers,

like *Lilijan*, *Oslobođenje* and *Večernje Novine*. An article we retrieved (NWS14) from *Večernje Novine* of March 2, 1995, titled “*krtica od povjerenja* [the trusted mole]” affirms that “his real name is Mihajlo Stanisavljević, a Serb who tries to influence the war in the favour of the Serbs”. Even though his employer, General Michael Rose, always took responsibility for the moves attributed to him, Stanković was later accused of having conspired with the Serbs also by the British army and he was forced to leave the corps, although investigations later acquitted him of all charges.

Such parallels between interpreters’ lack of neutrality and their ethnicity have also been made by scholars like Mila Dragović-Douet (2007: 34-35), a French-Serbian interpreter and professor who reports, in her most famous article, the mistranslation of a Croatian ECMM interpreter, during an interview with an elderly Croat woman carried out by Charles Neuforge for RTL-TV1 in the autumn of 1993:

The elderly woman (in a sad tone): “We’ve had a hard time finding food, and the water has been cut off. In this icy winter, things are getting worse by the day.”

The translator (venomously): “The Serbs left us to die like dogs.”

The elderly woman: “We couldn’t do anything else, we didn’t have any choice.”

The translator: “The Serbs chased us out, destroying everything.”

In this frequently quoted example, the willingness „to do something“ (I07) of Croatian ECMM interpreters (Stahuljak, 1999; 2009) and their outrage at the consequences of war on their fellow citizens undeniably pushed this anonymous interpreter to perform a clearly ideologically biased translation. Nevertheless, we believe that this short, out-of-context example, which doesn’t consider the interpreters’ position and personal history, cannot be taken as proof of the lack of neutrality of an entire category especially because it is an academically unverified one. Dragović-Drouet borrows it from Michel Collon’s book *Poker menteur: les grandes puissances, la Yougoslavie et les prochaines guerres* (Collon, 1998), a collection of unverified complot theories that borders on the offensive to those victims of war and genocide, where no source, or even a more precise time frame is provided for this example. Since RTL agreed to digitize the file for verification but required a more precise timespan than the autumn of 1993 to retrieve the footage for us, we contacted Dragović-Drouet, but she proved unhelpful: she only wished us good luck in finding it as “l’automne 1993 ne dure que trois mois” (Dragović-Drouet, personal communication, 2020).

This is why we will try and analyse here the issue of neutrality based on interviews, but also on the analysis of interpreted-mediated interactions retrieved, to reason on proven data and facts.

8.2.2.1 Interviews

As the example above shows, it is extremely difficult to evaluate and verify neutrality 30 years after an interpreted event, but we nevertheless analysed all available sources to try and understand if such publicly declared cases of non-neutrality could be ascribed to interpreters’

political position and ethnicity, also collecting military officers and interpreters' opinion on the issue.

When we asked interpreters if they felt they behaved neutrally, they admitted that they witnessed cases of unneutral interpreting from their colleagues, especially untrained ones, mostly men, who once again felt that they had to contribute more actively to the war effort (I02; I09).

Nevertheless, most interpreters felt that they managed to act at least impartially and professionally (I02; I03; I04; I05; I06; I07; I08; I09; I10; I12), helping the sides make informed decisions and keeping their feelings under control. They affirm that they learned to self-monitor or self-censor their opinions (I02; I07): "It was hard not to try to prove to them, you know, these are the bad guys we are good guys or whatever and it required a lot of self-discipline not to interfere and not getting into arguments with some of the monitors" (I02).

If Croatian ECMM interpreters had been at least alerted that they were not supposed to "change anything that was said, not downplaying, not manipulating" (I02) all the other interpreters were completely untrained, as we have seen, and it is therefore surprising that the words discipline, and especially professionalism emerge so frequently from their answers, as a sort of protective shield against the neutrality conflict bestowed upon them.

Interpreters, nevertheless, recognize that they found it particularly difficult to refrain from providing comments (I06) outside the interpreted act, like when travelling with monitors, or when talking with them before or after a meeting, especially because military officers appreciated their role as cultural informants, even eliciting their cultural explanations and opinions so that they felt they walked a "fine line between explaining things and propaganda" (I02).

Another occasion, in which many interpreters claimed that they found it impossible to be completely neutral was when translating for victims or survivors of war crimes and violence. They felt that neutrality was not possible, for a human tendency to sympathize with the victims (I03) especially if they belonged to the victimized group themselves (I01). It is especially when translating for victims of sexual violence that women interpreters affirmed having had a hard time remaining neutral (I08; I10), on the contrary they affirmed that neutrality was not appropriate, as they felt they had a responsibility to advocate for the victim, often poorly educated village women, traumatized by what they had been through and unused to the UN procedures: "It is different when you're translating, I don't know, a victim: then you have to show the sympathy for the victim, I can't just stand there like stony-faced and you know do nothing I have to show sympathy towards the victims" (I08).

On the military side, most interviewees affirmed that interpreters were neutral, or at least strived to be (M01; M04; M05; M08; M13; M14; M15) and reported only a few cases of interpreters that had to be fired for lack of neutrality (M01; M04). Even those who remember neutrality issues in interpreters, like trying to suggest to them what to say on a certain occasion (M07), recognized that interpreters were under a lot of pressure from the belligerent parties (M06) and that it was hard to be neutral in a situation (M03; M04; M06, M07; M11) where the opposite faction might have killed their family members:

No one was neutral. [...] you cannot have neutrality in a war, not even the UN was neutral, the UN is there to point fingers to whoever is doing something bad, [...] so the UN cannot be considered as neutral, maybe impartial and that is the goal, very difficult to achieve. (M03)

In 1993/1994, when I investigated my first atrocity, the interpreters were as shocked and outraged as I was and I know by the tone of their voices, that they were adding to my questions. It was very hard for interpreters to remain neutral in an ethnic conflict when they must witness atrocities committed against their own people. (M04)

Data show that military officers, despite the concern for the interpreters' lack of neutrality being central in their daily activities, as human beings perfectly understood the difficult position of interpreters, apparently better than interpreting scholars and professionals as their words resonate with those of interpreter 02, when asked about neutrality: "We lived under shelling, with everybody we knew a refugee, people killed every day and our friends were on the frontline, cities bombed [...] there's no way to be... it's ridiculous to even think that somebody local [could be neutral]" (I02).

Both military officers and interpreters seem to challenge here, as many scholars have recently done, the entire concept of interpreters' neutrality, which they consider unapplicable or even detrimental in conflict zones (M. Baker, 2006; 2010; Baker & Tobia, 2012: 202-3; Probirskaja, 2016; Gómez Amich, 2018b). They therefore seem to suggest the need for a more teleological approach to neutrality, to be considered according to the situation and its possible consequences (Morris, 1995; Rudvin, 2002; Hale, 2007; 2008; Inghilleri, 2012; Kalina, 2015) and not as a fixed moral imperative.

8.2.2.2 Interpreter-mediated interactions

In our analysis of neutrality, we also considered real, interpreter-mediated interactions to figure out if and how the lack of neutrality jeopardised the foreign missions' work, as it is suggested



Figure 23: Interpreter and old Serbian women in a UN refugee camp the day after Operation Storm in August 1995 (Dnevno.hr, 2018).

in a video published by the Croatian online newspaper, *Dnevno*, (example 1) in 2018 under the title "*Nikad Obavljena u Medijima: Snimka stanja u kampu UN-a neposredno nakon 'Oluje'*" - "Exclusive: footage of the situation in the UN camp immediately after Operation Storm" [my translation]. The video was filmed by Dražen Travaš who, at the time, worked as a cameraman for Worldwide Television News (VID01) and shows an exchange, in a refugee camp in Croatia (Figure 23), between a Canadian police officer (right), an old Serbian lady (center) and an interpreter (left), surrounded by

several other people. The old lady wanted to return to her house in the Croatian *Krajine*, which had just been taken back by the Croatian army in August 1995 and discusses the issue with a

policeman. The interpretation accused here is the one that the interpreter offers for the English word ‘ransacked’ in turn 17¹²⁰:

- 17 UN: Almost every houses have been **ransacked**, so everything is thrown everywhere.
18 I: Skoro svaka kuća je **opljačkana**= [almost every house has been robbed/ransacked]
19 W: =Ne opljačkana [not robbed]
20 B: Nije opljačkana, nego je sve pobacano [not robbed but everything thrown around]
21 I: Prefurano da i odneseno. [It is all moved around and taken]
22 B: Da [yes]
23 W: (?)
24 B: Nije odneseno, iz moje kuće nije ništa nije odneseno, iz zgrade gdje ja živim nije ništa odneseno, pobacano sve dolje [it is not taken, from my house nothing was taken, from the building where I live nothing was taken, everything has been thrown down]
25 I: Yeah, she knows that.

In the first adjacent turn, the interpreter translates the word ‘ransacked’ with *opljačkana* (‘robbed’), but she is immediately contradicted by someone in the audience, probably another interpreter as she wears the interpreters’ yellow tag around her neck, who nevertheless does not offer an alternative translation. The translation of ‘ransacked’ with *opljačkana* (‘robbed’) is contested because it is believed to depict the Croatian forces that reclaimed the area as thieves.

Interestingly, it is the old lady, who does not speak English, that offers a solution here, telling the interpreter that nothing was taken from the house, but it was simply thrown around (*Nije opljačkana, nego je sve pobacano*). The interpreter seems to accept the definition, as she repeats a synonym of *pobacano*, that is *prefurano* (moved around) in turn 21 but once again stresses the idea of ‘stealing’ by adding the adjective *odneseno* (taken).

At this point, the interpreter is once again corrected by the old lady, who states that nothing was taken from her house, and without venturing into further translations, she simply replies in the affirmative to the original question that the UN officer asked 8 turns earlier.

However, according to the Oxford dictionary (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.), the verb ‘to ransack’ can either mean “to go through (a place) stealing things and causing damage” or “to search (a place or receptacle) thoroughly, especially in such a way as to cause harm”. Therefore, the interpreters’ first rendition as ‘robbed’ is not incorrect, it just focusses on one of the two meanings of the term, both having a negative acceptance. In the second translation the interpreter still sticks with the original meaning of the word in English but offers two synonyms, *prefurano* (moved around) and *odneseno* (taken way) which is a correct rendition of the two ideas behind the term ‘ransacked’, that of moving AND stealing objects, despite the Serbian lady herself telling her that nothing was stolen from her house.

This analysis shows that what is described as a translation mistake with a specific political intent is the result of the polysemic meaning of the word ‘ransacked’, and of the difficulty in translating it with just one word in another language. To decide if and which of the two meanings was more appropriate, the interpreter should have known what the original meaning intended by the policer officer was - although he uses his hands to mark a movement of objects

¹²⁰ UN is the UN police officer, I is the interpreter, B is the old lady, and W is an unknown person in the audience, probably another interpreter who also appears at another moment in this video.

- and he should have had reliable information on the situation in the area, which he probably didn't have, since it had just been claimed back from the Croatian forces.

We believe that it is very hard to ascribe such a rendition to the interpreter's lack of neutrality, which in turn would be aimed at portraying Croatian soldiers as thieves or at discouraging the Serbian woman from going back to the area. It is much more likely that this particular interpreter felt sure about picking one of the two meanings of the verb 'ransacked' or didn't know it had two or might have just wanted to save her 'face' as an official interpreter, especially after being corrected in front of several people.

Moreover, if we look at the entire interaction we see that the interpreter's performance is quite poor in general: the UN police officer was kept in the dark on several occasions throughout the exchange, during which the interpreter did not even consider checking with him the meaning of 'ransacked'. The translation into both English and the local language is interspersed with language mistakes, weird grammar and pronunciation, and false senses (see § 8.3) which point, in our opinion, to a lack of language and interpreting skills rather than to an intention to sidetrack interpreting for political goals.

The second example considered here comes from a UN TV video (VID09, which continues in VID10) filmed at night-time in a UN refugee camp in Knin, on August 24, 1995, almost twenty days after the area was retaken by the Croatian army. In the video, UN Press and Information Officer Alun Roberts informs, through an interpreter, the Serb refugees of an informal agreement reached by General Forain for the UN and Croatian Army General Ivan Čermak for the departure to Serb territory of the camp population, except for men, whom the Croatian authorities want to interrogate about war crimes.

It is precisely the term 'war crimes' that creates issues for the interpreter, in what is otherwise a good performance, at least for the parts that we could evaluate. The UN officer¹²¹ mentioned the issue in several parts of his speech - he talks about 'interviews for investigation of war crimes' or 'allegations of war crimes' - but all four times the interpreter decided to go for softer and less explicit formulations, only once using the verb '*ispitivati*' ('to interrogate'), and preferring '*razgovarati*' ('to talk', 'to discuss') or '*održati informativne razgovore*' ('to have informative talks') or '*riješiti pitanje*' ('to solve the issue'). The only instance when he mentioned the exact translation of war crimes in the local language ('*ratne zločine*'), is quite late in the conversation, when the term has gone untranslated for several times, and it is preceded by signs of uncertainty:

I: Ehm... Eh... Ujedinjenje Nacije se i dalje drže svog stava da za sve... da za sve one osobe koje su osumnjičene za...ehm... za **ratne zločine** mora postojati pokazni dokazni materijal. [Ehm... Eh...The United Nations continue to stand by their position that all... that all those people that are suspected of... ehm... of war crimes there must be probatory evidence]

The pauses and fillers clearly show that the interpreter was uncomfortable with using the expression 'war crimes' but that he was at this point forced to, whether because he had failed to convey the expression several times now, or because he could not come up with a synonym. Either way, judging by the same standards used by the article published by Dnevno.hr in 2018

¹²¹ I is the interpreter and O is the UN officer.

to accuse interpreters, we could say that here too the interpreter is mistranslating because, probably being a Serb himself, he might not believe that those refugees were guilty of war crimes or that crimes towards Croatian citizens are crimes at all.

A closer analysis of the context and his language behavior, however, shows that the interpreter's translation choice might have been guided by the awareness that the public was tired, having been held in the camp for a long time - the UN officer at a later point asks them to keep being patient - and scared, and intended to achieve their collaboration.

It might also be linked to the fact that the interpreters knew that the crowd could become agitated at the mention of war crimes, an issue which is also discussed by some refugees in interviews in the same video, so that he might have downplayed the translation to avoid provoking or worrying the crowd.

What seems like an unneutral translation might have also been guided by the interpreter's knowledge of the situation and the aims expected by his employers from the encounter, that is to obtain the refugees' consent to the steps decided for their return and interrogation. In that case, the interpreter might have tried to present the procedure in the most reassuring way to achieve the aims of the institution he represented, a tendency that has been recorded in other interpreters working permanently within an organization, like resident healthcare interpreters (Barbieri, 2021: 81-83).

This is confirmed also by the use of *first vs. third person*. In both videos, the interpreter resorts to the third person singular only when giving refugees the order to come before the stage “*Gospodin Roberts moli vas da sidete dolje i da se skupite ispod stepenište* [Mr Roberts kindly ask you to come over here under the staircase].” or when he relays the refugees concerns to the monitors, again as if stressing his extraneity to their demands.

What is more interesting though, is that the interpreter almost always used the first-person plural, in a way marking his identification with the institution he represents, which becomes even more evident later in the encounter, when the interpreter switched to the first-person plural, even when the original statement was in the first person singular:

7 O: I am just gonna give you straight face what happened today and ask Captain Gilbert just to summarize a little more and be straight and honest with you.

8 I: Od prvog puta, od prvog puta kada sam vam na ovaj način obratio, rekli smo da će UN prema vama biti sasvim iskren i objektivan [From the very first time I talked to you, we said that the UN will be completely honest and objective with you].

A completely different strategy is that used in the third and last example offered here, by the interpreter in VID08¹²², translating between a UN officer and the village elders in a village in the Croatian *Krajine*. The interpreter strives, when possible, to use impersonal or infinitive constructions maybe to express his independent status and neutrality through language:

3 O1: I think the problem is the logistic of organizing this is too soon that those around Knin already started ((coughing)) getting the money.

¹²² I is the interpreter, O1 is the UN officer and M is one of the local elders.

4 I: Problem je jedino kako organizirati za sada ovaj dio ovdje. Ljudi u Kninu već dobivaju novce. [the problem is how to organize for this area here. In Knin people are already getting the money].

This attempt at neutrality was made clear again at the end of the encounter when the interpreter autonomously signalled the end of the meeting and made sure that the questions were over (turn 44 and 47). Most importantly, he stepped out here of his role as an interpreter to take that of a pseudo-co-principal, in a remark to one of the local elders (M), in which he openly marked his neutral position, separate from that of the UN, as we can see in the use of personal pronouns, ‘oni, ja i vi’ (‘them, me and you’). He even added that everyone is scared (‘*isprepadani*’) by the situation to express empathy for the local community as a sort of *captatio benevolentiae*:

44 I: Znači vama to je to to [so that was it for you?]
45 *M: Isprepadani [afraid]
46 *M: Isprepadani smo [we are afraid]
47 I: Znači uglavnom, je to to, jel znate već, [In general yea, but you know already]
48 *M: (
49 I: znam svi smo isprepadani i oni i ja i vi. [I know, I know, we are all afraid, them, me you]

These clear attempts at neutrality even through language tell us that interpreters did know how to behave if not neutrally, at least professionally, but also that neutrality in a conflict zone is a complex ethical issue that requires constant adaptation, renegotiation and is heavily affected by the constraints imposed by the context and the institution for which interpreters work.

Also, the excerpts analyzed show that unneutral renditions might be due to poor language, translation and interpreting skills (example 1) or might be guided by the need, imposed on the interpreter, to make sure that the encounter runs smoothly and that the goals set by the institution they work for are achieved, or, again, to protect everyone safety (example 2 and 3). Another case in point, in this respect, is the exchange in the already mentioned videos (VID05; VID06) where the Mayor of the besieged town of Bihać yells at the UN for their inactivity for ten minutes, but the interpreter only provides a summary and a way less colorful rendition into English, probably to promote conversation and the finding of a solution.

We can conclude, therefore, that even though ascribing unneutral renditions by interpreters to ethical and political consideration might be the easiest, and academically more worthwhile thing to do, the examples analysed here show that lack of language neutrality can be due to different factors and, most importantly, that in conflict zones neutrality should be approached with a teleological approach and understood as a nuanced, dynamic value to be constantly renegotiated on the basis of the communicative events interpreted (Ballardini, 2019).

8.2.3 Confidentiality

If confidentiality is considered paramount in military settings, we wondered how the issue was approached, at the time, and asked both interpreters and their employers if there was a system in place to make sure confidentiality was not breached. Interpreters seemed to have been very aware that what they learned on the job was to be kept confidential (I02; I05; I06; I08; I09; I10; I11) and many declared having signed a confidentiality agreement or having had a

confidentiality clause in their contracts (I01; I02; I05; I06; I07; I10; M15). The issue is raised, for example, at point 2 (obligations) of the UNPROFOR contract for individual contractors:

Individual contractors are required to exercise the utmost discretion in all matters of official business of the organization. Individual contractors may not communicate at any time to any other person, Government, or authority external to the United Nations any information known to them by reason of their association with the United Nations which has not been made public except in the course of their duties or by authorization of the Secretary-general or his designate; nor shall individual contractors at any time use such information to private advantage. These obligations did not lapse upon termination of the agreement with the United Nations. (COR07)

If most interpreters knew they had to respect military or professional secrecy, and I08 was even trained on the issue when she started working for UNHCR, both interpreters and military officers affirmed that there was no specific system in place to guarantee confidentiality as regards interpreters.

In UNPROFOR - and probably in ECMM, about which no information is available on the topic - confidentiality was, according to M08, M01 and Thomas (2003), less of an issue than in NATO settings, since UNPROFOR dealt with open intelligence. Military officers probably took for granted that some local interpreters could have been “conduits of information for their communities and no doubt, at minimum, low-level intelligence operatives” (Ibid: 40) who had to report some amount of information to the local authorities letting interpreters take such well-paid jobs (M05). Nevertheless, as Thomas points out, cases of interpreters fired for being spies were very limited (M01; M04; M10), while those of local interpreters providing information or warning to the UN that ended up protecting them were much more frequent.

UNPROFOR UNMOs and officers claim that the only way to have confidentiality respected, in the absence of a specific unit dedicated to it, was to trust interpreters and share as little confidential information with them as possible (M03; M06), while warning that they would be fired and blacklisted if they breached confidentiality (M02; M04; M09).

In NATO missions, the issue was slightly more complicated as NATO deals with actual intelligence, i.e. information to be used against the enemy (Gonçalves, 2020: 55). A confidentiality clause was probably included in interpreters’ contracts, as we can see in article 6.1 “obligation of professional confidentiality and discretion” of Veselin Gatalo’s NATO SFOR contract (Gatalo, 2004) which simply states that: “Workers will not spread any information learned in the course of their job”. One of the Italian officers interviewed affirms that, when hired, interpreters were “indoctrinated” on “ethics, faithfulness, loyalty, faithful translation and confidentiality” (M10).

The few officers interviewed who were also active during the NATO years seemed to imply that a system was in place to make sure interpreters kept the information they learned confidential, with investigations being launched if there was a suspicion that an interpreter was trying to steal documents or reported information (M10), although they declare that they do not know more about the issue, as it was not under their responsibility (M14).

In the absence of a reliable system to enforce confidentiality, military officers did not hide their concern that interpreters might have divulged information, and interpreters report having been treated with suspicion by their military colleagues on grounds of confidentiality breaches: “There was this general who was convinced interpreters were the moles, but it wasn’t true – my translation” (I10).

In interpreters’ accounts, confidentiality is a reason for concern, increased stress and pressure, as I06 recounts in an interesting anecdote:

There was this final draft of the ceasefire agreement that they had been working on for weeks and it was a top-secret document and this ambassador [...] he called me to his office because I was a kind of team leader of the five of us and he told me “Listen / name/ this is a super confidential document” so we had to work in his office on his computer [...] “If this leaks out I will kill you with my own hands” [humor] [...] so, anyway, we started working on it, me and my colleague, and it was time to go to lunch, one o’clock and we would usually buy the paper when we went for lunch and so we bought the local national daily and there it was the whole agreement from A to Z, published in the local paper. (I06)

In this case, interpreters did not face any consequences for the leaking of information, because the document must have been leaked the day before to be published in the morning paper, but we can easily imagine how compromised their position would have been, had it been published the day after, for example.

To conclude, confidentiality constituted, for interpreters, a cause for discrimination or suspicion, in the absence of specific mechanisms to check that information was not leaked. We agree with Thomas (2003b: 40), that confidentiality should be approached and discussed without shame - even military observers break confidentiality to report information to their Senior military Observers or national governments - to protect both soldiers and interpreters, also keeping in mind ‘reverse breaches of confidentiality’, that is when interpreters function as alert mechanisms on local threats.

8.3 Interpreting quality

Even though the concept of quality in interpreting is a complex one (Kurz, 2001; 2002; Pöchhacker, 2002; Hale *et al.*, 2009), the quality of the service provided by locally hired interpreters in the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s has been described as poor by interpreting professionals and scholars (Dragovic-Drouet, 2007; Askew, 2019: 232), mainly due to interpreters’ lack of skills and training, and to improvised and heterogeneous hiring procedures and management.

We will try here to paint a more detailed picture on quality by using interviews and documents retrieved and analysis of interpreter-mediated interactions.

8.3.1 Interviews and documents

In our data, this is confirmed by one comment in Document COR08, where the Commander of the Visoko battalion writes that most interpreters “cannot even conduct a conversation in English, let alone facilitate communication”.

However, interviews with military officers contradict such a perception and most of them reports no issues in communication through interpreters (M01; M02; M03; M07; M09; M11; M15), with only four (M04; M06; M10; M13) mentioning lack of confidentiality and inaccurate interpreting (M03; M13).

We also asked both interpreters and military representatives if there was a system in place to verify the quality and accuracy of translation and interpreting and they all confirmed that, at least in the war years and before the NATO language reform, no system was in place to check the quality of interpreters' and translators' output. Quality emerges more as an issue of trust, intended as trust in the recruitment process (I02) and in interpreters (M01; M04; M06; M09; M15).

Nevertheless, they report that makeshift quality control measures were adopted, the most frequent one being supervision by other interpreters (I06; I08; I09; M04; M05): “[At UNPROFOR] If there were more interpreters at one meeting, we kind of watched over each other, and cross-intervened if something was not interpreted correctly” (I09).

Sometimes supervision was provided by military interpreters (M04; M05; M10) - like British military interpreter Miloš Stanković, who mentions having acted as “snoop” several times (Stanković, 2001: 337) - and by officers with some grasp of the language (M03; M08) or speaking a ‘similar’ one, like Polish, Czech or Russian (M01; M05).

Other quality control mechanisms implemented by military officers were taking two different interpreters at similar meetings and having speakers repeat the content of the previous one to make sure it had been properly interpreted (M02), asking different translators to translate the same document (M14), waiting for a specific term heard in the original in the interpreter's rendition (M14) or passing the content of a meeting through the radio knowing that the belligerents were listening and would have alerted officers if mistakes were made in the official statements (M01).

We see, therefore, that in the absence of a centralized quality control system, officers were left to rely on the general coherence of the speech (M02; M04; M05), their own understanding of inter-language communication, rephrasing and questions asking:

How can you even tell? You speak and then they are telling their people in their language, then he gives you an answer, so you don't really know exactly whether he conveyed your questions. And then sometimes, sometimes you talk for one minute, or three-four sentences and [...] she just gives one sentence, you don't know whether that one sentence covers all that... you take it, you assume, but sometimes the answers you can tell you that your message didn't really go very well. So, you try to repeat those questions. (M11)

The length of the translation vs. the original is an issue raised by more than one officer (M03; M04; M11) and one of the mechanisms they adopted to verify interpreting quality. Although interpreting professionals and scholars know that a shorter or longer translation is not necessarily a sign of low-quality interpreting, military officers were concerned about being left out of the conversation, fearing to miss important bits, including jokes and side-exchanges:

I would say something seriously and he would say something and they kind of chuckled and joked and I think why is what I am saying, why is it funny? ‘cause it's not, and of course the other thing

was that I would say a short sentence and the interpreter would take a long time, and that's more than what you are saying, it was a longer period of time, and I wondered what is this guy actually doing what is he saying?. (M04)

It comes therefore as no surprise that when we asked them what kind of translation/interpreting they expected from their interpreters in question 16, most of them mentioned “saying exactly what I say and mean” (M04), “translating everything”, that is every aspect of the interaction, including jokes or seemingly unimportant conversations (M03; M04; M06; M11) and “maintaining the same length as the original” (M11).

In this respect, M13 claims that a good interpreter “translates, and does not interpret”, which may sound like a naïve conception of language mediation to any translation and interpreting scholar but surely betrays the concern of most military interviewees not to be in control and to obtain only partial information, therefore being unable to assess the situation, which is what a soldier is called to do.

Only two of the officers interviewed understood that interpreting is much more than a word-for-word language transfer and that interpreters “translate the purpose of words, the message” and use “general ideas, synonyms” to express a concept (M05; M06), while the majority of military interviewees (M04; M07; M08; M10; M16): seem to equal quality with **accuracy**, rather than equivalence, adequacy, and usability (Viezzi, 2016):

When 9/11 happened I had to go to the local commander who it was I think the lieutenant general at the time and said “look you guys don't do anything here”, because we didn't know what's going on in the world, and we didn't know whether the Americans were targeted around the world, [...] I needed the interpreter to interpret exactly what I was saying, because it meant if she didn't and he got the wrong impression, we would launch air strikes. (M04)

Accordingly, as stated in § 7.4.2, we believe that the military would benefit from training on how interpreter-mediated communication works or they risk replicating experiences like the one recounted by I07, an ECMM Croatian interpreter. He recounts that his commanding officer was used to affirm that he would have replaced interpreters with computers if he could, and one day scolded I07 in front of everyone because he wanted “a word for word translation”. I07 had felt so insulted that a few days later when they were in a village near Osijek, Croatia he decided to provide a word for word translation and take his revenge:

Some of the villages were deserted at the time and we came to one village where mostly Serb population was present and there is only one person in the village and European monitors went to talk with him; [...] they talked maybe for half an hour with him, about everything, presumed he was a Serb as it was a Serb village, and they asked him about his name [...] and I knew immediately he was a Croat but the European monitors could not make such a distinction and the interview went for half an hour because this monitor told me he would replace me with the computer **[laughter]** or some machine if he could, after this interview [I told them] they were talking with a Croatian not a Serb [...] and then they told me why didn't I told him immediately? So, I told him that you wanted me to be a computer.

Despite the lack of training, most interpreters seem, nevertheless, to be aware of the importance of accuracy for their employers and deny having resorted to downplaying, adding, or censoring information for any reason (I07; I09; I10; I11; I12).

I10, for example, affirms to have learned to translate even the most colorful swearwords and, even when the topic discussed touched her personally, managed to maintain her professionalism and avoid supplying monitors with information because “she was not there to set the crooked Drina straight [my translation]”¹²³. I01 affirms to have translated every word, even though his colleagues told him he was crazy and that he should have chosen different equivalents, especially when people cursed and threatened the monitors, while I08, informed the employer that the speaker was swearing but could not get to repeat such violent language.

However, a few interpreters (I02; I06) and military representatives (M04; M05) mention cases when the accuracy principle was contravened (I03; I05; I08), usually when a comment or a question could be perceived as rude or threatening by the audience (M05; I05), thus acting as gatekeepers as in the two anecdotes provided by I05 and I06 respectively:

I was working for the Civil Affairs officer as a language assistant and the person who was the officer at that time was not a politician by trade [...] he wasn't trained in it [...] he didn't have a sense of diplomacy much either [...]. So, we went to a village [...] that was pretty much destroyed during the war, [...] most of those people ran away, but a few older people were still living there, they didn't want to leave. So, we went to talk to those three people and the language this Dutch guy was using was, how can I describe that...putting oil on fire [...] in a different setting I would not have done anything about it, but we were in a deserted village, just the two of us and three of them and I didn't feel safe. (I05)

I was once present at a meeting where one of the participants told the UNPROFOR commander “*ne možete vi sa mnom tako razgovarati*” or something like, “you cannot use that tone with me”, this is what he said, but his interpreter, so l’*interprète de délégation*, he said something like “I’m a general, I’m of the same rank as you are and I would appreciate it if you could treat me as such”. (I06)

In other cases, interpreters renounced accuracy to save their employers’ face which they perceived as their responsibility, acting as advocates of the organization they worked for: “Sometimes [it] happened with things the monitors said – some interpreters would want to ‘improve’ or downplay something that they said that would show their lack of knowledge or would be embarrassing or provocative” (I02).

This short analysis of quality in interpreting in the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia in the 1990s shows that, on the one hand, the perception of quality in military representatives is often different from that of interpreting scholars and practitioners, so much so that language and interpreting skills are barely mentioned in their replies (§ 8.1.2).

If it is true that the mastering of English by locally recruited interpreters in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia was heterogenous and sometimes poor due to lack of training and haphazard hiring procedures and management (§ 7.2 and 7.4), our research shows that military officers were generally satisfied with the work of their interpreters and that interpreters were

¹²³ *Ispraviti krivu Drinu* is a Bosnian saying that means it is not the speaker’s business to set the information straight, just like one cannot straighten the meandering flow of the Drina River.

at least aware that they shouldn't intersperse their output with personal opinions and remain as faithful as possible to the original statement.

Monitors, on the other hand, considered accuracy the most important aspect related to quality. On this point, we feel that the discussion has too often focused on the presumed habit of interpreters to willingly (Dragovic-Drouet, 2007) or unwillingly (M. Baker, 2010) sacrifice accuracy to defend the interests their ethnic group, and we have shown that such choices were often aimed at protecting themselves and the organization they represented, rather than a lack of training and language skills rather than political affiliation, as we have seen in § 8.2.2.

In this respect, the interpreted-mediated interactions we transcribed and analyzed below, although short and incomplete, offer some useful food for thought on this aspect, which we will be presenting using three examples.

8.3.2 *Interpreted-mediated interactions*

The first example is that of the already mentioned VID01, published by Dnevno.hr (2018) featuring an interpreted conversation between a Canadian police officer and an old Serbian lady the day after Operation Storm. Leaving aside allegations of the interpreter's having *fige u džepu*, i.e., ulterior motives, which were discussed in the paragraph on neutrality (§ 8.2.2), we will consider here the quality of the mediated communication.

The overall quality provided by the interpreter in this interaction is extremely poor, so much so that communication fails because of the interpreter at almost every adjacent turn, due to dubious choices of vocabulary, zero renditions (Wadensjö, 1998), side conversations with one of the speakers and content and grammar mistakes. The interpreter's pronunciation, for example, is highly problematic - regardless of her being a speaker of Croatian, Bosnian or Serbian, which is not relevant here - to the point that the old lady completely misunderstands even the simplest questions, as we can see in (a)¹²⁴:

- | | | |
|----|----|--|
| a) | 3 | UN ¹²⁵ : Ok. When does she wanna go ? |
| | 4 | I: Kad želite ići? [when do you want to go?] |
| | 5 | B: KAK SE ZOVEM? [What is my name..?] |
| | 6 | I: KAD želite ići? [when do you want to go?] |
| b) | 9 | UN: OK Is she Serb or Croat? |
| | 10 | I: Jest vi Srbin ili Hrvatica? [Are you a Serb or a Croat?] |
| | 11 | B: Serb, Srpkinja. |

In point (b) the interpreter makes a grammar mistake: she does not know the feminine noun for Serb nationality (*Srpkinja*) and uses the masculine one (*Srbin*), while she knows the one for female Croatian nationality (*Hrvatica*) thus creating a weird, unbalanced rendition, that the old lady herself corrects in the following turn, also providing an English translation.

In the second part of the same interaction grammar mistakes appear again, and we see that in (c) the interpreter uses a wrong genitive ending for 'telephone' (*nema telefonu* instead of *telefona*), which although not impeding communication makes us wonder where the interpreter

¹²⁴ Communication is not helped here by background noise and the lady's old age.

¹²⁵ UN is the UN police officer; I is the interpreter and B is the old lady. Translation is provided in blue.

had learned the language (family, dialect?) and what command she had, if she was a second or third generation speaker, or illiterate altogether.

The interpreter's command of English is not better: at point (d) she mistakes the English word 'leave' for 'live', although she self-corrects a couple of turns later.

- c) 13 UN: Ok, Does she understand that there is no water, no electricity, no telephone?
14 I: Jeste li svjesni toga da u gradu nema vode, nema struje, nema telefonu? [are you aware that there is no water, electricity, and phone in town?]
- d) 26 UN: Ok, Is she leaving alone?
27 I: Sama živate? [do you live alone?]
28 B: Ima onde komšije, sama ja... [I have neighbors there, alone I...]
29 I: Mislim sama idite? [I mean, do you go alone?]

Similar issues can be observed in a second example of interpreted-mediated interaction taken from VID08¹²⁶, where an interpreter translates the concerns of the village elders for two UN officers in a remote location in the Croatian *Krajine*.

Although not all adjacent turns could be transcribed due to bad audio quality, we can affirm that the quality of interpretation is markedly better than in VID01: the interpreter is much more in control of the interaction, doesn't engage in side-conversations and conveys all turns, although a couple of false senses can be easily spotted. Two of them, which go completely unnoticed, can potentially undermine the understanding of the document issuing procedure by the village elders, which is the goal of the meeting in the first place.

In the excerpt below, the UN officer, O2, states, in turn 10, that the Croatian authorities will come to the village very soon hopefully, but the interpreter translates that they will come often, thus creating false expectations in the villagers, who even suggest a frequency of visit (twice a week). In turn 14, the meaning of O2's utterance is once again shifted as she says that the UN will see what the Croatian authorities suggest, while the interpreter translates that the villagers should suggest visits twice a week to the Croatian authorities, and the UN will see what the Croatian authorities think of that:

- 10 O2: I mean the Croatian authorities hopefully will come very soon but we also have to be very realistic in our demands, or you have to do that.
11 I: Hrvatske će vlasti ovdje dolaziti često ali moramo biti realni u našim zahtjevima a isto to očekujemo od vas. [The Croatian authorities will come frequently but we have to be realistic in our demands and we expect the same thing from you]
12 *M: Kako bih bilo barem dva puta sedmice. [two times a week?]
13 I: At least twice a week he said.
14 O2: We will see what they suggest to us.
15 I: To ćete predložiti njima pa ćemo vidjet sto oni predlože nama. [You will propose it to them and see what they suggest to us]

The third and final example on interpreter-mediated interaction analysed here comes from VID11¹²⁷, in which UN human rights officer, Edward J Flynn, asks women through an

¹²⁶ O2 is the UN officer, I is the interpreter, and M is one of the village elders. Translation is provided in blue.

¹²⁷ UN is the UN police officer, I is the interpreter, B1, B2 and B3 are the old ladies. Translation is provided in blue.

interpreter how many houses were burnt in the village of Grubori, in the Croatian *Krajine*. In this excerpt below, we couldn't analyse the interpreted output in detail, as the women's voices overlap too much and the audio quality is extremely poor, but we could see that the interpreter takes an interviewer, proactive role that heavily affects the outcome of communication and therefore quality. On many occasions, he does not report back the answers of the ladies to the UN official who is completely left out of the conversation, and he often initiates questions to the witnesses (in turns 30 and 44).

Although some amount of gatekeeping is necessary, as the four women often speak at the same time and are covered by the sound of the heavy rain, the interpreter oversteps into the UN officer's role, who gets lost in turn 36 as he does not understand how turn 35 is related to his question in turn 24. He finally loses his patience and ends the conversation abruptly, while the women's concern not for themselves, but for their male neighbours, fails to emerge.

- 24 UN: We'll tell your family. Is your family at the school? Or down in the town?
 25 I: Jesu li vaše familije dole u školi? [are your families at the school?]
 26 B2: Nema [no]
 27 B1: Nijesu [komšije?], nisu naši pošli odavde. To je naša familija sto im ((interrupted)) za mjesec dana imamo, nam je bolje ako vi za tri nedelje () ovde njih zabrinete. [no [comrade?] they are not here. This is our family ((interrupted)) we haven't had in a month, better for us if in three weeks () here worry about them]
 28 UN: All of them?
 29 B1: Nećemo zajedno sreću pustiti to. [we are not coming with us darling stop asking]
 30 I: Koliko je kuća bilo u Gruborima? [how many houses there were in Grubor]
 31 B1: Ima oko dvadeset [there are about twenty]
 32 I: Oko dvadeset sve ukupno cijeli Grubori [about twenty all Grubor]
 33 B1 and B2: E e [yes yes]
 34 B1: Cijeli Grubori [all Grubor]
 35 I: Some 20 houses
 36 UN: Are on fire right now?
 37 I: No, no there were 20 houses in the village
 38 I: Čuli smo prije, čuli smo prije da je 40 [we heard that before there were 40]
 39 B1: Ne nema [no]
 40 B2: Ne ma bilo je ranije [no, but before]
 41 B1 : Ima naših Grubara dolje [there are other from Grubori at the bottom]
 42 I : Yeah, but there are some other down there
 43 B1: Dolje dolje [down there, down there]
 44 I: A kako se zove ono iznad? [and what is the name of the village down the hill?]
 45 B1: isto isto Grubori [always Grubori]
 46 B2: Isto Grubari [always Grubori]
 47 B1: i ono jedva ima??
 48 B3: ja sam () najgore u one kuće. Sam sama gore živim.
 49 I: she is alone and up in the hill in the house.
 50 B3: () sama jedna starica kuća
 51 UN: once again how much of the village is on fire?

The several zero renditions and non-rendition (Wadensjö, 1998) in the example above, which is similar to what was observed in VID01, contravene one of the basic principles of interpreting, which is the interpreter's responsibility to interpret everything and only what has been said by

the primary party, or at least keep the parties to the exchange informed of the interpreter's own initiatives.

The analysis of these three short excerpts of mediated interaction, despite being in no way comprehensive nor representative of the sample, shows that interpreters had different levels of language knowledge and professional skills which consequently affected quality.

The interpreter in the first example seems to be struggling even to understand and produce simple sentences in both languages, while the interpreters in the second and third example display better language and translation skills but equally lack, especially in the third video, the training and skills to manage the mediated interaction and end up compromising the relations between the parties or distorting the message altogether.

8.4 Trauma

An element that was not initially included in our list of questions is that of trauma, despite the ample literature available on the psychological impact of war on the civilian populations in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (White, 2002)¹²⁸. We didn't consider it, initially, because we didn't want to delve into such personal issues and because we wrongly assumed that after 30 years it would not have featured so prominently both in interpreters' and military officers' accounts. Trauma is also a prominent¹²⁹ but taboo topic in military settings, still hampered by ideal masculinity representations and stigmatisation (Finkel, 2013; Doucette, 2015) and we estimated that including it upfront in our list of questions could have resulted in reduced participation in our research on the military side.

Besides, trauma is only briefly mentioned in the literature on interpreting in conflict zones (Snellman, 2014: 66-67; Rosendo & Persaud, 2016; Todorova & Rosendo, 2021: 286) and, in general, only recently have scholars realized that interpreters' channelling of traumatic content, and use of direct speech and first-person singular increase the interpreter's risk of experiencing traumatisation¹³⁰ (Bontempo & Malcolm, 2012: 111).

As we proceeded with interviews, however, we realized that trauma was still very much present, not just in soldiers, but especially in interpreters, where it had often gone unnoticed for years. If at least four of the fourteen military representatives interviewed manifested trauma explicitly or implicitly - in the latter case requiring long pauses¹³¹ not to cry or to gather themselves - half the interpreters interviewed brought up the issue of psychological discomfort more openly (I02; I03; I07; I08; I09; I10), all of them active between 1991 and 1995.

I02, for example, admitted that the traumatic nature of her job pushed her to quit: "It was getting to be a bit too much, you know, I was having, you know, psychologically it was getting quite..."

¹²⁸ According to Ismet Cerić, a late professor at the Neuropsychiatry Department in Sarajevo (as quoted in Pirjevec, 2014: 366), suicidal tendencies were extremely high among children during the siege of Sarajevo.

¹²⁹ According to Doucette (2015: 170), US, UK and Canada have been losing veterans at an alarming rate. The Canadian Armed Forces reported, between 2002 and 2012, more losses of suicide than killed in action in Afghanistan.

¹³⁰ With traumatization, we refer here to a series of different but overlapping conditions, like burnout, compassion fatigue, and PTSD, generating symptoms like intrusive thoughts, isolation, depression, phobias, anger, and sleep disorders, which can eventually modify a person's ego resources, identity, and world view (Bernardi, 2022).

¹³¹ We analyzed pauses longer than three seconds and observed that they occurred when interviewees were almost crying (I03), or before/after recounting a disturbing or traumatic event (I06; M05; M06; M11; M12), like I06 remembering the suspicion of her fellow citizens, and M13 when talking about people he didn't manage to save in Srebrenica.

I was just exhausted”. Even those who were not personally affected, or did not admit being affected, had someone else’s story to tell:

During the war, my husband’s cousin worked for UNPROFOR, and do you know how that ended? She went crazy. She lost her mind [and] I also remember a young interpreter, very nice, cute, she was also good, but she was fired within 24 hours because when she found herself before troops from the other side she just blanked, she was paralyzed, she couldn’t speak [my translation]. (I10)

For one of the interpreters, the breakdown occurred years later, triggered by a seemingly innocuous experience:

I went for psychotherapy 19 years after the war. It was because during one job [...] I broke down and I started crying and I had an episode – I couldn’t stop for about two hours. Fortunately, I was interpreting [...] training for psychologists, who were dealing with victims of trauma and this lady [...] she noticed something was going on with me, so she approached me and asked me if I had had experience of war or of any traumatic events and she suggested I seek psychological support. (I08)

The data we gathered in the interviews point to the heavily traumatic nature of interpreting in conflict zones, which exposes interpreters to both Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and vicarious traumatization, due to risk factors that are specific to interpreters and that we defined as context-related, job-related, and content related.

Context-related risk factors of traumatization for interpreters in the conflicts discussed here were the same as the general population: they lived in besieged cities, feared for their lives and those of their families and friends, and sometimes had been victims of violence, ethnic cleansing, or genocide themselves. They were particularly traumatized though because they were obliged to cross the confrontation line, to meet and work for the ‘other’ side: M14 recounts an experience when the military vehicle broke down in hostile territory and their female interpreter had a huge nervous breakdown, she completely shut down, and it took the soldiers a long time to calm her down.

Job-related trauma factors, on the contrary, were specific to interpreters and exposed them to the same trauma experienced by fellow soldiers operating in the line of fire, constantly at risk of being kidnapped (M05; M14), stepping on a mine or being the target of sniping and shelling. Moreover, interpreters’ working and employment conditions as we have seen (§ 7.3.) increased their sense of insecurity, stress and trauma, especially the lack of healthcare provisions and pension schemes, not to mention the pressure they were under from the local warring parties and the general animosity they experienced by their community. Lack of recognition for their work was also a traumatizing element, as reported also by Holmegre *et al.* (2003) who found out that interpreters working with refugees from the Kosovo war at the Danish Red Cross asylum reception center, experienced high emotional stress for the content they translated but also for the total lack of recognition of their work.

This often led to episodes of ghettoization which increased traumatization as I02 recalls: “You are really in a very lonely kind of position. Lonely is perhaps too strong a word, but you are in

a world of your own with this group of people that you're working with, a lot of people that you meet don't understand what you're doing".

Also, the fear of being considered weak or unprofessional when raising mental health issues, the imperative of confidentiality and the lack of recognition for interpreters' work (§ 8.2.1) probably increased their isolation and traumatization.

Lastly, as Stahuljak (1999) sustains, interpreters were traumatized in the conflict by what she calls the "violence of neutrality", which is the impossibility of giving their own testimony and speaking with their own voice, as they were bound by interpreters' neutrality.

Finally, content-related trauma factors featured prominently in interpreters' accounts as their job exposed them to the most gruesome scenarios of human suffering: they validated requests for medical evacuations, supervised body counts and exchange, examined scenes of shelling or explosions and interviewed victims of war crimes. The episode described by I08 above was triggered by something she saw while on patrol in a school: "One day we went to a concentration camp [...], just a day after it was won back by the Bosnian army and [I was] with this woman, who was a protection officer. She was taking notes and I was sent to 'look there is a brain on the wall'!"

Being the only point of contact with the local population, locally recruited civilian interpreters were also the first and only recipients of horrifying stories with a double traumatizing effect as they might have gone through some form of refugee or violent experience themselves. Very often these were stories about gender violence, which has been proved to be more difficult for women interpreters to convey (Shakespeare, 2012):

I did the interview with [...] the first woman prisoner of war. She was a woman with two children, one was six years the other was six months, and they were all, all three of them were violated and that wasn't, that wasn't easy to translate not only because of the knowledge of..., and you know learning what actually happened to them, but also because of..., you know, seeing them and even though I was very young and not really knowing anything at 21, but I could see that the child, the six-year-old girl, was, you know, disturbed and wasn't OK and it was, it was a difficult moment to witness. (I08)

This traumatic potential does not seem, nevertheless, to have been limited to the interpreter's gender or ethnic group but also extended to human suffering in general, as this Croatian interpreter recounts:

I remember once in western Slavonia we went to the occupied territory, and we were driving, and we saw people that... the Serbian people, population, local population, civilians and they did not... they did not have shoes, they were barefooted, and so I felt for them. (I07)

Finally, interpreters might also have been traumatized by having to translate, very frequently, violent language, like swear words and ethnic slurs, whose traumatic potential for interpreters is still unexplored but has been partly underlined by interpreters at the ICTY¹³² and international tribunals (Ndongo-Keller, 2015; Elias-Bursac, 2015), as this ICTY interpreter confirms: "You

¹³² The trauma of ICTY interpreters has been recently approached in a dedicated documentary, *In flow of words* (Bots, 2021).

feel depressed because you feel you have been misused as a tool of violence and you have helped create violence and aggression, and this is actually the opposite of the nature of what we do” (McCloskey & Dobričić, 2018).

To conclude, interpreters seem to have borne the psychological consequences of the war even more than soldiers for the reasons explained above. Many interpreters mentioned the need for trauma training for interpreters in conflict zones (I02; I03; I08; I09) - already called for by former UNPROFOR interpreter Spahić-Šagolj (Spahić-Šagolj, n.d.) and by the Head of the Italian Ministry of Defense’s interpreters (Cappelli, 2014) - which was absent in those days, except for the make-shift system that ECMM Croatian interpreters had devised to ‘unload’ traumatic content right after a field trip:

We had a kind of improvised psychological support [...] in that whenever somebody came from a field mission, we had a rule that, even if it was midnight, somebody had to be there at the headquarters to wait for them and to debrief them. The debriefing was really nothing else than listening to them talking very agitatedly for an hour about everything that happened because people kind of need to share. It was very intense emotions involved quite a bit of the time and they needed to share that, and they just need somebody who understands, who has been in a similar situation to listen to them. And that really, that’s such a simple thing, but it’s an enormous help. That’s how we manage not to... . (I02)

We have used their suggestions, as well as programs/guidelines for therapists (Figley, 2002), mental health workers in conflict zones (White, 2002) and community interpreters (Crezee *et al.*, 2015; Bancroft *et al.*, 2015), to devise elements for an adaptable ‘trauma curriculum’ for interpreters in conflict zones, based on the common triangular structure of prevention, self-care and support strategies (Bernardi, 2022). We believe that only by providing interpreters with the tools to protect themselves they can develop “vicarious post-traumatic growth” (Splevins *et al.*, 2010) or ‘compassion satisfaction’, which is a positive and empowering take-home approach to the traumatic experience that comes from helping others through one’s work, as described by I06:

When you interpret for a victim of violence [...] you really feel that you are necessary in these situations, that you are providing not only a service, but that you're also lending your voice [...] and I think that it is somehow the fact that you're doing something really meaningful and important that somehow protects you from the trauma. (I06)

8.5 The BCMS language question

As we have seen in Chapter 3, the official language of the missions in former Yugoslavia was English in combination with the local language(s), an issue that, as we have seen in Chapter 2, has always proved controversial ever since the establishment of the first Yugoslavia.

The choice of English as the language used for communication among different national units and commands¹³³ in ECMM, UNPROFOR and NATO missions was understandable: by the 1990s English was already the dominant language at NATO, despite its bilingual policy, and that of interoperability, defined as “the ability to act together coherently, effectively, and efficiently to achieve Allied tactical, operational and strategic objectives” (Jones & Askew, 2014: 10-27).

In the first months of UNPROFOR, French troops had tried to implement a double language system in Sarajevo (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 167; Jones & Askew, 2014: 50; M01; M05) but had to eventually switch to English for the costs and inefficiency of maintaining translation (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 167), although they reintroduced it in the SFOR mission, within the French-led Multinational Division South-East for communication among French, Italian, German and Spanish units (C. Baker, 2011a).

Russian functioned as the lingua franca among countries from the former eastern bloc, Baltic and Danish troops (C. Baker, 2014: 237-238).

What it is interesting here is that it seems that ‘Slavic’ troops, like Russians, Ukrainians, or Czech units did not use interpreters to communicate with the locals (Thomas, 1995; Doucette & Dallaire, 2009: 79-114) as can also be seen in a UN TV video (VID13) where a Russian soldier speaks Russian at both Serb and Croat checkpoints, and in one of the Associate Press videos (VID07) where a Ukrainian soldier talks in his language with Bosnian refugees in Žepa. This phenomenon is also mentioned by the late Italian journalist, Giuseppe Zaccaria, who described as follows an encounter in a hospital with a Russian wounded soldier:

Dopo un paio di incontri di riscaldamento Vlasha riceveva me e soprattutto l’interprete [...] con un grande sorriso, cominciava a sfogarsi in russo, la ragazza lo capiva all’ottanta per cento e mi spiegava che russo e serbo-croato sono lingue molto simili¹³⁴. (Zaccaria, 1994: 119)

Now, it seems to us that, despite sharing a common Slavic background, Serbo-Croatian and its successor languages and Russian are not so similar, or at least not enough to guarantee inter-comprehension. It is therefore possible that this was a makeshift solution, probably also dictated, especially when Bosnian-Serb and Russian units were involved, by ideological reasons rather than linguistic considerations: as we have seen in Chapter 3, Russia had always been considered Serbia’s protector and ‘brother’, united by common history and Slavic culture (Gow, 1997b: 195).

The main language issue here was not, nevertheless, linked to English or French or Russian, but to the local language (s), Serbo-Croatian, which split into three national languages (Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian) when the war broke out, following the old saying that “language is a dialect with an army and a navy”.

¹³³ Given the reportedly poor English skills of former soviet soldiers (Gonçalves, 2020) English-Russian or English-Ukrainian interpreters were probably used in communication among contingents, as confirmed by M01, who had a Ukrainian interpreter when talking with the Ukrainian contingent in the Žepa pocket.

¹³⁴ [After a couple of warm-up meetings Vlasha would receive me and especially the interpreter [...] with a big smile, and he would start venting in Russian, the girl understood 80% and explained to me that Russian and Serbo-Croatian are very similar languages – my translation].

In the war years especially, language, just like any element pertaining to culture became a weapon and in one case even the reason behind killing: according to Besmir Fidahić (2018: 78), at the ICTY a case was discussed about a Bosnian prisoner, Pop, Popović, who was killed by a Serb soldier for having used the Muslim expression *bujrum*, for *bon appetit*, which both Serbs and Muslims understood, rather than *dobar tek*.

As this very extreme example shows, the bizarre situation of Serbo-Croatian during the war counteracts the main rules that make spoken communication possible, like cooperation for example, as it is precisely the understanding of the other group's language that leads to the conflict, and in this case even murder.

With this in mind, we wondered how the BCMS language issue was managed within the military missions deployed to the area, and if and how this affected the work of interpreters given that, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina “when someone is asked what language they speak they are really being asked what ethnic group they belong to” (Lovrenović, 2002, as quoted in Askew, 2011: 16). We will therefore try to retrace here the approach to the language issue by military institutions and interpreters, dividing the review in the war-years (1991-1995) and the post-war years (1996-today) and trying and make a distinction between translation and interpreting, although interpreters often covered both roles. We will not mention here high-level meetings and conferences where interpreters for each language had been used ever since the war broke out (Ibid: 135) (see § 9.2).

8.5.1 The BCMS language question in the war years (1991-1995)

8.5.1.1 The BCMS language question for military institutions

Our data and interviews show that no clear policy was in place within the ECMM and UNPROFOR to deal with this particular language issue and that Serbo-Croatian was generally treated as one language for practical matters (Askew, 2011). In the documents in our possession, the local language (s) is generally referred to as Serbo-Croatian, occasionally Serbian.

The military interviewed also refer to the local language as Serbo-Croatian (M03; M04; M10; M11; M12), sometimes Serbian (M15), and only one of them, a Portuguese UNMO who had studied the language in Belgrade, recognizes the existence of different ‘versions’ (M03).

It seems therefore, at least apparently, that the missions that operated in the region when the war broke out were oblivious to the political issue connected to the language(s). Nevertheless, if we look closely at some of UNPROFOR documents we see that these sometimes try and avoid defining the local language(s): COR05, detailing UNMO language requirements in Sarajevo in 1993, states that interpreters are required to translate between English and their “native language”, while the Standards for the Recruitment and Grading of Language Assistants (COR04), describe the oral and written texts “in the language(s) in which they are required to work”.

These vague formulations seem hint to the fact that there was an understanding that language was an issue, although no official provision about it was adopted, probably also because, at the time, the language revolution was in *fieri*.

If no specific provisions were made by ECMM and UNPROFOR, the same was true for national contingents, where military language training was still being carried out in Serbo-Croatian, at least in the cases analyzed, that is in the UK (Footitt & Kelly, 2013), and Italy¹³⁵. In Italy, where Serbo-Croatian had been taught at the *Scuola di Lingue Estere dell'Esercito* in Perugia since 1970s, trainers told us that they were well aware that the language situation “did not fit the normative conception of a single language for a single nation where political and ethnic boundaries were fully congruent anymore (Ibid: 44) but that it was logistically and economically impossible to conceive three separate language courses, especially since trainees would only know after the course where they would be deployed (T02). Trainers decided, therefore, to raise awareness on the language’s polycentric nature (T01) and to teach students both pronunciations (ekavian and ijekavian) and alphabets even though they would usually practice the language for one month in Belgrade before deployment (T01; T02). To achieve such a complex aim they had to develop specific study material¹³⁶, with some ekavian and some ijekavian texts, and a special focus on Bosnian words and doublets (See Chapter 2), regardless of the ethnic origin/language of the trainer.

The UK military language trainers were confronted with the same challenges, plus a lack of time - as British troops got deployed with UNPROFOR in 1991-1992, whereas Italians would only enter the region with IFOR in 1996 - and adopted a similarly practical method, aimed at promoting a functional use of the language and at alerting learners about the differences (Kelly & Baker, 2013: 49), although they did not always listen. A British military language trainer interviewed by Kelly and Baker remembers that one of her students, a British soldier of Polish origins who had studied Serbo-Croatian was deployed to Gornji Vakuf, in the Croatian-held part of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although he had been alerted about terminological differences in the language, he continued to use the word *hleb* instead of *kruh* for ‘bread’. One day he entered the local bakery and asked “*Molim jedan hleb*” and “the guy pulled out the machine gun under the table. And that was a scandal really. They had - they put him in jail, they arrested him [...] that was really a mess, he made a mess, stayed day and a half in prison (Ibid: 38).

If the old and new language differences were difficult to accommodate in language teaching, they were even more challenging to reflect in the written language material distributed to troops, which had to be hastily prepared.

The excerpts from the Country Handbook by the US State Department for NATO IFOR troops and the new British Aide-Memoire compared in Figure 24 below, for example, show that if the UK language manual at least tried to provide a Croatian and Serbian equivalent for ‘Hello’, the American one was oblivious to the issue and used the Serbian ‘*Zdravo*’, although it claimed to adopt the “Croat alphabet”.

The US Handbook is also full of spelling mistakes, but one is particularly interesting, the spelling of the word ‘night’ as *noč* (instead of *noć*). Footitt & Kelly (2013: 97) posit that the

¹³⁵ We would like to thank the *Scuola di Lingue Estere dell'Esercito* in Perugia for letting us interview two of their military language trainers, one of whom worked throughout the war years.

¹³⁶ They had initially used a grammar by Arturo Cronia from 1930 and a Californian manual from 1949 entirely in Serbian and in the Cyrillic alphabet (T02).

drafter of the manual was a speaker of Slovenian, but we believe that he or she could be a second-generation Croatian speaker, as Croatian speakers do not distinguish, orally, between *č* and *ć*, but can make the difference in writing if they have been schooled.

<i>US Handbook</i>	<i>Good day</i>	<i>Dobar dan</i>	<i>dobahr dahn</i>
UK aide-memoire	good-day	dobar dan	doh-bar dan
<i>US Handbook</i>	Good night	Laku noć	lahkoo nohtch
UK aide-memoire	good-night	laku noc	lak-oo notch
<i>US Handbook</i>	Hello	Zdravo	zdrahvo
UK aide-memoire	hello	bok (Croat)	bok
		zdravo (Serb)	zdra-voh

Figure 24: Greetings in British and American glossaries (Footitt & Kelly, 2013: 97)

Another interesting document is the Canadian phrase-book *Serbo-Croatian for peace support* (LM03) from 1998, second edition, (Canadian Forces Language School, 1998), retrieved through a Canadian veteran. This manual seems to be more sensitive to the local language(s) issue, as it claims to offer both a Croatian and a Serbian version in both alphabets (Figure 25).

The common-use phrases provided are nevertheless often a mixture of the two, blending Croatian words and Serbian constructions like ‘*Da li si naoružan?*’ for ‘are you carrying a weapon?’ and ‘*Moram da te pretresemo*’ for ‘we must search you’, the latter example clearly using the Serbian infinitive in servile constructions described in Chapter 2.

48 SERBO-CROATIAN FOR PEACE SUPPORT			SERBO-CROATIAN FOR PEACE SUPPORT 49		
			SOME BASIC VOCABULARY OSNOVNI REČNIK OČHOBBИ PEHИK		
			PEACE	MIESTA	
Are you carrying a weapon?	Da li si naoružan? Ili si or naoružan?	Dah li see naoružahan?	Airfield	Aerodrom / Zračna luka Аеродром	Аеродром / Зрачна лука
We must search you.	Moram da te pretresemo. Moramo te se pretresati.	Moram da te pretrešahmo.	Bank	Banka Банка	Банк
Surrender your weapons.	Pređaj oružje. Pređaj oružje.	Pređajati oružjevih.	Barracks	Vojna Kuća	Vojarnah Kuhah
Put your weapons on the ground.	Ođici oružje na zemlju. Ostavaj oružje na zemlji.	Ođivah oružjevih na zemlju.	Base	Bez Baza	Базис
Not a step further!	Ni koraka dalje! Ne korakaj više!	Ne korakaj dalje!	Bathroom	Kupalo / Kupatna Kupatna	Купатило / Купатна
Stop!	Staj! Cuj!	Stoj!	Branch	Plata Buka	Плат
Stop, or I will shoot!	Staj, ili pušati! Cuj, ako trane!	Staj, edee pušati!	Bed	Krevet Kipen	Кревет
Hands up!	Ruke ovise! Ruke ovise!	Ročah ovise!	Border	Granica Pograničje	Граница
Lower your hands!	Spusti ruke! Cujni ruke!	Sposone ruke!	Bridge	Most Moc	Мост
Lie flat on the ground!	Lezi na zemlju! Lezi na zemlji!	Lahze nah zemlju!	Building	Zgrada Zgrata	Зграда
Get up!	Ustaj! Ustaj!	(Ostavaj)	Bush	Štara Štara	Штара
Surrender!	Pređaj se! Pređaj se!	Pređajati se!	Camp	Logor Logor	Логор

Figure 25: *Serbo-Croatian for peace support* (Canadian Forces Language School, 1998)

A similar consideration can be made also for the phrase book distributed to UNPROFOR troops (LM06), of which only a few pages were retrieved (Figure 26). Interestingly, it stands out not just for the lack of awareness of the language(s) issue, but also for its poor quality in both

translation and editing: to start with there are many typos ('*ourzje*' instead of '*oružje*', '*iti*' instead of '*ići*', '*kapiti*' instead of '*kupiti*') and diacritic marks are not indicated. Also, substantial grammar mistakes can also be found as in 'May I have one beer?' translated as '*mozem imati jednu pivu?*' where not only the interrogative structure is ungrammatical, but

Checkpoint	
Stop or I'll shoot!	= Stani ili pucam! / STAH-NEE EE-LEE POO-TSAMI!
Stay there!	= Stoj tu! / STOY TOO!
Put down your weapon!	= Menti dole ourzje! / MET-NEE DOH-LEH OH-ROOZH-YEH!
Put your hands up!	= Metni ruke uvis! / MET-NEE ROO-KEH OO-VEESI!
Open your jacket!	= Otvori svoj kaput! / OH-TVOH-REE SVOY KAH-POOT!
Show me your ID	= Pokazi mi tvoju identifikaciju / PO-KAH-ZHEE MEE TVOY-OO EE-DEN-TEE-FEE-KA-TSEE-YOU
You can go	= Mozes iti / MO-ZHESH EE-TEE
Shopping:	
How much is this?	= Koliko je ovo? / KO-LEE-KO YEH OVO?
I want to buy this	= Ja hocu kapiti ovo / YA HOH-CHOO KOO-PEE-TEE OVO
I need help	= Ja trebam pomoc / YA TRESH-BOMB PO-MOH-CH
Where is	= Gde je / GG-DEH YEH
May I have a beer?	= Mozem imati jednu pivu! / MO-ZHEM EE-MAH-TEE YEHD-NOO PEE-VOO
Numbers:	
1 = Jedan / YEH-DAWN	10 = Deset / DEH-SET
2 = Dva / DVA	11 = Jedanest / YEH-DAWN-EST
3 = Tri / TREE	12 = Dvanest / DVA-NEST
4 = Cetiri / CHE-TEE-REE	13 = Trinest / TREE-NEST
5 = Pet / PEHT	14 = Ceternest / CHE-TER-NEST
6 = Sest / SHEST	15 = Petnest / PEHT-NEST
7 = Sedam / SEH-DAHM	16 = Sestnest / SHEST-NEST
8 = Osam / OH-SAHM	17 = Sedamnest / SEH-DAHM-NEST
9 = Devet / DEH-VET	18 = Osamnest / OH-SAHM-NEST
	19 = Devetnest / DEH-VET-NEST

Figure 26: UN English/Serbo-Croatian language phrases (Private archive, 1991)

mozem does not exist (only '*moгу*' as in 'can I' or '*možemo*', as in 'can we') and the correct accusative neuter form of the word beer is *pivo*. The use of the feminine accusative *pivu* tells us that the writer was probably of Croatian origins and had not been schooled in the country, where the feminine term, *piva*, is used for beer only in colloquial settings.

Other translations are literal, heavily influenced by English, as for 'Put your arms down' translated as '*metni ruke/oruzje dole*' (misspelt as '*menti*'), once again confirming that the author had lived for a long time in an English-speaking country and probably worked under time-constraint and alone, as the glossary was clearly not edited.

Our review of soldiers' perception, language training and language material available therefore shows that, if the international forces deployed to

Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia were aware of the ethnic issue, they had little or no knowledge of the underlying language question, so much so that one of them (M13), a high-level officer within ECMM confesses having thought about it for the first time during our interview.

Nevertheless, our analysis shows that at least some understanding of the language question was present among UNPROFOR and ECMM troops, as acknowledged by military language trainers, the clumsy attempts at tailoring language materials to the new language landscape, the vague formulations in the documents we analyzed and as confirmed also by the words of this Canadian UNMO:

The one [occasion] that really made us think was a phrase of 'thank you very much', which is what, *hvala lepo* [...] but in Croatian that's *hvala lijepo*. I don't remember being told the difference until I got caught out in negotiation and I said that and the guy looked at me and I realised that may be I said something wrong and that was kind of one of the examples when you had to be really really careful, that's why a lot of times I stopped doing that and I let the interpreter say whatever I wanted to say so that I wouldn't make a mistake, and trusting that they would know what way to say it to who they were talking to. (M04)

8.5.1.2 The BCMS language question for interpreters

The excerpt above shows that the language issued was partially considered but not consistently addressed at a centralized level by the UNPROFOR and ECMM missions, although some level of awareness was present. This means, as clearly stated by M04 above, that the burden of

language decision was left entirely to the interpreters' discretion, thus attributing them not just a language function but also an inter-language and cultural one, as we have seen it is often required of interpreters (see § 4.3.6).

We, therefore wondered how translators, but specifically interpreters, juggled the now prominent language issue, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina where, as we have seen in Chapter 2, it is virtually impossible to distinguish a Serb from a Muslim or a Croat from the way they speak if they come from the same area, unless they want to stress specific language features to mark their ethnic identity (Hammel, 2000: 25), modifying their own natural expression by adopting words, structures and pronunciation to conform to the identified ethnic group.

To investigate this aspect, we asked interpreters how they approached this constantly changing language panorama and if any policy was in place in this respect, and we analyzed, from this sociolinguistic perspective, the transcripts of interpreter-mediated interactions acquired.

Data emerging from the interviews show that an unofficial double-language (Croatian and Serbian) system was in place, at least for translations, already in 1991: according to I06, a translator and interpreter at Zagreb UNPROFOR HQ, official translations were provided in both Croatian and Serbian. She nevertheless remarked that the Croatian translators produced the Serbian versions, double-checking with each other that the appropriate words and structures were used, in the Cyrillic alphabet, as required by the Serb authorities of the *Krajine*.

On this point, she affirmed that Croatian translators and interpreters used to joke about the fact they were "holier than the Pope", because the Croatian Serbs in the *Krajine* area had often trouble reading Cyrillic, which had been used until then only by intellectuals (I06) as confirmed also by Glenny (1996:12) and Bugarski (2004b).

This sensitivity towards language issues caused problems, she remembers, not just for translation into the local language(s) but also into English: she recounts that the whole office once got stuck, while translating into English a ceasefire agreement, on the English equivalent of a geographical area between today's Serbia and Croatia ('*Zapadni Srijem*', in Croatian, '*Zapadni Srem*', in Serbian), since an official English term did not exist at the time. Using the Croatian or the Serbian toponym in the English version would have meant, for the international community, taking sides or somehow implying that the area should belong to one of the two factions, an issue that translators finally solved by using the Latin '*Western Sirmium*'.

If attention to language issues could be made at UNPROFOR HQ in Zagreb, nevertheless, such a policy was impossible to implement at the lower level, for both lack of staff and financial means as supported by one of the interpreters interviewed by Askew:

In the field we didn't do that [...]. We would just translate into whatever was our language at that time, which was Serbo- Croatian. And no one really made much fuss about it but the fact is it was in the field so you wouldn't, these translations wouldn't go up to the upper channels of the military structures who would normally complain, as they complained all the time, later when I came to work to Sarajevo at the Headquarters. But in the field it wasn't really a big issue. (Askew, 2011: 204)

Smaller outposts often lacked even the technical support: two Serb linguists who worked in Pale affirmed that they did not have even the proper Cyrillic font in their text processing software and that translations could only be provided in the Latin alphabet but that did not bother anyone (Askew, 2011).

If the language issue was already complicated for written translation, the situation was even more intricate for interpreting, because if “it is possible to create three versions of a written text [...] it is almost impossible and totally impracticable to attempt to create three versions of an interpretation” (Ibid: 203). Also, if in written, alphabet use (Cyrillic vs. Latin) is a discriminating feature and translators take the time to use the ‘politically most appropriate’ words and structures, in oral expression interpreters do not have the time or means to verify that they used the proper word, nor can imitate a different accent.

It seems, nevertheless, that at the higher military level, just like in conferences, different interpreters provided translation in the three different languages: Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian, probably brought from Croatia and Serbia proper.

I06, who worked for the Zagreb HQ, affirmed, for example, that the commanding French officer had both Croatian and Serbian language interpreters, as he had realized it was an important issue.

On the ground, nevertheless, the literature provides very little information on how interpreters managed the language situation, and we believe that such a three-language system was impossible to implement if only for the fact that interpreters between English and the local language were already hard to find in the former Yugoslav countries (Dragovic-Drouet, 2007), let alone between English and three local languages, which were at the time 100% mutually understandable.

Also, it is interesting to wonder how that would have been achieved, as linguists working at NATO HQ in Sarajevo interviewed by Askew claim they all spoke Serbo-Croatian at the time, and admit that they were still uncomfortable to pick a language designation when asked what language they speak:

Linguist: “Serbo-Croatian, still. Well, sometimes I say, like to foreigners, I say local language. To locals I say our language, *naš jezik*, or my language, sometimes Serbo-Croatian. I just don't feel comfortable saying I speak Serbian, I speak Bosnian. I definitely don't speak Croatian. My mother tongue should be Serbian, but I live in Bosnia and it's kind of a mixture of Bosnian and Serbian, I don't know, maybe it's Serbo-Bosnian /laughs!/>” (Askew, 2011: 224).

Nevertheless, one of Askew’s interviewees claims that you had to “speak very Croatian when at HNO Headquarters in Vareš or Kiseljak (Ibid: 205), somehow suggesting that interpreters resorted to some kind of *alternance codique*.

Interpreters interviewed in this research project confirm that some kind of tailoring was deployed, although using common sense (I06) rather than following a centralized policy: I10, an interpreter from Sarajevo, adapted the linguonym to the speaker, for example, so she called the language Bosnian with the Bosnians, Croatian with the Croatians and Serbian with the Serbs. I03, an interpreter from Zagreb who often travelled to Mostar, in Herzegovina, with foreign journalists, after the Bosnian Croat war, remembers how her accent was a source of

concern and not being able to change it, she would carefully choose ‘common’ words and apologize for her language use before and after every interpretation:

And this language thing doesn't help because language was the center of every...like every policy in every country [...] it's a double job [...] I had to be very careful [...] there was still a lot of resentment for the Croats at that time, really a lot and it was a bit scary you know in hindsight I think somebody could have killed me for that accent. (I03)

I06 is the only one who provides an actual example of ‘language tailoring’ according to the ethnic identity of the interlocutor (Askew, 2011: 206):

We followed what was happening, what the changes were and of course you don't use something that will be a reason for debate or dispute, you were just being careful. When it comes to military terms, of course, when we were talking about Croatian military we would use Croatian terms, we would say *stožer*, but in the same meeting when we would talk about the Serb military we would say *štab* and nobody had a problem with it. (I06)

We see here that the difference between the two languages amount to terminology, influenced by the different historical and linguistic traditions and by the Croatian language reform of the 1990s (§ 2.2.5.2) that retrieved old Slavic words or words linked to Croatia’s immediate past, like *stožer*, that became popular in WWII. On this point, the same interpreter also recalls a language-related incident:

I remember once a local officer, general, he corrected me. He didn't want the new Croatian words to be used: I used *gospodarstvo* for economy and he turned around and he said “*privreda, ne gospodarstvo*”, and I said “ok, whatever”, I mean I reacted professionally. They were all so sensitive. (I06)

We see here that the terminology issue became a mine field for interpreters who had to be very careful when choosing what word of a double, or triplet to use, at least for Serbian and Croatian, as we have seen that Bosnian has always had a more tolerant approach to doublets which constitute one of its features as a language (see § 2.2.5.1). I06 tells us, however, that after the meeting the general apologized to her, saying that he didn't question her competence or judgement but that as an interpreter she had to be “aware of the context”, that is of the changed language and geo-political situation, and “shouldn't have used the Croatian word for ‘economy’, but the Serbian one”.

We therefore analyzed the videos used as historical documents in this dissertation to figure out if and how interpreters resorted to language tailoring. If it is almost impossible to identify language and/or ethnical origin of the interpreters in VID01, VID 07, 08, 09 and 10, nevertheless offer interesting food for thought on this point.

All videos were filmed in the Croatian *Krajina*, that is in an area that had linguistically been influenced by Croatian features, but were Serbian ones, like the alphabet, became prominent when the area seceded from Croatia in 1991 and established the Republic of Serbian Krajina with capital city Knin (see Chapter 1).

This can be seen in the three interpreters’ renditions, that are all Croatian ijekavian and generally use Croatian structures for the creation of future tenses (*Bit će* instead of *biće*) and

interrogative forms (*Jesu li ovdje uokolo po kućama* instead of a construction with *Da li su ovdje uokolo po kućama*) (VID10).

The interpreter in VID08 and 09 uses more words that are considered Serbian today (*u suštini, sedmica, 21. Augusta, Ujedinjene Nacije*) compared to interpreters in VID10 (*familija*) VID11 (*saradnja*) but some of these can be also attributed to the register (*familija* is still in use in Croatian in informal contexts, especially in and around Dalmatia).

It is nevertheless difficult to figure out here if interpreters actually tailored their way of speaking to the audience or if that was their natural expression, made of generally Croatian structures and a mixture of what is today considered Serbian but that was still in use at the time, as we should not forget that the introduction of fines and prison sentences for language behaviors has never managed to change languages overnight (Kapetanović, 2018).

What is interesting for our purpose, nevertheless, is the interpreting behavior that emerges in VID08, VID09 and VID11 where interpreters self-correct on specific words according to the audience, as in this example in VID08 and VID09 where the interpreter speaks to a crowd of Serbian refugees in a refugee camp:

44 I: Kao što je Gospodin Roberts rekao sada je ovo pitanje, sada je čitava ova stvar krenula na mnogo više nivoe, političke nivoe a mi ćemo i dalje kao i prije ovaj **osigur... obezbeđivati** vam zaštitu i podršku [As Mr. Roberts said, now this issue, now this whole thing has gone to much higher levels, political levels and we will continue as before **to guarantee... to guarantee** to you protection and support - my translation]

Even though the phenomenon cannot be underlined in the English translation, in the original language we see that the word '*osigurati*' 'guarantee', and '*sigurnost*', 'safety' which have the same root, prompt the interpreter to self-correct. He starts with the Croatian '*osigurati*' and then realizes that that word was nationally connotated after the language break-up and that he was translating for an ethnic Serb audience, thus immediately offering the Serb equivalents '*obezbeđivati*'.

Interestingly, a different interpreter in VID11, when talking to ethnic Serb village elders does the same thing:

34 I: I veoma smo zainteresirani da pratimo cijelu situaciju koliko god više možemo što se tiče ovdje vas i što se tiče potrebnih artikala hrane i tako dalje isto kao i vaše **sigurnosti osnovne, znači bezbednosti** [we are very interested in following the whole situation as much as we can your situation here, for what concerns food and so on and your basic **safety, that is safety** – my translation]

Here, once again, the interpreter starts to translate the word 'safety' with *sigurnost* and then self-corrects with *bezbednost*, this time offering it as a synonym, rather than changing words midway.

What we also noticed is that there was a very limited number of nationally and ethically connotated words in the interpreter-mediated renditions, which might be just a case, but it might also be the result of interpreters avoiding them and preferring non-ethnically marked words, that is terms used in both Serbian and Croatian, when available. This assumption is of

course difficult to prove, as we should be getting into the interpreters' mind and understand what choice they made at the time - if they were even aware of it - but it is a pattern that has been observed also in Croatian interpreters at the ICTY (Fidahić, 2018: 184) and that the author has remarked in herself and her colleagues when working in mixed booths on the private market (see § 2.2.6).

Although further evidence is needed, with greater stretches of transcribed interpreted conversations, followed, if possible, by a discussion with the interpreters to evaluate the reasons behind their language choices of the time, we believe that we manage to point out that interpreters tailored their linguistic output to the expectations of their interlocutors, partly abiding by Grice's cooperative principle of communication, but mainly to avoid problems and comply with the highly political and national value attributed to the language question. They thus worked on two translation levels, an interlinguistic one, between English and the local language, and an intralinguistic one, within their own language, which complicated not just their work as linguists, but also their position and status as interpreters.

8.5.2 The BCMS language question in the post-war years

After the signing of the Dayton agreement in Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian, and the establishment of the ICTY, the three separate languages came to be officially recognised by international institutions and the three ethnic groups asked NATO to produce documentation in all three languages at all levels.

The request was accepted by international institutions, because, as affirmed by the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina from 2002 to 2006, Lord Paddy Ashdown they understood that "Languages became the physical representation of the [...] barbed wire fence" (Askew, 2011: 137).

Accepting the three-language policy also meant taking the language subject "off the table" and speed up reconciliation and reconstruction procedure, as it had become an issue that slowed down negotiations after the end of the conflict (Ibid: 208).

The three-language policy was first officially implemented in IFOR and consisted in providing three versions for all relevant documentation: Latin ijekavian with the newly introduced words for Croatian, Cyrillic ekavian for Republika Srpska, and a more 'inclusive' version in the Latin alphabet for Bosnian (Ibid: 209).

Just like at the Zagreb HQ during the war, these could be produced by the same translator, but the document was then edited to make it more 'nationally acceptable', using new orthographic manuals and dictionaries. According to Askew, by producing three language versions of the same document, translators (and interpreters) contributed to creating a corpus of the three languages and to bolstering their linguistic claims (Ibid: 211).

Nevertheless, just like interpreters interviewed by Askew (2011), the interpreters we interviewed who worked for NATO IFOR and SFOR did not seem to appreciate this system very much and criticize it on several occasions, as I10 who doubt about its actual need and

effectiveness: “They tried to have this false balance of translations between Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian [my translation]” (I10).

The policy was so customary that even foreign troops became more aware of the language issue: one of the military officers interviewed who worked during the NATO years affirmed that “we always tried to take interpreters with us whose language was as consistent as possible [my translation]” (M15).



Figure 27: IFOR language card from 1995-1996 (private archive, 1995)

We see that the ethnicity requirement that was central in soldiers' concerns already in 1991-1995 (see § 7.3.4) begins to be paralleled by the language one here, and that military language institutions also adapted their courses to the new language situation.

In Italy, for example, from 2002, the Serbo-Croatian language course in Perugia had become a Serbian-only course, as Croatian was taught by another corps (T02). Nevertheless, the Serbo-Croatian linguonym remained in use, as we can see in this IFOR card for Bosnia and Herzegovina in Figure 27 (LM02), probably conceived to help multinational units communicate among each other and with the locals, where the language is still called Serbo-Croatian, and presented in the Latin alphabet and ijekavian.

Unfortunately, only a few of the interpreters interviewed worked in NATO IFOR and SFOR and no interpreted-mediated interaction was retrieved from those years so that we have no information on how such a policy was implemented in interpreting and oral communication, although it is likely that interpreters continued to tailor their speech, especially since they would work across former confrontation lines more frequently than (I05; I10; I12).

It is also true that, with the passing of time and the progressive implementation of language reforms, the now national languages started to diverge way more than they had in the first years of the war, and that interpreters themselves would probably be surer of specific language choices.

In the long run, nevertheless, the three-language policy became more and more difficult to enforce and was gradually abandoned and limited only to official documents, to be completely dismissed with the NATO reform of language services of 1998. Behind this decision were surely an improved safety situation, time and high costs, but also the already mentioned aversion of translators and interpreters for this system, which they considered a waste of paper and time (I10):

I would say with SFOR I think in 2001 or 2002 we managed to sort of convince them that if it were a technical document or if it was, so to say, politically sensitive or if it were not for such public distribution that we can do only one version. And now one version is widely acceptable, I would say, only if it's, yes, only if it's like official, if it's a translation like if it would be gazetted

or something of the sort then yes, we would still do it in three versions but if it is, for example, a PowerPoint presentation or something of that kind, we just do one version. (Askew, 2011: 209)

The decision was accepted by all sides, especially for more technical and less politically loaded documents, and the only version produced was now more ‘neutral’, in the Latin alphabet, unless Cyrillic was chosen out of courtesy or for specific issues.

The neutral version was produced by removing any characteristic identifiable with one of the ethnically hued versions, in a process opposite to the one followed to produce an ethnic version, and somehow close to the language tailoring operated by interpreters during the war highlighted above (§8.5.1.2).

Chapter 9: CONFERENCE INTERPRETING IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AND CROATIA FROM 1945 UNTIL THE 1990S WARS

After having described recruitment, employment, working conditions, quality and language issues for liaison interpreters for peacekeeping and military organizations in the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia in the 1990s in Chapters 7 and 8, we believe it is worth mentioning also how interpreting functioned in those years at the highest political level, that is in the peace conferences and political talks that supported the peace process. Such interpreting was carried out by another group of professionals, conference interpreters, although we have seen that GSL4 and GSL5 interpreters within UNPROFOR sometimes also attended high-profile political events and talks with the top-brass.

Since the shortage of qualified interpreters during the war has been linked in the literature to the lack of a mature translation and interpreting market in SFRY (Dragović-Drouet, 2007: 33) we will first consider here the general landscape of conference interpreting and the emergence of the profession (§ 9.1) to understand what the interpreting market looked like before those tragic events. We will then move on to describe the changes in the market with the breakout of the wars in the 1990s and try and offer a short prosopography (Stone, 1971; Baigorri Jalón, 2019) of the interpreters that guaranteed communication in those crucial years and events (§ 9.2).

It should also be underlined that the findings presented in this chapter are the result of our historical research and reconstruction, using first-hand accounts and historical documents, and that they represent the first attempt at sketching a short history of interpreting in the former Yugoslavian countries, bearing in mind that it is indeed a country that has ceased to exist, and that its territory and languages have split in a very violent way, which makes the reconstruction much harder for researchers and painful for readers.

Chapter 9.1 Conference interpreting in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1945-1992)¹³⁷

9.1.1 Foreign languages in SFRY

Since its foundation in 1945, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was conceived as a multinational and plurilingual country: its constitutions listed several official languages (Slovene, Macedonian and Serbo-Croatian) with laws being translated in all three and, from 1974 onwards, even into minority languages like Hungarian and Albanian, even if Serbo-Croatian¹³⁸ was the most widely spoken language thanks to radio, television, newspapers, administration and the army (Hlavac, 2014: 248; Szerhorváth, 2015).

¹³⁷ It took the name *Socijalistička Federativna Republika Jugoslavija* (SFRY), Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1963, while from 1945 until 1963 it was known as *Federativna Narodna Republika Jugoslavija* (FNRJ), Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia.

¹³⁸ For reasons of conciseness, we will only talk here about Serbo-Croatian, as the issue of the region's languages is discussed in the relevant chapter.

In such a multilanguage context, translation played a key role internally, but also externally, as Yugoslavia was well-known internationally for its vibrant literature (Jones, 2004: 712), openness to international tourism, and contribution to the Non-Aligned movement. This active role on the international scene resulted in contacts, official visits, events, and language study opportunities for SFRY citizens.

After WWII, literacy levels and the demand for literature had increased, since Yugoslavia had a more lenient approach to foreign literature, unlike other socialist/communist countries, and for some writers, translation was the only literary refuge available when their works were banned (Pavličević, 1994, as quoted in Hlavac, 2015: 251). According to UNESCO's Index Translationum, which contains cumulative bibliographical information on books translated and published between 1979 and 1991, in that period, in SFRY 15,855 books were translated, usually in the language, or variant, of the Republic in which it was published (see Chapter 2). In this respect, translation was a way to create the cultural identity of the newly re-formed state and to affirm, externally, its relationships to other countries and cultures as a progressive and open state (Hlavac, 2015: 250). Internally, translations were necessary to make the literature of "the big languages" (Pavlović, 1995: 6) available in Yugoslavia and to include, protect, and emancipate minority languages: if we look closely at UNESCO's statistics, we see that the bulk of translation in SFRY was from Serbo-Croatian into the languages of its domestic minorities, like Italian, Hungarian and Albanian (Hlavac, 2015: 251).

Given the importance of translation, the professional gathering of translators was allowed and even supported with federal funds (Małczak, 2015), following the idea, also put forward by the Croatian Federation of technical-scientific translators to obtain funds to take part in the FIT conference in Dubrovnik in 1981, that "the more translators go to the congress and talk in foreign languages with foreign translators on the success of socialism and communism, the more successful the Congress will be [my translation]" (Ašperger, 2007).

Translators started organizing professionally between the 1950s and 1960s at a federal and republican level, although some had been active before WWII, like the Serbian association of literary translator, the *Udruženje književnih prevodilaca*. The Croatian Association of literary translators, *Društvo književnih prevodilaca*, was established in 1953, the same year as the FIT, the *Fédération Internationale des Traducteurs* (Hrvatsko društvo znanstvenih i tehničkih prevoditelja, n.d.). It was followed by the establishment of Republican associations in Slovenia, the *Društvo prevajalcev Slovenije*, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the *Udruženje književnih prevodilaca Bosne i Hercegovine*, Macedonia and Montenegro, whereas the Kosovo literary translators' association was only established in the 1970s (Małczak, 2015: 284).

The Croatian Association of scientific and technical translators, *Hrvatsko društvo znanstvenih i tehničkih prevoditelja*, was established in 1957 (Hrvatsko društvo znanstvenih i tehničkih prevoditelja, n.d.) and its Serbian homologue, the *Udruženje naučnih i stručnih prevodilaca Srbije*, in 1960. The national associations converged in the Federal Union of Literary Translators of Yugoslavia, the *Savez prevodilaca Jugoslavije*, established in 1953 (Udruženje naučnih i stručnih prevodilaca Srbije, n.d.), becoming a member of FIT in the same year, while the Association of Scientific and Technical translators of Yugoslavia, *Savez društava znanstvenih i tehničkih prevodilaca Jugoslavije*, was established in 1972 (Ašperger, 2007). The Federal Union represented Yugoslav Translators at FIT until the very end of the SFRY, although, the Union had split, after 1961, into two associations: the Association of Literary

Translators of Yugoslavia, *Savez književnih prevodilaca Jugoslavije*, and the Association of Technical Translators of Yugoslavia, *Savez stručnih prevodilaca Jugoslavije* (Djurić & Novak, 1963). The Yugoslav Federations organized the FIT congress twice, in Dubrovnik in 1963, when the Translators Charter was approved, and in Belgrade, in 1990. Zlatko Gorjan, a member of the Croatian Federation of scientific and technical translators served as President of FIT from 1963 to 1966 (Ašperger, 2007) and contributions by translators from Yugoslavia started appearing in magazines like *Babel*, whose issue 9, number 3 of 1963 featured almost exclusively authors from the region.

Professional associations played a key role in promoting higher professional standards through congresses and several dedicated magazines like *Lingvist* - published in Croatia from 1963 to 1965 and replaced in 1967 by *Prevoditelj*, still in print today (Ašperger, 2007) - or *Glasnik*, published by the *Udruženja naučnih i stručnih prevodilaca Srbije* between 1968 and 1974, followed by *Prevodilac*, launched in February 1980 and *Mostovi*, the magazine of the Union of Literary Translators of Yugoslavia, first published in 1970.

The actual size of the SFRY market is impossible to gauge today, although the 1970 edition of the *Savremeni književni prevodioci Jugoslavije* (S. Jovanović, 1970), published by the Union of Literary Translators of Yugoslavia, gives us a clearer idea: the book is a pre-internet directory of translation and interpreting services, listing all professionals active in the five Republics. Each translator and/or interpreters' entry features a short bio with educational background, experience, specialties, languages, contacts, and type of employment, with many of them being freelancers, thus confirming some self-awareness as a professional category. Both a tribute to the profession and the result of a developed translation market, the directory lists translators and interpreters for all European languages plus Arabic, Turkish, Ukrainian, Russian, and even Esperanto. Most professionals were active in Slovenia and Serbia (99 and over 200, respectively), followed by Croatia (73) and Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia with about 30 translators each.

We see from this short excursus that the Yugoslav translation (and interpreting) market was fairly developed and that a plethora of organizations and international collaboration allowed Yugoslav translators to get in touch with colleagues from all around the world and get up to date with the latest professional developments. We also see that Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia counted a greater number of professionals than Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Kosovo, an issue that will heavily affect the provision of interpreting services in the 1990s.

9.1.2 Conference interpreting in SFRY

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, so far no scholar has tried to reconstruct the birth and evolution of conference interpreting in the former Yugoslavian countries, which was probably hindered by the fact that SFRY doesn't exist anymore as a country which surely complicates archival research. Also, in the region's language(s) there is no distinction between the term for 'interpreter' and 'translator', as both concepts are expressed by the term

prevoditelj/prevodilac,¹³⁹ sometimes specifying ‘*pismeni*’, written and ‘*usmeni*’, oral translator, or *konferencijski prevoditelj/prevodilac* (conference interpreter), which also makes it difficult to identify references to interpreters in historical documents and archives.

Despite the difficulties of archival research, we can safely state that the interpreting market started to emerge in Yugoslavia right after WWII, specifically because of its multilingual composition, thus emerging initially at a state level.

The 1946 and 1974 SFRY constitutions, for example, established the right of the individual to speak one’s language in court and official settings, thus meaning that those who did not speak Serbo-Croatian were allowed to use their language in official proceedings and be granted an interpreter:

Judicial proceedings in the courts are conducted in the languages of the republics, autonomous provinces, and autonomous regions where the courts are located. Citizens not speaking the language in which the proceedings are conducted may use their own language. Such citizens are guaranteed the right to acquaint themselves with all the legal material and to follow the proceedings of the court through an interpreter. (Republic of Yugoslavia, 1946)

The SFRY constitution is ground-breaking in this respect, as it introduced the right that “everyone who is arrested shall be informed promptly, in a language which he understands, of the reasons for his arrest and of any charge against him” way before the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR) in 1955 (Garwood, 2012: 174).

According to Szerhorváth (Szerhorváth, 2015), nevertheless, this did not translate automatically into the actual provision of an interpreter and very often such a right was denied, due to a lack of interpreters or autocratic procedures, and the infringement did not have any legal and practical consequences.

References were nevertheless found to court interpreters in the directory of the Union of Literary Translators mentioned above (S. Jovanović, 1970): Zorislav Dukat¹⁴⁰ (PhD) describes himself as a lawyer and permanent court interpreter (*stalni sudski tumač*) for English (Ibid: 114). His name also appears in a US report on Aliens as the official translator of an adoption procedure, where he signs as “Zorislav Dukat, permanent interpreter of the English language, duly commissioned and qualified by the decree of the Ministry of Justice of the P.R. Croatia of September 3, 1945, no. 5537/45”.

Another court interpreter was Edita Marijanović, translator into Croatian of the book *La Ciudad y los perros* (Vargas Llosa, 2009) by Mario Vargas Llosa and *La Muerte de Artemio Cruz* (Fuentes, 2005) by Carlos Fuentes, she is also listed as a permanent court interpreter for Spanish and occasional court expert for Portuguese in the directory (Ibid: 125).

This tells us that a permanent system of court interpreters was probably active in 1970 although the information available is not enough to portray a clearer picture of court interpreting in

¹³⁹ The noun *tumač*, to express the idea of interpreting like an actor in a play, is used for court interpreters with the adjective ‘*sudski*’ as in ‘*sudski tumač*’, court interpreter, a professional role recognized in several states emerging from the dissolution of Yugoslavia with dedicated courses and accreditation exams.

¹⁴⁰ He was probably also the translator into Croatian of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe published by Mosta in Zagreb in 1994 (Stowe, 1994) and *The Last of the Mohicans*, by James Fenimore Cooper, published in 2004 by Globus media (Cooper & Dukat, 2004).

SFRY. We believe that the topic requires more detailed investigation for the sake of the region's interpreting legacy and that of the European court interpreting history.

Unlike court interpreting, conference interpreting, probably due to the more prestigious contexts in which it was carried out, has left scholars more visible traces from its early days, which go back to the end of the 1950s, more specifically to 1957 when "for the first time a team of interpreters from Belgrade and Zagreb covered an international conference without international support" (Janković, 1993). Interpreting became institutionalized in the SFRY in the late 1960s, when 15 interpreters based in Belgrade set up a section for simultaneous interpretation within the Serbian Association of Technical and Scientific Translators, after having interpreted at 22 international meetings (Ibid). From 1962 until 1967 they provided interpretation services at 74 venues and, having grown stronger, left the translators association and founded the Serbian Association of Conference Interpreters (*Udruženje konferencijskih prevodilaca Srbije*) in 1967, bringing together members from Serbia, Croatia and a few interpreters from Slovenia (Paravić, 2014c).

The association was reorganized in 1970, taking the name Association of Conference Interpreters of Yugoslavia (*Udruženje konferencijskih prevodilaca Jugoslavije*) and operated until 1974, when republican societies were established in Slovenia and Croatia and the few interpreters in Bosnia and Herzegovina joined the Belgrade Association (Janković, 1993).

According to Janko Paravić, the first president of the Croatian Association of Conference Interpreters, the move to national interpreters' organizations was prompted by the increasingly federal climate in SFRY but also by the increase in international events in the 1970s and 1980s (Paravić, 2014a), like the International Conferences of the Non-Aligned Movement or the Olympic games in Sarajevo in 1984. Since many of these were held in Croatia's tourist coastal towns, it was much easier to establish connections with the local Croatian association than the central one in Belgrade (Levak Potrebica, 2013: 4).

In 1976, the republican associations once again came together under the Federation of the Associations of Conference Interpreters of Yugoslavia (*Savez društava i udruženja konferencijskih prevodilaca Jugoslavije*) which counted at the beginning of the 1990s roughly 100 members, 50 in Belgrade, 30 in Zagreb and 20 in Ljubljana (Levak Potrebica, 2013). Although not representative of the whole market, these numbers are interesting as they tell us that Yugoslav interpreters were mainly the product of the capital cities, especially Zagreb and Belgrade, with only a few in Ljubljana (Marušić, 2014a), Sarajevo and Podgorica, an aspect that would have consequences on the availability of interpreters during the war.

Given the absence of interpreting agencies and providers of services, the associations played a much more active role than they do today, as they negotiated work directly with clients through the elected executive board, signed collective contracts on behalf of the association and assigned teams and chief interpreters for single gatherings. The cooperation among the Republican associations was necessary because single associations couldn't often provide the teams needed for the growing number of gatherings, especially in the busy spring-autumn months. As a result, 50% of events were covered by teams from different Republics, especially when more exotic language combinations were required (Janković, 1993: 10; Paravić, 2014b).

Interpreters worked, on those occasions, in the Serbo-Croatian booth, featuring both speakers of Serbian and Croatian, for example, or even Bosnian.

At the end of the 1960s, Yugoslavia had also introduced full-time interpretation/translation services in the Federal parliament for Macedonian, Serbo-Croatian, Slovenian, and in regional/provincial parliaments for national and minority languages like Albanian, Hungarian, Turkish, Rumanian, Ruthenian, and Slovak (Janković, 1993). This very interesting type of interpreting, still a dream even in modern multilingual European states, required a substantial number of interpreters to guarantee daily operation although, unfortunately, no further information has been found on the topic.

Having established that the Yugoslav interpreting market was well-organized by the 1980s, we will now try and present an outline of interpreting in SFRY by considering training, language combinations, working conditions, status, and quality.

9.1.2.1 Training



Figure 28: Ivanji with Tito and German journalists in Karađorđevo (Ivanji, 2014: 11)

In the former Yugoslavia, there were no educational institutions and university courses in interpreting or conference interpreting and schools abroad rarely offered Serbo-Croatian or Croato-Serbian in their programs (Matešić, 2012), with a few exceptions, like the Trieste School. As a consequence, interpreters had learned languages and interpreting skills on the job (Janković, 1993; Pavlović, 1995) and, according to Gabrijela Vidan, founder and former secretary of the Croatian Association of Conference Interpreters (HDKP), there wasn't much awareness on the difficulties of interlanguage transfer, interpreting techniques, memory nor on the importance of a quality relay (G. Vidan, 2012): “interpreting was something new at the time and amateurism was hailed as talent” [my translation] (ibid).

Such a dominant opinion can also be inferred by the words of Nobel Prize laureate Ivo Andrić, who in an article on the translators and interpreters who worked at the Meeting of Peace (*Skup Mira*)¹⁴¹ in Zagreb in 1951, claims that interpreters should possess personal, rather than professional skills:

The best interpreter I knew [...] didn't know any language well. It can be said that he did not even have a mother tongue, but he had an unusual sobriety of spirit, a great gift of indulging in someone else's thoughts, and someone else's expression, the kind of courage that goes to the limits of courage without ever going into audacity. And more than anything, he could identify with the speaker and his speech [my translation]. (Andrić, 1951)¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Six interpreters worked at that meeting, four men and two women. Among them was Pierre Lambert, and Ogist-Renald Verner, apparently one of the first Geneva graduates and Manu Banerdi a native Hindu, from Bengal, who spoke English, French and Spanish [my translation] (Andrić, 1951) by whom Andrić was so impressed that unconfirmed rumours say he even fell in love with her.

¹⁴² © The Ivo Andrić Foundation, Belgrade, Serbia.

Ivan Ivanji (Figure 28 above), Tito's interpreter for German until the Marshall died in 1980, bluntly admits that he didn't even know what interpreting was when he started working and that anyone who knew or pretended to know a foreign language was an interpreter: "Faces and gestures helped when words were missing. And it worked, even better than today, when there are experts for anything. Or maybe it looked to me as it worked, we were young and felt important [my translation] (Ivanji, 2014: 47).

In the first years of the profession, Yugoslav interpreters, therefore, "ended up in the booth by coincidence" (Paravić, 2014c) just like many of the interpreters who had worked at the League of Nations, the Nuremberg Trials, or the United Nations, who had been hired for their multilingual background rather than their educational feats (Baigorri Jalón *et al.*, 2014). Interpreting was, after all, a relatively new profession that had emerged in the 1950s and training options were limited in many European countries (the Forlì Interpreting School, for example, opened in the early 1990s).

Just like their predecessors, SFRY conference interpreters approached the profession from all walks of life - Ivan Ivanji was an architect, Mladen Raukar a musician (G. Vidan, 2012; Marušić, 2014: 6) - had degrees and PhDs in fields other than languages and philology, although many had studied languages in one of the Faculties of Philology in the region. Some were trained abroad, in Graz, London Paris, and Geneva, usually at their own expense, rarely with a scholarship granted by the Yugoslav government (Janković, 1993: 11).

Examples are Aleksandra Đorđević, whom Ivanji calls *lijepa Saša* (the beautiful Saša [my translation]), who had studied German in Frankfurt, or Vesna Grbin, the promoter of the Serbian and later Yugoslav association of conference interpreters, who had studied languages at the University of Nottingham with a scholarship from the Yugoslavian government in 1961 and who then studied interpreting at Georgetown University (Marušić & Vidan, 2014).

Despite the lack of specific training, interpreters had solid academic backgrounds and general culture as Ivo Andrić explains:

There is no stupid or uneducated person, ignorant or garbage man among the translators [...] The best ones among them acquire the politeness of a diplomat, the expediency of businesspeople, the discretion of doctors, the skill of politicians. Or at least some of it. Many of them also have real knowledge, are good lawyers, or are versed in literature or art [my translation]. (Andrić, 1951)

Although no training was available in SFRY, we found out that, before going to the US, Vesna Grbin had completed a one-month interpreting course in Belgrade. The course was the first of its kind, held at Belgrade's Foreign Language Institute by Patricia Longley from the Polytechnic of Central London (later the University of Westminster), probably in 1961. It was aimed at training local interpreters for the first conference of the Non-Aligned States in the same year and designed, as Langly herself states in an account of the experience published in 1978, "to fill a purely immediate requirement" (Longley, 1978: 46). Nevertheless, in the following years, some of the professionals who had taken the course continued to train conference interpreters at Belgrade's Foreign Language Institute, which offered courses in simultaneous and consecutive interpretation, technical terminology and sight translation from

1962/1963 until 1967, when they were discontinued for financial reasons (Janković, 1993: 11). If the Institute had trained several interpreters in those years, all other training attempts were unsuccessful except for a course held for a short period in Ljubljana.

Other training attempts were the publication of books to teach secondary language graduates the profession, like the ones edited by Mirka Janković in English, French, German and Russian. Janković, who drafted the Russian one herself, nevertheless admits in an article in the magazine *Parallèles* from 1993, that most writers contracted for the purpose were prominent scholars but lacked interpreting and interpreters' training expertise and that the attempt led to scattered approaches and poor results, as none of the students joined the interpreters' association (Janković, 1993). A couple of noteworthy publications did nevertheless appear on the topic in those years such as Mara Cordic's *Uvad u konsektivno prevodjenje*, in 1967, a chapter in Vladimir Ivir's *Teorija i Tehnika prevodjenja* in 1978, Miodrag Sihinnvir's *Original i prevod* (1979) and the translation of Danica Seleskovic's *L'interprète dans les conférences internationales* in 1988 (Ibid: 11-12) but they were never used consistently in a training program.

Another training experience is the one mentioned by Janko Paravić who reports that he and his colleagues Vesna Grbin, Vlado Ivir and Živka Jurak attended a training course by foreign and domestic experts at the Federal Centre for Management Training (*Savezni centar za izobrazbu rukovodnih kadrova*) in Zagreb, established in collaboration with the International Labor Organization (ILO) (Paravić, 2014b). The name of one engineer, Jaeger Alfred, is mentioned in several documents as the one having provided basic instruction on conference interpreting, but we couldn't confirm to what extent, and in which position.

Finally, training was provided, although in a less institutional form, on the job or, as Vidan puts it, on the "listeners' ears" (G. Vidan, 2012), by the associations of conference interpreters. To make up for the lack of academic training, professional associations established a mentoring system in which potential future conference interpreters would be assigned to work with experienced interpreters. They would first sit outside the booth with headphones and listen to their colleagues' performance and only later start working with them and get feedback on their performance. After this training period, when they had acquired enough experience and found sponsors among the members of the association willing to support their application, they could be accepted as full members (Matešić, 2012). We see here that the associations devised a system that resembles the training provided in interpreting schools, aimed at providing interpreters with mentoring and advice and at guaranteeing that a certain level of quality was upheld in the booth.

9.1.2.2 Languages

If SFRY conference interpreters were often biologists, doctors, engineers, writers, diplomats, or army men, they all shared a bilingual or multilingual background as a result of familiar environments, emigration, or experiences abroad (Baigorri Jalón, 2014). Belgrade-born Dunja Badnjević Orazi, who became one of the reference interpreters for Serbo-Croatian in Italy

during the war, was the daughter of the Yugoslav ambassador to Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine (Badnjević-Orazi, 2019), Jagoda Lukavac had spent her childhood in Uruguay and Mexico, while Albert Abinun, a Sephardic Jew based in Belgrade had learned Spanish fighting in the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) (Lukavac, 2014). In many cases the region's century-old multilingualism had also promoted interpreters' language learning: Ivan Ivanji was born in the Serbian region of Banat, where Serbian, German and Hungarian are traditionally spoken (Ivanji, 2014: 13) and the same could be said for other regions of Slovenia or Croatia, like Istria and Dalmatia, for Italian. It was also not unusual for cultivated Yugoslavs to have studied abroad or had learned the foreign language(s) in the family: the father of Belgrade-born Nikola Kolja Čajkanović, considered one of the best interpreters of SFRY, spoke 15 languages and was used to speaking French at home (Čajkanović, 2006: 78).

Interpreters usually worked with Serbo-Croatian in combination with one or two of the most widely-spoken European languages like German, Spanish and Italian (Marušić, 2014a). Interpreters in the Italian booth worked, until the war, very often also in Italy with Italian agencies (Paravić, 2014) while French was, according to Vidan (G. Vidan, 2012) the only language at the meeting *Aktivna i miroljubiva koegzistencija između država (Active and Peaceful Coexistence between Countries)* and surely a very much used one, at least in the first post-war years, as it was also spoken in many of the African countries member of the Non-Aligned Movement.

English already had the lion's share, while Russian was introduced in 1958 (G. Vidan, 2012) with the demand rising until the end of the 1980s, in a wide range of settings, especially social ones (Paravić, 2014). At the gatherings of Non-Aligned countries, even those organized in SFRY, the languages offered were French, English, Spanish and Arabic plus Serbo-Croatian (Marušić, 2014a) but for all other events and gatherings, the demand seems to have been limited to the big European languages such as English, French, German and "our language" (Ivanji, personal communication, 2020). Albanian, Hungarian and the other minority languages of the peoples of Yugoslavia weren't frequently used in international conferences (Janković, 1993) but only in the national/regional parliaments and in more internal matters.

9.1.2.3 Working conditions

The working conditions of interpreters in the post-war years, not just in SFRY, were rather different from today's ones: the interpreting craft had just emerged and only over the years professional associations, like AIIC, have managed to obtain better working environments, shifts and rates. Even at the UN, at the very beginning "working conditions were very tough, with rudimentary technical equipment, booths with poor to no ventilation and bad lighting, long working days and few days off" and it took



Figure 29: Introduction of simultaneous translation at the international meetings in Dubrovnik (Vidan, G., 2012: 4)

several years and a one-day strike in 1974 to establish the working conditions that apply today (Baigorri Jalón & Barr, 2004). It comes therefore as no surprise that the working conditions of interpreting in SFRY gradually improved with the institutionalization of the profession and thanks to the work of SFRY interpreting associations, which all used AIIC-defined standards and codes of conduct as a reference (Janković, 1993: 10). By managing



Figure 30: Jelica Vidan interprets with the help of rudimentary interpreting equipment (Vidan J., 2014: 9)

contracts and assignments centrally, and by appointing a *chef d'équipe*, associations ensured better working conditions for interpreters, including rates uniformity throughout SFRY, although they were sometimes forced to deal with the hard reality of economic planning in a Socialist country that had experienced tough economic downturns since the mid-1980s.

A case in point is that of Albanian and Hungarian parliament interpreters who joined the interpreters' association in Belgrade hoping to improve their working conditions - like proper booths, more interpreters and more regular working hours - but any bargaining attempt was denied for financial reasons by the central government (Ibid: 11).

Simultaneous interpreting, which was probably first used in 1956/1957 at the Dubrovnik Festival (see figures 29 and 30 above), initially relied on rudimentary equipment. In figure 30 above, Jelica Vidan interprets with what looks like a typical interpreting console and a portable microphone and delegates listen through headphones (Figure 29), but interpreters were in the same room as the delegates, without any soundproofing nor adequate view of the podium. At the time, “visual contact was not considered important” (G. Vidan, 2012) and the following year they were even accommodated in a near-by room not to disturb the proceedings.

Equipment became more performant as the technology industry improved in the 1970s-1980s, as we can deduce from figure 31 on the right, where Maša Marušić and Vesna Grbin work in a fully-fledged wooden booth with a windowpane guaranteeing full vision of the room if not sound insulation, and improved lighting and air conditions.

This is also confirmed in our interview with Ivanji, who affirms that the equipment was fairly good, there was generally enough space for two interpreters in the booth (Ivanji, 2014) and different channels and relay were available (Ivanji, personal communication, 2020).



Figure 31: Maša Marušić and Vesna Grbin (Marušić, 2014: 8)

Rather than an EU/UN pure booths system, with interpreters only translating into their native language, the Yugoslav market was generally bi-directional (Ivanji, personal communication, 2020), except for high-level political meetings where two interpreters were usually present. Ivanji nevertheless claims, although we do not know if this was a general tendency or his own

opinion, that when working in one language only he usually worked into the foreign language, as he thought that interpreters could better understand the jargon, ideas, expressions and positions of their fellow politicians, and therefore express them correctly “especially when headed by Tito with whom I could truly attune [my translation]” (Ivanji, 2014: 297). We do not know, however, whether having a Yugoslav interpreter to translate into the foreign language and not into their native one was a standard practice motivated, like in Soviet Russia, for example, by security concerns.

The application of **AIIC standards** by conference interpreters’ associations seems to have guaranteed that interpreters worked in pairs and for a fair number of hours. Nevertheless, a Belgrade interpreter, Vladimir Pavlović, in a book published in 1995 remembers that in the early 1980s, he went to Brussels with a delegation of the Yugoslavian Ministry of Agriculture, negotiating the export of meat to the then European Community. He recounts having worked alone for the entire day from and into French until, half-way through the afternoon, an EC interpreter entered his booth and put a piece of paper under his nose that read ‘Feel free to stop this exploitation. Our union protects you’, at which he wanted to burst out laughing: had the meeting been interrupted because of him, he would have endured serious consequences, maybe even the loss of his job (Pavlović, 1995). Leaving aside the different context and rights the EC interpreters enjoyed if compared to their Yugoslav homologues - and that they still enjoy today compared to free market interpreters - this episode is nevertheless interesting, as it points to the fact that the working conditions for SFRY interpreters at the government level were probably different than those on the private market, as they were influenced by the fact that Yugoslavia was a totalitarian state, even if a “soft one” (Andjelic, 2003: 35).

The issue of interpreters’ **accommodation** seems to have been a particularly tricky one, and many colleagues complain about it not always being up to AIIC standards: Maša Marušić remembers that she went to Dubrovnik for a medical conference with a more experienced colleague, Mladen Raukar, who vehemently protested with organizers for the poor state of their accommodation and said: "If you put us in that chicken coop, we'll translate for you like chickens, (Marušić, 2014a) today’s equivalent of ‘if you pay monkeys you get peanuts’. Another example was the Mediterranean Games in 1979 in Split, where no hotel rooms had been reserved for interpreters at Hotel Marjan, where the delegations were accommodated. When news broke out that among interpreters was also the dean and several professors of the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb, rooms were found, although, at first, not for everyone (G. Vidan, 2012).

Tito’s interpreter, Ivan Ivanji, praises the accommodation he and his colleagues, Borislav Milošević and Liljana Tambača¹⁴³, enjoyed at the Helsinki conference on European Security and Cooperation in 1975 but complains about the one in Cuba at the Non-Aligned States Conference in 1979.

¹⁴³ Working with English, French and Italian, she accompanied Tito’s delegation as an interpreter to Rome in 1971 to meet Pope Paul VI (Ramet, 2002: 92; Radosavljević, 2016).

As per **rates**, it is unfortunately impossible to find precise information, although it seems that Republican associations had agreed upon and applied the same rates (Janković, 1993: 10) throughout the country and that for highly technical conferences interpreters were paid an extra day for preparation (Ibid). A stark difference emerges, nevertheless, between simultaneous and consecutive interpreting where the first enjoyed better rates while, for the latter, cheaper and less experienced individuals were preferred, as the competition was quite stiff and the market uncontrolled, despite the associations' efforts (Ibid).

Ivanji draws a difference also between interpreting **rates** on the private and the institutional market, with the former being better paid than the latter. He mentions that the Yugoslavian army and the Cabinet of the President of the Republic paid low interpreting rates and that the daily allowances and expenses refunded to the interpreter varied at different moments even for the Presidency:

When Dolanc was the secretary of the party all the expenses during trips abroad were paid, hotel, food, drinks, and interpreter received a double daily allowance in foreign currency. With Tito, although everything was paid for, the daily allowance was one-tenth of what we got with Dolanc, it was barely enough for tips, and we received one-third if hotel and breakfast were paid for [my translation]. (Ivanji, 2014: 236-237)

Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA), which was formalized in the late sixties, and travel and accommodation allowances were therefore paid, especially since interpreters in SFRY travelled quite a lot, being mostly based in Zagreb, Belgrade, and Ljubljana, and covering events throughout the country. Interpreters also travelled to cover the gatherings of the Non-Aligned Movement and sometimes to very far-away countries like Indonesia, North Korea, Zimbabwe (Marušić, 2012) or Cuba. In general, Ivanji sustains that the rates and allowances paid to the interpreter were good and accommodation was provided in the same hotels as delegates (Ivanji, personal communication, 2020) although it depended on the mission. Ivanji complains, for example, about an assignment on the Brioni islands when the daily allowance was entirely paid in dinars but interpreters had to pay even hotel expenses (Ivanji, 2014: 236-237). Daily allowance was not taxed (Ibid: 300) and was paid in foreign currency when the assignment was abroad, and in dinars, the local currency, when the assignment was within the country.

A further issue that interpreters raise in their accounts is that of **preparation**, especially for highly technical meetings. Ivanji recounts that at the International Conference of Confectionery in Petrovaradin, he was terminologically unequipped and took advantage of the coffee break to apologize and ask participants how to better translate technical terms (Ibid: 300-301). In that pre-Internet era, interpreters exchanged glossaries that they created consulting books and documents available in public libraries and records, which surely looks like a time-consuming Sisyphean toil to today's interpreters. A turning point was, as Vidan tells us, when organizers, like the Council of Europe, began sending regularly huge amounts of documents with express airplane delivery services, although they would sometimes arrive after the event (G. Vidan, 2012).

Ivanji affirms that, on several occasions, like before the official visit of the German ambassador Bruno Kreisky to Ljubljana, interpreters were invited to preparatory meetings, thus introducing the concept of ‘briefings’: “Here, in Yugoslavia, it was sometimes customary for translators to take part in those meetings to better know the contents and the topic of the meeting. I don't know how it worked in other countries but I think that our method was very much useful”(Ivanji, 2014: 55).

Nevertheless, from our interview with Ivanji, we gathered that this ‘method’ was not an institutionalized practice, but one adopted in political settings and when, as in this case, the interpreter was already a party official or employee: Ivanji admits that he only attended such preparatory meetings when he translated for Tito, Edvard Kardelj, Vladimir Bakarić, and Stane Dolanc and never when he translated simultaneously on the private market (Ivanji, personal communication, 2020).

9.1.2.4 Status

The role and position of interpreters in SFRY society as a professional category is extremely difficult to evaluate after so many years although it seems that, just like in other countries, their job was highly regarded, not just for being a hard task but also for offering them the chance to participate in international meetings and meet important personalities from the political, economic, and scientific world. They were the spokespersons of Socialist Yugoslavia abroad thus contributing to its good foreign relations, and they were considered of primary importance in a Cold War environment, as Ivo Andrić puts it:

Translators are [...] a good sign for the state of international relations. As long as they speak and translate at various international conferences around the world, it means that there is still talk and negotiation, no matter how much contradiction and sharpness there is in what is said and translated, it means that there is no war or general conflict in the world. When the last interpreter and translator are silent, the cannons speak. And what that means and what the world looks like then, we all know. Therefore, these mediators-interpreters are at the same time symbols of peace and human, reasonable relations between people [my translation]. (Andrić, 1951)

Interpreters, therefore, generally enjoyed a good reputation and often received public recognition for their work: Vidan remembers that her neighbors were very impressed when the boxes of confidential documents were delivered by the Council of Europe and thought of her as an “important person” (J. Vidan, 2014).

Conference interpreters in SFRY, unlike their colleagues that would later work with military forces, enjoyed public recognition and awards: Jagoda Lukavac and Nada Maier received the French Legion of Honour (*Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur*), whereas Vladimir (Vlado) Ivir, who became famous in 1969 when translating for Croatian media the landing of the first man on the moon (Marušić, 2014b: 13), was later decorated with the British Royal Victorian Order and the Danish *Ridder af Dannebrogordenen* (J. Vidan, 2014: 8). The landing on the moon was interpreted in Belgrade by Boško Čolak-Antić¹⁴⁴ who was awarded, for his live

¹⁴⁴ An experienced interpreter working with French and English who had already translated for SFRY state leaders such as Tito, Edvard Kardelj, Veljko Vlahović, Koča Popović, Milan Panić, Vojislav Koštunica and Boris Tadić and who also

broadcast interpreting, the radio Belgrade award and the special praise from NASA for the best commentary to the moon landing in the entire Apollo 11 program in languages other than English (Brašanac, 2013).

The profession also counted an increasing number of women although a comment by Andrić who states that “simultaneous translation was more suitable for women, because, closed in the cabin, they translated easier and faster, while in successive translation, where they had to speak from the tribune, face to face with the assembly, they showed less success” (Andrić, 1951) probably points to the fact that in high-level political meetings - where consecutive, which he calls *sukcesivno*, successive translation, was likely the rule - male interpreters were still more numerous than female ones.

Just like today, interpreters in the SFRY nevertheless had to fight to have their role respected as professionals, as Ivanji did on a couple of occasions with a party official who kept correcting his otherwise accurate translation into German (Ivanji, 2014: 191). The interpreters’ job on those occasions was particularly sensitive, especially in a country where several officials, including Tito¹⁴⁵, spoke several languages.

Living in a non-democratic country, the interpreters’ bargaining position was limited by the mechanisms of the party, and they were in a much more disadvantaged position in relation to their employers than their colleagues living in democracies. Ivanji once defended a young female colleague from the sexual harassment from a drunk politician, the same who he later told off for misbehaving with German guests and for this reason he was left out of the picture for a while and reinserted into service only due to Tito’s intervention (Ibid: 178).

Although most interpreters were freelancers, some mainly worked, like Ivanji, at governmental level, and were often hired in diplomatic or public servant positions, thus enjoying a much higher status in Yugoslav Society and within the party, similar to that of famous interpreters in history, whom Baigorri Jalón defines as “interpreters of the dictators” (Baigorri Jalón, 2014) (see § 4.2.3). Ivan Ivanji, for example, was also a cultural press consultant for the Yugoslav embassy in Bonn, Edvin Zdovc, who translated into Slovene, and German for Tito was the Yugoslav consul in Frankfurt before being killed in München in 1976 and Borislav Milošević, older brother of the then still unknown Slobodan Milošević, was Tito’s interpreter for Russian and a diplomatic envoy to the Soviet Union in the 1970s.

9.1.2.5 Quality

Writing about the quality of interpreting in a country that ceased to exist thirty years ago is hard, especially given the ephemeral nature of interpreting. The fact that many interpreters were trained on the job does not necessarily mean, in our opinion, that the quality of interpreting was poor: professional associations guaranteed a traineeship and mentoring period, they abided by the AIIC rules of conduct, and the role of the *chef d’équipe* was instrumental in guaranteeing

accompanied the three astronauts’ wives during their stop in Belgrade for the world tour in October 1989 (Radio Televizija Srbije, 2020).

¹⁴⁵ He spoke German, Russian, Czech, Slovenian, some English and Kazakh, and was apparently able to read French and Italian (Dedijer, 1955: 413).

the same level of quality at every meeting. Vidan remembers, for example, that complaints were rare and quality was praised many times by organizers accustomed to top interpreters from Geneva (G. Vidan, 2012).

This is proved by the letters in Figure 32 below, sent to the Association of Croatian Conference Interpreters, where interpreter Janko Paravić is praised for the quality of the interpreting service



provided at the District Court (left), and at the Yugoslavian Academy of Science and Arts for the Nikola Tesla Symposium of 1976 and in Gospić and Smiljan at the presence of Tito (right). Nikola-Kolja Čajkanović, a Belgrade interpreter of French, English and Spanish received praise from personalities like Monserrat Caballet or crowned heads like king Baudouin of Belgium and Queen Fabiola who even sent him a framed picture of their visit to Yugoslavia to personally thank him for his services (Čajkanović, 2006: 81).

Figure 32: Thank you letters to members of the Association of Croatian Conference Interpreters (Paravić, J., 2014: 4)

This chapter on the first days of interpreting (and translation) in SFRY, showed that Yugoslavia was a fairly developed market where professional associations had organized following AICC standards and managed to guarantee a certain quality, working conditions and training, which made up for the lack of interpreting agencies and training institutions.

We also proved that it is incorrect to affirm that there were no trained and skilled interpreters in the former Yugoslavia at the outbreak of the war (Dragovic-Drouet, 2007) and that SFRY could count on a small but qualified group of interpreters, who enjoyed relatively high status.

9.2 Conference interpreting in the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia in the 1990s (1991-1995)

9.2.1 Conference interpreting in the wars

In the article that Ivo Andrić wrote in 1951 on interpreters and translators he concluded that “When the last interpreter and translator is silent, the cannons speak [my translation]” (Andrić, 1951), it was a powerful foretelling of what would happen to Yugoslavia forty years later.

If cooperation between Republican associations of interpreters had always been effective, and necessary, to meet the demand for interpreters, especially in the busy spring and autumn months, it started to falter in the 1980s.

The general climate of hostility and animosity between Zagreb and Belgrade, which had by then built up in society, started to disturb interpreters’ cooperation (Paravić, 2014c), which *de facto* ended at the beginning of the 1990s when tensions turned into physical confrontations.

Another factor behind the end of the cooperation between Republican interpreters' associations was the very peculiar language question: Serbo-Croatian had by then officially split into two (or even three or four) separate languages and great attention was placed on language as an element of national unity (see Chapter 2).

This sensitivity around language and interpreting issues is perfectly epitomized by the episode quoted by Glenny (1996: 145) (see § 2.2.5) from 1991 when a conference to stop the war organized in Sarajevo was immediately suspended because a Croatian and Bosnian delegate had complained that no simultaneous interpreting was provided into their languages.

Another reason behind the end of interpreters' cooperation was the fact that suspicion had by then marred inter-republic relationships and delegates only trusted interpreters from their own ethnic group to convey their ideas accurately: interpreter Maša Marušić remembers that, at the arms control negotiations in Vienna, during the war - which led in 1996 to the signing of the Florence Subregional Arms Control Agreement - former Yugoslav delegates refused to talk to each other and did not trust interpreters from other delegations in their translation into Serbo-Croatian (Marušić, 2014b).

It is on this occasion that organizers decided, probably for the first time, to organize three booths for Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian and the system remained in place for all the diplomatic meetings throughout the war, all the way until the Dayton Agreement and today.

When the wars broke out and relations among Republics ended, interpreting markets became, therefore, fully national or organized on ethnic grounds, hindering the interpreters' capacity to cover for events. This was far cry from the SFRY where interpreting teams from all Republics had worked together to meet the market's needs.

Even if the amount of work dwindled, on the one side, as international conferences were no longer held in the region due to its instability, on the other, thousands of troops, relief workers and journalists swept the country in the 1990s and at a higher level, the Republics had tripled the number ministries and offices that needed to entertain diplomatic relations.

According to Croatian interpreter Gabrijela Vidan, the request for interpreters, especially into English, had boomed from the very beginning of the dissolution of Yugoslavia: "The English booth [in Croatia] was intensively engaged in a series of meetings and press conferences that immediately preceded independence, and later as interpreters for the President Office, the Government and the Parliament of the Republic of Croatia" [my translation] (Paravić, 2014: 4-5)

It seems that interpreting took here the lion's share, and that translation work, on the contrary, declined and changed: a Croatian translator remembers, for example, that in Croatia the few assignments they had were voluntary work, like letters that thanked international institutions for the arrival of a humanitarian convoy or appeals to the international community to stop the war or to recognize Croatia as an independent state (Ašperger, 2007).

In Belgrade, on the contrary, local citizens were not hearing so much as a bullet being fired, at least until 1999, but international sanctions had heavily impacted the country's economy and

translation and interpreting work dwindled, while the presence of international forces was limited to a few monitors and offices and the UN warehouse (Gonçalves, 2020).

In Zagreb, where the UNPROFOR headquarters were set up, and in Split, which was the entrance point into Bosnia and Herzegovina, the demand for interpreters skyrocketed, as it did in Sarajevo and other cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Several English interpreters also worked, according to Paravić, for NATO and RACVIAC¹⁴⁶, in Oberammergau, Germany and Rakitje, close to Zagreb within the training programs of military personnel of the former Federation for Disarmament Control as well as at conferences and seminars across Europe (Paravić, 2014: 5).

In the two countries at war the demand for interpreters was felt at all levels: interpreters were needed at international peace talks, to maintain phone and in-presence relations with world leaders and other ministries of foreign affairs, by military observers and humanitarian convoys to help enforce the missions' objectives and deliver aid and by journalists who wanted to talk with local politicians and be escorted throughout the country. The latter was often defined as 'escort interpreting', and in a speech at the 50th anniversary of the Association of scientific and technical translators in Zagreb in 2007, the Association's president, Ana Ašperger remembered how the term became so popular that it had completely changed their perception of the word 'escort': when some Japanese required 'escort services' she sent them their most experienced translator, a man in his seventies, instead of a woman to entertain them, which was their true objective (Ašperger, 2007).

The request for qualified interpreters, although difficult to establish in numbers, was almost impossible to meet as only UNPROFOR II counted, at its peak operational levels, more than 30,000 men on the ground (United Nations, 1996), not to mention NGOs, relief agencies and journalists. The first translation agencies, which were set up in those years, could not make up for the lack of interpreters in general, and of qualified ones, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina which, as we have seen, could only count on a few interpreters even before the war and no interpreters' association, as its few members had joined the Belgrade one.

It should be said however, that in countries counting slightly more than 4 million people each, such a demand for interpreting services would have been difficult to meet anyway, especially since many of those who had the skills and contacts had left their countries at the outbreak of the war. Such a great demand for interpreters would have probably been met only by markets like Geneva and Brussels and caused problems in bigger national interpreting markets: during Expo 2015 in Milan, for example, the very much developed Italian interpreting market equally struggled to provide interpreters for all the events taking place in Milan and throughout the country.

¹⁴⁶ The Regional Workshop on Threat Assessment and a Risk-Informed Approach for Nuclear and other Radioactive Material out of Regulatory Control (RACVIAC) is an international, independent, regionally owned organization for Security and Cooperation, with the mission to foster dialogue and cooperation on security matters in South-Eastern Europe through a partnership between the countries of the region and their international partners.

Interpreting began therefore to be practiced by people who did not enter the profession through the professional associations' mentoring system but learned to work on the job (Matešić, 2012). It is precisely at this point that two parallel interpreting markets emerged, one represented by interpreters already active on the market, versed in simultaneous and consecutive who were immediately recruited to translate high-level meetings and conferences, and another that catered for needs on the ground supplied by people with no or limited interpreting training and experience who began working as interpreters to survive and/or do something for their country (which we described in detail in Chapters 7 and 8).

We will try and provide below, for those interpreters, a collective biography, in the sense suggested by Lemerrier & Zalc (2008: 21-22, as quoted by Baigorri Jalón, 2019: 164), that is as 'nano-stories', or 'nano-biographies' of some of these interpreters, despite the lack of sources and the desire to circumscribe the study. We will therefore present here eight short biographies of interpreters, from all the Republics that were active during the war or immediately before, whose choice was not dictated by ethnic or political considerations but only by the availability of information.

9.2.2 Conference interpreters in the wars

9.2.2.1 Nikola-Kolja Čajkanović

The biography of Nikola-Kolja Čajkanović has been reconstructed thanks to direct contacts with the interpreter's niece, Jelena Čajkanović, who was kind enough to provide us with an issue of the specialized magazine *Prevodilac*, published by the association of scientific and



Figure 33: Nikola-Kolja Čajkanović (Jovanović, Z., 2006: 78)

technical translators of Serbia, which features, under the column "portraits of translators" an autobiographic account by Nikola-Kolja Čajkanović (Čajkanović, 2006).

Nikola was born in Belgrade in 1928 in a prominent and well-educated family: his mother had completed Romance studies and his father was a university professor, later Dean of the Faculty of Philology and a polyglot who had studied in Germany, spoke 15 languages, and translated from Greek and Latin (Čajkanović, 2006: 78). Nikola had studied languages since early childhood, first English and French - which he started to learn with his nanny and practiced at home, as his mother, father and sister conversed daily in French - and later German, Russian and Spanish. After completing his studies at the gymnasium in Belgrade, he enrolled in Engineering but dropped out when he understood that it wasn't his cup of tea.

One day he ended up by chance at a conference organized by the Institute of Foreign languages and his language skills earned him an invitation to take a one-year course (probably the one mentioned in § 9.1.2.1) ("Sa Patrijarsima i Striptizetama," 2022). Since Nikola did not have enough money to pay for the course, the Institute granted him a loan and found him his first jobs to help him pay them back (Trošelj, 2009).

His *baptême du feu* in interpreting took place in 1964 in Herceg Novi, at a conference that gathered scholars from the US and USSR, where he performed so well that he then started getting offers for simultaneous interpreting on a regular basis.

He affirmed to have had a talent for simultaneous interpreting that he had trained in the three years of German occupation when he was stuck at home with nothing to do but reading his father's books in foreign languages. Other than for his beautiful voice and perfect diction, Nikola-Kolja Čajkanović is remembered for his incredible memory that made his consecutive interpretations legendary: he could remember very long stretches of speech without taking notes, as he did at the Belgrade International Theatre when the director of the Théâtre de la Ville in Paris held a speech that lasted 20 minutes, or in 1996 during the Belgrade Fest when translating the long and passionate speech by Greek director Michael Cacoyannis (Čajkanović, 2006: 78), which earned him a long round of applause by the audience (Ivanji, personal communication, October 22, 2020).

Acclaimed by his clients and colleagues, Nikola was always a freelancer, a member of the Association of Translators and Interpreters and of the Association of Writers and never accepted long-term engagements or political appointments, despite having worked in high-profile political events like Tito's meeting with Emperor Mohammad Pahlavi in Belgrade (Trošelj, 2009), François Mitterrand's speech at the Yugoslav assembly, the visit of the Archbishop of the Church of England and several Non-Aligned Movement conferences in Morocco, Sierra Leone, Togo, and Lesotho.

During the war, he often interpreted into English and French for Slobodan Milošević, whom he accompanied on his visit to Paris to meet President Mitterrand and several other French officials and authorities (Trošelj, 2009; Nin, 2022).

Nikola-Kolja Čajkanović was also present at the signing of the Dayton Agreement in Dayton, Ohio, in November 1995 as an official interpreter into Serbian: in an interview for the magazine *Nin* (Nin, 2022) he declared that he worked a lot during those days as had to be available all day and all night. Although Milošević spoke excellent English and understood Clark and Clinton, he added, the Serb leader considered it wiser to always have Čajkanović translate for him to get some time to form the best answer.

Nikola-Kolja Čajkanović also interpreted at the signing of the Kosovo agreement in Rambouillet, France, in 1999 (Ivanji, personal communication, October 22, 2020), and later at the ICTY, although only for a short while, as he was already 62 at the time, that is over the maximum age for conference interpreters allowed by the Tribunal ("Sa Patrijarsima i Striptizetama," 2022). He died in Belgrade in 2011.

9.2.2.2 Janko Paravić

Among one of the most active Croatian interpreters was surely Janko Paravić. Born in Matulji, near Opatija, Croatia, in 1936, he had completed a degree in English and Italian literature at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb and, like many others, had no formal training as an interpreter, as he states in an article about the first days of conference interpreting in Croatia (Paravić, 2014c) although he mentioned a training course for interpreters he took in Zagreb organized in collaboration with the ILO in another contribution (Paravić, 2014). After the training he started to work as a freelance translator and interpreter and was one of the promoters and the first President of the Croatian Association of Conference interpreters, established in 1974, an experience which he remembers as follows:



Figure 34: Franjo Tuđman, Janko Paravić and Alija Izetbegović (Mišetić, 2014: 4)

I experienced my first mandate together with the other founders with a sense of pride when, in 1974, twelve of us gathered. By that day, after the initial "apprenticeship", we became a cohesive team, established throughout SRH and - in cooperation with colleagues from Belgrade and Ljubljana - the former state [my translation]. (Paravić, 2014)

Paravić was also a member of the Croatian Association of Literary Translators and translated into English almost 60 books, mainly art monographs about Croatian artists, such as Ivan Lacković Croata, Ivo Šebelj, Nives Kavurić-Kurtović, Vojin Bakić and Hrvoje Šercar (Tadić, 2017). He also translated works of famous novelists into Croatian, such as L. Durrell, D. S. Chesterfield, M. E. Atwood, Peter J. A. Calvocoressi, Richard Overy, Margaret Atwood, and John Le Carré, often working with his wife, Nedeljka, also a translator (Enciklopedija.hr, 2021).

From 1991 until 2003 Paravić was the official interpreter of the President of Croatia, Franjo Tuđman, whom we see in figure 34 and in Figure 35, with Bosnian President Alija Izetbegović and Pope John Paul II, respectively (Enciklopedija.hr, 2021; Društvo hrvatskih & književnih prevodilaca, n.d.). He later served under presidents Stjepan Mesić and Ivo Josipović and prime minister Jadranka Kosor (Tadić, 2017) and participated in all the most important meetings throughout the war years and probably at Dayton, although we could find no confirmation of the latter.



Figure 35: Pope Jean Paul II, Franjo Tuđman and Janko Paravić (Menđušić, S., 2017)

In his accounts, he remembers, for example, that US diplomat Richard Holbrooke and several members of the Senate and Congress visited Zagreb and President Tuđman on many occasions and engaged in conversations that lasted several hours and required a high level of patience and concentration, as each word had to be weighed carefully. The situation was sometimes so tense, he added, that it was almost impossible to "hear some silence" in the short pauses

between what was spoken and what was translated (Paravić, 2014c) but his experience and knowledge of the subject helped him successfully guarantee conversation on several occasions. Former Ambassador and director of the Croatian Presidential Protocol Office from 1995 to 1997, Ivan Mišetić, even affirmed in an article published by the magazine of the Croatian Association of Conference Interpreters (HDKP), that Paravić was such a good interpreter that Paula Gikas, the operational manager of Hoolbroke's mission, thought that the Croatian word for 'interpreter' (or 'translator') was actually 'Janko' (Mišetić, 2014). Janko Paravić died in 2017 (Enciklopedija.hr, 2021) and received the Croatian Homeland War Memorial and Order of the Croatian Trefoil for his work (Paravić, 2014a).

9.2.2.3 Vladimir Ivir

Vladimir, or Vlado, as he was often called, Ivir was born in Zagreb, and graduated from the Faculty of Philology in 1958 with a degree in languages. He then probably attended, together with Vesna Grbin, Živka Jurak and Janko Paravić the already-mentioned training course for interpreters organized at the Federal Centre for Management Training in Zagreb in collaboration with ILO, apparently held by Jaeger Alfred (Paravić, 2014).

He started teaching at the Faculty of Philology in Zagreb in 1966, and he continued his career as an academic and professor until he retired in 2004 (Metroportal.hr, 2011). The first Croatian theoretician of translation, Ivir was highly appreciated among European linguists and his research interest included English syntax, transformational linguistics, translation theory, contrastive analysis, semantics, and lexicology. He wrote several English books for high school and university students, like *A Contrastive Analysis of English Adjectives and their Serbo-Croatian Correspondents* (1982) or *Translation Theory and Technique* (1978) - the latter was used in several universities where translation was taught - and the *Croatian English dictionaries of economic and business terms* with M. Urbany and V. Protega, and later with V. Špiljak (Kalogjera, 2011). Ivir lectured at the Universities of Trieste, Provo (Utah), Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Taipei, Graz, Ljubljana, Sarajevo, Novi Sad, and Skopje, and in Croatia at the Universities of Osijek, Split and Rijeka. He was on the International Advisory Board of the translation theory periodicals *Target* and *Across*. He greatly contributed to the establishment of a postgraduate translation program at the University of Philology in Zagreb and was eventually appointed Emeritus Professor (Metroportal.hr, 2011).



Figure 36: Vladimir Ivir next to Queen Elizabeth II during her visit to Zagreb in 1972. (Hrvatsko Društvo Konferencijskih Prevoditelja, 2021)

He is listed here, nevertheless, for his long and impressive career as an interpreter, who became famous for having provided simultaneous interpretation into Croatian of the broadcast covering the landing of Apollo 11 on the moon in 1969, as Boško Čolak-Antić had done for the Serbian media. He soon became one of Tito's official interpreters into English, both at home and abroad

(J. Vidan, 2014) and took part in key events in the history of Yugoslavia, like the Visit of Queen Elizabeth to Zagreb in 1972 (Figure 36), or the reception in *Banski Dvori*¹⁴⁷ for the visit to Zagreb, in 1970, of US President Richard Nixon, who even complimented Vlado Ivir on his English, invited him to Washington and gave him a fountain pen (Jakovina, 1999).

Ivir was also one of the co-founders of the Croatian Association of Conference Interpreters (HDKP) and was decorated with the British Royal Victorian Order and the Danish *Ridder af Dannebrogordenen* (J. Vidan, 2014: 8). Apparently still active in the 1990s, he worked personally for Croatian President Franjo Tuđman during the war (J. Vidan, 2014) although no further information was retrieved on this period of the interpreter's life. He died in Zagreb in 2011.

9.2.2.4 Sabina Berberović-Izetbegović



Figure 37: Sabina Berberović-Izetbegović today (Alija Izetbegović Foundation, 2022)

Born in Sarajevo in 1954 and married to Mirsad Berberović, she completed High School in Sarajevo and graduated in French and English at the Faculty of Arts, Sarajevo University. She began doing some translation work as a student and was then employed as an English and Bosnian teacher at the Sarajevo Languages Center for five years and later at a Yugoslav company, Jugokomerc, as an interpreter for English/French/Italian. When her father became the President of the Presidency of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, she became his secretary and interpreter (1991-1995). After the war, she continued to work as a professional freelance translator/interpreter for local and international organizations and the EU institutions in Brussels.

Mother of two, with her husband she founded the company Bihexo (Mrkić-Radević, 2020) and is a board member of the Alija Izetbegović foundation. Among her published translations (both individual and the result of teamwork) are: Muhammed Hamidullah, *An Introduction into Islam* (1992); Hichem Djait, *L'Europe et l'Islam* (1978); Alija Izetbegović, *Islam between East and West* (1993); Peter Medawar, *The Limits of Science* (1984); Jalaluddin Rumi: *Fihi-ma-fihi, (The Book on the Inner-Self)* (1994); Colum Murphey, *Sarajevo, Snap-Shot by Candle-Light* (1997); Noel Malcolm, *Kosovo – a Short History* (1998); Robert W. Mc. Chesney, *Rich Media, Poor Democracy* (1999); John L. Esposito and Dalia Mogahed: *Who Speaks for Islam? What a billion Muslims really think* (2008) and Minou Reeves *Muhammed in Europe* (1999) (Alija Izetbegović Foundation, 2022).



Figure 38: Sabina is helped out a military vehicle on May 2 1992 when she was kidnapped together with her father at Sarajevo airport (Tvsa.ba, 2022)

¹⁴⁷ Traditional palace, today the seat of the Croatian Government.

As an interpreter, during the war, Sabina escorted her father on a series of occasions: according to UN document UNAR03, Sabina Izetbegovic was, for example, present at the meeting between the UN Secretary General and Alija Izetbegović held in New York on February 20, 1992, as “daughter and interpreter”. Sabrina also escorted her father to Lisbon, Portugal, in 1992, where he participated in a conference organized by the European Community to discuss a potential cease-fire and solution to the conflict. On his way back to Sarajevo, on May 2 1992, the President was arrested by members of the JNA at Sarajevo airport and released after lengthy negotiations (Damon, 1992; Doyle, 2018: 145; 155). Sabina was arrested and kept prisoner as well (Figure 38 above), as she remembers in a long interview with a Sarajevo television (Tvsa.ba, 2022).

Sabina also escorted her father to the US in September 1993, March 1994, September 1994 and October 1995 (Karčić, 2013). In September 1993¹⁴⁸, the Bosnian president was invited to give a speech before several congressmen and journalists, at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. The event was filmed and is available online (VID14), where we can listen to Sabina’s interpreting into Bosnian and English, for over one hour (Brad, 1993) as her father had asked “Sabina to help him with translation”.

His father first gave an introductory speech in Bosnian, which she translated on the podium, next to him into English, and they then sat down to answer questions from the audience. Being not just the interpreter, but also the president’s daughter, we can see from Sabina’s positioning that she was very confident and not afraid to interrupt her father mid-sentence to finish her translation or to provide expanded or summarized renditions. Probably given their relationship, the speaker-interpreter alternation is perfect throughout the meeting: Izetbegović speaks in very short sentences that Sabina translates without notes in a sort of short consecutive/liaison interpreting, on one occasion switching almost to chuchotage/simultaneous. At some point, in the second part of the meeting, when Sabina and her father were not on the podium anymore, but sitting at the table answering journalists’ questions, Morton Abramowitz, the host, passed her a notepad, but she almost never used it and gave her father summarized renditions of the journalists’ questions.



Figure 39: Sabina and her father at the Carnegie Endowment for International peace in 1993 (Brad, 1993)

We do not know why Sabina didn’t opt for a true consecutive although we can guess that, not having received specific training as an interpreter, including notetaking, she probably wasn’t feeling comfortable enough with consecutive. Nevertheless, her interpretation throughout the meeting is professional, correct, and accurate, even when she is visibly moved and struggles to keep her voice steady, like when her father describes the tragedy and destruction suffered by Bosnia and Herzegovina. On occasions, President Izetbegović often interjected in the translation not to ‘correct’, but to ‘acquiesce’ - he often only repeated the words Sabina just

¹⁴⁸ Karčić (2013: 343) affirms the meeting took place on 09/09/1993 whereas the date marked on the video is 01/09/93.

said in English and helped her with terms in English - but Sabina did not seem to be threatened by this behavior, which usually irritates interpreters, probably for the special bond she had with the speaker.

9.2.2.5 Amira Kapetanović

If feminist peace scholars have often observed that Bosnian women were absent from the Dayton negotiations and marginalized by its constitution settlement, especially if compared to women's political participation in Yugoslavia (C. Baker, 2019: 245), it is worth noting that in the Bosnian delegation two women were present at Dayton as interpreters. The first one, as we have seen was Sabina Berberović-Izetbegović, Alija Izetbegović's daughter and interpreter while the second was Amira Kapetanović (McLeod, 2016: 39).

Born in Sarajevo in 1945, according to her CV published on the official web page of the Bosnian embassy (Kapetanović, n.d.), Amira had studied English, English Literature, German and Italian at the University of Sarajevo, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Department of Linguistics, to later take an interpreting course at Avoncroft College, Birmingham (Department of Linguistics) and the NATO/American Diplomatic Training School, US Military Base, in Oberammergau, Germany. When the war broke out she was in her forties and had already worked in the import/export department of two local companies, as Head of the Department for press and information organizations (1975-1990) and had served as a Member of the VIP protocol of the Organizing Committee of Sarajevo Winter Olympic Games in 1984.

Between 1990 and 1995, she was simultaneously Head of Mission of the BiH Olympic



Figure 40: Madeleine Albright, Amira Kapetanović and Alija Izetbegović in 1997 (Muzej Alija Izetbegović, 2021).

Committee for the Summer Olympic Games in Barcelona, Advisor to the Prime Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and a member of the Bosnian Peace Negotiations Teams at all International Peace Conferences on Bosnia and Herzegovina, such as Lisbon, Geneva, Paris, New York, and Dayton. From 1991 until 1996, she was also the official interpreter into English for the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina and could be seen at the side of Alija Izetbegović on several occasions.

A member of the political office of the president, like many non-freelance interpreters, Amira covered a variety of roles, she was also an advisor on foreign matters, as she later declared: "I was the interpreter, translator, PR, secretary, everything" (Banham, 2006).

Amira Kapetanović accompanied President Izetbegović to meetings at home and abroad: thanks to a post on the Facebook page of the Museum Alija Izetbegovic, which every Wednesday presents on social media a column called "Alija Izetbegović, friends and collaborators" (Muzej Alija Izetbegović, 2021) we know that Kapetanović escorted the Bosnian president (Figure 40) during the meeting with US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in

1997. Amira was also present at the talks at Sarajevo airport on Srebrenica on April 17 and 18, 1993 between Bosnian-Serb commander Ratko Mladić and the Bosnian government (Muslimović, 2022) and, according to Mile Jovičić (Jovicic, 2011: 149) also when president Izetbegović and his daughter Sabina were taken hostage at the airport on May 2, 1993, although she is not mentioned in Doyle's memoir (Doyle, 2018).

If “*žene su prevodile, a ne predvodile pregovore* [women translated peace talks, but did not lead them [my translation]]” (Gradjanke za Ustavne Promjene, 2015), her experience as an interpreter at peace talks, including Dayton, was the beginning of her diplomatic career, which she pursued after the war (McLeod, 2016: 39). Amira was Minister of Culture and Sports for the Sarajevo Canton, Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the United Nations in Vienna, at the International Atomic Energy, Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban-Treaty Organization, at the Industrial Development Organization, and at the United Nations Office, and she was also the ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Australia and New Zealand, Hungary, and Austria. She died in 2016.

9.2.2.6 Ivan Ivanji

Although he did not work as an interpreter for state leaders during the wars in the 1990s, as he had resigned from the party and moved to Vienna revulsed by the politics of Slobodan Milošević, we feel a mention is due to one of the most famous interpreters of SFRY, Ivan Ivanji who was Tito's official interpreter for German from the mid-Sixties until the Marshall died in 1980. What we know about Ivanji's work comes from his autobiography (Ivanji, 2014), a lecture he gave in Vienna to interpreting students in 2002 (Ivanji, 2002), our emails and a written interview with him from 2020 (I. Ivanji, personal communication, October 22, 2020). Since his autobiography was only published in Serbian, Ivanji's contribution to the profession is unfortunately almost unknown and yet he would deserve to be included among the famous “interpreters of the dictators” (Baigorri Jalón, 2014: 165), like Birse, Schmidt, Berezhkov and Chaozhu, although he prefers the title of “interpreters of the powerful” (Ivanji, 2002).

Born in 1929 in Serbia, in a family of Jewish doctors educated in Germany, his parents were captured and killed in 1941, while Ivanji survived concentration camps and was freed at the liberation of Auschwitz in 1945 (Ivanji, 2014). Going back to the newly founded Yugoslavia he started studying architecture and worked in a secondary school, but then decided to follow his passion and enrolled in German language and poetry at university, finishing his studies while acting as secretary to the Yugoslav writers' association (1951). He then went on to work as a journalist and editor of several newspapers (*Omladina*, *Mladost*, *Mladost na autoputu*, *Beogradske novine*) and helped with translation during meetings of the young socialists: it is in those years that he started to work as an interpreter.

In the seventies, Ivanji served as general director of the Yugoslav national theatre, from 1974 to 1978 he was a press and cultural advisor at the Yugoslav embassy in Bonn, worked for three years at the Yugoslav Ministry for foreign affairs (Ivanji, 2014: 94-95) and then served as the secretary general of the Yugoslav Writers' Association from 1982 until 1988. He left Belgrade when Milošević rose to power and has been living between Vienna and Belgrade ever since,

devoting himself to his second vocation, writing. Ivanji has published poems, plays, short stories and numerous novels in Serbian and German such as *Čoveka nisu ubili* (1954), *Na kraju ostaje reč* (1980), *Preskakanje senke* (1989), *Barbarosin Jevrejin u Srbiji* (1998), *Guvernanta* (2002), *Balerina i rat* (2003), *Druga strana večnosti* and *Poruka u boci* (2005). He translated into Serbian and Hungarian authors like Günther Grass, Bertolt Brecht, Max Frisch, and Heinrich Böll. For his commitment to fostering understanding and communication among the central European peoples, he was awarded, on his 80th birthday the Austrian Cross of Honor for Arts and Science (Puel, 2011).



Figure 41: Tito writes the book of guests at the municipality of Bonn (Ivanji, 2014: 6).

Ivanji, who had not received any training as an interpreter, started to work for Yugoslav politicians in 1965, on Austrian Foreign Minister Bruno Krajski's visit to Yugoslavia.

He was summoned to work for Tito in 1966 due to his excellent knowledge of the German language and culture, which he defines as his A language, together with Serbian, while he qualifies Hungarian as his C language (I. Ivanji, personal communication, October 22, 2020).

Ivan Ivanji was Tito's official interpreter for almost twenty years, translating for the most famous personalities of the time such as Willy Brandt, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Bruno Kreisky, Otto Winzer, Konstantin Popović, Marko Nikezić, Mirko Tepavac, and Budimir Lončar. He took part in some of the events that marked the international history of Yugoslavia at home and abroad, like Willy Brandt's visit to Croatia or the Helsinki 1974 Conference on Security and European Cooperation (Ivanji, 2014). In figure 41 we see Ivanji (back right) during a visit to Bonn with Tito and his wife, Jovanka, who affectionately introduced him to her guests as "the man of letters who is so polite to help us" [my translation] (Ibid: 183).

9.2.2.7 Dunja Badnjević-Orazi

Dunja Badnjević-Orazi grew up between Egypt and Belgrade, as her father was the Yugoslav ambassador to Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine (Badnjević-Orazi, 2019) and her mother was a Belgrade partisan fighter. Although she was born in Serbia, her father, an atheist, was from Herzegovina, from an ethnic Croat family that had converted to Islam¹⁴⁹ and her mother was born in Croatia to an Italian-Croatian father who was born and grew up in Vienna. The true definition of a Yugoslav, after gymnasium Dunja graduated in Belgrade and then met her Italian husband and moved to Rome where she enrolled again in university and graduated in Slav Philology, as her Yugoslav degree had no value in Italy.

She first worked as an editor in a publishing house and then as a translator into Italian for several works, such as *La bocca piena di terra* by Branimir Šćepanović (1982), *Diario di Maja*

¹⁴⁹ Her father was later confined to *Goli otok*, the naked island as it was called, for being a political dissident during Tito's time. Dunja tells her father's story in her first book *L'isola nuda* (Badnjević-Orazi, 2008).

by Nenad Veličković for Editori Riuniti (1995), *Racconti di Sarajevo* by Ivo Andrić for Newton Compton (1995), and the essays of Danilo Kiš for Adelphi (2014).

She was a member of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and began working as an interpreter during the visits of the Yugoslav delegations to Italy. Her first assignment was to translate the speech of the head of the Yugoslav delegation, Macedonian Aleksandar Gliškov, before the Congress of the Italian Communist Party in 1975, which she remembers as a source of great stress, as she had not been trained as an interpreter and had started learning Italian just a few years earlier:

Quella fu una delle mie prime uscite davanti a un grande pubblico e l'agitazione era enorme perché mi trovai a leggere, tradotto in italiano, il discorso che il presidente aveva preparato per l'occasione e che faceva seguito a una sua breve introduzione in lingua originale. Tremavo tutta e ricordo che lui mi teneva la mano sotto il palco per farmi coraggio – proprio come si fa qualche volta con i bambini quando vanno dal medico: dovevo leggere ad alta voce davanti a migliaia di delegati in una lingua che avevo imparato da pochi anni, io che avevo paura di aprire bocca anche durante le riunioni redazionali. Ando tutto bene e fu allora che vidi per la prima volta da vicino Enrico Berlinguer: applaudiva in prima fila sul palco. (Badnjević-Orazi, 2019: 23)¹⁵⁰

She then continued to work as an interpreter and was present at meetings that the Secretary of the Communist Party, Enrico Berlinguer, had with the Yugoslav delegations, like Dolanc's visit to Rome (Ibid: 24), or the last Congress that Berlinguer chaired in Milan in 1983. On that occasion, she remembers, an interesting translation/interpreting misunderstanding occurred:

Il discorso conclusivo del segretario italiano fu molto applaudito. Gli jugoslavi quella volta furono particolarmente impressionati. [...] “Gli dica che il suo intervento è stato davvero emozionante”, mi disse un membro della delegazione. In quel momento la parola “emozionante” non mi venne in mente, anche se è quasi identica in serbo-croato, essendo di radice latina. Avevo una specie di blocco mentale, non riuscivo a ricordarmela. Passarono alcuni secondi che a me sembrarono un'eternità e, a mia volta emozionata, proferii “divertente”. Ma prima che potessi correggermi Berlinguer si mise a ridere e disse quasi saltellando “è la prima volta che mi definiscono divertente! Dovrebbero sentirlo quelli che mi dipingono sempre con la faccia lunga e luttuosa! Che bello!” continuò a ridere. [...] Poco dopo, in un'intervista alla televisione, alla domanda su cosa gli era capitato di bello ultimamente, il segretario del PCI espresse la sua soddisfazione per essere stato definito anche lui, una volta nella vita, “divertente” per bocca di un delegato straniero. Il mio errore aveva avuto gambe lunghe, era diventato realtà. (Badnjević-Orazi, 2019: 25-26)¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ That was one of my first times in front of a large audience and the excitement was enormous because I found myself reading, translated into Italian, the speech that the president had prepared for the occasion, and which followed a brief introduction in Italian. I was shaking and I remember him holding my hand under the stage to cheer me up – just like you sometimes do with children when they go to the doctor: I had to read aloud in front of thousands of delegates in a language I had learned a few years before, I who was afraid to open my mouth even during editorial meetings. Everything went well and it was then that I saw Enrico Berlinguer up close for the first time: he was applauding in the front row on stage – my translation]

¹⁵¹ [The concluding speech of the Italian Secretary was much applauded. The Yugoslavs were particularly impressed at that time. [...] “Tell him that his speech was really exciting,” a member of the delegation told me. At that moment the word “exciting” did not come to my mind, even though it is almost identical in Serbo-Croatian, being of Latin root. I had some kind of mental block; I couldn't remember it. A few seconds passed which seemed like an eternity to me and, being excited myself, I uttered “amusing”. But before I could correct myself, Berlinguer started laughing and said almost hopping “it's the first time they've called me amusing! Those who always paint me with a long mournful face should hear it! How wonderful!” he continued to laugh. [...] Shortly afterwards, in a television interview, when asked what had happened to him lately, the secretary

Dunja was later hired as an interpreter and translator at the Yugoslav embassy in Rome, where her job consisted of selecting relevant news in Italian and translating them into Serbo-Croatian and interpreting at meetings with Italian institutions during State visits, sometimes working very long hours like when, at the *L'Elefante bianco*, a restaurant in Rome, she interpreted for almost 10 hours for a Macedonian State official (Ibid: 80-81).

When the war broke out in the 1990s, Dunja was living in Italy and was called to work as a simultaneous interpreter for the Italian national broadcaster (RAI) which often covered live events from the region until the NATO bombings of Belgrade in 1999. In her book, she remembers the live coverage of the bombings of 1999 as a particularly difficult moment, both privately, as her friends, her mother and her family lived in Belgrade, and professionally, because she worked long shifts, often at night (Ibid: 121-123).

Dunja today lives in Umbria, Italy, where she continues to work as a translator and promotes Serbian, Bosnian, and Croatian literature. She is the vice present of the association of intercultural promotion Lipa.

9.2.2.8 Borislav Milošević

Borislav Milošević was the older and lesser-known brother of Slobodan Milošević, Yugoslav politician and President of Yugoslavia, who is one of those responsible for the wars that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

Born in Nikšić, Montenegro, in 1934, Borislav Milošević studied law in Belgrade and joined the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia at a young age. He started



Figure 42: Borislav Milošević
(Associated Press, 2002)

his career in the international sector of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and was promoted to work in the diplomatic service in the seventies. In this position, he spent almost ten years in USSR (1963-1974) as a consultant to the Yugoslav embassy in the Soviet Union, and later became the director of Interexport, the Yugoslav export giant (Vreme, n.d.).

Having lived in USSR for more than a decade and thanks to his excellent knowledge of Russian (Nbcnews, 2004), he became Tito's personal translator for Russian in the confidential meetings with Brezhnev during the Soviet Union's 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia. Borislav Milošević also took part, as an interpreter, in the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1975, with Ivan Ivanji and Lilijana Tambača (Ivanji, 2014). He apparently also spoke good English and French.

When the war broke out, Borislav went to work with his brother Slobodan, serving as an interpreter also during talks in Moscow in June 1998 between Milošević and Russian President

of the Italian Communist Party expressed his satisfaction at having been defined, once in his life, as "amusing" by a foreign delegate. My mistake had come a long way, it had come true – my translation].

Boris Yeltsin and was later appointed the ambassador of Yugoslavia in Algeria and Moscow, where he was very influential, replacing former ambassador Daniel Ž. Marković in 1998.

After the fall from power of Slobodan Milošević on October 5, 2000, his brother remained the ambassador of the FRY in Moscow for some time and continued to live and work in Russia even after he was recalled from the post of ambassador, acting as a consultant for several companies in Moscow. The Russian State University of Trade and Economics in Moscow recently awarded him an honorary doctorate (Vreme, n.d.).

On his death, in January 2013, he was buried in Montenegro, in the presence of the former Yugoslav prime minister, Momir Bulatović, and representatives of the Russian Duma to pay him tribute (Kurir.rs, 2013).

9.2.2.9 Other interpreters

The interpreters presented above are by no means the only ones who played a key role in international conferences and at bilateral meetings between the leaders of the new Republics and the international community, but the ones for whom information could be retrieved publicly. Other interpreters continue to be but names without a public story, probably as they wished to remain private or because their contribution was shadowed by the VIPs of history.

One of them is an interpreter mentioned, for example, in UN archives document UNAR05, dated March 15, 1993, which states that on March 11, 1993, UNPROFOR General Morillon went, with a party of 19 people, from Zvornik to Srebrenica and declared the enclave a UN protected area. Attached to the report is a fax communication sent from the main commander in Kiseljak to UNPROFOR HQ in Zagreb and Sarajevo, with Morillon's escort party¹⁵²: among them a civilian, **Laurence Jolles**, is listed as an interpreter, whom the head of UNHCR, Larry Hollingworth describes as "a bright lawyer, and outstanding linguist" (Hollingworth, 2021).

Another UN archive document, UNAR01, mentions that at the meeting on February 18, 1994 between the UN secretary general and the Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (notes of meeting) the official interpreter was **Jelka Brajovic-Jevremovic**, to whom we could only find a brief mention in a more recent document where she is listed as one of the three interpreters for Serbian in the minutes of an EU-Kosovo Stabilization and Association Parliamentary Committee (European Parliament, 2016), held in Pristina, Kosovo, on May, 16 and 17, 2016.

In a similar UN archives document, UNAR10, we learn that the official interpreter for the meeting of March 22, 1994, between the UN Secretary general and the Archbishop of Sarajevo, Vinko Puljić, was a priest, **Mato Zovkić**, Vicar general to the Archbishop. As we can read on the Berkley Center web page (Berkley Center, n.d.), with which Zovkić has collaborated on several projects, Monsignor Mato Zovkić is a New Testament scholar and professor at Sarajevo

¹⁵² According to Nuhanović, Morillon was always escorted by a French soldier who spoke Serbo-Croatian with a Macedonian accent (Nuhanović *et al.*, 2019).

Theological Seminary. He also served as vicar general of the Catholic Archdiocese of Sarajevo, holding responsibility for relations with other faith communities, as a member of the Inter-religious Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1997 to 2012 (Verbum, n.d.; Berkley center, n.d.).

Born in 1937 in a Croatian Catholic family in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mato Zovkić obtained a Doctorate in Theology from the Catholic Theological Faculty in Zagreb in 1968, and from 1969 until 1972 he studied the Holy Scripture at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome (Urbana university press, n.d.). Ordained a priest of the Sarajevo Archdiocese in 1963, he taught New Testament Exegesis at the Catholic Theological Faculty in Sarajevo from 1972 until 2009. In 2015, the Sarajevo University awarded him the title of Professor Emeritus. He wrote 24 books, several academic articles and reviews and he translated four theological books on interreligious and interethnic relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina from English, and two from German into Croatian. His academic interests are theology, translation of the Holy Scripture and languages with over 200 publications listed on Google Scholar.

Finally, another high-level interpreter was Croatian **Vesna Grbin**, one of the few professional conference interpreters in Croatia and the only one who was trained as an interpreter, first at the University of Nottingham, with a scholarship from the Yugoslavian government, and then in a professional course at Georgetown University. She was one of the founders of the Serbian and later the Yugoslav Society of Conference Interpreters, and joined the Croatian association when she moved to Zagreb from Belgrade in 1974 (Marušić & Vidan, 2014).

During the war, she interpreted peace talks between Croatian generals and the JNA, which took place at the Hotel I in Zagreb in 1991, then at Dayton in 1995 and for Prime Minister Račan during his visit to the UK (Ibid.). Together with Vladimir Ivir and Vera Andrassy, she interpreted disarmament and arms control negotiations in Vienna under the auspices of what would later be called OSCE.

Chapter 10: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMANDATIONS

10.1 Conclusions

In this research work, we tried to shed light on the practice, role and training of interpreters during the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia in the 1990s, considering both liaison interpreters on the ground, in **Chapters 7 and 8**, and conference interpreters at the higher level, in **Chapter 9**, albeit to a lesser extent.

Although the topic had been approached by other scholars before (C. Baker, Persaud, Dragovic-Drouet, Stahuljak), we believe the merit of this research work lies in “joining the dots” and “filling the spaces” that remained blank in our knowledge of how interpreting played out in the wars in the Former Yugoslavian countries of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s.

Starting with **peri-process aspects** of the job, our investigation on locally-hired **liaison interpreters** for peacekeeping forces, which constitutes the bulk of results of this research work, although confirming, in general, a substantial heterogeneity of language solutions (M. Baker, 2010), managed to identify, for the first time, recurring patterns in **recruitment** and shed light on testing procedures for interpreters.

We found out, for example, that in the ECMM (European Community Monitoring Mission), interpreters were hired after an interview followed by a ‘probation’ period in which they translated written articles into English. We also found proof of the existence, in UNPROFOR (United Nations Protection Force), of a centralized recruitment procedure - initially ad-hoc and then better standardized in 1994 - which required interpreters to pass an oral test, a written test, and an interview, with the final scores determining their employment level, pay and advancement opportunities. Such a test was surely in place after the reform of ‘language assistants’ recruitment and employment conditions of 1994, but a similar procedure was probably applied even before 1994.

On this point, the documents retrieved, describing the selection procedure and the skills considered at the evaluation of the oral test, as well as the different skills required at each of the employment levels (GSL2 to GSL5) constitute an unprecedented source of information on interpreters’ recruitment and evaluation at UNPROFOR. We also showed that, although recruitment became heterogeneous once again with NATO IFOR and SFOR, the above-mentioned UN system was not abandoned completely and that national contingents adopted similar grading procedures and categories.

As per **employment and working conditions** of interpreters, we managed to complement the existing information with a more detailed description of interpreters’ contracts, benefits, payment, age and gender, ethnicity, and working conditions.

We confirmed, for example, that Croatian and Bosnian ECMM interpreters worked for free, at least until 1994, while for UNPROFOR interpreters we managed to retrieve a standard contract, which provided us with more detailed information on their working conditions, status, position and social security (or lack thereof) before the reform of 1994.

Thanks to these documents, which were never published before, we also showed that, with the reform of 1994, interpreters’ working conditions improved and they were entitled to annual

leave accrual, sick days, compensation for overtime and access to a Medical Insurance Plan funded by the employee and the employer after the first 3 months of service, which were not offered before 1994. The reform also updated interpreters' grading system, defining qualifications, recruitment allowances, and advancement requirements at each of the GSL levels and introduced posts at the GSL5 (senior language assistant).

If information remains scant and classified for the interpreters in NATO IFOR and SFOR, we are nevertheless satisfied to have collected information confirming that no healthcare or pension schemes were paid to local interpreters before 2006 which led, in 2010, to local SFOR and EUFOR (European Union Force) workers, including interpreters, suing their former employers.

For all interpreters - except ECMM ones - the lack of social security was compensated by high salaries: UNPROFOR interpreters earned between 566.92 USD and 830.92 USD per month while NATO IFOR and SFOR had salaries up to 1000-1200 euros per month, which corresponded to those of "three surgeons, two mayors and one regional governor [my translation] (Gatalo, 2004: 35).

Despite being a highly paid occupation, interpreting was a difficult job, with long and irregular hours, travelling on badly manned and mined roads, and exposure to a whole set of risks - although only one interpreter, Dobrila Kalaba was deliberately killed in 1993 - which we defined as military, contingent, socio-political and economical. Despite the risks, it seems nevertheless that no official protection measures were in place for interpreters, other than the ones adopted ad-hoc by single units or commanders, such as accommodation in base or surveilled houses, military escort, and identification cards and uniforms, when available. The lack of official protection measures emerged as a cause of great distress for military interviewees who claimed having often ended up taking risks that went against their military training and common sense only to protect their interpreters.

As per interpreters' **gender, age and ethnicity**, our research confirms that interpreters were usually in their twenties, and mostly women - although in Croatian ECMM a higher percentage of male interpreters is registered - as they were not subject to compulsory drafting and considered less suspicious by the belligerent parties. Military interviewees were not bothered by having women following them in the battle zone, on the contrary, a slight majority claims to have preferred women for the task, as they promoted collaboration and disclosure, although male interpreters had fewer issues to travelling long distances and camping outside.

Consequently, although interpreter-soldier relationships emerge from our research as being generally very good, a few instances of gender discrimination, insults, and mild harassment were raised by female interpreters - or "Me 2" situations as they called them - while military interviewees report that the relationship was complicated by affairs and love stories between military officers and local female interpreters.

Female interpreters claim that they felt triply subordinate, for their position as interpreters, as females in a traditionally male-dominated setting (war), and as local citizens who were considered "inferior on the civilization scale" or at least looked down with some sense of "colonial" superiority, probably also promoted by the dominant idea of the "ancient hatred" in crazy, savage, primitive Balkans (Ristović, 1995: 6; Zizek, 1999; Todorova, 2015). It should

be mentioned, however, that gender discrimination also affected male interpreters who received adverse comments from their own communities for not fighting in the trenches.

As per ethnicity, interpreters were hired from the three ethnic groups in all missions, but no official policy about ethnically based recruitment was in place. Nevertheless, military officers soon learned to assign an interpreter of the right ethnic group to a specific task or patrol, at least in the war years, to guarantee the interpreter's safety and the success of the meeting.

With regards to **training**, our findings confirm that interpreters were generally untrained and with little translation or interpreting experience and had learned English in school or on their own, but results show that they had a high or good educational level, even if not relevant for the job: they had generally studied or were studying languages in university or practicing different careers (engineer, lawyer, architect, secretary).

The lack of interpreting training is underlined as problematic by their employers, but no training was provided with a few makeshift exceptions until the 1998 NATO language service reform, which resulted in an improvement in the overall quality of the service.

On this point, military interviewees wished interpreters had received training but thought of the training in terms of basic military or combat training, to deal with life-endangering situations and procedures, or to perform first aid, drive military vehicles and manage radio communications. Interpreters, on the contrary, wished they had been trained in interpreting techniques, especially consecutive, military terminology and the psychological aspects of the job.

It is interesting to note that, parallelly, military officers had received little or no training on how to work with interpreters, an aspect highlighted as problematic by interpreters - especially given the lack of standardized terminology and poor English skills - and by soldiers alike, who claim that they would have appreciated having received instructions on how to best work with interpreters.

Moving on to the **in-process aspects** of interpreters' work, data show that interpreters performed a wide array of **tasks**, which often went well beyond the 'simple' act of translating and interpreting. Besides interpreting at meetings, they carried out 'military tasks' like the verification of shelling and bombing, counting casualties, carrying out crater analysis, supervising cease-fire breaches, and prisoners' exchange. They acted as guides, drivers, fixers, and situational or political advisers, sometimes even playing a diplomatic role as 'proxies' of the institution for which they worked. They also performed 'humanitarian and medical tasks' like the counting of bodies on sites of massacres and during hospital visits, assistance in medical evacuation, coordination and provision of humanitarian aid, and investigation of human rights violations. Finally, interpreters carried out 'open intelligence tasks', preparing reports of recent events, and administrative tasks, such as copying documents, taking notes and answering the phone, contracting the delivery of food and equipment and translating several types of written documents.

As the situation stabilized 'military tasks' were gradually replaced by 'community' ones, which also included escorting monitors and or guests to religious buildings or monuments, meetings with local civilian leaders and helping in reconstruction, demining, and reconciliation activities.

To this aim, interviewees point out that, more than professional interpreting **skills** - which were rarely mentioned by both interpreters and soldiers - interpreters in conflict zones should possess specific personality traits like **courage, empathy, situational awareness, honesty, unobtrusiveness, trustworthiness** and **the ability to adapt, remain calm and take care of themselves**, as well as **mediation and negotiation skills** and a **good knowledge of military terminology and concepts**.

Continuing with more controversial aspects, we focused on the **quality** of interpreting provided by locally hired linguists in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, which has often been described as poor in the literature (Dragovic-Drouet, 2007; Askew, 2019: 232), although being fully aware that it is virtually impossible to evaluate the quality of an oral activity performed almost 30 years ago.

Nevertheless, having retrieved original videos that portray examples of interpreted-mediated interactions - a first in this type of research - we managed to show that the level of English and interpreting skills were sometimes poor, due to interpreters' lack of training and improvised and heterogeneous hiring procedures. However, data suggest that it is wrong to throw the baby out with the bath water: if the quality of the service was as heterogeneous as the recruitment policies, with some interpreters struggling with basic language mediation tasks, as we have seen in VID01, others displayed fairly good language and professional skills, as in VID08.

This seems to be confirmed also by military interviewees who declared having been, in general, satisfied with the quality of interpreting, which they conceived as an issue of trust and accuracy, rather than equivalence, adequacy, and usability. On this point, interpreters, seem to have been aware of the importance of accuracy for their employers and deny having resorted to downplaying, adding, or censoring information unless a question or comment was perceived as embarrassing or dangerous, thus displaying cultural gatekeeping skills.

Moving on to interpreters' ethics, we considered interpreters' status, neutrality and confidentiality. Data collected show that interpreters' **status** was a complex alternation between power and fragility, or "projectariat and precariat" (C. Baker, 2014b): on the one side, high salaries, access to food products and other essentials, conversational power and connection to foreign monitors put them in a position of power while on the other, the insecurity and risks of their job, their subordinate position to foreign and local soldiers, especially for women or specific ethnic groups, made them a very fragile category. Interpreters' association with their employers' inability to stop the war, their salaries, the chance to engage in black market activities, and the decision-making power that working women interpreters acquired in their families led to a lack of recognition of interpreters' work in their own countries even today. In this respect, we believe that this work has the merit to have raised the issue about the lack of recognition for a category that has remained silent for too long after the conflict ended, which interpreters still feel today as "wound".

Moving on to other ethical issues pertaining to their work, interpreters in the wars in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia were repeatedly accused of a lack of professional ethics, like **neutrality** and confidentiality. Although some evidence of unneutral behavior was found, most interpreters interviewed felt that they managed to act, if not neutrally, at least impartially and

professionally, with two exceptions: when translating for victims of sexual violence or when they believed a comment or statement was rude, or even dangerous, thus questioning the applicability of the neutrality tenant in conflict zones. Most military officers interviewed also stated that their interpreters were generally neutral but even they doubted the concept of neutrality in a war zone, thus confirming the need to move from a deontological to a teleological approach to ethics, including neutrality, in conflict zones, as supported by several scholars (Morris, 1995; Rudvin, 2002; Hale, 2007; 2008; Inghilleri, 2012; Kalina, 2015).

Moreover, the interpreted-mediated interactions analyzed - among them is also one used to “prove” that UN interpreters pursued their own political goals - show that, even when interpreters adopted linguistically unneutral behaviors (as in VID01 and VID11), these might have not necessarily been ethnically or politically motivated, but rather caused by poor language knowledge and interpreting skills. They emerge also as the result of interpreters’ difficult position on the one hand belonging to the local community and on the other trying to achieve the aims of the organization they worked for, especially given the dangerous environment. Interpreters struggled here to balance three unreconcilable expectations of neutrality - their own, their employer’s and their community’s - operating in a fragile context and in a subordinate role.

The same is true for the issue of **confidentiality**: interpreters interviewed seemed to have been very aware that what they learned on the job was to be kept confidential and many declared having signed a confidentiality agreement or having had a confidentiality clause in their contracts, even though in UNPROFOR and ECMM, unlike in NATO missions, no system was in place to verify it. Nevertheless, as military officers underlined, it was normal that some amount of information might have been divulged, as interpreters were under a lot of pressure from the belligerent parties to obtain information, and from local institutions that sometimes needed to ‘provide an authorization’ for them to work for international peacekeepers. Soldiers also affirm that cases of interpreters fired for being spies were limited and that breaches of confidentiality in the opposite sense - that is when interpreters disclosed information with them - often allowed to avert dangers and threats and to protect the international troops.

The last aspect considered in this analysis is the complex Bosnian/Croatian/Montenegrin/Serbian (**BCMS**) **language question**, and more specifically if and how it affected the work of interpreters - as the “ethnic conflict in the former Yugoslavia was one that was anchored in language” (Fidahić, 2018: 16) - an issue that was never considered in previous works on the topic.

Although, officially, in the war years (1991-1995), international peacekeeping missions continued to consider and teach the language(s) spoken in the former Yugoslavia as one, our investigation showed that, unofficially, in UNPROFOR HQs, Croatian and Serbian versions of the most important documents were prepared, and different interpreters were assigned for the two languages at the higher level.

On the ground, on the contrary, such policies were rarely implemented mainly for logistical reasons, and interpreters were left to adopt ad-hoc measures to navigate the difficult language situation, prompted not by a lack of mutual understanding - after all until 1991 people from the

different warring factions had lived together and communicated successfully - but by the importance that language acquired in the definition of the new nation-states.

Data shows that unlike translators, who could use the different alphabets and proofread texts to make them linguistically and ethnically acceptable, interpreters juggled their renditions in a true linguistic 'minefield' and that they tended to adapt their language choices and the linguonym to the public, or adopted apologizing strategies when aware that their accent or language would not be appropriate.

Examples of 'language tailoring' also emerged from the analyzed interpreted exchanges, primarily on a terminological level, with interpreters self-correcting to use the nationally appropriate word or picking, when available, non-ethnically marked terms. This aspect, we believe, is very interesting because it adds to the complexity of the job carried out by interpreters who were thus performed both an inter-language and an intra-language translation work.

Last but not least, the originality of this work also lies in its ability to let topics not previously foreseen for investigation emerge from the data. One of these is the aspect of **trauma** for interpreters in conflict zones, which still features prominently in their accounts after 30 years, despite it having been rarely approached in the literature. Interpreters interviewed seem to have been exposed to traumatization even more than military officers for factors that we identified as context-related, job-related, and content-related. In this, a key role was surely played by their being simultaneously the recipients of traumatic content, their presence on the front lines but also by their belonging to the local population, sometimes having lived through the same traumatizing experiences that they interpreted, like gender violence and genocide. This is why interpreters interviewed underlined the importance of a 'trauma curriculum' and psychological support in conflict zones, to develop 'vicarious post-traumatic growth' or 'compassion satisfaction', and to function as professionals and individuals.

Finally, if the bulk of results of this research project focusses on locally recruited civilian interpreters working on the ground for peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, we are particularly proud to have also considered the conference interpreting situation during the war in **Chapter 9**.

The merit of this chapter, we believe, is that of reconstructing the birth and development of interpreting in the former Yugoslavia, an aspect that had never been tackled in the literature on the history of interpreting, unlike what has been done for other countries like Hungary, Poland, Romania, or Japan (Horváth, Pelea & Tryuk, 2017).

Our historical reconstruction, using first-hand and second-hand accounts, contradicts the available literature and shows that the Yugoslav conference interpreting market was a structured one, which featured the same language combinations, standards of equipment, and working conditions of other European countries, as the professional associations referred to AIIC standards and codes of conduct (Janković, 1993: 10). In the absence of interpreting agencies and schools, professional associations played a very active role to guarantee consistent rates and in providing a training system.

Our research nevertheless shows that many Yugoslav interpreters had completed training abroad, and some of them benefited from the training experiences offered by Belgrade's

Foreign Language Institute from 1960 until 1967, and by the Federal Centre for Management Training in Zagreb, in collaboration with the International Labor Organization (ILO).

One of the key features of the Yugoslav conference interpreting market was that interpreters from different republics worked together to meet the interpreting demand with most of them being based in Zagreb and Belgrade.

Unfortunately, in the years that led up to the wars, the buildup of nationalist discourse increasingly strained relationships among associations of interpreters, and when hostility turned into outright war, cooperation among the professional associations in the new Republics emerging from SFRY and teams of interpreters ceased, because delegates claimed that they only trusted interpreters of their own ethnicity and because, meanwhile, Serbo-Croatian had split into national languages. Interpreting markets then became fully national, *de facto* hindering the capacity to meet the booming demand for interpreting services, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which had heavily relied on Belgrade interpreters before the war.

To account for the work that interpreters did behind the scenes, in the many conferences and peace talks from 1991 until the Dayton agreement, we tried to present here the “nano-stories”, or “nano-biographies” (Lemercier & Zalc, 2008: 21-22, as quoted by Baigorri Jalón, 2019: 164), of eight conference interpreters, from all the Republics, who worked during the war. Our aim was not to recreate their entire bibliographies but to provide information on some of the silent protagonists of history and of a war that, like never before, was also fought on the language field.

10.2 Recommendations

As recent conflicts have shown, the recruitment and deployment of interpreters in conflict zones is still a complicated issue. We believe, nevertheless, that the lessons learned in the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1990s might help identify best practices and problems that can transcend the case study and improve interpretation services in the future.

This is why we have tried to extract from our analysis of data a series of recommendations that might help the armed forces better manage and plan locally recruited civilian interpreters, although keeping in mind that these should be adapted to the political, cultural and linguistic situation on the ground.

The invasion of Ukraine has pointed out how wars, unfortunately, keep being a constant in human history and how it is the academic and interpreting community’s task to keep hoping for peace while preparing to deal with language issues in conflict areas in the best possible way.

10.2.1 Legal status and protection

Recent experience has once again demonstrated that before civilians may be employed to accompany peace-support troops, their legal status should be properly clarified in all operational documents, with the help of experts and the large body of legal substantive instruments of International Humanitarian Law (IHL). Interpreters should be defined as

noncombatants, pursuant to customary law and the jurisprudence of international and several national courts or as civilians and they should, as such, enjoy special protection.

This protection should be in line with the appropriate Operating Procedures and Rules of Engagement (ROE) should be guaranteed, on the ground, by interpreters' commanders who will also be responsible for the mitigation of risks during operational duties. Measures to mitigate risks for interpreters include the provision of helmets, flak jackets, gas masks and uniforms, including sizes that are suitable for women. If uniforms are not available (like in the case of military observers) interpreters should be provided with at least work attire that does not identify them as interpreters, like for example dressing in white like ECMM monitors.

Interpreters' uniforms should be made less recognizable as possible, also providing interpreters with fake name straps. If the conditions on the ground are especially risky, it might be necessary for interpreters to cover their faces with masks and or sunglasses, and to adopt fake names to protect their identity.

It is suggested not to take pictures and videos of interpreters and not to disclose sensitive information in front of interpreters as they might be under pressure to divulge information learned on the job: in this respect, it is easier if interpreters do not have access to restricted areas, like operational rooms, and, if they are provided with physically separated facilities (e.g., the interpreters' office) within the facility or HQ. Sensitive strategic or intelligence information should be better trusted to linguists from TCCs and military linguists, for the local interpreters' safety.

In countries where interpreters become the insurgents' favorite target, like it happened in Iraq and Afghanistan, plans should also be in place to accommodate them inside the military base/compound or to escort them to and from work if living in the military base is not feasible for interpreters or culturally appropriate. Identification cards are a protection measure, and they should always be provided to interpreters, although they should also correspond to an actual willingness to rescue interpreters if kidnapped or arrested.

Finally, interpreters should be the object of security checks straight away, so that they possess all the relevant documents should evacuation or visa request procedures be necessary. To this respect having precise and correct records of interpreters, with their names spelled correctly, facilitates evacuation and visa granting procedures. Employers should have plans in place to re-employ interpreters in other facilities when bases close down to guarantee them social and economic stability and security and to evacuate interpreters when circumstances make their work no longer feasible, together with their close family members. Thomas (2003b) suggests that interpreters could be provided the same kind of protection offered to people in witness protection programs.

10.2.2 Recruitment

The recruitment of local linguists poses several challenges that vary depending, for example, on the area of operations, the fighting but also the literacy and education levels in the country. Planning should consider that finding qualified interpreters might be hard and different peacekeeping contingents might get into a competition for the highest bidder to secure interpreters, as witnessed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq and Afghanistan. While interpreters'

salaries should be appropriate for their work and the risks it entails, it is advisable to avoid such competition, as high salaries are often counterproductive, *voire* dangerous: on the one side they deprive the country of the doctors and engineers it needs for reconstruction and attract all sort of candidate, even unqualified ones, to the job. On the other, they turn interpreters into “targets” of kidnapping, extortion, and illegal taxation, while contributing to them being seen as traitors profiting from the wars that hit their country, thus posing security risks for them. Ideally, consistent wages should be adopted for local interpreters across different agencies and contingents and inter-agency competition provisions should also be in place.

As Ian Jones and linguist Louise Askew have shown, a centralized recruitment model, like the one adopted by NATO in Bosnia and Herzegovina after 1998, is the one that is most successful in selecting better-skilled interpreters and in saving time and resources. On the contrary, the use of subcontracting agents that has become the rule with American forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq and Afghanistan has been proven to be the reason behind the deterioration of quality of interpreting and of interpreters’ working conditions.

If planning is essential for good recruitment, interpreters’ duties, tasks and required skills should be defined beforehand and should be used as guidelines for testing and interviews. Ideally, candidates should be tested for their oral, written and interpreting skills including fluency, pronunciation, public speaking, note-taking, memorization and interpersonal skills. These skills are better tested in interviews, maybe using imagined, mediated situations from and into the working languages of the mission (like the role-plays traditionally used to evaluate students in interpreting schools), supervised by an interpreter or at least by someone speaking the two languages at play. The testing should be provided in a format that can also be easily carried out remotely and graded anonymously and that can be implemented even in faraway outposts, to avoid hiring interpreters without testing and payment for their services, as it happened in the first months for Nuhanović and Suljagić in Srebrenica. If success rates at testing are very low, single battalions or contingents can introduce a preliminary test, as the commander of the Visoko battalion did in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1993, testing his interpreters in-house before sending them to take the standardized UNPROFOR test at the regional HQ.

Also, it should be kept in mind that, at hiring, interpreters come under a lot of pressure from belligerent parties and that they have always been seen as a crucial way to obtain information. This is why provisions should be in place to quickly vet candidates beforehand and to find a balance between the interpreter’s skills and security profile.

10.2.3 Employment

If recruitment works best when centralized, the same is true for employment: interpreters’ contractual issues, pay and rights should be managed centrally according to a framework contract. Following UNPROFOR’s practice in the former Yugoslav countries after 1994, candidates can be assigned a mark from 1 to 5, which could also be used to determine their paygrade and responsibilities. Once interpreters’ positions have been defined, these should foresee career advancements, and most importantly contractual rights like healthcare and sick and maternity leave. The experience of UNPROFOR and of Afghan and Iraqi interpreters has

taught us that interpreters should be contractually entitled to at least emergency healthcare in military hospitals - especially in countries where healthcare systems are non-existent or struggling – and that provisions should be made in case of life-long injuries. Insurance and a clear policy of compensation in case of death or permanent physical harm should also be part of the labor contracts. Likewise, provisions should be in place, either with local governments or private funds for the interpreters’ pension schemes, because sometimes interpreters end up working for foreign military forces for almost 20 years and cannot retire due to lack of pension allowance or have troubles re-entering the local job market at an advanced age.

Hired interpreters should then be managed by a central structure and have a supervisor on-site or at the HQ - either a military officer with some language experience or an interpreter - whom they can contact to discuss day-to-day management or problems. The case of Vera Varga, at the Croatian ECMM mission, has been mentioned as ‘good practice’ on several occasions, as she was able to defend interpreters’ rights better organize their work and provide a reference point for any issue that might have risen. On this point, the peer debriefing session when returning from the field appears as ‘good practice’ to counteract the traumatic consequences of war. It is also advisable to define different levels of responsibility within the interpreters’ hierarchy (ex. head interpreter, interpreter, assistant interpreter) to establish a chain of command among them to make management and decision-making easier.

Depending on the mission and the importance of confidentiality, discrete checks should be in place to make sure that interpreters do not divulge sensitive information, although keeping in mind that interpreters can be pressured by local authorities or warlords for information. Controls on interpreters should be discreet as suspicion from their employers emerges as one of the factors that contributed to interpreters’ feeling of isolation. This is why it is better not to discuss sensitive information with or in front of interpreters, but briefings should be provided to help them better prepare for the job, both psychologically and terminologically.

It is paramount, for the purpose of collaboration, that interpreters feel like valued members of the team and that they are included in socialization occasions with the rest of the military, like sharing meals. Derogatory references to interpreters in the form of nicknames (such as “terps” and “yellow cards”) and/or associations with “gear” and “stuff” should be strongly discouraged. It should be kept in mind that, for their work with foreign military institutions, interpreters might already feel isolated, or even threatened by their own community and that they should be provided at least during working hours a calm and collaborative working environment. A clear list of tasks expected of interpreters should be available for every position, but it should, nevertheless, be avoided to ask interpreters to perform tasks that go beyond their job description (like buying food or cooking for example).

As per gender, military representatives interviewed pointed out that both sexes can equally perform in the job, with female interpreters being more suited to have speakers “open up” and to avoid suspicion, and male interpreters being a better fit for outside of base missions. It is nevertheless important to have specific policies in place against gender discriminatory behaviors and harassment, including sexual harassment, as well as fraternization provisions.

Ethnicity and religion, and sometimes language, often play a key role in the theater of

operations, especially in ethno-religious conflicts. Measures should always be taken to make sure that the interpreter from the right ethnic group/language is picked for the task, and that, if this is not possible, interpreters might feel uncomfortable or even threatened. Interpreters are embedded in the local conflict and might reflect fundamentalist views or be subjected to possible radicalization or might simply wish to voice “their side of the story”. In either case, military officers should keep in mind to avoid asking for cultural explanations beyond actual translation or interpreting. Nevertheless, since international personnel often do not have previous education on the local languages, and cultural and political struggles, interpreters can be a valuable source of information, but it should always be considered that personal anecdotes, experiences and/or convictions may be reflected and/or manifested. On this point, research has shown that it is impossible to expect of interpreters in conflict zones, especially locally hired ones, the same neutrality traditionally part of the interpreters’ code of ethics, and that while it is perfectly normal not to be neutral they should be encouraged to act professionally.

10.2.4 Training

As emerged from the results of our research, training is essential for interpreters, as they are often locally hired civilians with no interpreting experience, but also for military personnel.

Interpreters could benefit, we believe, from both military and interpreting training, which should be provided centrally, at recruitment, or take the form of short modules to be consulted and consumed autonomously, considering factors such as the lack of time, Internet resources, secured connections, interpreters’ concentration, and actual fighting (Moser-Mercer, 2014). Interpreters should first and foremost be given some basic interpreting training, focusing on memorization exercises and techniques, note-taking and ethical issues¹⁵³, using fictional scenarios like structured and unstructured role-plays and case studies.

They could also benefit from training in medical and military terminology and jargon while being given, as much as possible, the right tools to perform their job (dictionaries, computers, Internet access, specialized glossaries, and/or parallel texts to read and extract terminology, asynchronous training materials such as short videos, etc.).

According to peacekeepers interviewed, interpreters should also undergo some sort of “military training”, meant as basic military practice and behavior to better respond to risk situations, incoming fire, and to learn how to remain calm in the face of violence (Albaaka, 2020: 230). Among skills required of interpreters, military interviewees have mentioned the ones usually taught to journalists following the armed forces in the theatre of operations like, for example, how to take cover, wear a protective mask, effectively embark and disembark from an armored vehicle. Training should also include basic first-aid training, driving military vehicles and use of radio (Thomas, 2003, 41). Soldiers underline the importance of military training as an untrained, frightened civilian in certain situations is a burden to take care of that can endanger an entire unit. Finally, interpreters (and soldiers for that matter), would profit from stress

¹⁵³ Where the approach to interpreters’ ethical tenants is, as we have underlined in § 5.2.7 and 8.2, more teleological than prescriptive and promotes reflection on the consequences of interpreters’ choices rather than imposing rules difficult to apply in this very peculiar interpreting setting.

management and trauma training, given the highly traumatic nature of their job (Bernardi 2022; Thomas 2003).

A final point on the training of service users, which has long been proved useful to improve mediated communication in healthcare or court interpreting settings: troops should be trained on how mediated communication works, its advantages and disadvantages and on how to best communicate with interpreters - e.g., avoid unnecessary intra-textual references, acronyms, inside jokes, and figurative language - while greater uniformity in the use of acronyms and better English skills would make, in general, interpreters' work easier.

Despite the difficulties faced in this project with the Covid-19 pandemic, barriers to archive access and issues connected to the sensitivity of the topic at hand, we believe we managed to contribute to research in ICZ, by providing a more detailed picture of the practice, role and training of interpreters in the wars in the former Yugoslavia.

We also hope to have finally given back voice to this often-invisible category of young men and women, who bravely risked their lives to contribute to peace, not by holding a gun, but by helping people communicate and they would deserve some kind of at least, symbolical, recognition.

Nevertheless, few areas remain unexplored, especially when it comes to the NATO IFOR and SFOR years, and issues like confidentiality and trauma, which surely deserve more investigation when and if archives are declassified and available for consultation. Another aspect that could provide interesting for researchers is the development of court interpreting in the SFRY.

The use of videos portraying real-life interpreter-mediated interactions in war, which have been used as historical documents for the first time in this type of research, is surely a domain to be further explored as they could be analyzed using methods more typical of interpreting research, like conversation analysis (CA) or Discourse Analysis (DA), to better investigate rules, structures, meaning, power relations as well as non-verbal aspects of communication such as tone and gestures.

Annex A – List of interviewees

A.1 List of military officers interviewed

Code	Rank	Nationality	Missions in HR/BiH	Status	Type	Length	Language
M01	N/A	Canadian	UNPROFOR (UNMO)	Retired	Written	N/A	English
M03	Captain	Portugal	UNPROFOR (UNMO)/SFOR	Discharged	Oral	1h	English
M04	N/A	Canada	UNPROFOR (UNMO)	Retired	Written + oral	1h24m	English
M05	Captain	Portugal	UNPROFOR (UNMO)/IFOR	Active	Written + oral	1h42m	English
M06	Major	Sweden	UNPROFOR/IFOR/EUFOR	Retired	Written + oral	20m	English
M07	Major	Malaysia	UNPROFOR (UNMO)	Retired	Written	N/A	English
M08	Major	Ghana	UNMOP	Retired	Oral	33m	English
M09	N/A	United Kingdom	UNPROFOR/IFOR/SFOR	Active	Written	N/A	English
M10	Major	Italian	IFOR/SFOR	Retired	Oral	58m	Italian
M11	Captain	Ghana	UNPROFOR	Active	Written + oral	29m	English
M12	Lieutenant	Ghana	UNPROFOR	Retired	Written	N/A	English
M13	Colonel	Ireland	ECMM	Retired	Oral	58m	English
M14	N/A	Italian	SFOR	Active	Oral	47m	Italian
M15	N/A	Morocco	IFOR/SFOR	Retired	Oral	1h17m	French

A.2 List of military language trainers interviewed

Code	Place of work	Years of work	Current profession	Type	Length	Language
T01	SLEE, Perugia - Italy	2015-today	SLEE trainer	Oral	1h10	Italian
T02	SLEE, Perugia - Italy	1994-today	SLEE trainer	Oral	33m	Italian

A.3 List of interpreters interviewed

Code	Previous interpreting experience	Place of work	Missions in HR/BiH	Years of work	Current profession	Type	Length	Language
I01	No	BiH	UNPROFOR	1993-N/A	Other	Oral	56	English/Bosnian
I02	No	HR	ECMM	1992-1995	Other	Oral + notes	1h16m	English/Croatian
I03	No	HR/BiH	Media	1992-1995	Other	Oral	48m	English
I04	No	BiH	UNPROFOR	1992-N/A	Interpreter	Oral	49m	English
I05	No	HR/BiH	UN/OSCE/national foreign army	1996-1999	Interpreter	Oral	46m	English
I06	No (Student)	HR	UNPROFOR	1992-1995	Interpreter	Oral	1h08m	English
I07	No	HR	ECMM	1992-1993	Other	Oral	35m	English
I08	No (Student)	BiH	UNHCR	1993-1994	Interpreter	Oral	48m	English
I09	No (Student)	BiH	UNPROFOR/UNHCR	1992-2006	Other	Written	N/A	English
I10	No	BiH	National foreign army	1997- N/A	Interpreter	Oral	1h24	English
I11	Limited	BiH	ECMM/UNPROFOR	1992-1993	Other	Written	N/A	English
I12	No	BiH	EUPM	1997-2003	Other	Written	N/A	English
I13	No	SRB	Other	Other	Interpreter retired	Written	N/A	Serbian

Legend (for acronyms see Annex E):

- N/A = information was not available or withheld to avoid subject identification.
- HR= Croatia
- BiH = Bosnia Herzegovina.
- Limited = previous limited working experience as interpreter without proper training.
- Student = student enrolled in high school or university interpreting and/or translation studies.
- Other = interviewee not involved in interpreting during the wars.

* When numbers are not progressive in the list of interviewees it means that the missing interviewee retired from the research project mid-way or failed to provide necessary authorizations.

Annex B – List of interview questions

B.1 Questions to military representatives

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

- 1) Could you please tell me about your job in the military.
- 2) Let's now move to the time of the conflict - from 1992 to about 2000 – which led to the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia. What can you tell me about when you were deployed to the Balkans?
- 3) How did you communicate, if you needed to communicate at all, with the local population or military contingents from the other countries?

PART 2: THE JOB

- 4) Tell me about your interpreters?
- 5) When and where did they work with the military?
- 6) Do you know how the interpreters were recruited?
- 7) Were the interpreters trained?
- 8) What kind of relationship did you and your fellow soldiers have with the interpreters?
- 9) Were the interpreters paid? If yes, by whom and how?
- 10) Now, could you describe a typical day with an interpreter? Where would you look for an interpreter if you needed one?
- 11) Did you ever feel that there was a difference when using a male or a female interpreter?
- 12) Did you ever feel that your interpreter's life was at risk?
- 13) How much did the interpreter's ethnicity (Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian) determine their assignment?
- 14) Did you receive instructions on how to effectively work with an interpreter?
- 15) Did you have any problems in communicating through an interpreter?

PART 3: INTERPRETING PRACTICE

- 16) What kind of translation did you expect from your interpreter?
- 17) Besides translating, did the interpreter perform other tasks?
- 18) What kind of instructions or information was given to the interpreter before the interpreting assignment?

PART 4: ETHICAL ISSUES

- 19) In non-war-related settings, professional interpreters are expected to be neutral. Do you think that your interpreters behaved in a neutral way?
- 20) If they didn't, please describe how they were not neutral.
- 21) Were you able to verify the quality of translations?
- 22) How did you make sure that interpreters preserved confidentiality about what they learned on the job?

PART 5: FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

- 23) For you, what is a good interpreter in this kind of setting?
- 24) In your opinion, what did you learn from this experience on how to use interpreters in conflict zones?
- 25) Is there anything else you'd like to add that we didn't mention?

B.2 Questions to military language trainers

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

- 1) Could you please tell me about you and job as a military language trainer.
- 2) Could you please tell me, now, about your job at the Scuola di Lingue Estere dell'Esercito (SLEE)?

PART 2: THE COURSE

- 3) When was the teaching of BCS at SLEE first considered?
- 4) How was the BCS course at SLEE organized?
- 5) What kind of military personnel did you train?
- 6) How were the training objectives of the course defined?
- 7) How was the achievement of the training objectives assessed?
- 8) What kind of materials did you use?
- 9) Was Serbo-Croatian taught as one language, or was there a focus on the regional variants that later became languages?
- 10) What were, in your opinion, the main difficulties that learners faced?

PART 3: INTERPRETING TRAINING

- 11) Did you only offer language training or also interpreting training?
- 12) If yes, what was the goal of interpreting training and what did it look like?
- 13) For whom? (how trainees were selected)
- 14) How did you assess acquired interpreting skills?

PART 4: FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

- 15) Did you get any feedback from language experts and/or interpreters during or after the mission?
- 16) Was the feedback useful to update training?
- 17) In your opinion what improvements could be made considering your experience, in the training of military language experts/interpreters?
- 18) Is there by anything you would like to add that we have not talked about??

B.3 Questions to interpreters

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

- 1) How and why did you start working for international/armed forces?
- 2) Had you ever worked as a translator/interpreter?

PARTE 2: THE JOB

- 3) How did the interpreting service work?
- 4) Did you receive any training or instructions?
- 5) What kind of relationship did local interpreters have with the military?
- 6) What was the relationship with your local community after you took the job?
- 7) Did your job entail risks?
- 8) Was the choice of the interpreter for a specific meeting determined by the interpreter's and the participants' ethnicity?
- 9) Were the interpreters paid? If yes by whom and how?
- 10) Could you briefly describe a typical day as an interpreter?
- 11) How long did you work as an interpreter for international/armed forces?

PART 3: INTERPRETING PRACTICE

- 12) What kind of translation did they expect from you, as an interpreter?
- 13) Besides interpreting, did the interpreter perform other tasks?
- 14) Did you have any information on the interpreting assignment?

PART 4: ETHICAL ISSUES

- 15) In non-war-related settings, professional interpreters are expected to be neutral. Do you think that the principle of neutrality can be applied to interpreting in conflict zones?
- 16) Did someone check the quality of your translation?
- 17) Did you have to keep what you learned during your job secret?
- 18) Did you ever censor or downplay the meaning of what you translated? If yes, why?

PART 5: FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

- 19) For you, what is a good interpreter in this kind of setting?
- 20) In your opinion, what can be learnt from this experience on how to use interpreters in conflict zones?
- 21) Is there anything else you'd like to add that we didn't mention?

Annex C – List of sources

C.1 Memoirs, academic articles and publications:

Title	Type	Author	Status	Year
<i>Trusted mole: a soldier's journey into Bosnia's heart of darkness</i>	Memoir	Miloš Stanković	Military interpreter	2001
<i>Last refuge: a true story of war, survival and life under siege in Srebrenica</i>	Memoir	Hasan Nuhanović	Civilian interpreter	2019
<i>Cartolina dalla fossa: diario di Srebrenica</i>	Memoir	Emir Suljagić	Civilian interpreter	2010
“Interview with Greiss lecturer Mirijana Nikolić”	Article/interview with interpreter	Pavetić-Dickey, Janja	Civilian interpreter	2012
<i>A cry from the grave</i>	Documentary/interview with interpreter	Leslie Woodhead	Civilian interpreter	2000
“Zrinka Stahuljak: formidable passeuse”	Article/interview with interpreter	Rigondet, Juliette	Civilian interpreter	2020
<i>Siesta Fiesta Orgasmo Riposo</i>	Memoir	Veselin Gatalo	Civilian interpreter	2004
“COMSFOR's interpreter”	Article	Leila Dizdarevic	Civilian interpreter	2002
“UN Military Observer Missions: a Babylonian Language Confusion”	Article	Roy Thomas	Military	1997
“Observing Air Power at Work in Sector Sarajevo, 1993– 1994”	Article	Roy Thomas	Military	2016
“U.N. Military Observer Interpreters in Sarajevo”	Article	Roy Thomas	Military	1995
“United Nations Military Observer Interpreting in a Community Setting”	Article	Roy Thomas	Military	1997
“Battle Zone Interpreters”	Article	Roy Thomas	Military	2004
“Languages on the front line”	Article	Roy Thomas	Military	2003
“The Use of Language Assistants in UN peace missions – benefits and risks”	Article	De Souza, Israel Alvaes Junior	Military	N/A
<i>Empty Casing: A Soldier's Memoir of Sarajevo under Siege</i>	Memoir	Doucette, Fred & Dallaire, Romeo	Military	2009
<i>Bosnia 95: Peacekeeping in a War zone</i>	Memoir	Gonçalves, Paulo	Military	2020
<i>A guerra na antiga Jugoslávia vivida na primeira pessoa: testemunhos de militares portugueses ao serviço das Nações Unidas</i>	Collection of memoirs	Branco, Carlos; Santos, Henrique, & Saraiva, Luís Eduardo	Military	2018
<i>At war without weapons: a peacekeeper in the Bosnian conflict</i>	Memoir	Husum, S.B.	Military	1998
<i>Witness to war crimes: the memoirs of a peacekeeper in Bosnia</i>	Memoir	Doyle, Colm	Military	2018
<i>Fighting for peace: lessons from Bosnia</i>	Memoir	Rose, Michael	Military	1999
<i>Missione Sarajevo: dalla distruzione alla ricostruzione: cronologia dei rapporti giornalieri dello Stato Maggiore della Br. Folgore e dei comandanti di reparto, nell'intervento di Peacekeeping e Nation Building in Bosnia</i>	Collection of army dispatches	Baschiera Simone	Military	2013
“Diplomatske posjete Alije Izetbegovića Sjedinjenim Američkim Državama 1991-1995”	Academic article	Karčić Hamza	Academic	2013
Interpretation in the Former Yugoslavia	Academic article	Janković Mirka	Academic	1993
<i>Bilten – Hrvatsko Društvo Konferencijskih Prevoditelja</i>	Association journal	HDKP	Civilian interpreters	2012 2013 2014

<i>Bilten – Hrvatsko Društvo Konferencijskih Prevoditelja</i> <i>Bilten – Hrvatsko Društvo Konferencijskih Prevoditelja</i>				
<i>Titov prevodilac</i>	Memoir	Ivan Ivanji	Civilian interpreter	2014
<i>Prevođenje i tajne službe</i>	Lecture	Ivan Ivanji	Civilian interpreter	2002
“О ПРЕВОДИОЦИМА И ТУМАЧИМА” [O prevodiocima i tumačima]	Academic article	Ivo Andrić	N/A	1951
“Portreti Prevodioca: Nikola-Kolja Čajkanović”	Journal article	Jovanović Zoran	Civilian interpreter	2006
“Prevodilački biseri”	Journal article	Čajkanović Nikola-Kolja	Civilian interpreter	2006
<i>O prevodilaštvu i prevodiocima</i>	Memoir	Pavlović Vladimir	Civilian interpreter	1995
<i>Savremeni književni prevodioci Jugoslavije</i>	Directory of translators and interpreters	Jovanović Slobodan (Eds.)	Civilian interpreters	1970
“Savez prevodilaca Jugoslavije”	Journal article	Djurić & Novak	Civilian interpreters	1963
<i>Govor prigodom 50. obljetnice Društva znanstvenih i tehničkih prevoditelja</i>	Lecture	Ašperger Ana	Civilian interpreters	2007
<i>Razgovor sa kćerkom Alije Izetbegovića: Sabina Berberović o otmici njenog oca i događajima 2. maja</i>	Interview	Tvsa.ba	Civilian interpreter	2022
“Gendering the 1991-95 Bosnian Peace Process: Current Research and Future Directions”	Academic article	McLeod Laura	Civilian interpreter	2016
<i>CV Amira Kapetanović</i>	Curriculum vitae	Kapetanović	Civilian interpreter	N/A
<i>Come le rane nell'acqua bollente</i>	Memoir	Dunja Badnjević-Orazi	Civilian interpreter	2019

C.2 Newspaper articles (NWS):

Code	Title	Type	Newspaper	Date	Source
NWS01	“U Goraždu uhapšen prevodilac”	Newspaper article	<i>Oslobođenje</i>	21/11/1995	Newspapers online archives
NWS02	“Prevodilac Posvandžić još u pritvoru”	Newspaper article	<i>Oslobođenje</i>	22/11/1995	Newspapers online archives
NWS03	“Sono vivi gli osservatori europei. Un video alla tv di Pale: erano con noi”	Newspaper article	La Stampa	01/09/1993	Newspapers online archives
NWS04	“Un commander set to leave Bosnia after a year of triumph and disaster”	Newspaper article	<i>The New York Times</i>	22/01/1995	Newspapers online archives
NWS05	“Bosnian Serbs Warn NATO not to impede advance”	Newspaper article	<i>The New York Times</i>	1991-1995	Newspapers online archives
NWS06	“Četnici uhapsili plavce”	Newspaper article	<i>Oslobođenje</i>	28/10/1994	Newspapers online archives
NWS09	“Do Pakla i natrag”	Newspaper article	Slobodna Dalmacija	26/07/1992	Newspapers online archives

NWS11	“Crveni Križ”	Newspaper job vacancy announcement	Slobodna Dalmacija	26/08/1992	Newspapers online archives
NWS12	“Nambiarov prevoditelj”	Newspaper article	Slobodna Dalmacija	03/06/1992	Newspapers online archives
NWS13	“Da li su SFOR i NATO dužni BiH radnicima”	Newspaper article	<i>BNPortal</i>	25/03/2016	Newspapers online archives
NWS14	“Krtica od povjerenja”	Newspaper article	<i>Oslobođenje</i>	02/03/1995	Newspapers paper archives
NWS15	“En réaction aux raids aériens de l'OTAN Les Serbes de Bosnie recourent à l'intimidation contre les ‘casques bleus’”	Newspaper article	<i>Le Monde</i>	14/04/1994	Newspapers online archives
NWS19	“Darko Močibob: glas koji je saopštio mir u BiH”	Newspaper article	<i>Slobodna Europa</i>	14/12/2012	Newspapers online archives
NWS21	“When my father was taken captive in Sarajevo”	Newspaper article	<i>BBC</i>	02/05/2012	Newspapers online archives
NWS22	“Милошевић је крао време Клинтону и Кларку [Milošević je krao vreme Klintonu i Klarku]”	Newspaper article	<i>Politika</i>	28/03/2009	Newspapers online archives
NWS23	“Sa patrijarsima i striptizetama”	Newspaper article	<i>Nin</i>	23/05/2022	Newspapers online archives
NWS24	“Umro jedan od naših najuglednijih prevoditelja Janko “Paravić preveo je brojne klasike, a bio je i prevoditelj trojice hrvatskih predsjednika”	Newspaper article	<i>Jutarnji List</i>	29/08/2017	Newspapers online archives
NWS25	“Umro anglist prof. Vladimir Ivir”	Newspaper article	<i>Metroportal.hr</i>	22/02/2011	Newspapers online archives
NWS26	“Poslovni uspjesi male porodice Izetbegović: Sta bi tek postigli da ih ima više?”	Newspaper article	<i>Žurnal</i>	11/09/2020	Newspapers online archives
NWS27	“Preminuo Borislav Milošević (1934-2013)”	Newspaper article	<i>Vreme</i>	29/01/2013	Newspapers online archives
NWS28	“Feast fit for Tito, and Milosevic, in Moscow”	Newspaper article	<i>Nbc news</i>	20/01/2004	Newspapers online archives
NWS29	“Borislav Milošević sahranjen u Crnoj Gori”	Newspaper article	<i>Kurir.rs</i>	01/02/2013	Newspapers online archives

C.3 Archival documents

C.3.1. Correspondence and private archives (COR):

Code	Name	Type	Mission	Date	Source
COR01	Letter of commendation for interpreter	Military document	UNPROFOR	N/A	Private archive

COR02	Request for commendation for interpreter	Military document	UNPROFOR	30/07/1993	Private archive
COR03	Information on University Training in Interpretation of Serbian/English	Military officer's note to colleagues	UNPROFOR	22/09/1994	Private archive
COR04	Information on language assistants' employment grades	Military correspondence	UNPROFOR	16/09/1994	Private archive
COR05	UNMO language assistant requirements	Military correspondence	UNPROFOR	14/05/1994	Private archive
COR06	Standards for the recruitment and grading of language assistants – attachment to COR04	Military document	UNPROFOR	16/09/1994	Private archive
COR07	Language assistants' contract – attachment to COR04	Military document	UNPROFOR	N/A	Private archive
COR08	Interpreter survey	Military correspondence	UNPROFOR	28/12/1994	Private archive
COR09	Request for information on language assistants	Military correspondence	UNPROFOR	N/A	Private archive
COR10	Personal communication between researcher and military officer	Military correspondence	UNPROFOR	N/A	N/A
COR11	Personal communication between researcher and military officer	Military correspondence	UNPROFOR	15/06/2020	N/A

C.3.2 Documents from official archives (UNAR, DOC, ICTY):

Code	Name	Type	Mission	Date	Source
UNAR 01	S-1086-0042-02-00002	Conference minutes	N/A	18/02/1994	United Nations online archives
UNAR 02	S-1096-0346—02-00041	Report	UNPROFOR	June 1997	United Nations online archives
UNAR 03	S-1086-0105-02-00001	Conference minutes	N/A	20/02/1992	United Nations online archives
UNAR 04	1086-0124-04-00002	Conference minutes	N/A	30/09/93 – 10/05/93	United Nations online archives
UNAR 05	1086-0117-02-00002	Report	UNPROFOR	15/03/1993	United Nations online archives
UNAR 06	1086-0117-01-00002	Cable	UNPROFOR	18/03/1993	United Nations online archives
UNAR 07	S-1086-0104-05-00002	Conference minutes	N/A	N/A	United Nations online archives
UNAR 08	S-1086-0102-11-00001	Conference minutes	N/A	11/11/1992	United Nations online archives
UNAR 09	S-1086-0089-02-00002	Cable	N/A	30/07/92	United Nations online archives
UNAR 10	S-1086-0042-01-00001	Conference minutes	N/A	22/03/1994	United Nations online archives
UNAR 11	S-1063-0013-0006-00001	Report	UNPROFOR	05/04/1995	United Nations online archives
UNAR12	S-1063-0010-0003-00001	Report	UNPROFOR	22/03/1995	United Nations online archives

DOC01	Rješenje o imenovanju Vere Varga predstojnicom Ureda za europske integracije	Croatian law	N/A	28/04/1998	Croatian Official Gazette online
DOC02	Odluka o odlikovanju Spomenicom Domovinskog rata 1452	Croatian law	ECMM	23/07/2002	Croatian Official Gazette online
DOC03	Zakon o hrvatskim braniteljima iz Domovinskog rata i članovima njihovih obitelji” 121/17; 98/19/84/21	Croatian law	N/A	31/07/2021	Croatian Official Gazette online
DOC04	Zakon o pravima branilaca i članova njihovih porodica” 33/04,72/07,9/10	BiH law	N/A	26/06/2004	BiH Official Gazette
ICTY01	020530FE 01 – ICTY01	Trial proceedings IT-98-29-T Galić	N/A	30/05/2002	ICTY online archives
ICTY02	020531FE 02 – ICTY02	Trial proceedings IT-98-29-T Galić	N/A	31/05/2002	ICTY online archives
ICTY03	020603FE – ICTY03	Trial proceedings IT-98-29-T Galić	N/A	31/05/2002	ICTY online archives
ICTY04	031112ED – ICTY04	Trial proceedings N/A	N/A	12/11/2003	ICTY online archives
ICTY05	121116ED – ICTY05	Trial Proceedings IT-09-92-T Mladić	N/A	16/11/2012	ICTY online archives
ICTY06	980619IT – ICTY07	Trial Proceedings IT-95-14/1, Aleksovski	N/A	19/06/1998	ICTY online archives
ICTY07	140612ED – ICTY08	Trial Proceedings IT-09-92-T Mladić	N/A	12/06/2014	ICTY online archives
ICTY08	140613ED – ICTY09	Trial Proceedings IT-09-92-T Mladić	N/A	13/06/2014	ICTY online archives
ICTY09	MOT9830R0000438422-ICTY10	Trial Proceedings IT-09-92-T Mladić	N/A	05/05/2014	ICTY online archives

C.3.3 Language-related material (LM):

Code	Name	Type	Issuer	Year	Source
LM01	<i>Manuale del militare Kosovo</i>	Language manual	Italian army	2000	Private archives

LM02	Iforova karta za izreze	Glossary	IFOR	1996	Private archive
LM03	<i>Serbo-Croatian for peace support</i>	Language manual/glossary	Canadian Army	1991-1995	Private archive
LM05	Dutch UN language cards	Language cards	UN?	1991-1995	Private archive
LM06	<i>Phrases de checkpoint</i>	Glossary	UN	1991-1995	Private archive

C.3.4 Videos and pictures (AUD, VID, PIC):

Code	Name	Type	Mission	Date	Source
AUD01	Darko Močibob prevodi svečano potpisivanje Daytonskog sporazuma	Audio file	UNPROFOR	14/12/1995	Private archive
VID01	Nikad Obavljena u medjima: snimka stanja u kampu UN- a neposredno nakon oluje	Video	UNPROFOR	August 1995	Newspaper online archive – Dnevno.hr
VID02	Knin. Srbske izbjeglice u srednoj školi	Video	UNPROFOR	August 1995	Newspaper online archive – Dnevno.hr
VID03	Bosnia - Mladic And UN Dutch Forces Commander	Video	UNPROFOR	13/07/1995	Associated Press online archive
VID04	Bosnia – General Ratko Mladic statement update - AP 11892	Video	UNPROFOR	27/07/1995	Associated Press online archive
VID05	Interpreter translates on the phone shelling episode notification - AP1082	Video	UNPROFOR	29/11/1994	Associated Press online archive
VID06	Phone interpreting of Mayor of Bihac - AP 979	Video	UNPROFOR	26/11/1994	Associated Press online archive
VID07	Bosnia – Mladic oversees surrender terms – Apw027170	Video	UNPROFOR	31/07/1995	Associated Press online archive
VID08	Human rights abuses: Grubor 1 - UNT 729X03	Video	UNPROFOR	25/08/1995	UNTV archives
VID09	Human rights abuses: Grubor 2 - UNT 729X01	Video	UNPROFOR	24/08/1995	UNTV archives
VID10	Human rights abuses: Grubor 3 - UNT 729X02	Video	UNPROFOR	24/08/1995 - 25/08/1995	UNTV archives
VID11	Human rights abuses: Grubor 4 - UNT 729X04	Video	UNPROFOR	25/08/1995	UNTV archives
VID12	Farming in easter Slavonia 1 - UNT 33301	Video	UNPROFOR	22/12/1995	UNTV archives
VID13	Farming in easter Slavonia 2 - UNT 331A-331F	Video	UNPROFOR	22/12/1995	UNTV archives
VID14	President of Bosnia and Herzegovina Alija Izetbegovic addresses an audience and speaks on the situation in Bosnia	Video	UNPROFOR	08/08/1993	Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
PIC01	UNPROFOR in Bosnia and Croatia - 46570	Picture	UNPROFOR	28/08/1992	UN online archives
PIC02	UNPROFOR in Bosnia and Croatia - 46567	Picture	UNPROFOR	28/08/1992	UN online archives
PIC03	US army and French officials talk to local residents through interpreter Leila Dizdarevic (SFOR) - 6628805	Picture	SFOR	09/06/2002	US National archives
PIC04	Military and civilian interpreter (IFOR) - 6596531	Picture	IFOR	Beginning of December 1995	US National archives
PIC05	Interpreter at orphanage with US forces - 6519975	Picture	IFOR	23/05/1996	US National archives

PIC06	US forces interpreter Sasa Vidic - 6511610	Picture	SFOR	06/07/1997	US National archives
PIC07	US forces interpreter Admir Corhozic - 6511660	Picture	SFOR	26/08/1997	US National archives
PIC08	US forces interpreter Admir Corhozic – puppet show - 6511659	Picture	SFOR	26/08/1997	US National archives
PIC09	US department of defense interpreter Dragan Minc - 6502895	Picture	N/A	14/10/1996	US National archives
PIC10	Local Bosnian police forces, interpreters, American and other multinational team members - 6646606	Picture	SFOR	11/01/2004	US National archives
PIC11	Joint endeavor interpreter, military, and religious leaders - 6596670	Picture	SFOR	09/10/1996	US National archives
PIC13	UNMO and his interpreter, Tuzla (BiH)	Picture	UNPROFOR	End of 1995	Private archive

Legend (for acronyms see Annex E):

- N/A = information was not available or withheld to avoid subject identification.
- BiH = Bosnia and Herzegovina

* When documents' numbers are not progressive it means that the corresponding document was not used in this analysis because it failed to comply with the internal and external source criticism procedure used and was therefore considered historically unreliable.

Annex D - Relevant historical events

- 1918** **December 1** - Establishment of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.
- 1929** **January 6** - Monarchic coup and establishment of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.
- 1941** **April 6** - The Axis troops invaded the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. **April 10** –
Establishment of the Independent State of Croatia (NDH).
- 1941-1945** Occupation, resistance, and civil war in Yugoslavia.
- 1945** **November 29** - Establishment of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia.
- 1961** Establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement in Belgrade.
- 1965** Economic reform.
- 1968** Students' protest and rise of nationalism in Kosovo.
- 1971** Repression of the 'Croatian spring' nationalist movement.
- 1972** Tito excluded liberals from the government in Serbia.
- 1974-1976** Constitutional reform allowing for greater Republican decentralization and partial
economic liberalization.
- 1980** **May, 4** - Death of Josip Broz Tito.
- 1981** Rise of nationalism in Kosovo. Economic crisis.
- 1987** Rise of nationalism and Milošević in Serbia, and first Serbo-Slovenian disputes.
- 1988** Street protests in Slovenia against the Federal government and Serb-held changes of
government in Montenegro and Vojvodina
- 1989** Kosovo's autonomy was revoked. Yugoslav premier Ante Marković adopted radical
economic reforms. Collapse of communism in Eastern Europe.
- 1990** Rising inflation, breakup of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia and first multi-
party elections, won by nationalist parties.
- 1991** **June** - Slovenian and Croatian declarations of independence.
- 1991** **June 27-July 6** - 'Ten days war' between Slovenia and JNA.
- 1991** **July 7** - Following the Brioni agreement, JNA forces retreat into Croatia. First
confrontations between Croats and Croatian-Serbs in the *Krajine*.
- 1991** **November 18** - Vukovar in Croatia fell to Serb forces after a three-month siege.
- 1991** **December 26** - Serbia and Montenegro joined in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
(FRY).
- 1992** **January 15** - The international community recognized the independence of Croatia and
Slovenia. The UN imposed heavy sanctions on Serbia. Bosnian Serbs declared
independence.
- 1992** **February** - A referendum approved the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- 1992** **April 2** - Beginning of the Sarajevo siege.
- 1992** **April 7** - The international community recognized the independence of Bosnia and
Herzegovina.
- 1993** War broke out between Croats and Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- 1994** The US imposed the creation of the Croat-Muslim Federation of Bosnia and
Herzegovina.
- 1995** **July 11-22** - Srebrenica genocide.
- 1995** **August 5** - With *Operation Storm*, Croatian forces retrieved most of the lost territories.
- 1995** **November 21** - The US imposed on Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia the
Dayton Agreement, in Dayton, Ohio.
- 1995** **December 14** - The Dayton Agreement is signed in Paris.

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