Between Silencing and Survival: Roma Experiences and the Politics of Security in the Kosovo War.

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Abstract

This thesis dives into the realm of critical security studies, questioning who gets to define (in)security and highlighting how certain voices are often left out of the security conversation. It builds on the securitization theory from the Copenhagen School and engages with postcolonial and emancipatory critiques that reveal its epistemological shortcomings—especially its reliance on elite speech acts and institutional acknowledgment. By utilizing Sarah Bertrand's framework of silencing—locutionary silencing, illocutionary frustration, and illocutionary disablement—this research reinterprets securitization as a process that not only includes but also systematically excludes subaltern voices. Additionally, it brings in Ali Bilgic's idea of emancipatory security to redefine agency as something that arises from everyday acts of survival, care, and refusal, rather than just from institutional recognition. Together, these frameworks allow for a nuanced analysis of silence and agency, challenging the notion that security is solely created through formal political discourse. Through a qualitative case study of the Roma during the Kosovo War (1998–1999), this thesis applies this combined analytical approach to semi-structured interviews and historical analysis, uncovering how Roma communities were made invisible by the prevailing Serbian, Albanian, and international security narratives. It shows how their voices were often dismissed, distorted, or even punished, while also highlighting how Roma individuals engaged in grassroots security-making practices despite being epistemically excluded. By connecting Bertrand's critique of silencing with Bilgic's focus on subaltern agency, the thesis offers a more inclusive and decolonial perspective on security—one that acknowledges security as a contested and lived experience shaped by voice, resistance, and the ongoing fight for recognition

Introduction

What if the most critical security threats are never acknowledged, not because they aren't real, but because those affected aren't allowed to share their stories? In international relations, the ability to define what "security" means has long been in the hands of states and elites. Yet, as critical theorists have highlighted, this power is not neutral; it often silences, excludes, and obscures vital perspectives. From Gayatri Spivak's assertion that "the subaltern cannot speak" to Ken Booth's push for a security approach focused on freedom rather than oppression, scholars are increasingly asking: whose insecurities are recognized, and who gets to decide? This thesis engages with that challenge by exploring how the experiences of the Roma during the Kosovo War illuminate the complex politics of voice, recognition, and resistance in security discourse. This thesis dives into a key theoretical discussion in security studies: who gets to define insecurity, and how are certain voices pushed aside or made silent in mainstream security discussions? Emerging from the Copenhagen School, securitization theory redefined security as a performative act, where a securitizing actor presents an issue as a life-threatening danger to a referent object, thus justifying extreme measures (Buzan, Waever, and De Wilde 1998). While this perspective has significantly broadened the study of security beyond just material and state-focused views, its dependence on elite discourse and formal political settings has initiated a range of critical responses.

One of the most notable critiques comes from Sarah Bertrand (2018), who examines the underlying assumptions of securitization theory through a postcolonial lens. Drawing on Gayatri Spivak's ideas about subalternity and epistemic silence, Bertrand argues that securitization theory tends to favor voices that are already part of dominant knowledge systems (Bertrand 2018). She presents a three-part framework of silencing—locutionary silencing, illocutionary frustration, and illocutionary disablement

(Bertrand 2018) to illustrate the different ways marginalized voices are kept from being seen as valid contributors to security discussions. Instead of simply rejecting securitization theory, Bertrand proposes a rethinking that highlights the politics of voice, recognition, and exclusion. Instead of dismissing securitization theory entirely, this thesis takes Bertrand's critique and uses it as a motivation to rethink the politics of security, focusing on the experiences of those who are usually left out of the conversation. By doing this, it merges Bertrand's focus on epistemic exclusion with Ali Bilgic's concept of emancipatory security, which highlights the everyday actions such as survival, care, refusal, and memory, that marginalized communities use to create their own forms of security. This combined perspective goes beyond just the idea of voice versus silence, exploring how subaltern actors not only face exclusion but also engage in security-making practices that often fly under the radar of institutional frameworks. This theoretical argument draws on the real experiences of the Roma minority in Kosovo, whose struggles during and after the 1998–1999 war have been largely ignored in mainstream security conversations. Caught in the crossfire of Serbian and Albanian nationalist agendas, the Roma endured violence, forced displacement, and long-lasting marginalization. Yet, they were not merely passive victims or silent subjects. As this thesis reveals, they actively practiced survival and solidarity in ways that challenge dominant security frameworks and seek theoretical recognition. Given this context, critical questions emerge: How did Roma communities survive during a conflict in which they were supported by neither side? How did they negotiate life under threat without protection from either Serb or Albanian factions, or from international actors? On the empirical side, the thesis relies on semi-structured interviews with Roma individuals who lived through the conflict, along with secondary literature and historical records. These interviews are not just narrative accounts; they provide a vital entry point for theorizing subaltern security. The findings shed light on how the Roma community survived through a hostile and securitized landscape using strategies that resists the typical binaries of victimhood and collaboration, thus deepening our understanding of security as a

contested and negotiated practice. The argument is laid out in five chapters. The first chapter reviews the literature, tracing the development of securitization theory from 20th century, the Copenhagen School to the postcolonial and emancipatory critiques that shape this study. Chapter Two, delves into the analytical and methodological framework, detailing how Bertrand's typology of silencing and Bilgic's concept of grassroots security influence the research design and interpretation. Chapter Three provides the historical and political context of the Roma in Kosovo, emphasizing the long-standing marginalization that has affected their position during and after the conflict. Chapter Four presents the empirical analysis, applying the theoretical framework to interview data to investigate both the mechanisms of exclusion and the resistance practices of Roma communities. Finally, Chapter Five reflects on the broader theoretical and policy implications of these findings, making a case for a reimagined security politics that centers on dignity, agency, and the right to be heard.

Chapter 1 Literature Review

1.1 Security through the 20th Century

Security remains a significant concept in IR discourse, even though its definition is still debatable. From classical realist methods focused on state survival to modern critical and postcolonial perspectives, scholars have debated what security is, who it protects, and how it should be achieved. This section traces the evolution of security throughout time in order to understand how some voices, particularly those of marginalised groups like the Roma, have been left out of dominant frameworks. Before delving into the security of marginalized minorities such as Roma in Kosovo and their experiences, it's important to trace the roots of security theory in international relations. It is crucial to go back to how the idea was first presented in order to gain insight into the development of security theory.

A starting point is Walter Lippmann's post-war realist thinking, which reflects a strategic conception of security. According to his definition of security, the sovereign is secure "when it does not have to sacrifice its legitimate interest to avoid war and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by war" (Lippmann 1943, 51). This definition, which stresses both condition and capability, emphasises a state's physical ability to defeat or deter foreign threats. Nevertheless, Lippmann's notion is constrained by its exclusive focus on state interests and military issues, even if it is considered fundamental. His approach lacks the instruments necessary to examine the security issues of non-state actors[1] such as ethnic minorities, whose vulnerability during the Wars resulted from institutional abandonment and racial targeting rather than interstate rivalry. Therefore, Lippmann's state-centric

[1] https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep12608.8?seq=4

perspective ignores the security that marginalized communities experience. Responding to these limitations, a more adaptable and socially understanding approach to security is provided by Arnold Wolfers. He made the well-known claim that security is an "ambiguous symbol" (Wolfers 1952) a term whose meaning is context-dependent and not universally fixed. Crucially, Wolfers emphasised that many nations and societies understand and pursue security in different ways by making a distinction between subjective security (a feeling of safety) and objective security (an actual lack of threats). He argues that: "...security, in an objective sense, measures the absence of threats to acquired values, in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked." (Wolfer 1952, 485). For constructivist theorists, who view security as socially produced rather than objectively provided, this argument had a particularly significant impact. Thus, Wolfers' finding expanded the analytical scope beyond material dangers by opening an opportunity to study how political and cultural factors shape what is considered a security concern. As we move towards a more socially constructed view of security, the Copenhagen School has introduced a new framework that focuses on the importance of language and performance in identifying threats.

1.2 Copenhagen school

Building on this development, the Copenhagen School emerged as the next major development in security studies. This school of thinking included the political and performative aspects of security, further challenging conventional state-centric perspectives. One of the school's founders, Barry Buzan, advanced the security definition going beyond military concerns. According to Buzan, to be a security issue it must fulfill some criteria. He argues that "They have to be staged as existential threats to a referent object by a securitizing actor who thereby generates endorsement of emergency measures beyond rules that would otherwise bind" (Buzan, Waever, and De Wilde 1998, 5). As a result, this approach led to the creation of sectoral analysis, which separates security into five areas:

environmental, sociological, political, economic, and military (Buzan, Waever, and De Wilde 1998, 5-6). The sectoral method emphasizes that identifying something as a security concern is a political act with institutional and societal consequences and allows researchers to analyze how security risks are defined in every sector. Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde claim that security is a speech act that creates a category that is socially constructed, he argues that "they are social constructs operative in the interaction among people" (Buzan, Waever, and De Wilde 1998, 37). According to this theoretical paradigm, a problem becomes a security concern when a securitizing actor, typically an elite, frames a referent object as existentially endangered and successfully persuades a relevant audience that drastic actions are required (Buzan, Waever, and De Wilde 1998). Because it highlights how political language produces threats, this concept has had a big influence on academic and policy circles. Despite this discursive shift, the framework has come under criticism for maintaining elitist and hierarchical biases. The Copenhagen School is criticized for excluding non-state actors, and has been replaced by alternative theoretical models that offer more inclusive frameworks for examining security from the perspective of marginalized groups. These models, derived from critical security studies like the Welsh School[2] and postcolonial scholarship, focus on emancipation from structural violence and the discipline of racialized populations by securitization. Critics argue that the theory carries the risk of legitimizing the very militarization and exclusionary processes it aims to address. Because of this, a number of academics have tried to update, expand, or localize the framework in what is now referred to as second-generation securitization theory. The following section will delve

[2] Read more: https://www.academia.edu/31516026/Copenhagen_school_versus_Welsh_School_of_security_studies#loswp-work-container

into how "second-generation" securitization theorists addressed these limitations by anchoring securitization in the daily lives and contextual factors that shape it.

1.3 Second-Generation Securitization

Critics such as Thierry Balzacq, Holger Stritzel, and Juha Vuori have introduced advanced perspectives on the speech act, audience, and political context, which have significantly addressed the original framework's shortcomings. A pragmatic perspective in securitization theory is represented by Thierry Balzacq who is stressing that security is not just a matter of words but also of actions (Balzaq 2005). He critiqued the Copenhagen School for being too formal and idealistic, suggesting that the effectiveness of a securitizing move rested on various contextual factors, including political culture, institutional setups, and the speaker's position. Drawing from practice theory, Balzacq argued that securitization is deeply rooted in our everyday practices and power structures (Balzaq 2005). He critiques the Copenhagen model for its formalism and argues that "securitization is better understood as a strategic (pragmatic) practice that occurs within, and as part of, a configuration of circumstances, including the context, the psycho-cultural disposition of the audience, and the power that both speaker and listener bring to the interaction." (Balzacq 2005, 172). Similarly, Stritzel's constructivist-pragmatic framework, claiming that it's not merely the content of what is said that matters, but also how security claims are shaped by social frameworks, practices, and historical contexts. He critiques the Copenhagen School for being too focused on speech acts, arguing that this perspective is too narrow and formal. He believes that securitization is actually a dynamic process that varies with context and involves different actors, audiences, and power relationships. He argues that "too much weight is put on the semantic side of the speech act articulation at the expense of its social and linguistic relatedness and sequentially." (Stritzel 2007, 358). From this perspective, securitization isn't just about declaring a threat successfully; it's a complex and negotiated process that's deeply embedded in both material

and discursive frameworks. This viewpoint also critiques the Copenhagen School for overlooking how security concepts are shaped by wider social and political forces. Meanwhile, by analyzing how security discourses operate in non-democratic and authoritarian environments, Vuori (2008) expands securitization theory beyond Eurocentric and liberal democratic settings. He argues that "…the concept of securitization through illocutionary logic, can be utilized to study security politics in non-democratic contexts." (Vuori 2008) While the Copenhagen model tends to depend on open public discussions and the consent of the audience, Vuori showed that securitization can also take place in authoritarian regimes. He states that: "In authoritarian regimes, securitizing moves do not need to follow deliberative democratic procedures; they may rely on censorship, coercion or symbolic actions." (Vuori 2008, 71). In these contexts, elements like censorship, coercion, and even non-verbal cues such as a military presence or silence can act as forms of securitization. He argues that "Securitization is not always about breaking rules... security speech can be utilized... for renewing discipline, and for controlling society and the political order." (Vuori 2008, 69) His research emphasized that securitization isn't just about spoken statements in democratic environments; it can also be deeply rooted in disciplinary practices and the structures of authoritarian power (Vuori 2008). The scholars significantly reformed securitization theory by adopting a practice-oriented approach, redefining securitization as a long-term, evolving process, broadening its applicability to non-Western and non-democratic environments, and addressing issues of power, exclusion, and legitimacy, setting the stage for feminist and postcolonial critiques. This approach shifted the model from rigid formalism to a more flexible and inclusive approach. While these second-generation interventions greatly improved the adaptability of securitization theory, they still left some key questions unanswered regarding voice, recognition, and the impact of power on whose insecurities are acknowledged. As the next section illustrates, feminist and postcolonial scholars took on this challenge.

1.4 Critiques of the Copenhagen School

To address these silences, critical scholars have developed emancipatory and subaltern approaches to security. Building on the limitations of the Copenhagen School outlined above, feminist scholars introduced epistemological critiques that redefined what it means to "speak" security. One of the most prominent interventions comes from Lene Hansen. Using poststructuralist and feminist frameworks, she was one of the first academics to question the epistemic beliefs of securitization theory, which is perhaps the most significant model. In her article "The Little Mermaid's Silent Security Dilemma" she presents a significant obstacle to securitization theory: What if you can't "speak" security? (Hansen 2000). Hansen's idea of "security as silence" goes beyond just a theoretical concept; it highlights the situations where speaking about security can pose a risk. Silence isn't just the absence of words; it emerges from feelings of exclusion, fear, or the pressure of authority. For Hansen, this silence arises from systems that label certain insecurities as shameful, compelling vulnerable groups to stay quiet just to get by. As she points out, "The focus on the verbal act of speech causes difficulties in coming to terms with what can be called 'security as silence': a situation where the potential subject of security has no, or limited, possibility of speaking its security problem. As the case of Pakistani rapes leading to zina convictions, or even honor killings show, by discursively acknowledging the rape, the woman in question runs a risk of being penalized herself." (Hansen 2000, 294). First, security as silence: Since speaking could make them vulnerable to attack, actors may choose to keep quiet. For instance, victims of persecution or assault based on gender or ethnicity could worry about stigmatization or punishment due to accusations of insecurity. The second is subsuming Security: When these actors do speak, their experience is often limited by more general "issues" (e.g., "ethnic violence" or "women's issue") that

deny specificity to their insecurity and, thus, exclude them from the greater security context (Hansen 2000).

Hansen's criticism is on epistemic violence rather than merely inclusivity. She shows how power dynamics that determine who is heard and whose voice is respected impact the act of voicing security itself. Hansen uses poststructuralist feminist theory to show how social and political marginalizations and exclusion actively produce silence, which is not just a passive lack of voice (Hansen 2000). The theory of securitization is significantly impacted by this study. It highlights the shortcomings of an approach that prioritizes observable performance and provides opportunities for researchers to investigate how security might be expressed collectively, nonverbally, or as resistance. In this way she expands the field of security studies beyond securitization by relating it to broader issues of representation, visibility, and gendered power relations. Hansen's research opens up a new theoretical avenue by viewing silence as a byproduct of power dynamics. Following this line of thought, postcolonial scholars such as Sarah Bertrand explore the ways structural exclusion functions within racialized and colonized settings. Additionally, Bertrand expand on Hansen's work to analyze how racialized and colonized groups are silenced not only by repression and violence but also by the discursive structures that define who is able to speak security in the first place. This reconceptualization of silence not as absence, but as a product of power relations, significantly broadens the analytical lens of security studies. It also creates space for further critical engagements—particularly those coming from postcolonial theory. Through a postcolonial perspective, Sarah Bertrand (2018) examines the Eurocentrism that is deeply rooted in securitization theory. The challenge she raises is whether subaltern actors, who are frequently excluded from dominant discourses, can ever actually participate in securitizing speech actions. In reference to Gayatri Spivak's concept of epistemic silence, Bertrand reframes the securitization debate by posing the question, "Can the subaltern securities?" (Bertrand 2018). Her reaction, which emphasizes how the theory ignores the

systemic obstacles that limit these voices, is an effective critique. In her work, Bertrand identifies a typology of exclusion that consists of three main categories: (1) locutionary silencing, where the marginalized are unable to express themselves; (2) illocutionary frustration, where their words are spoken but not acknowledged; and (3) illocutionary disablement, where their messages are heard but misinterpreted (Bertrand 2018, 284). This framework is particularly applicable to groups like Roma, who have long been misrepresented, ignored, or had their narratives constructed by others, including international institutions and humanitarian actors. Bertrand offers a decolonial reconstruction that considers the perspectives of subalterns and explores epistemological ideas regarding whose voices are heard, instead of outright dismissing securitization theory. A more thorough security framework that transcends critique and starts to theories the character of resistance is made possible by this reconsideration. Bertrand's contribution sharpens the focus of this thesis: it highlights how marginalized groups, like the Roma, are often silenced and misrepresented in mainstream security discussions. In the next section, we'll explore the concept of emancipatory security, which introduces the ideas of agency and resistance into this important dialogue.

1.5 From Silencing to Agency: Toward Emancipatory Security

While Hansen and Bertrand delve into themes of exclusion and silencing, scholars like Ali Bilgic are pushing the boundaries by examining the liberating and active aspects of security. In his article "Real People in Real Places," (Bilgic 2015) presents a theory of emancipatory security that is rooted in the real-life experiences of marginalized individuals. He argues that security should be seen as a journey of reclaiming dignity and autonomy, rather than just a status granted by the state or acknowledged through institutional language. Bilgic states that "… emancipatory power of resistance will be conceptualized as a productive power emerging during 'moments of emancipation', where individual subjectivities are reproduced within a collectivity based on trust" (Bilgic 2015, 273). He emphasizes

that everyday actions can be understood as acts of resistance that challenge dominant security narratives. He argues that "...the everyday bodily performances were building social trust between the protesters." (Bilgic 2015, 283). This focus on grassroots security is crucial for understanding how the Roma navigate war and displacement. Rather than seeing the Roma simply as passive victims or invisible subjects, Bilgic's perspective allows us to recognize their actions as political, meaningful, and possibly challenging the dominant security narratives. Thus, this research aligns with Bilgic's view for a "security theory that centers the experience and agency of the marginalized" (Bilgic 2015). In summary, this literature review has traced the evolution of securitization theory from its traditional concepts of security to contemporary feminist, postcolonial, and emancipatory critiques. This analysis, drawing on the perspectives of Hansen, Bertrand, and Bilgic, will delve into the dynamics of exclusion and silencing while also shining a light on how resistance, survival, and daily acts of agency can reshape our views on security. By weaving together these theoretical advancements from postcolonial critiques of silencing to grassroots strategies for agency, this thesis introduces a cohesive analytical framework for exploring security from the margins. The following chapter will lay out this framework and detail how it guides the empirical research.

Chapter 2: Analytical framework

In this chapter, we delve into the theoretical and methodological approach that shapes this thesis. It starts with an overview of Sarah Bertrand's typology of exclusion, followed by an introduction to Ali Bilgic's theory of emancipatory security. Ultimately, it weaves these ideas together to shed light on the Roma's experiences during the Kosovo War. It explores how Roma experiences during the Kosovo War might be interpreted outside of conventional state-centered frameworks by drawing on critical security studies, especially emancipatory and subaltern approaches. In this research I am focusing on the analysis combining two frameworks; that of Sarah Bertrand's postcolonial analysis of subaltern silence (Bertrand 2018) and Ali Bilgic's idea of emancipatory security (Bilgic 2015), that build upon the criticisms of conventional securitization theory made in the literature review. Although they approach the issue from separate but complementary perspectives, both academics criticize the exclusions present in conventional security studies. Each theory offers valuable insights: Bertrand's work explains the exclusion of those silenced from being recognized as security subjects, while Bilgic's perspective shows how these communities still managed to take action and protect themselves.

2.1 Postcolonial Silencing: Sarah Bertrand's Critique

This thesis goes beyond just securitization theory; it taps into the wider realms of postcolonial and subaltern theory, with a particular focus on Gayatri Spivak's article "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (Spivak 1988). Spivak points out that subaltern voices often face systemic barriers that prevent them from having the authority to speak and the opportunity to be heard, especially in Western-centric knowledge

systems (Spivak 1988). Even when these voices do manage to "speak," they frequently get filtered, twisted, or co-opted by those in power. As Spivak famously puts it, "the subaltern cannot speak" (Spivak 1988, 308) not because they lack a voice, but because their words become unintelligible within dominant frameworks of knowledge. This idea is crucial for understanding the historical exclusion of Roma communities in Kosovo—not just from policy-making but also from the very creation of knowledge. Their marginalization is not merely political or economic; it's fundamentally "epistemological". By centering their experiences in this analysis, the thesis aims to reshape security studies through a postcolonial lens, striving to listen to the silences and reclaim meaning from the edges. Bertrand highlights that securitization theory often overlooks the structural barriers that prevent marginalized groups from being recognized as credible voices in security discussions. She asserts, "Securitization theory structurally excludes the subaltern from claiming the label of (in)security for the issues they face through the three mechanisms of locutionary silencing, illocutionary frustration, and illocutionary disablement." (Bertrand 2018, 288). In response to this challenge, she proposes a typology of exclusion that sheds light on how the voices of marginalized communities are systematically overlooked at different stages. To start, "locutionary silencing" refers to the situation where marginalized voices are completely silenced due to various political, institutional, or material barriers. Then there's "illocutionary frustration," which describes instances when these voices are heard but their messages are ignored, dismissed, or not seen as relevant to security issues. Finally, "illocutionary disablement" occurs when their words are misinterpreted or taken over by those in power, leading to distortion or misrepresentation (Bertrand 2018, 284– 285). These concepts are vital for examining the experiences of the Roma during and after the Kosovo War. Even when Roma individuals tried to articulate their feelings of insecurity or victimhood, their claims were frequently disregarded, labeled as illegitimate, or used to paint them as collaborators or criminals (as will be shown

in the next chapter). Bertrand's typology shows that these forms of exclusion are not just incidental; they are fundamentally woven into the very fabric of how we understand security.

While Bertrand provides a significant framework for understanding how silencing operates, her work primarily concentrates on identifying exclusion rather than examining the potential for resistance. Even if the subaltern may resist, that resistance is unlikely to be legible within the existing security discourse. She argues that "...the subaltern is silenced if not silent. Hence the necessity to move away from a sole focus on locutionary silencing and instead appreciate how all three mechanisms of silence work together in different ways to marginalize subaltern voices." (Bertrand 2018, 287). In simpler terms, she makes it clear that marginalized groups, like the Roma, can act or express themselves, but their resistance often goes unrecognized as significant within the prevailing security discussions. This shortcoming highlights the need for an additional perspective, one that not only tackles the politics of voice and exclusion but also brings to light the politics of survival, care, and everyday agency. That's why this thesis turns to emancipatory security theory, aiming to better understand how Roma communities have asserted their own security from the grassroots level, even when faced with silencing and structural negligence. While Bertrand offers a compelling critique of exclusion, her framework leaves limited space to explore how marginalized communities resist or redefine insecurity on their own terms. For this reason, we now turn to Bilgic's emancipatory framework.

2.2 Emancipatory Security: Ali Bilgic's Framework

The concept of emancipatory security is built on Ken Booth's idea that real security isn't about holding onto power, but rather about achieving true freedom (Both 1991). For Booth, emancipation means "…freeing of people (as individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them carrying out what they would freely choose to do" (Booth 1991, 319). This perspective

broadens the focus of security from the state to individuals and communities, shifting the aim of security politics from deterrence to fostering dignity. He also emphasizes that emancipation is both an analytical and ethical commitment, it's not just a concept, but a "practice" (Booth 1991). For marginalized groups like the Roma, who face vulnerabilities rooted in social, economic, and racial oppression rather than military threats, Booth's vision offers a powerful lens for understanding security as liberation from structural harm. The second part of this framework draws on Critical Security Studies, especially the Welsh School, which redefines security as not just about maintaining state power, but about achieving freedom from structural violence (Booth, 1991). He argues that "emancipation, not power or order, produces true security" (Booth 1991, 319). Ken Booth specifically argued that real security is about emancipation, freeing individuals and communities from the oppressive structures they encounter. This viewpoint shifts the emphasis of security from the state to the people and their communities. Building on Booth's foundation, Ali Bilgic (2015) offers a grounded, ethnographically informed framework that highlights the agency of marginalized groups. Rather than questioning whether a group has effectively expressed their insecurities to gain institutional recognition, as the Copenhagen model does, Bilgic focuses on the survival, care, refusal, and memory practices through which people actively shape their own security. His work raises an important question: What does it really mean to look at security from the grassroots level, especially when official channels fall short or leave people out? Bilgic's research is part of a larger movement among scholars who are pushing for more every day and embodied approaches to security. For instance, João Nunes (2012) points out that traditional security studies often overlook the "embodied, every day, and affective" experiences of insecurity that marginalized communities face (Nunes 2012). He emphasizes that "Understandings of security are embedded in a social setting in which facts are established by political negotiation and sometimes struggle". (Nunes 2012, 351). Nunes' insights complement Bilgic's by highlighting the 'embodied, affective, and spatial' aspects of insecurity. He argues that "The

meaning of security is not based on a universal, a priori notion of what being secure is, but rather stems from the experiences of insecurity of real people in real places "(Nunes 2012, 351). For example, the anxiety of being misidentified, the anguish of displacement, or the heartbreak of losing a home are not just abstract threats; they are visceral, lived experiences. Nunes advocates for a security epistemology that considers 'how people experience insecurity in their daily lives' (Nunes 2012), rather than assuming that threats can only be understood through official narratives. This thesis takes that idea to heart, using testimonies from the Roma community not just to recount security incidents, but to 'explore' how insecurity is felt, endured, and resisted. Nunes calls for a transformation in security thinking that aligns with local practices and knowledge, rather than merely engaging in theoretical debates. Therefore, Bilgic's concept of emancipatory security is not just an isolated theory; it's part of a growing field that demands a reimagining of security from the ground up. It builds on Booth's normative vision and aligns with Nunes' emphasis on embodiment and practice. Together, Bertrand and Bilgic showcase two different angles on the same issue: one that centers on silence and exclusion, while the other shines a light on the everyday acts of agency. The following section will merge these viewpoints into a single analytical lens that will inform our empirical analysis.

2.3 Beyond Voice: Toward a Combined Analytical Lens

In the previous sections we saw how merging Bertrand's critique of exclusion with Bilgic's emphasis on agency creates a powerful framework. This approach not only highlights the silencing of marginalized communities but also showcases how these communities actively shape their own security. Bertrand's typology—comprising "locutionary silencing," "illocutionary frustration," and "illocutionary disablement" (Bertrand 2018, 284) is instrumental in pinpointing the various ways Roma voices were suppressed or made invisible during the Kosovo War. Her framework effectively illustrates how structural obstacles and prevailing knowledge systems prevent Roma from being

acknowledged as legitimate security players. On the other side, Bilgic shifts the narrative from a lack of recognition to the actual practices at play. He points out that "Its objective is to enable a community of individuals to be referents and agents of security. …the material space is reconfigured through the bodily performances of individuals in their own localities. When they build trust between each other through their performances, they exist in the 'space of appearance' together, which is the manifestation of their emancipatory power." (Bilgic 2015, 280)". This perspective reveals that security isn't just something handed down from above; it can also be created from below through everyday acts of defiance and solidarity. Yet, there's an interesting tension between these two viewpoints. Bertrand raises the question of whether subaltern resistance can ever be recognized within mainstream security discussions, noting that resistance is unlikely to be legible within the existing security discourse (Bertrand 2018). In contrast, Bilgic encourages scholars to pay attention to those practices that dominant frameworks often overlook, arguing that the significance of resistance does not depend on institutional acknowledgment. This thesis embraces that tension, asserting that even when Roma's survival and resistance efforts go unrecognized by state or international entities, they still represent meaningful expressions of emancipatory security. By blending Bertrand's thoughts on silencing with Bilgic's emphasis on agency, this analysis aims to highlight both the structural marginalization, and the active resistance found within Roma communities. This integrated framework serves as the basis for the empirical chapters that will follow. However, before we get into the interviews and thematic analysis, it's essential to first understand the historical and political context that has shaped the vulnerability of Roma people in Kosovo.

Chapter 3: Historical Context

In this chapter, we delve into the socio-political factors that shaped the Roma's experiences of insecurity throughout the Kosovo War and its aftermath. It lays out the essential historical context for using the analytical framework discussed in Chapter two. With the theoretical lens established in the previous chapter, this chapter examines how shifting power dynamics, and the fall of Yugoslavia impacted Roma security in the context of the Kosovo War. While often overlooked, the Roma were caught in a conflict they did not choose, shaped by decades of marginalization, forced identification, and displacement. By examining their position before, during, and after the war, this chapter provides the foundation for understanding how the theories discussed earlier apply to their lived experience of insecurity.

3.1 Before 1998

The Roma minority appeared in Yugoslavia for the first time around the year 1362[3] .There is not a fixed date when they were located in Kosovo but something is for sure; they were treated as second class citizens who were victims of persecution and killings[4] until WW2. They were not a nation - state, they were not waving their own flags, they had just their identities and their bodies. The only time that some policies were drafted and given some right to Romas was during Josip Broz Tito era[5]. But this continued until 1990 when the Yugoslav wars broke out and Romas in Yugoslavia would reverse the

[3] See more: https://www.errc.org/uploads/upload_en/file/abandoned-minority-roma-rights-history-in-kosovo-dec-2011.pdf

[4]See more: https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/mrgi/2018/en/46231

[5] See more: https://balticworlds.com/romani-writers-and-the-legacies-of-yugoslavia/

clock and lose those little rights that Tito's gave them under his regime. The numbers of Roma people in Kosovo both before and after the Yugoslav wars show how minority identities were being mobilized to further the interests of majority ethnic groups. Both Jan Briza's Minority Rights in Yugoslavia (Briza 2000) and Rainer Mattern's Roma of Kosovo: Escape, Return, or Stay? (Mattern et al. 2011) provide important insight into how the Roma were serving to strengthen demographic claims, particularly on the part of the Albanian community who desired to be in a position to claim a significant percentage of the Albanian population. During late Yugoslavia, depending on where they lived physically, which linguistic group they belonged to, and the interests of the local elites, Roma in Kosovo frequently had to declare whether they were Serbs or Albanians. As (Mattern et al. 2011) notes, before the 1999 conflict, Roma communities were often situated in urban centers or agricultural settlements, speaking either Serbian or Albanian. This linguistic and cultural adaptability made them particularly vulnerable to political manipulation. As the 1991 census approached, Albanians encouraged Albanian-speaking Roma, particularly Ashkali and Egyptians, to register as Albanians. Some of them declared themselves as Albanians and, others that did not, were portrayed as loyal to the Serbs. This operation helped to increase official Kosovo Albanian population percentage[6], which facilitated the establishment of demographic superiority over Serbs and further political independence or autonomy claims (Mattern et al. 2011, p. 42). (Briza 2000) reporting identifies that during both the Yugoslav and post-Yugoslav periods, Roma populations were often "invisible" within official statistics due to their inclusion as Albanians or Serbs. In situations in which majority ethnicity held significant political power, minorities like the Roma were instruments of numerical dominance. Particularly in Kosovo, there existed no institutional channels through which to document ethnic self-identification in meaningful ways, allowing hegemonic groups to subsume minorities in their own naming (Briza,

[6] See more : https://balkaninsight.com/2019/11/07/kosovos-demographic-destiny-looks-eerily-familiar/

1998, p. 12). The patterns of forced identity changes and demographic manipulation really set the stage for how the Roma were treated, and often overlooked, during the larger conflict. This history of being marginalized only grew more intense as the war progressed.

3.2 Roma in between Kosovo Albanians and Serbs

Unlike the dominant minorities who seemed to be two nation- states fighting for power and control over territories, Romani communities were not seen as part of this nation- state, as a result, they were just a minority who found themselves in between these two powers. The Kosovo territory was divided into cities with the majority of Serb population and cities with the majority of Kosovo Albanians. Besides this fragmentation Roma's were not living with one party or the other, they were living among them in different cities in Kosovo. The Roma minority was brought up in the war of Serbs and Albanians; they were not included completely nor excluded totally, neither regarded as an immediate enemy nor as a valid political player. This condition of "in-betweenness", both politically and socially, has made the Roma especially vulnerable especially during times of wars. Sardelic extends this idea of "in-betweenness" to put it in the context of citizenship exclusion and statehood transitions (Sardelić 2015). In the dissolution of Yugoslavia, many Roma became "stateless in place" legally invisible due to absent documents or having moved across republican borders in pursuit of work or marriage (Sardelić 2015). Post-Yugoslav citizenship regimes did not formally exclude them, but they were overrepresented among administrative, linguistic, and residency requirements. Roma usually lived in settlements without legal registration, so it was difficult to acquire new citizenship statuses, healthcare, or education (Sardelić, 2015). She argues that "Their position in regard to citizenship access and status was more of an unanticipated side effect, due to their specific forced in-betweenness originating from their disadvantaged position". (Sardelić, 2015, 172).

"Forced in-betweenness" is the best way to explain how Roma were pushed into a liminal status—not regarded as a national minority like Serbs or Albanians, nor protected as a politically mobilized group. The Roma's "in-betweenness" in social, geographical, and political contexts made them especially vulnerable in a divided conflict. The following section will examine how this distinct position affected their experiences during the war.

3.3 Roma's position during the war

In the previous section I argue that the Roma minority was a minority which was caught in between, their position is complex as they wanted to remain neutral but there was no space for them to remain far from this conflict. Some of the Roma, particularly those who lived in territories with most Serbs, were portrayed as collaborating with the Serbian regime (Mattern et al. 2011). At the other hand, most of the Roma population, particularly those who were living in cities with majority of Kosovar Albanian were accused of supporting Serbs in their offensive. Posen analysis of Serbia's political-military strategy during the Kosovo War (1999) reveals a calculated attempt by Slobodan Milosevic to resist NATO pressure through coalition-splitting, military survival, and coercive tactics such as forced displacement (Posen, 2000). He argues that "Milosevic's strategy was to split the coalition, and he had the political and military means to try, which he skillfully employed" (Posen 2000, 39). While the Roma minority is not explicitly addressed in Posen's article, their involvement can be interpreted through the strategic framework he outlines. Serbia's ground strategy relied heavily on internal security forces and informal paramilitary groups to suppress the Kosovo Liberation Army and control Albanian populations. This informal mobilization of marginalized communities reflects Milosevic's pragmatic approach to warfighting: using all available means to extend Serbian control while preserving military capacity. In this context, a small number of Roma were coerced into supporting Serbian forces, especially in logistical roles such as cleaning, guarding, or property robbery or being in the frontline.

This limited involvement was later used by radical Albanian groups as a justification for collective punishment of the entire Roma community calling them collaborators or allies of the enemy One of the interlocutors in Petersen article argues that". the Roma were serious collaborators" (Petersen 2011, 132) no matter in which area they were living. Moreover, Serbia's strategy of using mass displacement as a political weapon (Posen 2000) indirectly affected Roma communities. Caught between Serb and Albanian forces, many Roma were displaced during and after the war and they were located in Serbia and in other neighboring countries. This outcome illustrates how Serbia's war strategy both instrumentalized and abandoned minority populations. Some members of the Roma minority living in the territories with majority of Albanians even participated in the Kosovo Albanian resistance, either through open support or by adopting Albanian identity during asylum processes abroad. He argues that "Arriving in Western European countries (especially during and after the conflict), many identified themselves as Albanians (Mattern et al. 2011, 41). Despite the given support all Roma were collectively accused of collaborating with the Serbs, regardless of their actual roles during the conflict. This led to widespread displacement, violence, and marginalization of Roma communities across Kosovo. Thousands were forced to flee to Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Western Europe. The KLA's focus was on attacking Serb police forces (MUP), Yugoslav Army units (VJ), and Albanians seen as collaborators (Mockaitis 2004). He argues that "Adopting a classic insurgency strategy, the KLA assassinated Serbian policemen, Serbian officials, and Albanian collaborators in the fall of 1997 (Mockaitis 2004, 6). Many Roma were perceived as collaborators with Serbian authorities, particularly because of the fact that some Roma were forced to work as cleaners, guards, or in logistical roles for Serbian police and military. This made them vulnerable to KLA retribution, especially after military victories in certain areas. As KLA influence spread, Roma communities were targeted, leading to: destruction of Roma homes, threat, physical violence, mass displacement and murders particularly after June 1999. He argues that "...angry Albanians burned the Roma quarter" (Mockaitis 2004, 9) The

KLA's ethnic nationalism operated through a binary logic: Albanian vs. enemy or collaborators (Mockaitis 2004). Thus, Roma were not recruited or politically engaged, but were instead ethnically profiled, excluded, or displaced in areas under KLA influence. The result was a double marginalization: Roma were denied recognition as a distinct group while also being excluded and without any rights to speak out loud. The consequences of this forced identification became evident during and after the 1999 war. The Roma's had an unstable position in ethnopolitical conflicts: they are attacked or abandoned when it is no longer politically advantageous, and they are employed when it is necessary to exploit them. In both narratives, the Roma emerge not simply as passive victims, but as communities whose voices are silenced in dominant histories and political negotiations. Their in-betweenness is not just geographic or legal, but deeply rooted in structures of exclusion and as an easily manipulated community without voice. These dynamics highlight the fragile and often manipulated role of the Roma during the conflict. In the next chapter, we'll use this analytical framework to delve into how these historical circumstances shaped their experiences of being silenced and their acts of resistance during and after the war.

Chapter 4: Application of analytical frame to empirical case

4.1 Introduction: Method, Voice, and Framework in Practice

In this chapter, we take the analytical framework from Chapter 2 and apply it to the real-life experiences of the Roma during and after the Kosovo War. How did Roma communities survive during a conflict in which they were supported by neither side? How did they negotiate life under threat without protection from either Serb or Albanian factions, or from international actors? are the research questions that this thesis aims to investigate. By using semi-structured interviews and drawing on existing literature, I aim to raise Roma voices beyond mere evidence; I see them as vital expressions of subaltern knowledge and agency. Echoing Bilgic's ideas on emancipatory security and Bertrand's critique of silencing, this chapter highlights how Roma experiences push back against mainstream security narratives. This dual framework shapes both how we structure the chapter and how we interpret the empirical material. Men and women from the Roma community of different ages with different backgrounds are included in the sample. Interviews took place online, in the preferred language of each participant (Albanian, Romani or English), and were audio-recorded with the consent of each participant. All participants were informed of their rights and the voluntary nature of participation. The samples were chosen through a snow ball approach. The analysis is developed in three interpretive steps: first, I identify patterns of silencing using Bertrand's typology; second, I explore everyday acts of agency and survival through Bilgic's lens; and finally, I weave these insights together to reimagine security from the bottom up. The findings are organized under thematic subheadings that directly reflect the analytical categories we introduced earlier. I use an interpretative

approach that allows theory and experience to coexist rather than categorising data into strict groups. This method enables the understanding of how security is transformed from below and connects individual stories to larger systems of exclusion and resistance. As a Roma researcher, I have both insider and academic perspectives in this study, allowing for greater cultural understanding but also requiring constant reflection on my assumptions and biases. This reflexive stance ensures participants' voices are represented with integrity and care, without romanticizing or generalizing them. Some participants may have felt reluctant to fully disclose experiences they perceived as shameful, dangerous, or politically sensitive. This is particularly relevant in a context where Roma have been portrayed as collaborators or scapegoats by dominant communities. The interviews reflect these dynamics—some speech was interrupted by hesitation, laughter, or changes of subject, which I interpreted as potential indicators of discomfort or trauma. Rather than treating these silences as absences, I approached them as meaningful signs of the politics of voice.

4.2 Locutionary silencing

Bertrand's first category, locutionary silencing, shines through in the stories shared by Roma participants who felt completely shut out from expressing their fears and suffering during the war. As Mahmut argues, "I tried to go to the municipality office to report that my house had been burned, but they said: 'We have other priorities.' I was not a Serb, not an Albanian, so I was nothing to them". This outright dismissal of Roma grievances as politically or administratively insignificant is a textbook example of locutionary silencing. Institutions didn't just overlook their voices due to chaos or overload; they categorized them as outside the realm of recognized suffering. As Bertrand points out, this represents a form of epistemic exclusion (Bertrand 2018, 289) Roma voices were systematically deemed unacceptable. Further evidence of this institutional blindness can be found in secondary sources. Schulze notes that post-war reconstruction policies completely lacked mechanisms for Roma

consultation, which only deepened their invisibility. He argues that "…the UN Special Envoy, former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari, talked only with the Serbian and Albanian delegations, arguing that they also had the task to represent the interests of the Roma. The voices of the Roma remained again un-heard; they were not even asked" (Schulze 2014, 137). Even humanitarian organizations often turned a blind eye to Roma complaints, choosing instead to focus on the tensions between Serbs and Albanians. Even when Roma individuals finally got the chance to express themselves, their voices were often brushed aside, misinterpreted, or simply ignored. This leads us to another form of silencing: illocutionary frustration.

4.3 Illocutionary Frustration: Speaking but Being Ignored

The occasions when my interlocutors attempted to step up and raise their voice were not rare, but as Spivak's statement:" Subalterns cannot speak" says, they were also barely heard. Bertrand's idea of illocutionary frustration sheds light on the struggles faced by marginalized voices that manage to speak up, yet find their words falling on deaf ears. Take the Roma community during and after the Kosovo War, for instance—numerous accounts illustrate this very struggle. They attempted to express their fears, their neutrality, or their protests, but often their voices were ignored, misunderstood, or outright dismissed. Mahmut shared "We felt caught between two fires, and even now we are afraid to go to Serbia. There were provocations — they called us Albanians and we always felt afraid." Despite his efforts to clarify who he was and to separate his family from both sides, simply speaking out didn't shield them from suspicion. Fiona painted a vivid picture of how Roma voices were consistently invalidated: "As soon as the divisions between Serbs and Albanians began, we Roma became like a ball kicked from one side to the other. Albanians would say 'you are with the Serbs,' and Serbs would say 'you are with the Albanians.' We were like a ball in a field" Even when the Roma tried to voice their suffering or their neutrality, others defined their position for them, making their own words feel

powerless. The struggle for recognition of their suffering also emerged in memories of displacement. John reflected: "Families were destroyed, dreams were destroyed, childhoods were lost, homes were destroyed. Family members got killed and no one answered for that. My community lost everything, and no one really addressed this issue." This underscores how, even when the Roma sought to share their wartime experiences, their trauma was largely overlooked in the wider post-war conversation. Moreover, systemic neglect only deepened this frustration. Anna argued that "We said we couldn't live like this. No one listened. They said they helped us, but it was just for their own purposes." An international Roma NGO ERRC states that "... researchers witnessed numerous instances in which KFOR representatives did not react to mass or individual looting carried out openly and in broad daylight" (ERRC 2012, 20). The same practice was followed even after war when returned Roma families were located in UN camps near an industrial area. Radio Free Europe[7] states that "The nightmare for Babajboksi (a Roma person living in this camp) and other formerly displaced Roma has now extended decades beyond their residency at the notoriously polluted camp at Cesmin Lug, which remained open for years despite testing that showed dangerous levels of lead in the plants and soil. Besides an apology from UNMIK in Kosovo there were not provided any medical help or compensation." In some instances, the voices of the Roma weren't just overlooked, they were distorted into something threatening. This more aggressive type of exclusion is what Bertrand refers to as illocutionary disablement.

4.4 Illocutionary disablement

Illocutionary disablement happens when speech isn't just overlooked but twisted—when trying to speak actually puts the speaker in a more dangerous position. This kind of silencing is particularly

[7] See more: https://www.rferl.org/a/kosovo-contaminated-un-camp-lead-poisoning/32674475.html

evident in situations marked by ethnic division, where the voices of the Roma are filtered through strict and hostile interpretations. A powerful illustration comes from Ray who shared his experience: "An Albanian guy came into a Roma-owned shop asking for sugar. Hamid gave him sugar. A Serb standing nearby saw this and accused Hamid of giving information to the Albanians. He tried to kill him. I had to tell him that he just gave him sugar, nothing else. But he was sure Hamid was an informant." In this instance, a simple act of kindness, completely unrelated to politics, was quickly recast as an act of betrayal. In a highly securitized environment, even the most ordinary interactions become suspect. The Roma were stripped of their right to be neutral; their words and actions were constantly reinterpreted through a lens of distrust, making them vulnerable to retaliation. Fiona shared a similar experience when trying to voice her fears: "We were afraid of both sides. That made us collaborators. From Albanians we were called Serbs and Serbs told us we were Albanian collaborators." This statement highlights how the Roma's attempts to express their insecurity were not only ignored but also used to further undermine their legitimacy. Speaking became a risk—no matter how careful, fair, or genuine they were. Trapped between two dominant narratives, the voices of the Roma lost their clarity. Speaking about security wasn't just hard, it became unsafe. Tom recalls a situation where he went with his uncle to the neighbor to ask for flour so they could make some bread, and they were caught by Serb soldiers. His uncle was explaining to him the purpose of being in the street at that moment, the Serbian paramilitary solider turn to his colleague and started to say, "Gypsies are hungry". He turned to my uncle saying, "you know if we find you somewhere we're going to kill you". In this way, illocutionary disablement represents a form of epistemic violence: the Roma were not only unheard but also punished or neglected for even trying to speak. Rifati[8] argues that an UN representative stated that "Oh, the Gypsies know how to take care of themselves. They're

[8] See more: https://dissidentvoice.org/Articles/Rifati_Kosovo.htm

nomads; they've lived all their lives like that." The power to define what constitutes a threat remained with others, while Roma was silenced through a systematic reinterpretation of their speech as a sign of threat or disloyalty. These examples not only show how silencing works but also highlight moments of defiance and strength. In the next section, I explore how the Roma community engaged in everyday acts of security, even when they were not officially recognized.

4.5 Emancipatory Acts: Security Through Survival and Care

The interviews uncover a variety of agency and resilience practices that align with Ali Bilgic's concept of emancipatory security, a bottom-up approach where security is established through everyday actions of survival, dignity, and refusal, despite their structural exclusion from dominant security discourses. Instead of looking to formal frameworks for recognition, participants reinterpreted what it meant to be safe in the face of systematic marginalization through small but impactful acts of resistance.

In the beginning of the war to survive they gave up a part of their identity (their names) they didn't had to change their names in their ID card but in public they needed to call each other with Serbian names. Tom argues that "In 1998- 1999, of course, if your name would be for example Jeton or have a Muslim name and surname that would be a huge actual problem... in school, for example, I could not reveal my real Albanian/Muslim name but instead I had to say I am Dragan or Ivan. And all of us, we had to change our names". When the war started several Roma families chose not to flee their homes, even under high risks. Tom recalled that after a Roma meeting the majority of the families they left but his family never moved. Although it lacks explicit political significance, this act is essential to Bilgic's idea of emancipatory practice because it expresses continuity and a refusal to give in to displacement. Also during this period Interpersonal defensive actions also become important indicators of agency. Andy described an incident in which a Roma merchant was threatened with

execution by a Serbian militia for supplying sugar to an Albanian neighbor whose son was killed in the war. By claiming that the gesture was innocent and all of them were neighbors, the witness stepped in and stopped the execution. He turned to Andy and told him "I won't kill him because of you, but if it happens again I will kill both of you". This intervention, which was based on community solidarity rather than official authority, serves as an example of how unofficial ethical commitments inside communities may give rise to resistance and security. As a practice of surviving, many Roma men sacrificed their bodies during the war. The interlocutors recall that many Roma were forced to join the military or to do the random jobs of Serbians or Albanians having two choices: to do what they were asking for or the entire family to be murdered. Tom described it, "We didn't want to do these things. But if we refused, they would hurt our families. We just wanted to make it to the next day." This is not resistance in conventional terms, but it is a strategy of survival, rooted in responsibility, fear, and protection. ERRC in their report also documented the case of a Roma women that was raped. In the report they stated that the woman had to sacrifice herself in order to protect her family[9]. "Fleeing from the war was another form of survival. As Sophia described: "We had to cover the babies' mouths with our hands so they wouldn't cry. If someone heard us, we were dead." The urgency of abandoning homes mid-meal, as Johni recalled: "My mom jumped off the truck to tell the neighbors to take the bread from the oven"—shows how escape was not just physical movement but also a rejection of the binary conflict altogether. The choice to leave was not surrender, but a tactic for life, reflecting Bilgic's view of security as rooted in lived experiences, where families mobilize knowledge, care, and fear to secure a future. Other attempts to protect memory and resist erasure also gave rise to emancipatory agency. As one respondent noted: "My community's pain should not be forgotten, yet no one truly discusses it. Our narratives shouldn't be irrelevant". As a kind of counter-narrative,

[9] See more: https://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=798

this evocation of communal memory challenges the silences that exist in post-conflict discourse by attempting to document Roma experiences in the historical record. Besides their position, the created identity by the main conflict groups there were attempts to document their war memories. Tom argues that "The Swiss development Agency is one of the biggest donors here in Kosovo who is working with the histories from the past. And when we were registered back in 2017, we could not enter this profile. No, because back then, Ramush Haradinaj, who was a general during the war back then, was a Prime Minister in 2017. How can you? How you can do the narratives about it because you are going to go directly against the government and against society in general. You cannot do these things". Besides being an attempt to talk about their experiences even in post conflict time Romas are living in insecurity. Lastly, several individuals talked about how their marginalizations experiences influenced their post-war participation as Roma. Some joined civic society, coordinating with foreign organizations, translating for displaced families, or promoting Roma rights. Ben, one of the participants said, "This is how I became a human rights activist," referring to his journey from victim to advocate after working in refugee camps with UNHCR and KFOR. Emancipatory security may develop into persistent campaigns for justice and acknowledgement, as seen by several types of post-war organizing. These simple, everyday actions represent a kind of grassroots security that pushes back against the prevailing systems. They also show how the Roma have taken back their voice and meaning in a world that often tries to exclude them.

4.6 Reclaiming Voice: From Silence to Meaningful Presence

In this final section, we pull together the insights we've discussed to highlight how the Roma's experiences of security during the Kosovo War can't be fully grasped through the usual state-centered or military views of security. Instead, we need to look at it through the lens of exclusion and resistance—where their voices are often stifled or misunderstood, yet their survival becomes a

powerful act of agency. Using Bertrand's (2018) framework on silencing, we observed that Roma voices were systematically pushed out of the security conversation. They faced not just neglect when they attempted to speak (illocutionary frustration), but also punishment for their efforts (illocutionary disablement), and in many instances, they were simply not given a chance to voice their concerns at all (locutionary silencing). One participant remarked, "We were not Serbs, we were not Albanians. So no one listened to us." This silence wasn't just a coincidence—it was woven into the narrative of the conflict, shaped by both local players and international bodies. However, that's only part of the picture. The interviews also shed light on how Roma individuals pushed back against this silencing not through grand protests or formal political movements, but through everyday acts of care, survival, and remembrance. Following Bilgic, these actions are political in their own right. When Roma families chose to stay in their homes despite threats, when they looked out for one another, when they fled with their children to ensure their safety, or when they documented their experiences these were all ways of crafting security from the bottom up. As Sophie respondent expressed: "We didn't want to run. But we also didn't want to be killed. So we stayed quiet, we stayed alive." In Raxhmi's work she claims that Roma were encountering violence, fears for their life. From her field notes she shows that Roma from Kosovo were not going out of the house to survive "During the war, we did not dare go outside. Until KFOR forces came, we lived in fear of attacks from our neighbors" (Sula-Raxhimi 2019). By merging the insights from Bertrand and Bilgic, we recognize that the Roma were not merely victims of war—they were also active agents of security. Even when their voices were muted, their actions spoke volumes. Even when they went unrecognized by the state or international entities, they forged their own paths to safety.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Implications

This thesis goes beyond criticizing the limitations of security theory; it also offers a new vision of security, one that hears the voices of the most silenced individuals and acknowledges their power to express themselves, act, and survive in the face of neglect. The goal of this thesis was to explore a fundamental question: How did Roma communities survive during a conflict in which they were supported by neither side? How did they negotiate life under threat without protection from either Serb or Albanian factions, or from international actors? To delve into this, I integrated postcolonial and emancipatory security frameworks to investigate how Roma were marginalized, misrepresented, and excluded from prevailing security narratives. At the same time, I highlighted their resilience in finding ways to survive, care for each other, and safeguard their communities in the face of inadequate institutional support.

5.1 Revisiting the Argument

In Chapter 1, I explored how security theory has evolved over time, starting from its traditional realist and state-centric roots, moving through the Copenhagen School, and finally reaching the feminist, postcolonial, and emancipatory critiques that highlight its shortcomings. Notably, the critiques from Hansen and Bertrand revealed that marginalized groups, particularly racialized minorities like the Roma often find themselves unable to "speak" security or be acknowledged as individuals deserving of protection. Building on these insights, Chapter 2 presented a blended analytical framework.

Bertrand's typology of silencing helped pinpoint the various ways Roma voices were stifled through locutionary silencing, illocutionary frustration, and illocutionary disablement. Meanwhile, Bilgic's idea of emancipatory security shed light on the subtle yet impactful acts of care, resistance, and survival that allowed Roma communities to carve out their own forms of protection and meaning. Chapter 3 laid out the historical and political context for the empirical analysis. It illustrated that the Roma faced structural marginalization long before the Kosovo War erupted. During the conflict, their ambiguous status caught between being neither Albanian nor Serb left them vulnerable to violence from both sides, while international peacebuilders overlooked them, focusing only on the main conflict parties. This neglect persisted into the post-war era, resulting in many Roma being displaced, unprotected, and politically voiceless. Chapter 4 took the analytical framework and applied it to interviews with Roma individuals who experienced the conflict firsthand. It showed that while Roma voices were frequently silenced or misinterpreted as acts of betrayal, the community also cultivated grassroots security practices. These included changing their names to evade persecution, staying put to safeguard their homes, assisting neighbors in survival, and later engaging in civil society as advocates for Roma rights. In this way, the empirical analysis highlighted the resilience and agency of the Roma community.

5.2 Theoretical Contributions

This thesis makes significant contributions to critical security studies in three key areas: First, it broadens the scope of securitization theory by emphasizing that having a voice goes beyond just speaking; it also involves being heard, recognized, and interpreted in a fair manner. Bertrand's typology serves as a valuable framework for understanding why expressions of fear, neutrality, or suffering from the Roma community are often overlooked or even punished. This highlights that securitization is not solely about the act of speaking, but also about the power dynamics that determine whether that speech is treated as a matter of security. Second, it enriches understanding of agency within security

studies by illustrating how resistance can arise from care, memory, and the struggle for everyday survival. Bilgic's emancipatory perspective reinterprets Roma actions not as failed attempts to engage with official discourse, but as legitimate and meaningful practices in their own right. This shift encourages us to focus more on lived experiences rather than just institutional recognition. Lastly, it brings Roma experiences to the forefront as a case of subaltern security, providing fresh insights into how racialized minorities navigate the realities of war. The Roma community is frequently marginalized in both academic discussions and international policy. By amplifying their voices, this thesis challenges prevailing narratives of conflict and contributes to a decolonial perspective in international relations.

5.3 Policy Implications

This thesis is rooted in both theory and interviews, but it also has real-world applications. First, humanitarian efforts and post-conflict reconstruction need to move past simplistic models that only see people as "victims" or "perpetrators" based on their ethnic backgrounds. As we discussed in Chapter 4, Roma communities often faced punishment for actions they didn't commit, simply because they didn't fit neatly into defined national identities. Next, it's crucial that policies are crafted with input from marginalized communities. The silencing of voices doesn't just happen during conflict; it continues when Roma are left out of reconstruction plans, legal support, or opportunities to share their stories. Transitional justice initiatives, documentation efforts, and reparations should actively involve Roma voices not just as "informants" but as essential partners in shaping memory and accountability. Lastly, international organizations need to start recognizing non-state actors as key players in security discussions. The experiences of the Roma show that just because a group lacks a state doesn't mean they don't have security needs or practices. We need to rethink how security is provided to better align with the realities faced by those who exist outside of formal recognition.

5.4 Future Research

This study has its limitations, particularly due to the small number of interviews and its focus on one specific minority group within a single conflict. Future research could broaden this work by looking at the experiences of other marginalized groups, like the Rohingya in Myanmar or Afro-Colombians in Latin America. Another important avenue would be to engage with Roma youth in post-war Kosovo today and examine how the legacy of silencing influences their current feelings of security and citizenship.

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