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Raping and Killing Versus Raping and Impregnating: An Atrocity Primer for Ethnic Cleansing in the Balkans

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Abstract. This article describes political psychological aspects of rape as a tool of ethnic cleansing. In the article, rape denotes only the forced sexual behavior by males against females.

Rape plays many useful roles among the perpetrators of ethnic cleansing. First, it provides sexual gratification for the perpetrators without the social expectations, obligations, or responsibilities of maintaining a personal relationship or of fathering a child. This "freebie"--this sense of getting something for nothing--obviates the need of the politico-military authorities engendering ethnic cleansing to take alternative measures to satisfy military personnel's "social hygiene." (Analysts who claim that rape is only an act that satisfies aggressive, not sexual, needs are their own ideological captives whose senses of reality are essentially being raped.)

Second, rape reinforces the situational disinhibition of sets of normative social standards and the depersonalization of ethnic rivals. From the ethnic cleansers' perspective there hopefully is significant generalization to facilitate other seemingly necessary acts that violate normative social standards against the targeted ethnic group such as the (1) random, arbitrary, ad hoc, or systematic murder and dismemberment of individuals and (2) destruction of homes, schools, and religious edifices. In essence, this situational disinhibition of normative standards creates new situational norms.

Third, rape can reinforce an attitude of hopelessness, helplessness, and terror--but not only among those of the targeted ethnic group who are raped and among those who know or believe that they are liable to be raped. Other attitudinal victims include those people (1) who know and believe that they should do what is necessary to stop the rapes but cannot stop them, (2) who are still normatively socialized and who merely are informed of the rapes of others, and (3) who view and drift towards viewing the rapes as an ineluctable demeaning of their ethnic group.

A more complex Issue might revolve around the merits of choosing a policy of raping and killing women versus raping and impregnating women--the latter with the goal of forcing women to carry and bear the children of their adversaries. Which of the two best facilitates ethnic cleansing? Both, obviously, are associated with the psychological consequences described above. As well, both seem to empirically increase the probability that members of the targeted ethnic group flee a contested area. The purposeful impregnation of women, however, seems to bring additional benefits for the ethnic cleanser.

For example, the defiling of a woman without her subsequent killing can create noxious dynamics between her and loved ones as well as other members of the ethnic community. Unfortunately, the woman is likely to be derogated if not blamed and shunned for something that she was forced to experience. Sometimes, the dynamics can even lead to the killing of the woman by her "own kind." Moreover, the dynamics can lead to the demeaning, derogation and excessive control of many women who are not yet victims--on the part of their "own kind." In essence, women become victims of their "own kind" and often traditional and even sacred bonds and rituals between and among men, women,

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and children among the targeted ethnic group become sullied for generations. A result is that ethnicity is being cleansed from the targeted ethnic group.

In fact, the singular consequences of rape with the intent of impregnation should--in the context of ethnic cleansing--qualify it as an example of genocide, war crime, and a crime against humanity. That this conclusion could be controversial suggests a high index of sexism endemic to international and foreign policy analysts. (See Holzman, C.G. (1996). Counseling adult women rape survivors: Issues of race, ethnicity, and class. *Women and Therapy*, 19, 47-62; Neville, H.A., & Heppner, M.J. (1999). Contextualizing rape: Reviewing sequelae and proposing a culturally inclusive ecological model of sexual assault recovery. *Applied and Preventive Psychology*, 8, 41-62; Perlez, J. (April 10, 1999). Serbs seal off refugees who face starvation, U.S. says. *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com>; Sorenson, S.B. (1996). Violence against women: Examining ethnic differences and commonalties. *Evaluation Review*, 20, 123-145; Vrij, A., & Fischer, A. (1996). The role of displays of emotions and ethnicity in judgments of rape victims. *International Review of Victimology*, 4, 255-265.) (Keywords: Ethnic Cleansing, Rape.)