Are Apologies Just Symbolic Politics? A Case Study of Serbian Apologies Towards Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina

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Foreword by Patrick M Kuhn

Political reconciliation is a key element of peace building in post-conflict societies. While most existing literature has focused on the creation of democratic power-sharing institutions and the establishment and impact of truth commissions, the act of apologising has received much less scholarly attention. Are political apologies just cheap talk or can they contribute to political forgiveness and reconciliation? What elements must an apology have to be effective? This working paper tackles these questions by embedding the political apology in the process of political reconciliation. It argues that the quality of an apology affects the extent of political forgiveness, which in turn affects the level of political reconciliation. Often, several apologies are necessary leading to a 'cycle of apologies', which, if done right, progressively increase in quality over time, fostering complete forgiveness, and contributing to maximal reconciliation. Assessing this claim empirically, the paper develops an elaborate research design by combining a within-case comparative design with process tracing, ruling out key alternative explanations and tracking empirically the proposed causal pathway. Focusing on the Yugoslav Wars (1991-1995), it compares the quality of Serbian political apologies for war atrocities towards Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) and finds overwhelming support for its argument: the higher quality of Serbia's political apologies towards Croatia, compared to BiH, fostered greater political forgiveness and resulted in greater political reconciliation. In light of this working paper's argument and empirical findings, research on reconciliation and restorative justice may give more attention to the role and quality of political apologies, further broadening the scope of research in this area.

Abstract

The prevalence of apologies in modern politics has left the international community expectant of moral repentance. Simultaneously, the increasing focus on restorative justice in reconstructing war-torn environments has propelled ideas of forgiveness and reconciliation into political rhetoric. In developing an understanding of the relationship between these processes, this paper asks if the quality of a political apology positively impacts the level of political reconciliation in post-conflict societies. The paper suggests that there is a relationship between the explanatory factor 'the quality of a political apology', the causation factor 'political forgiveness' and the outcome 'the level of political reconciliation'. This link is explored through a comparative case study analysis using a process tracing framework. The case study concerns the apologies offered by Serbia's political elite to Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina respectively, for the atrocities committed by Serbia during the Yugoslav Wars of 1991 to 1995. It argues that the quality of a political apology has the potential to impact the level of political reconciliation achieved, thereby challenging the notion that apologies are just symbolic politics driven by governmental self-interest. This paper contributes to the literature on restorative justice by providing a novel insight into the nature and potential of a political apology in the restoration of societies after modern conflicts.

Acknowledgements

About the Author

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List of Abbreviations

BiH	Bosnia-Herzegovina
CDR	Community driven reconstruction
EU	European Union
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia
SFRY	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
TRC	Truth and reconciliation commission

1 Introduction

Apologies have become a major phenomenon in modern politics. Offered on both a domestic and international scale, the prevalence of political apologies has sparked some scholars to refer to the modern era as 'the age of apology and forgiveness' (Brooks 1999, Howard-Hassmann and Gibney 2007, Lind 2010). In 2008, Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, apologised to the Stolen Generations. In 2010, British Prime Minister, David Cameron, apologised for the actions of soldiers on Bloody Sunday. In 2011, the Dutch Government apologised for the 1947 Rawagede massacre in Indonesia. In 2015, US President, Barack Obama, apologised for the air strike on the hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan. In 2017, Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, apologised for the oppression of LGBTQ+ Canadians. However, with the international community expectant of apologies and moral repentance, is this 'apology mania' just symbolic politics driven by governmental self-interest or do apologies offered by political elites actually make a difference (Beauchamp 2007, Taft 2000)?

I ask the question: does the quality of a political apology positively impact the level of political reconciliation in post-conflict societies?

Previous literature on the use of restorative justice within the international community has focused on the role and potential of restorative actions in reconstructing post-conflict societies. Of particular interest are truth and reconciliation commissions (TRCs) and community driven reconstruction (CDR) programmes. Within this paradigm, scholars have focused on three processes: apology, forgiveness and reconciliation (see Amstutz 2005, Bennet 2002, Digeser 2001, Govier 2002, Govier and Verwoerd 2002a, 2002b, Kohen 2009, Ricoeur 2000, Schaap 2003, Shriver 1995, Tavuchis 1991, Vandevelde 2013). However, there is a lack of consensus as to the nature and potential of these mechanisms. Tavuchis (1991: 122) does not believe the connection between an apology and forgiveness has been "adequately addressed". Ricoeur (2000) states that there is no politics in forgiveness while the Arendtian (1998) account of politics affords forgiveness an indispensable role. For Kohen (2009), political reconciliation cannot proceed without both a public apology and forgiveness, but he places less importance on the order in which the processes occur. Bennet (2002), however, understands forgiveness as the final term of reconciliation. In contrast, Digeser (2001) does not consider forgiveness a necessary precondition for political reconciliation and Govier (2002: 141) similarly argues that "reconciliation can exist without forgiveness". This paper suggests that there is a gap in research regarding the process which links an apology to reconciliation. I aim to contribute to this puzzle through analysing the relationship between the explanatory

factor 'the quality of a political apology', the causation factor 'political forgiveness' and the outcome 'the level of political reconciliation'.

I argue that the quality of a political apology affects political forgiveness. I consider political forgiveness to be the causal mechanism which, in turn, affects the level of political reconciliation. I assess the quality of a political apology through eight core factors: an appropriate actor, the correct form, a public nature, a ceremonial aspect, an act supporting the apology, an expression of collective responsibility, an explicit commitment to restoring the relationship, and an acknowledgement of wrongdoing with an expression of remorse. A *good* political apology contains all eight factors, while a *satisfactory* political apology contains some, but not all, of the eight factors. I consider political forgiveness to be evidenced by a change in the offended political community's attitude measured by two elements: (i) a release in negative emotions by the offended political elite and (ii) a vision of a joint future. Complete political forgiveness will contain both complete elements, any lower value will be considered incomplete political forgiveness. Political reconciliation encompasses two levels. I term the lower level 'democratic political reconciliation' and the higher level 'maximal political reconciliation'. I regard evidence of the latter as an expression of explicit commitment by the offended political community to restore friendship between groups. I also theorise that achieving maximal political reconciliation is a process requiring multiple apologies which I will term a 'cycle of apologies'.

I propose three hypotheses. First, that a *good* political apology fosters complete political forgiveness which achieves maximal political reconciliation. Second, that a *satisfactory* political apology fosters incomplete political forgiveness which leads to democratic political reconciliation. Third, if the quality of the political apology increases throughout the cycle, political forgiveness will increase and thus there will be a higher level of political reconciliation. If this is the case, I expect maximal political reconciliation to be achieved at the end of the 'cycle of apologies'.

To empirically assess my hypothesis, I will carry out a comparative case study analysis using a process tracing framework. My case study analysis concerns the apologies for atrocities committed during the Yugoslav Wars of 1991 to 1995. I will compare four apologies from Serbia's political elite to Croatia (Case Study A) and four apologies from Serbia's political elite to Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) (Case Study B). While it is necessary to acknowledge that war-time atrocities targeting Serbia were committed by Croatia and BiH, this paper concerns the atrocities committed by Serbia. Serbia is considered as the perpetrator of the worst war-time atrocities by the populations of both Croatia and BiH (Çanga 2011). Given that the three

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countries were part of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), my comparative case study amounts *de facto* to a within-country comparison.

For each case study, my process tracing approach will involve assessing the four apologies against my eight core factors. I will then examine the attitudes of the offended political community in response to each apology to deduce whether political forgiveness has occurred. Based on the quality of each apology and whether incomplete or complete political forgiveness has occurred, I will assess the level of political reconciliation. Lastly, I will examine the 'cycle of apologies' by analysing the progression of core factors in each apology and the trends in political forgiveness.

My case study analysis supports all three of my hypotheses. In Case Study A, as the 'cycle of apologies' progresses, the number of core factors increases significantly. The higher the number of core factors, the stronger the political forgiveness offered by the Croatian political elite. By the fourth apology, all eight core factors of a *good* political apology are present as well as two complete elements of political forgiveness. Consequently, maximal political reconciliation is achieved.

In Case Study B, there is only a minimal increase in the number of core factors present as the cycle progresses. The 'cycle of apologies' encompasses four *satisfactory* political apologies that do not create the requisite conditions for complete political forgiveness. Therefore, the cycle ends with democratic political reconciliation. This demonstrates that if the quality of the *satisfactory* political apologies does *not* increase during the cycle and amount to a *good* apology, complete political forgiveness will *not* be fostered and therefore maximal political reconciliation will *not* occur.

My research aims to classify the quality of the political apology in order to determine its impact on political reconciliation and help grasp some of the complexities that mark restorative justice.

2   Restorative Justice: A Theoretical Overview

The growing scholastic field exploring restorative justice recognises three central processes: apology, forgiveness and reconciliation reconciliation (see Amstutz 2005, Bennet 2002, Digeser 2001, Govier 2002, Govier and Verwoerd 2002a, 2002b, Kohen 2009, Ricoeur 2000, Schaap 2003, Shriver 1995, Tavuchis 1991, Vandevelde 2013). While progress is shown to have been made in considering the nature and potential of apology, forgiveness and

reconciliation, respectively, analyses remain limited regarding the interconnecting dynamics between these processes. This paper suggests that there is a gap in research regarding the relationship between a political apology, political forgiveness and political reconciliation and, specifically, that there is potential to explore the process through which a political apology reaches political reconciliation.

Restorative justice emerged in response to the inherent limitations of retributive justice. Retribution upholds that the credibility of the rule of law demands that wrongdoing be prosecuted and punished. While strict legalism contributes to regime accountability, such retribution is problematic when facing systematic political violence. Rather, the primary challenge may be to foster cooperation or a political order grounded in the restoration of civic values (Amstutz 2005). However, while there is a growing scholastic interest in restorative justice, the concept has no single meaning or a single practice (Johnstone and Van Ness 2007, McCold 1998, Zernova 2007). Broadly, the term denotes a series of processes aimed at repairing harm that a criminal offense inflicts on victims and communities (Braithwaite 1999). On a practical level, restorative justice has become the concern of both legal theorists and Human Rights activists (Stovel 2010). Recently, truth and reconciliation commissions have been set up in an increasing number of post conflict societies from South Africa, arguably the most famous, to Latin America, Africa, Europe, South East Asia, the Caribbean and the Far East (Borer 2006). This paper further explores the scholarship on the central process within restorative justice: apology, forgiveness and reconciliation.

Apologies, according to Winter (2015: 262-263), "bring together different combinations to realise different values in different contexts" but, at a basic level, every apology must have a set of "existence conditions". Adopting Austin's (1962) terminology, we can consider the "existence conditions" to have three elements: the 'verdictive' confirms the wrongdoing; the 'attributive' establishes the blameworthiness; and the 'participatory' establishes the identity of those offering and accepting the apology. While the structure of apologising is traditionally rooted in an interpersonal model, the mechanisms involved can be applied to a collective level (Tavuchis 1991). In the realm of politics, apologies are best understood as part of the Human Rights revolution, which focuses on establishing and understanding truth (Gibney and Roxstrom 2001). Apologies can be split into two categories: historical political apologies and contemporary political apologies (Celermajer 2009, Wilson and Bleiker 2013). The former relates to injustices in the past while the latter refers to recent trauma. Several scholars consider apologies to re-establish the governing moral framework that binds the state to not only external conduct but also to internal matters such as judicial decisions (Celermajer 2009,

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Jennings and Watts 1992, McGonegal 2009). According to Wilson and Bleiker (2013), who draw heavily on Cunningham's (1999) analysis, there are five types of actors who play important roles in offering political apologies: individuals; professional and commercial organisations; religious organisations; spiritual leaders; and the state. Thaler (2012: 267) upholds that observers must judge a political apology by the "consequences they trigger". As Gibney and Roxstrom (2001) underline, apologies have considerable potential as political statements. While there is currently a lack of understanding as to what factors make apologies successful, it is universally recognised that their value lies in the ability to foster forgiveness. Accordingly, it is necessary to explore the literature on forgiveness.

Arendt (1959) identifies forgiveness as one of the key human capacities that make possible genuine social change. Numerous authors have acknowledged the origins of forgiveness as an interpersonal and spiritual notion rooted in Jewish and Christian religious traditions (see Amstutz 2005, Arendt 1998, Celermajer 2009, McGonegal 2009, Tutu 1999). However, recent scholarship has stepped outside the individual and spiritual realm to focus on the nature and potential of collective forgiveness in politics (see Amstutz 2005, Digeser 2001, Govier 2002, Schaap 2003, Shriver 1995, Vandevelde 2013). In thinking about this facet of forgiveness, literature on the South African truth and reconciliation commission is instructive. While there is certainly a lack of consensus among scholars as to the success of the TRC, the thoughts of Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela are nonetheless insightful. Tutu (1999) emphasises that there is "no future without forgiveness" while Mandela promoted unilateral forgiveness as a separate restorative act from both personal and political reconciliation (Kohen 2009). For Shriver (1995), political forgiveness links realism to hope, aiming to prevent the future from repeating atrocities. Appleby (2000: 195) considers the value of political forgiveness to lie in the ability to overcome the "vicious cycle of charges and counter charges of political victimisation". However, formal understandings of forgiveness in reconciling and reconstructing a post conflict society remain in its infancy (Hartwell 1999). To better grasp this concept, it is necessary to examine the scholarship on reconciliation.

De Gamboa (1999) succinctly highlights the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation, defining the former as a virtue and the latter as a collective practice and policy. Several scholars view reconciliation as the telos of restorative justice (Amstutz 2005, Kiss 2000). However, there is limited understanding as to the theoretical underpinnings of reconciliation (Cilliers et al. 2016). Hamber's (2009: 159-160) Five Strand Reconciliation Model defines reconciliation as a process involving five interwoven strands: developing a shared vision; acknowledging and dealing with the past; building positive relationships;

significant cultural and attitudinal change; and substantial social, economic and political change. Stovel (2010) terms reconciliation to incorporate three levels: individual, group and national reconciliation. Political reconciliation is a sub-category of Stovel's (2010) national reconciliation. De Gamboa (1999) defines reconciliation as a political goal connected to the normative ideals of inclusion, political equality and reasonableness. I am particularly interested in the conception of political reconciliation. Murphy (2010) considers political reconciliation to have a normative framework with three elements: the rule of law interpreted via Fuller's (1969) eight principles of legality; an attitude of political trust and the expectation that trust will be reliable; and respect for individual's political capabilities. For Christodoulidis (2000), political reconciliation is predicated on recasting the present as the point of origin while Lederach and Jenner (2002) consider it a basis of sustainable peace.

While scholars concur on the three central processes in restorative justice, literature on the interconnecting dynamics between these processes is underdeveloped. Regarding the relationship between apology and forgiveness, Tavuchis (1991: 122) states that despite acknowledging "forgiveness as a crucial element in the apologetic equation", the connection has not been "adequately addressed". There is also a lack of consensus in discussiona on the relationship between forgiveness and reconciliation. The Arendtian (1998) account of politics affords forgiveness an indispensable role in political life. In contrast, Ricoeur (2000) believes there is no politics in forgiveness. Govier (2002: 141) argues that "reconciliation can exist without forgiveness". He believes that people can work towards a common goal without reflecting on past wrongs, but they cannot build a lasting peace if they remain angry. Similarly, for Digeser (2001), the major rationale for political forgiveness is that it *can* foster the restoration of communal relationships by promoting both the *process* and the *state* of reconciliation. The *process* promotes the restoration of trust and civility while the state "settles the past and opens possibilities for the future" (Digeser 2001: 20-21). For Kohen (2009), political reconciliation cannot proceed without a public apology from prominent offenders and the offering of forgiveness from prominent victims. He also places less importance on the order in which an apology and forgiveness occur (Kohen 2010). Bennet (2002), on the other hand, understands forgiveness to be the final term of reconciliation.

In summary, scholarship clearly recognises three central processes in restorative justice: apology, forgiveness and reconciliation. While some scholars explore the link between an apology and forgiveness as well as the link between forgiveness and reconciliation, analyses of the interconnecting dynamics remain both contested and largely underdeveloped. I have identified a gap regarding the relationship between all three processes and, specifically, that

there is potential to explore the link connecting a political apology to political reconciliation. Therefore, my research seeks to shed light on the complex relationship between a political apology, political forgiveness and political reconciliation.

3 Re-Conceptualising the Road to Political Reconciliation

I aim to investigate the impact of political apologies on the quality of political reconciliation. To do so, this paper draws upon the literature on transitional justice and peacebuilding, with a focus on the nexus to conflict resolution. More specifically, I use the concepts within restorative justice theory to link my explanatory factor 'the quality of an apology', my causation factor 'political forgiveness' and the outcome 'the level of political reconciliation'. I will argue that the quality of an apology affects political forgiveness. I consider political forgiveness to be the causal mechanism which, in turn, affects the level of political reconciliation. I theorise that achieving the highest level of political reconciliation is a process requiring several apologies. This process is represented as a 'cycle of apologies'. First, I define key terms: political forgiveness, a political apology, a cycle of apologies and political reconciliation. Second, I analyse the relationship between the explanatory factor, causation factor and outcome.

Political forgiveness depends on "the capacity and willingness of groups to fulfil the requisite conditions" (Amstutz 2005: 74). There are three requisite conditions that I consider to be particularly valuable in defining this term. First, the importance of consensus on truth. Political forgiveness will only occur if the conflicting groups are able to agree on the nature, causes and responsibility of past offenses. Second, it is important for the offender to demonstrate remorse through an apology and, in response, for the victim to forgo vengeance (Amstutz 2005). Third, interaction is considered paramount if attitudinal changes and moral virtues that foster the restoration of relationships are to occur. Considering this, I will define political forgiveness as an act where political communities lead society by agreeing on the nature, responsibility and causes of offenses, accepting an apology and renouncing vengeance, thus fostering an interactive process promoting the renewal of political relationships.

A political apology is defined as an official apology given by a representative of an offending state or party (Thompson 2005). While numerous scholars have analysed what constitutes *successful* political forgiveness, literature on a *good* political apology remains limited. Given that the primary goal of an apology is to foster successful forgiveness, I draw

upon the discussion surrounding *successful* political forgiveness in order to define a *good* political apology. Vandevelde (2013) explains that forgiveness needs to represent the whole community while Digeser (1998: 706) considers it necessary for political forgiveness to be compatible with "an independent, active citizenry". Therefore, whoever offers the apology must substantially and appropriately represent both the political and wider community. The two scholars also discuss the importance of public discourse by the political community so that the wrong committed is publicly acknowledged before political forgiveness is offered (Digeser 1998, Vandevelde 2013). Action-based models draw on the "performative character of political forgiveness" thereby placing importance on actions reinforcing the words of apology (Digeser 1998: 705). While sentiment-based models of political forgiveness reinforce the restoration of human relationships as an end goal (Shriver 1995). Ash (1998) states that knowledge and acknowledgement are necessary preconditions when offering forgiveness. Amstutz (2005: 74) emphasises that, for offenders, "the collective must admit culpability" thus placing emphasis on mutual responsibility for past offenses. In this context, I consider a *good* political apology to contain eight core factors: an appropriate actor, the correct form, a public nature, a ceremonial aspect, an act supporting the apology, an expression of collective responsibility, an explicit commitment to restoring the relationship, and an acknowledgement of wrongdoing with an expression of remorse. A political apology is *satisfactory* if some, but not all, of the eight core factors are present.

Alongside defining what constitutes a *good* political apology, it is useful to also consider the process by which political apologies (re-)build fractured relationships. I, again, draw on political forgiveness literature. Vandevelde (2013) categorises political forgiveness as a "process of transformation". Govier and Verwoerd (2002b) have linked this process to the (re-)building of trust where trust is defined as the attitude of "confident expectation" through which people anticipate the other individual's or group's willingness to act in a decent manner. My 'cycle of apologies' embodies this "process of transformation" (Vandervelde, 2013). I term a 'cycle of apologies' to be multiple apologies by the same actor and between the same antagonistic political communities. I consider the 'same actor' to be representatives of the same political community and 'multiple' to be four apologies.

At a basic level, political reconciliation accommodates hostile groups within the same political system or community, defined by values of fair coexistence and even competition (Ugarriza and Nussio 2017). Authors also stress that these groups must be moving towards a commonly built future (Hayner 2002, Ridby 2001, Schaap 2005, Ugarriza and Nussio 2017). Villa-Vicencio (2009: 5) describes this as a "commitment to the long haul of political

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confidence", while Govier and Verwoerd (2002b) emphasise the role of mutually trusting groups dealing peacefully and respectfully with challenges to their relationship. Considering this, I will define political reconciliation to be the process of (re-)building political relationships and political institutions so that previously antagonistic groups coexist within a commonly accepted political system and work towards a shared, realistic and sustainable vision of peace involving a minimum level of political harmony and cooperation.

Alongside defining political reconciliation, it is necessary to assess the different levels of political reconciliation. In order to identify the differentiating criteria, we must define a rebuilt (good) political relationship. Developing Crocker's (2000) classification, Amstutz (2005) categorises three depths of political reconciliation: minimal, democratic and maximal. The lowest level is 'minimal reconciliation' defined as "nonlethal coexistence" that involves an end of violence but not necessarily a resolution of the causes (Amstutz 2005: 99). The middle level is 'democratic reconciliation' defined as an intermediary form of peace that is achieved by "commitment to democratic virtues" (Amstutz 2005: 100). As there are no shared aspirations or values, democratic procedures are used to create a peaceful environment. Encarnación (2008) emphasises that failure to confront the past is not a hindrance to democratisation. The highest level is 'maximal reconciliation' defined as the ending of enmity and the restoration of friendship through forgiveness with the "reformation of people's cultural values and political attitudes" (Amstutz 2005: 99). I have built on this framework to define my two levels of political reconciliation – democratic political reconciliation and maximal political reconciliation. At the lower level is democratic political reconciliation. This has incomplete political forgiveness offered by the offended political elite – at worst there will be none and at best there will be partial – but there is a commitment to working towards a shared, realistic and sustainable vision of peace through democratic institutions. At the higher level is maximal political reconciliation. At this level, complete political forgiveness is offered by the offended political elite thus resulting in the restoration of friendship between political communities.

Having defined key terms, I will now analyse the relationship between these processes. In short, a *good* political apology is considered a "vital precondition to political forgiveness" and therefore acts as a "prelude to reconciliation" (Amstutz 2005: 182, Tavuchis 1991: 109).

Analysing the eight core factors of a *good* political apology is instrumental to understanding this relationship. Without an acknowledgement of wrongdoing with an expression of remorse, victims are unlikely to view the apology as genuine or respond with compassion. A public admission of the wrongs issued in the correct form and by an appropriate actor works to "put things on record" (Tavuchis 1991: 109). This demonstrates that the

wrongdoer values the principle of accountability. Assuming collective responsibility further reinforces accountability. It also openly recognises human dignity and legitimates the feelings of the victims (Govier and Verwoerd 2002a). This fosters empathy among the victims. An apology is considered most effective when supplemented by tangible acts (Amstutz 2005). A ceremonial aspect and an act supporting the apology reinforce the words of apology and the sincerity of the act, thereby reducing the distrust of the victim.

However, offering a *good* political apology and achieving complete political forgiveness is not instant but rather an interactive process. This is represented by the 'cycle of apologies'. The cycle initiates the renewal of political relationship and thus "opens up the path to a new relationship" (Solzhenitsyn 1974: 133-134). By repeating, reinforcing and increasing the number of eight core factors in consecutive apologies, the cycle facilitates an alternative development rooted in the renewal of social trust (Amstutz 2005). Collectively, the eight core factors engender complete political forgiveness. By agreeing on the nature, responsibility and causes of offenses and accepting the apology, the offended political community "resist the power of the past to determine the possibilities of the present" (Schaap 2003: 82). Renouncing vengeance helps the political communities to adopt mutually constructive attitudes that foster the restoration of political harmony. However, if the number of eight core factors does not increase in the 'cycle of apologies', the interactive process does not have the same success. Instead, the consecutive apologies will only foster partial political forgiveness.

Numerous scholars emphasise that political forgiveness is not a prerequisite for political reconciliation (see Huyse 2003, Digeser 2001, Eiskovits 2004, Villa-Vicencio 2009). Former adversaries do not need to forgive each other in order to interact in an acceptable manner. Gutmann and Thompson (2000) promote the concept of "democratic reciprocity" which upholds a recognition that others are our fellow citizens and that we should treat them as such if a willingness to reciprocate this behaviour is demonstrated. That is, a lack of deep social harmony does not prevent political communities from acting in a way that promotes democratic norms and development. This clearly links to my concept of "democratic political reconciliation" that signifies a commitment to working towards a shared, realistic and sustainable vision of peace through democratic institutions but does not require complete political forgiveness. However, while political forgiveness is not considered a prerequisite for political reconciliation, it is considered to improve the quality of political reconciliation (see Amstutz 2005, Govier 2002, Kohen et al. 2011). Political forgiveness allows for deeper political reconciliation because it creates an opportunity to move beyond irreconcilable differences (Kohen et al. 2011). Amstutz (2005: 86-87) terms this a 'superior approach'

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whereby backward-looking negative emotions are transformed into a forward-looking renewal and restoration. Digeser's (2001) notion of a "settlement with the past" elaborates that forgiveness promotes reconciliation by creating trust and civility among antagonistic groups. This not only helps restore the relationship but (re-)builds friendship between parties. This clearly relates to my concept of 'maximal political reconciliation' characterised by complete political forgiveness and the resultant restoration of friendship between political communities.

Considering this, I propose the following three hypotheses:

1) A *good* apology fosters complete political forgiveness which achieves maximal political reconciliation.

2) A *satisfactory* apology fosters incomplete political forgiveness which achieves democratic political reconciliation.

3) If the quality of the political apology significantly increases throughout the 'cycle of apologies', I expect maximal political reconciliation to be achieved by the end of the cycle.

4 Put to the Test: The Power of Political Apologies

To empirically assess my hypotheses, I will carry out a comparative case study analysis using a process tracing framework. This combination has two distinct advantages. By using a comparative case design, I can rule out alternative explanations via the case selection through holding cofounding variables constant. A process tracing approach enables me to provide both a detailed description and causal evidence on the process outlined in my theory.

My case study concerns the apologies for atrocities committed by Serbia during the Yugoslav Wars of 1991 to 1995. Having previously been a Kingdom between 1918 and 1941, SFRY was re-created in 1944. It consisted of six republics and two autonomous provinces: Slovenia, Croatia, BiH, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia as well as Kosovo and Vojvodina. The federal capital was Belgrade, Serbia. Following the death of communist leader Tito in 1980, SFRY fell into crisis and subsequently disintegrated. This dissolution was characterised by large-scale violence (see Bunce 1999, Gagro and Vukas 2012, Hadžić 2004, Lucarelli 2000). When Croatia declared independence in 1991, intense fighting developed as the Serb-dominated Yugoslav army assisted local Serbs to defend Serb populated areas. The international recognition of Croatia in January 1992 sparked widespread fighting in BiH. This

respective fighting continued until December 1995 when the leaders of BiH, Serbia and Croatia signed the Dayton Accord thereby restoring stability (Gagro and Vukas 2012).

This paper builds on scholarship analysing the reconciliation processes and political dialogue within former SFRY (see Fischer and Petrović-Ziemer 2013, Horelt 2016a, 2016b, Šćekić 2016). Beginning with an apology to Croatia issued by the Montenegrin President, Milo Dukanović, in June 2000, political representatives in the region have started to publicly acknowledge and apologise for war-time atrocities. I will compare four apologies from Serbia's political elite to Croatia (Case Study A) and four apologies from Serbia's political elite to BiH (Case Study B). In both case studies, Serbia is the offending political community and Croatia and BiH are the offended political community, respectively. As important dialogue between the countries, these apologies were widely covered by media outlets and were also the topic of political commentary. I sourced my analysis between February and March 2018. It is necessary to note two points about these countries. First, BiH contains a mixed population of three majority ethnic groups: Serbs, Croats and Serbo-Croat-speaking (Bosnian) Muslims, resulting in it being governed by a tripartite Presidency. The country is comprised of two main entities: The Federation of BiH – mostly Bosnian Muslims and Croats – and Republika Srpska – mainly Serbs – as well as Brčko District, a self-governing administrative unit in north-eastern BiH. Second, until 2006 – when Montenegro declared independence – Serbia and Montenegro were a federation. However, this was a loose federal structure in which the common state had only limited powers (Noutcheva and Huysseune 2004).

I chose to analyse Serbia, Croatia and BiH for two reasons. First, this case study offers bilateral apology processes. Serbia's political elite offered four respective apologies to each country within the same decade (2000 to 2010). Each of the apologies concerned the atrocities committed by Serbia during the Yugoslav Wars of 1991 to 1995. Therefore, this paper holds the number of apologies, the time frame, who was offering the apologies and the context constant. Second, Serbia, Croatia and BiH were all part of SFRY. Therefore, my comparative case study amounts *de facto* to a within-country comparison. By performing a within-country analysis, I minimise the risk of omitting variable bias allowing for a more robust assessment of the influence of my key explanatory variable (Lijphart 1971). My most similar case design allows me to rule out several key alternative explanations because the three nations shared ideological roots, a ruling government, cultural heritage, interactions with the international community and socioeconomic development. The home-grown communist system was largely ruled by a logic of totalitarianism (Lefort 1986). Even before the formation of SFRY, Yugoslavism was a recognisable discourse that had framed political action and cultural

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initiatives since the nineteenth century (Robinson 2011). Serbia, Croatia and BiH spoke dialects of the same 'polycentric' language, formerly called Serbo-Croatian (Declaration of the Common Language 2017). Christianity was the dominant religion. Although BiH's 'ethnic patchwork' included a notable Islamic presence, no group had "the numerical strength to claim the prerogative of titular nationality" (Dyker 1996: 53, Vejvoda 1996). In 1948, SFRY was expelled from Stalin's Cominform and became an important buffer state between the Cold War blocs. The success of Yugoslav market socialism brought an economic boom, prosperity in the 1960s and 70s resulting in an increased urban middle class population and, within the logic of totalitarianism, the introduction of Yugoslavs to Western consumerism. In addition to the within-country comparative case study, I also use a process tracing framework.

Process tracing, according to Collier (2011: 824), is an "analytic tool for drawing descriptive and causal inferences from the diagnostic pieces of evidence – often understood as part of a temporal sequence of events of phenomena". At the core of this method is the notion of concatenation: "the state of being linked together as in a chain or a linked series" (Waldner, 2012: 68). Collier (2011) discusses four causal tests used in process tracing to determine the strength of evidence: 'straw-in-the-wind', 'hoop', 'smoking-gun' and 'doubly decisive' tests. I will apply 'straw-in-the-wind' and 'doubly decisive' tests to my empirical analysis. 'Straw-in-the-wind' tests can affirm the relevance of a hypothesis, or suggest that it is not relevant, but do not confirm, or eliminate, it (Bennet 2010). I will classify the analysis of the individual apologies as 'straw-in-the-wind' tests. They will provide a benchmark in my investigation by giving an initial assessment of hypotheses 1 and 2. As Collier (2011: 826) adds, that "if a given hypothesis passes multiple straw-in-the-wind tests, it adds up to important affirmative evidence". This will be applicable if my analysis of multiple apologies points to the same conclusions. 'Doubly decisive' tests provide strong inferential leverage that confirms one hypothesis (Collier 2011). Bennet (2010) notes that while it is unusual for single cases to confirm a doubly decisive test, this may be achieved by combining multiple tests which support one explanation. This is applicable to hypothesis 3 in which I analyse the whole 'cycle of apologies'.

The key terms are a *good* political apology, political forgiveness and political reconciliation. The quality of a political apology is operationalised through the eight core factors. I consider if the appropriate actor is offering the apology. I evaluate when it is appropriate to apologise and the appropriate medium of the apology – this encompasses the correct form of an apology. I consider the public nature of an apology, whether it includes an accompanying ceremonial aspect or supporting act and an explicit commitment to restoring

relationships. I consider it important for the offender to assume collective responsibility as well as turning the knowledge of what has happened into the perpetrators' acknowledgement of the wrongfulness of his act and an expression of remorse.

Political forgiveness is evidenced by a change in the offending political community's attitude following an apology. The two elements evident of this change are:

(i) A release of negative emotions by representatives of the offended political elite: An example of this is Nelson Mandela's statement, upon being released from a 27-year prison confinement, that if he did not renounce his bitterness and hatred, he would still be in prison (Cowling 2014).

(ii) A vision of a joint future: An example of this is Desmond Tutu's ethic as chairman of South Africa's TRC where he argued that forgiveness held a central role in the political and moral reconstruction of a society characterised by distrust, enmity and division (Amstutz 2005).

I will assess these factors in the words and behaviours of the offended political community in response to the apology by Serbia's political elite.

Maximal political reconciliation is evidenced by an expression of explicit commitment by the offended political community to restore the friendship between groups. An example of this is Tutu's conception of political reconciliation (see Crocker 2000). Tutu's vision of a unified multiracial country was founded in *Ubuntu*, a South African indigenous tradition, which gives "primacy to social solidarity over institutionalism" and emphasises the "reconciliation of the wrongdoer with the victim and the society he has injured" (Amstutz 2005: 99, Crocker 2000: 9).

As Collier (2011: 824) explains, process tracing focuses on "the unfolding of events or situations *over time*". My two respective 'cycle of apologies' will enable me to demonstrate that a relationship has been repeatedly found and help explain the trajectories of causation in each case study.

The *descriptive* component of process tracing requires 'fine-grained description' evidence by "good snapshots at a series of specific moments" (Collier 2011: 825, 824). That is, alongside describing events *over time*, one must be able to describe them *at one point*. My snapshot moments provide an explanatory model describing the key steps in the process from which a *good* political apology and complete political forgiveness reaches maximal political reconciliation.

Collier (2011: 828) states that it is productive to start with a good narrative that lists the sequence of events. Therefore, I will start each case study with a timeline. Second, I will

chronologically assess the four apologies against my eight core factors. I will then examine the attitudes of the offended political community in response to each apology to deduce if my two elements of political forgiveness are present. Based on the quality of each political apology and whether incomplete or complete political forgiveness has been offered, I will assess the level of political reconciliation. Last, I will examine the 'cycle of apologies' as a whole through analysing the progression in the quality of the political apologies and the trends in political forgiveness.

5   An Analysis of Apologies: Are they Symbolic or Significant?

In the empirical analysis I test Serbia's political elite apologising to Croatia (Case Study A) and Serbia's political elite apologising to BiH (Case Study B) against my three hypotheses. In each case study, I assess the four apologies against my eight core factors. I then examine the attitudes of the offended political community in response to each apology to deduce whether political forgiveness has occurred. Based on the quality of each apology and whether incomplete or complete political forgiveness has occurred, I assess the level of political reconciliation. Lastly, I examine the 'cycle of apologies' as a whole through analysing the progression of core factors in each apology and the trends in political forgiveness. Case Study A provides support for all three of my hypotheses. First, that a *good* apology fosters complete political forgiveness which achieves maximal political reconciliation. Second, that a *satisfactory* apology fosters incomplete political forgiveness which achieves democratic political reconciliation. Third, that if the quality of the political apology significantly increases throughout the 'cycle of apologies', I expect maximal political reconciliation to be achieved by the end of the cycle. Case Study B provides considerable affirmative evidence for hypothesis 2 as well as adding weight to hypothesis 3.

The colour and numerical codes in Diagrams 1 and 2 and Tables 1 and 2 are:

	Present	1
	Only partially present	0.5
	Not present	0

5.1 Serbia's political elite apologising to Croatia: case study A

Case Study A analyses four apologies made by Serbia's political elite from December 2001, September 2003, June 2007 and November 2010. As the 'cycle of apologies' progresses, the number of core factors increases significantly. The higher the number of core factors, the stronger the political forgiveness offered by the Croatian political community. By the fourth apology, all eight core factors of a *good* political apology are present as well as two complete elements of political forgiveness. Consequently, maximal political reconciliation is achieved. Thus, Case Study A provides support for all three of my hypotheses.

Case Study A cycle part 1 / 4: On 14 December 2001, the Serbian and Montenegrin Foreign Minister – Goran Svilanović – apologised in Zagreb, Croatia. The apology has four complete core factors: a ceremonial aspect, a public nature, an act supporting the apology and a commitment to restoring the relationship. Issued on the first official state visit of a Serbian and Montenegrin Foreign Minister to Zagreb, the apology was clearly a public affair. Further, the apology was issued just after the 10th anniversary of the fall of Vukovar, Croatia, to Serbia. On 13 December 2001, Serbia returned around 1,000 pieces of stolen art to Croatia (Horelt 2016b). In the statement, Svilanović urged politicians to "take the step that leads towards reconciliation" (Stanivukoviæ 2001). One core factor is partially present – an acknowledgement of wrongdoing with an expression of remorse – while three core factors do not appear – an appropriate actor, the correct form, and an expression of collective responsibility. While Svilanović expressed "sincere regret", he also justified Serbian actions in saying that "I want also to give you an explanation…Fear is something that makes people commit the worst crimes" (Stanivukoviæ 2001). Svilanović clarified the limitations of his role as the appropriate actor when asked about the statement by Serb weekly magazine *NIN* (Horelt 2016b). He explicitly recognised that an apology by the head of state would be stronger for the role had more authority and better represented both the political and wider community. Croatia demanded an unconditional formal apology. However, their request was ignored and Svilanović only apologised in his personal capacity: "I would like to share with you an emotion. I would like to share with you my sincere regret…" (Horelt 2016b, Stanivukoviæ 2001). Instead of expressing collective responsibility, Svilanović equalised the victim's status by referring to the pain experienced by the "citizens of the Republic of Croatia, both Croats and Serbs, as well as the citizens of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia" (Frankfurter Allgemeine 2001).

Political Forgiveness
elements:

(i)   1
(ii) 1

Maximal Political Reconciliation

8 / 8 core factors

Cycle part 4

Apology 4: 4
November 2010

Democratic Political Reconciliation

Cycle part 3

Apology 3: 23
June 2007

6.5 / 8 core factors

Political Forgiveness
elements:

(i)   1
(ii) 0

Democratic Political Reconciliation

Political Forgiveness
elements:

(i)   0.5
(i)   0.5

6 / 8 core factors

Democratic Political Reconciliation

Cycle part 2

Apology 2: 10
September 2003

Cycle part 1

Apology 1: 14
December 2001

4.5 / 8 core factors

Political Forgiveness
elements:

(ii)   0.5
(iii) 0.5
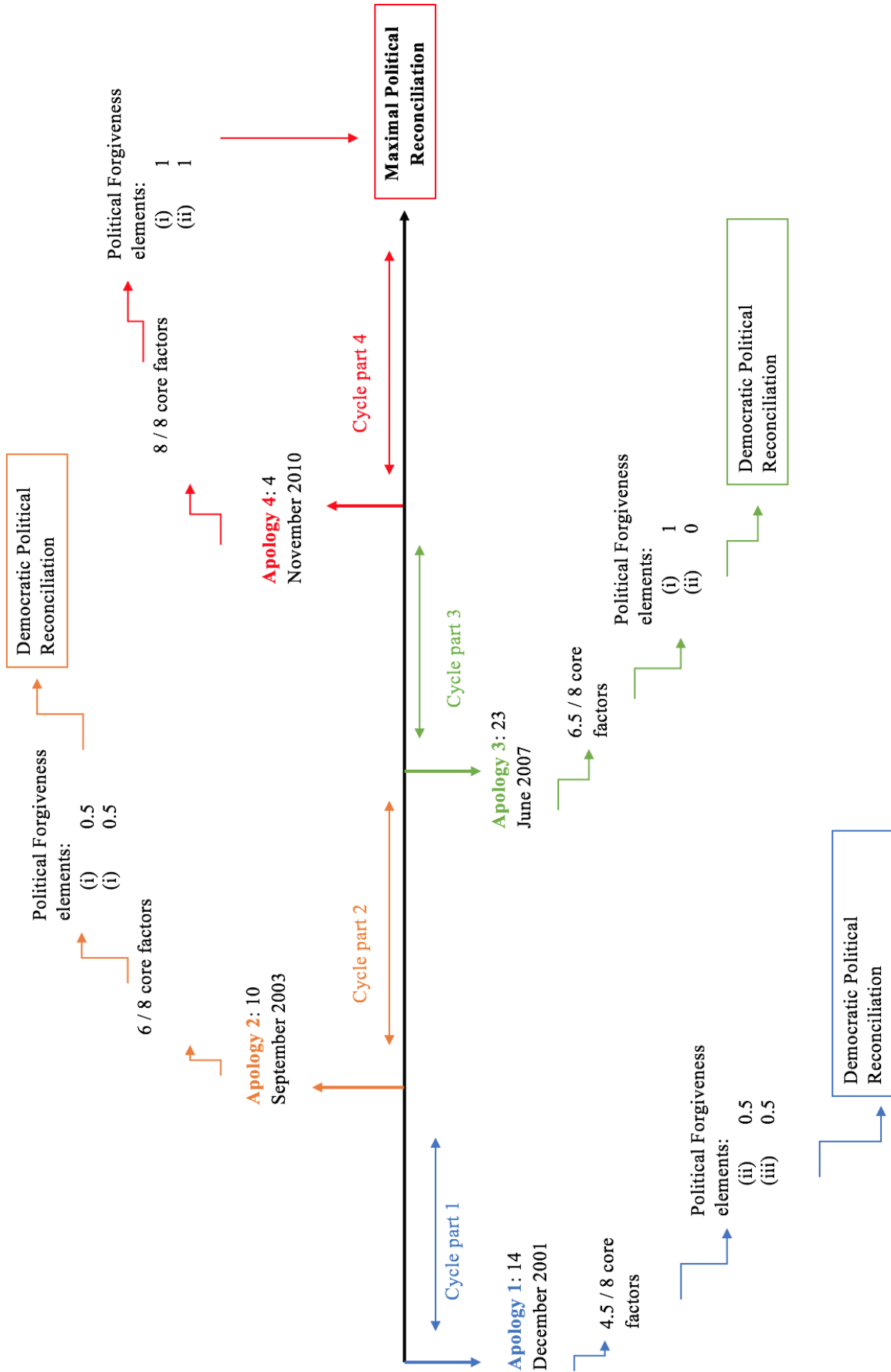
Democratic Political Reconciliation

Diagram 1: Timeline illustrating the cycle of apologies in Case Study A

The political forgiveness offered by Croatia's political elite was incomplete. Both a release of negative emotions and a vision of a joint future were partially present. As the Croatian public desired an unconditional formal apology, Svilanović's words were "hardly welcomed" (Culic 2001). However, "without hesitation", the Croatian counterpart – Tonino Picula – termed Svilanović's words as "excellent" (Stanivukoviæ 2001). Picula also stated that "easy to solve problems" should be worked on (Culic 2001). However, this was tainted by Picula's recognition that the past was still a burden and that these underlying differences acted as an impediment to the complete renewal of relations (Culic 2001, Stanivukoviæ 2001).

The apology can be considered a "door-opening device" (Horelt 2016b: 170). While the statement did not contain all eight core factors, the Croatian government explicitly welcomed it. This is evidence of a commitment to diplomatic relations and thus equates to *democratic political reconciliation.*

As a 'straw-in-the-wind' test, part 1 / 4 affirms hypothesis 2.

Case Study A cycle part 2 / 4: On 10 September 2003, the President of the Union of Serbia and Montenegro – Svetozar Marović – apologised in Belgrade. The apology has six complete core factors: the appropriate actor, the correct form, a public nature, a ceremonial aspect, a commitment to resorting the relationship and an acknowledgement of wrongdoing with an expression of remorse. Marović presented the apology in his role as "President of our Union" (Slobodan 2003). Croatian President – Stjepan Mesić – not only accepted the apology but also reciprocated with his own apology therefore Marović's apology can be considered in the correct form. The apology was issued in front of an international audience during the first official visit of Mesić to Belgrade. Marović stated that: "We do not and will not accept to live in the past, but in a common European future" (Slobodan 2003). He also stated that: "I want to apologise for all evils that any citizen of Serbia and Montenegro inflicted upon any citizen of Croatia" (Slobodan 2003). However, there is no act supporting the apology or an expression of collective responsibility.

The political forgiveness offered by Croatia's political elite was incomplete. A release of negative emotions was partially present and the vision of a joint future was grounded in acceptance of the European Union (EU). Mesić stated "I accept this symbolic apology" and "I also apologise to all those who have suffered pain or damage…from citizens of Croatia" (Geshakova 2003). However, he did not have unanimous support in Croatian politics (Horelt 2016b). Further, Mesić stated that "in order to join the EU we must help each other and be

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recognised as democratic, progressive societies" (Kozole 2003). Therefore, Mesić's response was grounded in a desire to appear democratic. This equals *democratic political reconciliation*.

As a 'straw-in-the-wind' test, part 2 / 4 also affirms hypothesis 2.

Case Study A cycle part 3 / 4: On 23 June 2007, the President of Serbia – Boris Tadić – issued an apology in Zagreb. The apology has six complete core factors: the appropriate actor, the correct form, a public nature, a ceremonial aspect, the expression of collective responsibility and an acknowledgement of wrongdoing with an expression of remorse. Tadić, the highest political authority, offered the apology in an interview with the Croatian state television. It was offered on the eve of the 16th anniversary of Croatian independence and termed "the most serious expression of regret ever heard in the region" (B29 2007). Notably, for the first time, collective responsibility was expressed. Tadić stated he "assumed part of the responsibility" for the crimes committed (B29 2007). One core factor is partially present – a commitment to restoring the relationship – and there is no act supporting the apology. While not an explicit commitment, Tadić stated that he "would like if all politicians in the Balkans were less proud" (B29 2007).

The political forgiveness offered by Croatia's political elite was incomplete. There was a release of negative emotions but not a vision of a joint future. Mesić commented that "Tadic's apology was given at the right time…it is good that he apologized to everybody to whom members of his people had brought harm" (dalje.com 2007). Political analysts also emphasized the importance of Tadić's explicit assumption of collective responsibility (Horelt 2016b). However, Serbia's lack of cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY) undermined the apology and stalled the vision of a joint future. Commentators upheld that "words are not enough – deeds are also necessary" (Horelt 2016b). Only *democratic political reconciliation* was achieved.

As a 'straw-in-the-wind' test, part 3 / 4, again, affirms hypothesis 2.

Case Study A cycle part 4 / 4: On 4 November 2010, Tadić issued an apology in Vukovar. All eight core factors are completely present in the apology. Tadić offered the apology at a media conference. He spoke on both a personal and collective level. At the collective level, he spoke on behalf of Serbia and then used 'we', 'us' and 'our' thereby implicating the Croatian President – Ivo Josipović (Horelt 2016b). Clearly, there was an appropriate actor, a public

nature and the correct form. From a ceremonial perspective, the media conference was held on the central memorial site of the Vukovar massacre. There was also the reparation of stolen objects, including 25 original documents from the Vukovar hospital. These were considered crucial in discovering the fate of the 460 missing persons from the region (Horelt 2016b, Le Point 2010). Tadić reinforced his expression of collective responsibility from 2007 by stating that "I am here to do what I can in the sphere of personal responsibility – to say that a crime has been committed" (Horelt 2016b). Tadić added that Serbia wanted "good neighbourly relations" (Le Point 2010). Finally, he stated that "by acknowledging the crime, by apologizing and regretting, we are opening the way for forgiveness and reconciliation" (Bandic and Vukic 2010).

Croatia's official political discourse was that of total forgiveness with a total release of negative emotions and a vision of a joint future. The Croatian Prime Minister "welcomed everything that President Tadić said" with "satisfaction" (Horelt 2016b). Josipović very much looked towards a joint future. He referred to "a different policy of … friendship" (Le Point 2010). He also stated that "we will finish this process of reconciliation and Serbia and Croatia will be two friendly, neighbouring countries" (BBC 2010).

Josipović's reference to friendship directly embodies my definition of *maximal political reconciliation.*

As a 'straw-in-the-wind' test, part 4 / 4 affirms hypothesis 1.

Conclusion: Case Study A provides support for all three of my hypotheses. First, that a *good* apology fosters complete political forgiveness which achieves maximal political reconciliation. Second, that a *satisfactory* apology fosters incomplete political forgiveness which achieves democratic political reconciliation. Third, that if the quality of the political apology significantly increases throughout the 'cycle of apologies', I expect maximal political reconciliation to be achieved by the end of the cycle. As individual 'straw-in-the-wind' tests, part 1, 2 and 3 affirm hypothesis 2. As all three parts show the same conclusion, this adds considerable affirmative validity to hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 1 is affirmed by part 4. As evidenced in Table 1, all four parts of the cycle work together to affirm hypothesis 3 through a 'double decisive' test. As the cycle progresses, there are more of the core factors present in each apology. As the quality of the apologies increases, so does the strength of the political forgiveness offered by the Croatian political elite. By part 4, all eight apology factors are

present as well as the two elements of political forgiveness and Josipović's statement directly correlates to my definition of maximal political reconciliation.

Table 1: Summary of Case Study A

		Cycle of apologies			
		Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4
Core factors of an apology	Appropriate actor	Red	Green	Green	Green
	Correct Form	Red	Green	Green	Green
	Public Nature	Green	Green	Green	Green
	Ceremonial Aspect	Green	Green	Green	Green
	Act supporting apology	Green	Red	Red	Green
	Collective responsibility	Red	Red	Green	Green
	Commitment to restoring relationship	Green	Green	Orange	Green
	Acknowledging of wrongdoing and expressing of remorse	Orange	Green	Green	Green
Political Forgiveness elements	Release of negative emotions	Orange	Orange	Green	Green
	Joint future	Orange	Orange	Red	Green
What level of Political Reconciliation was achieved?		Democratic	Democratic	Democratic	**Maximal**

5.2 Serbia apologising to Bosnia and Herzegovina: case study B

Case Study B analyses apologies made by the Serbian political elite from November 2003, November 2004, December 2004, and March 2010. There is only a minimal increase in the number of core factors present as the 'cycle of apologies' progresses. The cycle encompasses four *satisfactory* political apologies that do not create the requisite conditions for complete

political forgiveness. Therefore, the cycle ends with democratic political reconciliation. Consequently, Case Study B provides considerable affirmative evidence for hypothesis 2, as well as adding weight to hypothesis 3.

Case Study B cycle part 1 / 4: On 3 November 2003, Marović issued an apology in Sarajevo, BiH. The apology has three complete core elements: a public nature, a ceremonial aspect and an acknowledgement of wrongdoing with an expression of remorse. It was issued during a news conference on Marović's first official visit to Sarajevo. He stated, "I have a duty to apologise on behalf of myself and those I represent…" (Alić 2003). However, the apology does not contain five core factors: an appropriate actor, correct form, an act that supports the apology, expression of collective responsibility and a commitment to restoring the relationship. There was a debate surrounding the appropriateness of Marović, specifically his political role as head of the 'loose union' of Serbia and Montenegro (Horelt 2010, Traynor 2010). Considered as either being too early or too late, there was a lack of consensus over the timing of the apology (see Horelt 2016b). Marović stated that "these are times when apologies are not just courtesy words – they are words of sincere intentions", but this sentiment was not supported by actions (New York Times 2003). He was also perceived as offering too many apologies thereby reducing the symbolic weight of each (Horelt 2016b). Marović also clearly rejected the notion of collective responsibility by stating that "nations should not and must not assume responsibility for crimes committed by certain individuals" (Slobodan 2003).

The Bosnian political elite only offered minimal political forgiveness. A release of negative emotions was partially present and there was no vision of a joint future. The latter was blocked by the pending case in the International Court of Justice where Serbia and Montenegro faced the charge of genocide. The President of Republika Srpska emphasized that the tripartite Presidency would not have an official position on the apology while the Bosnian Muslim representative in the Presidency welcomed the apology and viewed it as a contribution towards the development of relations between the states (Alić 2003, Horelt 2016b, Slobodan 2003). The Croatian chairman of the tripartite Presidency considered the apology to be encouraging for the future of the two countries (New York Times 2003).

The apology did not significantly aid the improvement of relations resulting in *democratic political reconciliation*.
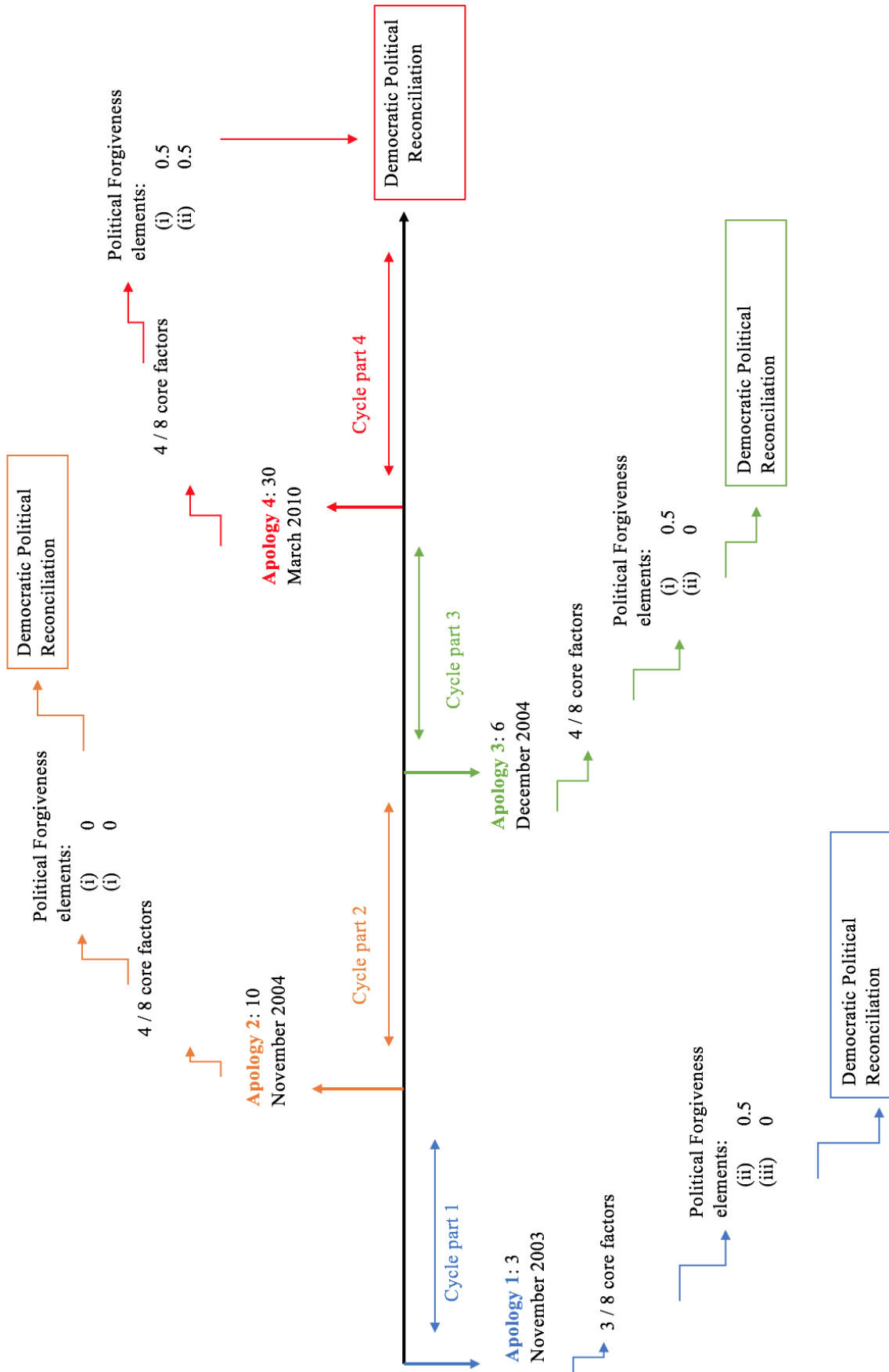
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Diagram 2: Timeline illustrating the cycle of apologies in Case Study B

Case Study B cycle part 2 / 4: On 10 November 2004, the Government of Republika Srpska issued an apology in Banja Luka, Republika Srpska. The apology has four complete core factors: an appropriate actor, public nature, ceremonial aspect and act supporting the apology. Known as the 'Srebrenica Report' apology, this was the first time the government acknowledged and regretted the crimes committed in Srebrenica. The public statement was released a month after a report by the Investigation of War Crimes for the Bosnian Office. It came after a period of long lasting "denial, obfuscation and concealment" (Fassier 2004: 1). Further, the names of 8731 persons confirmed missing or dead from the Srebrenica massacre were released in the report (Collins 2009). The government stated it "shares the pain of the families of the Srebrenica victims, is truly sorry and apologised for the tragedy" (Associated Press 2004). However, four core factors are not present: the correct form, collective responsibility, a commitment to restoring the relationship and an acknowledgement of wrongdoing with an expression of remorse. The apology was not in the correct form because it was a written governmental statement.

The Bosnian political elite did not offer political forgiveness. A big hindrance was the fact that the apology was written. It was considered 'faceless', less attributable to specific political figures and therefore less binding (Horelt 2016b). Additionally, it was deemed that international pressure was instrumental in the official acknowledgement of the Srebrenica massacre in the report and this backdrop undermined the force of the apology (Horelt 2016b). Therefore, only *democratic political reconciliation* was achieved.

As a 'straw-in-the-wind' test, part 2 / 4 affirms hypothesis 2.

Case Study B cycle part 3 / 4: On 6 December 2004, Tadić released an apology in Sarajevo. The apology has three complete core factors: an appropriate actor, public nature and a ceremonial aspect. It was the first official apology by a Serbian leader – rather than a leader from the Serbia and Montenegro Union – and it was issued publicly on the first official visit of Tadić to Sarajevo. There are two incomplete core factors: commitment to restoring the relationship and an acknowledgement of wrongdoing with an expression of remorse. Tadić hinted at the restoration of relations by saying that "we all owe each other an apology. If I have to start, well here I am" (Gordy 2004). This desire for a mutual apology undermined his own expression of remorse. Further, Tadić stated that "it is not possible to charge a whole people because the same crimes were also committed against the Serbian people" (Gordy 2004). Three core factors are not present: the correct form, an act supporting the apology and an expression

of collective responsibility. It cannot be considered in the correct form because Tadić expressed the apology on a personal basis (Horelt 2016b).

The political forgiveness offered by the Bosnian political elite was incomplete. There was a partial release of negative emotions but no vision of a joint future. The former Bosnian member of the tripartite Presidency – Beriz Belkić – welcomed the apology while the Bosnian Minister of Civil Affairs criticised the apology, describing it as amateurish (Gordy 2004). Regarding a joint future vision, Gordy (2004) comments that the political effect of the apology was mostly muted. Considering this, relations remain categorised as *democratic political reconciliation*.

As a 'straw-in-the-wind' test, part 3 / 4, again, affirms hypothesis 2.

Case Study B cycle 4 / 4: On 30 March 2010, the Serb Parliament released an apology in Belgrade. There are four complete core factors present in the apology: the appropriate actor, a public nature, a ceremonial aspect and an acknowledgement of wrongdoing with an expression of remorse. The official acknowledgement of the Srebrenica massacre was at the forefront of the 15th anniversary of the event. It stated that the government "most severely condemns the crime" and offers "condolences and an apology to the families of the victims because not everything possible was done to prevent the tragedy" (AG Friedensforschung 2010). However, four core factors are not present: the correct form, an act supporting the apology, an expression of collective responsibility and a commitment to restoring the relationship. Not only was it a written declaration but the advocates of the declaration had hoped for an explicit reference to genocide and this was not included (Dragović-Soso 2012). Instead, the government condemned the crime "as determined by the International Court of Justice Ruling" thereby only implying that it met the legal definition of genocide (Balkan Transitional Justice 2010). Further, the declaration referred to "social and political processes and incidents", "personal national goals", and "physical violence" thereby placing the crimes into an abstract context (Horelt 2016b: 183). In doing this, the government implied that the massacre was the result of individual actors and not the collective.

The political forgiveness offered by the Bosnian political elite was incomplete. Both the release of negative emotions and a vision of a joint future were only partially present. Emphasis was placed on the fact that the resolution failed to acknowledge the crimes as genocide rather than the crimes that were condemned (Orentlicher 2018). This view was particularly prevalent among Bosnian Muslims (Horelt 2016b). The vice-mayor of Srebrenica stated that the

avoidance of the word genocide could only have "detrimental effects on the political stability of the region" (Horelt 2010). However, the Bosnian representative to the tripartite Presidency welcomed the declaration and Humanitarian Law Centre Director – Nataša Kandić – described the apology as a "good step" (Horelt 2016b; Orentlicher 2018: 250). Some considered the apology as progress in a long journey, while others dismissed it as a "political game" (Dragosović-Soso 2012, Mail & Guardian 2010). As there is no expression of friendship, the criterion for maximal political reconciliation is not met. Rather, the partial acceptance of the declaration by the Bosnian political elite demonstrates a commitment to slowly working towards a realistic vision of peace between the countries. Thus, relations remain as *democratic political reconciliation.*

As a 'straw-in-the-wind' test, part 4 / 4 also affirms hypothesis 2.

Conclusion: Case Study B provides considerable affirmative evidence for hypothesis 2, as well as adding weight to hypothesis 3. Hypothesis 2 posits that a *satisfactory* apology fosters incomplete political forgiveness which achieves democratic political reconciliation. Hypothesis 3 states that if the quality of the political apology significantly increases throughout the 'cycle of apologies', I expect maximal political reconciliation to be achieved by the end of the cycle. All four parts of the 'cycle of apologies' align with hypothesis 2. In particular, the 'straw-in-the-wind' tests affirm the relevance of my hypothesis from both parts of my incomplete political forgiveness definition. Parts 1, 2 and 4 affirm hypothesis 2 with partial political forgiveness, while part 3 affirms it with no political forgiveness. Combined with my three 'straw-in-the-wind' tests from Case Study A that also affirm hypothesis 2, this amounts to important affirmative evidence. As demonstrated in Table 2, there is only a minimal increase of one in the number of core factors present in each apology as the cycle progresses. The 'cycle of apologies' encompasses four *satisfactory* apologies that do not create the requisite conditions for complete political forgiveness. Therefore, the cycle ends with democratic political reconciliation. This adds validity to hypothesis 3 by eliminating an alternative option which could result in maximal political reconciliation. Case Study B demonstrates that if the quality of the *satisfactory* political apology does *not* increase significantly during the cycle and amount to a *good* apology, complete political forgiveness will *not* be fostered and therefore maximal political reconciliation will *not* occur.

Table 2: Summary of Case Study B

		Cycle of apologies			
		Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4
Core factors of an apology	Appropriate actor	🟥	🟩	🟩	🟩
	Correct Form	🟥	🟥	🟥	🟥
	Public Nature	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩
	Ceremonial Aspect	🟩	🟩	🟩	🟩
	Act supporting apology	🟥	🟩	🟥	🟥
	Collective responsibility	🟥	🟥	🟥	🟥
	Commitment to restoring relationship	🟥	🟥	🟨	🟥
	Acknowledging of wrongdoing and expressing of remorse	🟩	🟥	🟨	🟩
Political Forgiveness elements	Release of negative emotions	🟨	🟥	🟨	🟨
	Joint future	🟥	🟥	🟥	🟨
What level of Political Reconciliation was achieved?		Democratic	Democratic	Democratic	Democratic

5.3 Alternative explanations: did one nation have better relations with Serbia or was there a difference in the culmination of war?

There are two alternative explanations that could explain my results. First, it could be argued that, during SFRY's existence, Serbia and Croatia had better inter-republic relations than Serbia and BiH. Therefore, it might be suggested that, as a result, Croatia was more likely to forgive. However, we can eliminate this explanation because, in fact, Serbia and BiH had better relations. SFRY is widely considered a dark period in Croatia's national history (Cviić 1996, Jović 2011). Although Tito was half-Croat, Croatia led the fight against his Yugoslav

'unitarism'. Aiming to create a nation-state, Tito's 'unitarism' favoured the revival of Serb influence over smaller constitutive nations (Jović 2006). In particular, Tito crushed the 'Croatian Spring' with a purge between 1971 and 1972. Although this was part of a broader crackdown throughout Yugoslavia, the purge was the harshest in Croatia due to extreme nationalist currents of thought (Civiić 1996). Indeed, while relations improved during the 1980s, the Croatian national elite cultivated a powerful, underlying 'sense of separateness' that re-emerged by the 1990s (Sibler and Little 1995: 88). In comparison, BiH had better relations with the SFRY. Spaic (2017) reports that Bosnian's refer to Tito's rule as the 'Golden Age' of BiH. As a common republic of three constituent nations, the Communists aimed to persuade non-Serbs in BiH that SFRY could function without Serb hegemony (Baker 2015). In 1974, Tito's constitution granted Bosnian Muslims the status of their own identity. While they were the only nationality in Yugoslavia without an undisputed claim to a separate region, Bosnian Muslims had inhabited BiH since the Turkish occupation in the fifteenth century (DeRouen and Heo 2007, Sibler and Little 1995). Bosnian Muslims, Serbs and Croats co-existed as the three majority ethnic groups in BiH (Sibler and Little 1995). Further, in the 1980s, the League of Communists of Bosnia remained the 'strictest in its continued support for the Titoist dogma of "unity and brotherhood"' (Bougarel 1996: 95). Considering this, it is clear that BiH had a better relationship with Serbia and therefore we can eliminate the quality of the previous relationship as an alternative explanation.

A second explanation might be the difference in the culmination of war between Croatia and BiH. For Croatia, the war ended with the mass expulsion and crimes committed against Serbs on Croatian territory. However, for BiH, the war did not end as such, rather, the Dayton Agreement 'froze' wartime activities (Horelt 2016b: 188). Thus, it could be argued that BiH were less likely to forgive due to this experience. However, this explanation is flawed. In focusing on how the war ended in each country, it does not consider the violence occurring during the wars. Even if it was argued that BiH experienced worse war crimes and therefore was less likely to forgive, this is also a weak argument. If crime and punishment are "fundamentally disparate matters", then it is possible to argue that the severity of the crime and the severity of the reaction, ergo the likelihood to forgive, do not possess similar benchmarks for comparison vis-à-vis each other (Goh 2013: 41). Considering that this is a weak argument, we cannot count the second explanation as a viable alternative.

6 Conclusion

My research has concluded that the quality of a political apology affects political forgiveness. Political forgiveness is the causal mechanism which, in turn, affects the level of political reconciliation. I found that achieving maximal political reconciliation is a process. That is, for maximal political reconciliation to occur there needs to be a 'cycle of apologies'. This must occur because *satisfactory* political apologies only achieve democratic political reconciliation. If, as the cycle progresses, the quality of the political apology increases, stronger political forgiveness will gradually be fostered. It is only after this that a *good* apology will occur and foster complete political forgiveness thereby achieving maximal political reconciliation.

However, my research has several limitations. Firstly, I am not a native Serbo-Croatian speaker and hence I relied on translated documents. Consequently, I have potentially lost some of my own interpretation of the speeches and natural response in the translation. A solution to this limitation is for the same study to be carried out by a native speaker. Secondly, retributive justice was occurring alongside the restorative justice in former SFRY. Given the international community's dominant emphasis on accountability, credibility of the rule of law and punishment, there will not be a resolution of a large-scale conflict that does not engage with retributive justice. However, my research design could be applied to small scale community reconciliation without retributive processes in post-conflict societies where the equivalent of a political community are the leaders of local groups. Alternatively, my research design could be applied to other large-scale conflicts. While every war has unique elements, the broader political, social and economic characteristics at play in former SFRY allow for comparison between conflicts. Thus, it would be a useful to apply my research design to evaluate restorative justice in other contexts. In conclusion, it is clear to me, as demonstrated by my research, that the quality of a political apology has the potential to impact the level of political reconciliation. As Desmond Tutu (2014: 1) said:

> 'I am sorry' are perhaps the three hardest words to say...[W]e find there is great freedom in asking for forgiveness and great strength in admitting the wrong. It has how we free ourselves from our past errors. It is how we are able to move forward into the future, unfettered by the mistakes we have made.

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