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FOUR WAVES OF MEMORY POLITICS RELATED TO THE HISTORY OF THE UTASHA MOVEMENT (1980–2017)

Lovro Kralj

Abstract

This paper analyzes the memory politics related to the history of the fascist Ustasha movement from 1980 to 2017. I argue that memory politics related to the Ustasha movement had a particular kind of ideological and political functionality for political elites in Croatia and Serbia in the last three decades. I identify four waves of memory politics related to the Ustasha in the given period. The first wave of discussion about the "hidden past" in Yugoslavia started in the period of 1980-86, in which primarily cultural references were made to the Ustasha and Communist atrocities. These developments were initially deeply transnational and had a political aim of discrediting the communist elites in order to increase (primarily) cultural and media liberties. However, the first wave of historical revision opened a Pandora box of memory politics which soon turned from transnational into increasingly nationalized discourses about the past. The second wave of memory politics which lasted between 1986 and 1995 marked the period in which history was instrumentalized to mobilize and reinforce national identities. The reinvented image of the Ustasha which was projected on to Croats and depicted them as a genocidal nation played on the fears of the Serbs in ethnically mixed areas which activated a spiral of security dilemmas which eventually escalated into an open war. The third wave of memory politics related to World War II lasted from 1995-2010 in which initially the end of the war, and consequent change of regimes in both Croatia and Serbia, brought a significant ease of tensions between the two countries and the reliance on history lost its appeal and political functionality. Croatia's process of accession to EU provided incentives for bipartisan consensus on quelling the revival of the Ustasha apologism. After it was clear that Croatia would enter the EU the incentives to keep the (neo) Ustasha rhetoric in Croatia under the lid was lost, and the new far-right movement was forged which used anti-communism and implicit pro-Ustasha attitudes as a common vessel of pushing their political values into the political arena. This triggered the most recent wave of memory politics related to the history of the Ustasha movement which started in 2010 and is still taking place. A range of different, newly created conservative and far-right NGOs, part of war veterans' organizations, radical elements within the Catholic church and a group of revisionist historians, all use memory politics as a populist strategy to discredit their political enemies and to challenge the state institutions.

Historiography and Current State of Research

References to the Second World War in the media during the Yugoslav Wars were made too often and too openly for it not to catch the eyes of the historians, the political analysts and the media experts working on the topic. Therefore, the first inquiries about the role of memory politics in the dissolution of Yugoslavia were already made during the war. For example, Robert Hayden's article "Recounting the Dead: The Rediscovery and Redefinition of Wartime Massacres

in Late – and Post-Communist Yugoslavia," which he wrote at the end of 1991 (published in 1994), was one of the pioneering attempts to emphasize the role of the memory politics in the escalation of the conflict between the Croats and Serbs (Hayden 1994: 172).[1]

Soon after Hayden, Bette Denich (1994) published the article "Dismembering Yugoslavia: Nationalist Ideologies and the Symbolic Revival of Genocide," that also focused on the period of the 1980s, but unlike Hayden, who focused on the political elites, she emphasized the importance of popular culture such as plays, novels and symbols, for the revision of memory. Denich demonstrated that the cultural workers who took part in the pioneering attempts to challenge the mainstream narratives of Yugoslavia in a more nationalistic tone, often ended up as leading politicians during the war.

In 1999, Branimir Anzulovic, a cultural historian, published his book entitled, *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide*, in which he looked at the entire Serbian history from the Middle Ages as leading up to the Yugoslav wars, and attributes this to the culturally conditioned Serbian behavior. Anzulovic's *longue durée* approach is similar to the one of Daniel Goldhagen for the case of antisemitism in Germany. Anzulovic (1999: 2) writes that the "myths and legends created soon after the Battle of Kosovo were reinvigorated by the Serbian intelligentsia to fan their compatriots' nationalist passion in the 1980s." Anzulovic is also dancing on the edge of ascribing to the ideas of a Huntingtonian clash of civilizations by arguing that:

> I frequently use comparisons between Serbia (or Montenegro) and Croatia in this study to highlight the differences between Eastern and Western Christian cultures. Such comparisons are particularly suitable, because we are dealing here with ethnically and linguistically very similar peoples who have developed distinct national identities through exposure to different civilizations (Ansuléovic 1999:6).

In the paper "The Historical Link between the Ustasha Genocide and the Croato-Serb Civil War: 1991-1995," Damir Mirković (2000) argues that the revival of extreme nationalism on both the Croatian and Serbian sides utilized memory as one of the most important tools in promoting their political agenda. Mirković draws clear connections between the crimes of the Ustasha in 1941 and the Croatian Operation Storm in the 1995, describing both events as aiming to cleanse Croatia of its Serbian population. He concluded that "parallels could be drawn between the ideology and the nature of the Ustasha movement and the ethnic nationalism dominating Croatia today. Mirković's research is largely biased since he does not present strong evidence for his *longue durée* approach and bases his conclusions largely on speculation. Mirković almost completely ignored the production of knowledge during the 1980s in the Serbian nationalist circles which were pushing themes revolving around the Ustasha crimes as one of the main cornerstones of the Serbian historical trauma, and therefore one of the main constituents of contemporary Serbian identity.

In the article entitled, "The Violence of Memories: Local narratives of the past after ethnic cleansing in Croatia," Stef Jansen (2002) issued a crucial methodological warning to researchers working on memory and the collapse of Yugoslavia. Jansen noted that

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1 Hayden's article was written in the immediate beginning of the war and suffers from certain propagandistic narratives of the time, such as blaming the international community for escalation of the conflict, which was the narrative used by the Serbian propaganda during the war. For a comprehensive critique of Hayden see Cushman (2005).

'memory-centred' explanations of the recent nationalisms need to be nuanced. Without wanting to deny the importance of historic traumas, this article warns against the danger of attributing a straightforward causal role to recollections of past events. Explaining the local anatomy of conflict with reference to such traumas would imply a risk of unintentionally ratifying or even canonizing their legitimacy and significance by retrospectively embedding them in 'social memory' (Jansen 2000: 77).

Jansen's study is one of the first serious attempts to turn the studies of memory and violence from the macro level to the micro level. Jansen warns the reader that these narratives about the past are not actual individual memories, but constructions (Jansen 2000: 89). Therefore, Jansen concludes that:

> I think it would be incorrect to immediately interpret this as a symptom of deeply embedded, collectively entrenched traumas. We do not know whether, for the speakers in question, such memories played a role in everyday narratives before the disintegration of Yugoslavia (Jansen 2000: 90).

Although literature and references to memory politics in the history of Yugoslavia and the successor states is abundant, contemporary scholarship does not put enough effort into a chronological contextualization of the memory politics. Very often there is no qualitative differentiation in the usage of memory politics in different periods. Furthermore, the complexity of actors, motives and incentives for reliance on memory politics and the variety of functions it performs is often overlooked.

Yugoslav Memory Politics and its Downfall

The approach of Yugoslav historiography towards the history of the Ustasha movement was envisioned by Tito already during the WW II. In December 1942 Tito rhetorically asked: "What does Pavelić and his Ustasha gang represent in Croatia? Nothing else than simple agents of the occupiers in the enslaved Croatia" (Tito 1987: 745). In other words, the Ustasha would be treated as simple traitors who were without any agency of their own and who were in complete service to German Nazism and Italian Fascism.

After WW II, the Yugoslav Communist regime, led by Josip Broz Tito, launched a campaign of "repressive erasure" in which all remnants of the fascist Ustasha regime were obliterated (Connerton 2008: 60). This was not only done on a symbolic level, but also involved a general ban on political rights, as well as episodes of the mass murder conducted against the members of the Ustasha movement, and those suspected of being their collaborators. Although the Yugoslav regime was effective in their erasure of Ustasha symbolism and ideology within the country, many former Ustasha members managed to escape Yugoslavia. A historian, Mate Nikola Tokić (2009), notes that about 12,000 collaborators or anti-communist-oriented Croats found political asylum in Germany after the war. Additionally, about 20,000-40,000 managed to escape through the so-called ratlines to countries such as Argentina, Uruguay, Spain, United States, Canada and Australia.

Yugoslav Communists launched the policy of "Brotherhood and Unity" which served the function of "prescriptive forgetting" (Connerton 2008: 61). The integral part of the policy of "Brotherhood and Unity" was the official memory politics which focused on the positive aspects of the Partisan struggle in the liberation of Yugoslavia in which every nation could find its own

positive image. Virtually all other political groups, who did not join the Partisans, were depicted as Axis collaborators, including the pro-democratic Croatian Peasant Party. Therefore, the official Yugoslav historiography represented the Ustasha as a mere extension of "Nazi-Fascism." This was an effective memory policy which was in the service of the Yugoslav nation and state-building because the issue of collaboration was not ethnicized. The Ustasha and the other collaborators were represented as small groups of traitors who collaborated with other fascists either for their own material gain, in the form of upward social mobility, or they were merely affected by a foreign ideology which was seen as alien to the majority of "Yugoslav peoples." In many ways, the fascist Ustasha were represented as having no agency of their own and seen as lacking any genuine support of the population during their rule in the Independent State of Croatia (1941-1945).

The policy of "Brotherhood and Unity" was the cornerstone of Communist Yugoslavia's identity politics and, according to the historian, Vjekoslav Perica (2002: 95), it was elevated to the level of a civic religion. This civic religion and its official narratives about Yugoslav history were supposed to be firmly protected by the regime, and the legal historian, Vladimir Petrović (2007:34), concluded that "the state tried to restrict the debates [about history] through legal means." Yugoslav historiography failed to create any sort of viable scientific explanation for the rise of the fascist Ustasha movement and demonstrated an unwillingness to tackle the issue of Ustasha mass support. This had an unintended consequence of transferring the debate about the history of the Ustasha movement, and the atrocities it had committed, from the sphere of scientific debate into the sphere of private history in which these events were discussed either in the closed family circles or among like-minded acquaintances. These discussions about the "secret history" of the Ustasha movement were based on the private experiences of family members or rumors which were often elevated to generalizations. Historian Iliana R. Bet-El fully recognized this process and concluded that:

> These were private words, delivered while fields were tilled or over a family meal, painful personal experiences slowly transmuted into collective, but still largely private memory. But in 1980, with Tito's death, they slowly began to become public and nationalized. And as a result, they were distorted: the personal context of the memories, their narrative coherence, was eliminated; all that was left was the pain of the past, and anger at its suppression (Bet-El 2009: 208-209).

Iliana R. Bet-El is correct when she emphasizes Tito's central role in maintaining the official Yugoslav Communist narrative about the "Brotherhood and Unity" and the official historical narrative which stood behind it. Tito was one of the main arbiters in the balancing between the policy of the Yugoslav "prescriptive forgetting" and especially the "repressive erasure." Historian Ivo Banac (1992) noted that Tito had openly criticized, "national manifestations in historiography" and the first attempts at revision of the official Yugoslav historical narrative already in 1964, and this critique was enough to introduce the so called "working towards the leader principle" (Banac 1992: 1087). The concept of "working towards the leader" is borrowed from Holocaust and fascism studies and it denoted the idea that the party bureaucracy and the administrative apparatus (including intellectuals and cultural workers) were expected to take their own initiative, without direct orders from above, and to initiate work (everyone in their own capacity) which would meet the leaders perceived wishes (Kershaw 1993).

If the concept of "working towards the leader" provided the positive incentives, or the carrot, for those involved in memory politics, Tito also secured a stick for those who departed from the official narratives. In the early 1970s, when the so-called "Croatian Spring" or MASPOK (ab-

breviation of the Mass Movement) aimed for a major political and cultural reform of Yugoslavia, Tito quelled it by forcing the Croatian Communist leadership to resign, hundreds of people were arrested, thousands were fired from their positions and many cultural newspapers and institutions such as *Matica Hrvatska* [Matrix Croatica] were dissolved. Tito's quelling of the "Croatian Spring" was also noticeable in the historiography and a brief synthesis *Povijest hrvatskog naroda* [History of the Croat People], written by Trpimin Macan, was withdrawn and destroyed (Banac 1992: 1089). Tito made similar purges in Serbia when he faced dissenting opinions. For example, in 1971 when several professors from the Belgrade Faculty of Law opposed the creation of the new constitutions which was supposed to grant increased autonomy to the Yugoslav republics, Tito made sure that they lost their positions (Hayden 1994: 172).

After Tito's death in 1980, there was no charismatic leader who could perform his role as a transnational arbiter in Yugoslav affairs. The cultural workers and intellectuals had lost both the carrot in the form of "working towards the leader" and the stick in the form of extra-procedural interventions into the Yugoslav system. This was the most important precondition for the emergence of the "memory wars" in the 1980s. However, by 1980, it was not only Tito who had left the Yugoslav political scene. By that time, the political leadership of Yugoslavia went through a major generational shift in which there were fewer and fewer political leaders who were direct participants of the antifascist struggle, and the new generation of younger politicians who were not burdened by the legacy of antifascist struggle was emerging. These younger politicians also had fewer incentives to uphold the official narratives about the Partisan struggle.

The First Wave: Transnational Rebellion Against Communism (1980–1986)

Many dissidents hoped that, with the death of Tito in 1980, an increasing liberalization of the society could be accomplished. The beginning of the 1980s was therefore a period of probing the limits of the Yugoslav system by the dissidents across the country. Dissidents hoped that by discrediting Communism and its taboos they could loosen its grip on power and make room for the increased liberalization of the country. One of the first Yugoslav "secret histories" discussed openly was the topic of *Goli Otok* [The Barren Island]. *Goli Otok* was a detention camp created in 1949, after the Tito-Stalin split, where tens of thousands of suspected opponents to Tito's regime were imprisoned. A series of articles about *Goli Otok* started to appear in the magazine *NIN* during the 1982. The aim of these articles was to publicize the hidden and dark parts of the Yugoslav Communist regime. However, these articles did not have a nationalistic undertone and they were aimed at a "pan-Yugoslav audience" (Hayden 1994: 170, 172). The ethnic composition of the prisoners at *Goli Otok* was deeply mixed and no ethnic group could claim a monopoly on victimhood. Due to this reason, *Goli Otok* was the ideal place of suffering through which the Communist regime could be discredited on a transethnic level.

The prime example of how cultural workers tried to test the limits of the Yugoslav policy of "repressive erasure," "prescriptive forgetting" and the taboos surrounding "Brotherhood and Unity" came in 1982 with the play *Golubnjača* [The Pigeon Cave]. The play treated the topic of the interethnic relations in a small village after the end of WW II. *Golubnjača* was the pit in which the Ustasha supposedly threw the slaughtered Serbian civilians. The play triggered a "culture war" in Serbia at the time. After it was briefly shown in Novi Sad in October of 1982, the play was forbidden by the Communist leadership of Vojvodina, a region nominally under the Republic of Serbia, but *de facto* an autonomous region with its own government. Vojvodina leadership argued that further performances of the *Golubnjača* could increase inter-ethnic tensions and that the play ran against the policy of Brotherhood and Unity.

Unlike the more orthodox Vojvodina Communists, the Belgrade authorities eventually allowed the play to be performed in Belgrade in December 1982. Bette Denich (1994) noted that the play was banned In Vojvodina by the Tito supporters who adhered to his policy of intervention into the cultural and social life of the country in order to "suppress reminders of the various interethnic conflicts, in the interests of a multiethnic state" (Denich 1994: 367). Jovan Radulović, the author of the *Golubnjača* play, noted in an interview that the beginning of the 1980s was the "time when the 'political theatre' came into being, it was an age in which forbidden topics and taboos were deconstructed" (Radulović 2008). Radulović, an ethnic Serb from Croatia, eventually became one of the leaders of the rebel Serbs and the head of the Foreign Ministry of the *Republika Srpska Krajina* [The Republic of Serbian Krajina] which was created on the occupied parts of the Republic of Croatia during the Yugoslav Wars.

The *Golubnjača* play illustrates the renewed interest in the "secret histories" of Yugoslavia. The increasingly nationalistic dissidents in both Serbia and Croatia used the memory of mass atrocities as a tool for discrediting the Communists and showing that they were hiding the truth and that they were morally corrupt (Hayden 1994: 180). Nationalistic Croatian dissidents focused on the Bleiburg episode – an event in which tens of thousands of the Ustasha and other collaborators were executed after the end of WW II – in order to show that the Partisan antifascist struggle was not without moral stain as the dominant Communist narrative argued. Serbian nationalist dissidents focused on Ustasha crimes in order to show that the policy of Brotherhood and Unity tried to cover up Croatian mass crimes against the Serbs during WW II. Both Catholic and Serbian Orthodox Churches also became involved in the process of challenging the predominant Communist narratives about the past. For example, in 1982, Atanasije Jevtić, the dignitary of the Serbian Orthodox Church, accused Croatian secular and church press that they were covering up the truth about the Croat genocide against the Serbs during the Second World War (Perica 2002: 146). At the same time, the Catholic Church in Croatia was pushing for the revision of the status of Alojzije Stepinac, a controversial archbishop of Zagreb who collaborated with the Ustasha, but at the same time opposed their genocidal policies Perica 2002: 148).

The main aim of the first wave of memory politics during the early 1980s was to delegitimize the governing Communist Party, its main ideological tenants, and to challenge its effective grip on identity politics. The dominant agents involved in this process were dissident (nationalist) intellectuals, cultural workers and the clergy. The data from Serbia at the time confirms that the trust of the people in Communist institutions and the party was partially corroded already by the mid-1980s. A sociological survey conducted in Belgrade demonstrated that 21% of respondents thought that the Serbian Orthodox Church was the most trustworthy national institution (Perica 2002: 129).

Although the first wave of memory politics was fairly successful in challenging and diminishing the guiding myths of the Yugoslav Communist historical master narratives, it did not create alternative master narratives which would be accepted across different Yugoslav Republics. This created a memory politics vacuum at the supra-national level which was being increasingly filled by particularized and nationalized narratives about the past. Therefore, the first wave of memory politics opened the Pandora Box which quickly turned into "memory wars" between different ethnicities in the second wave which started in 1986.

The Second Wave: (1986-1995)

Phase I: National Mobilization (1986-1990)

The year 1986 marks a sharp division between the first and the second wave of memory politics related to the history of the Ustasha movement. Namely, the question of national identity and nationalism, although noticeable in the first wave, would become predominant in the second. The first wave served as the enabler of the second, or in the words of Andrew Wachtel: "most notably Croatia in the late 1960s and Serbia in the early 1980s, it would not be an exaggeration to say that nationalist political movements rose on the back of cultural ones rather than the other way around" (Ramet 2005:63).

The year 1986 is important as a point of division between the two waves for several reasons: 1) The publication of the Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (Srpska akademija nauka i umetnosti, SANU). The authors of the Memorandum warned that the survival of Serbdom in Croatia was at stake due to supposed assimilationist policy of the Republic of Croatia. Moreover, the authors added that "excluding the period of the existence of the Independent State of Croatia [1941-1945], the Serbs in Croatia were never more in danger in Croatia than they are now." The SANU Memorandum had a decisive role in the legitimization of the rumors that the Serbs were being discriminated across Yugoslavia. The claim that a cultural genocide against the Serbs was being conducted in Yugoslavia was mentioned five times. The Academy, the highest scientific body in Serbia, therefore contributed to the creation of frustration and instilling fear among the Serbian population. Moreover, the Memorandum placed the topic of the Serbian victimhood as one of the main cornerstones of the Serbian identity across different Yugoslav Republics. 2) One of the members of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a contributor to the Memorandum, a historian Vasilije Krestić published an essay "On the Genesis of the Genocide of the Serbs in the Independent State of Croatia" (1986) in which he asserted that the Croats are a genocidal nation. According to Krestić, the Ustasha genocide against the Serbs was not a mere aberration in the Croatian history, but a deeply rooted idea instilled in the Croatian culture through centuries (Anzulovic 1999: 192). 3) In 1986 the trial of the highly ranked Ustasha Andrija Artuković began in Croatia. Artuković was a Minister of Interior in the Independent State of Croatia and he was one of the most important figures in conducting the genocide against the Serbs, Jews and Roma during WW II. The trial of Andrija Artuković was probably the single most publicized legal proceeding in the history of Yugoslavia. The press across the country was following the trial and brought stories about it on a daily basis. According to the director of the Croatian State Archives at the time, Petar Strčić, the rooms of the archives were flooded by reporters and amateurs at unprecedented levels. All of them tried to dig out documents about the variety of crimes committed during the Second World War by the Ustasha movement. The discussions in the press went beyond Artuković and stories about the Independent State of Croatia, and its genocidal policies in general were being publicized on a daily basis for almost a year and a half. 4) Certain Serbian dissident politicians started to openly accuse Croatia of diminishing the crimes of the Ustasha movement and argued that the number of Serbs killed by the Ustasha was far higher than what the official historiography claimed. For example, Vuk Drašković, a prominent dissident and the future politician argued in 1986 that that there were "at least 1.5 million slaughtered Serbs in Pavelić's Croatia" (Anzulovic 1999: 104).

The Communist Secret Service of Croatia made a report in 1986 in which they informed the Croatian Communist leadership that the leaders of the Serbian Orthodox Church made an

alliance with the Serbian nationalists in Serbia and Croatia. According to the report, the aim of this alliance was to provoke incidents between the Croatian Serbs and the authorities of the Republic of Croatia in order to mobilize the Serbs for a massive armed uprising (Perica 2002: 153).

The provoked clashes were supposed to serve as the self-fulfilling prophecy which would confirm that the Serbs in Croatia were indeed being persecuted. This was in line with the newly promoted image of Serbdom based on historical victimhood. For example, Jovan Opačić, one of the founders of the *Srpska Demokratska Stranka* [Serbian Democratic Party], and one of the leaders of the Serbian nationalist revival in the 1980's and 1990's noted:

> So long as Yugoslavia's federal structure was emphasized, we didn't raise questions about national consciousness and national institutions. We considered Yugoslavia to be our state, and the republic boundaries as only administrative. That's why we considered out nationality to be Yugoslav. But now that there are fewer and fewer Yugoslavs and more and more Croats, Slovenians, Serbs, Albanians and so on, we realized that we Serbs in Croatia need to return to our national identity. In this context, when we confronted with real dangers and existential fears, it is normal to unite in the framework of the national idea and to use that principal to defend ourselves. If I am attacked as Jovan and as a Serbs, it is only as a Serb that I can defend myself (Denich 1994: 372).

Therefore, the perception of endangerment, and the existence of the existential threat, was a necessary ingredient for the awakening of Serbian nationalism in Croatia. This is why Iliana R. Bet-El concluded that "to the Serbs, memories of the cruel, systematic actions of the Ustasha became both a currency of justified self- determination – largely…, based upon notions of victimhood – and an anti-Croat one" (Bet-El 2009: 212).

Prominent members of the Serbian Orthodox Church urged for the division of Yugoslavia along ethnic lines as early as 1987. For example Patriarch Germanus, the head of the Serbian Orthodox Church said in 1987 that Serbia awaits a leader with "the strength and intelligence to select the right portion of land for the Serbs" (Perica 2002: 158). On the 1st of October 1987 in the church newspaper *Pravoslavlje* [The Orthodoxy] the patriarchate official Svetozar Dušanić wrote that Yugoslavia should be divided into an "Eastern Orthodox-Byzantine sphere of influence" and "western Roman Catholic sphere of influence," because "the two incompatible worlds sharply differ from one another in religion, culture, historical development, ethics, psychology and mentality, and therefore previous conflicts that culminated with massacres in the Second World War could be repeated" (Perica 2002: 158).

Phase II: Warmongering (1990-1995)

The period from the quelling of the Croatian Spring in 1971 up until 1989 was characterized by the so-called "Croatian silence" (Banac 1992: 1092). Leadership of the Croatian Communist Party did not demonstrate any serious condemnation or active resistance to Milošević's rise, nor did it energetically oppose the developments related to memory politics. The first serious opposition to Milošević's policies was shown by Ivica Račan, the newly elected president of the Central Committee of the Croatian Communist Party in 1989. The reform oriented Croatian Communists decided to introduce the first democratic elections scheduled for April 1990.

The newly formed Croatian Democratic Union [Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica, HDZ] led by the former partisan and dissident Franjo Tuđman, ran on a platform of Croatian self-determination. Tuđman's party, HDZ, claimed that they were a Croatian movement which actually tran-

scended all party divisions, and Tuđman made considerable efforts to depict the party's ideology as a synthesis of virtually all Croatian historical political organizations from 19th century Ante Starčević, Stjepan Radić, antifascist partisans and the Croatian Spring. Tuđman's aim to create a catch-all party led to a dubious concept of national reconciliation according to which the opposing sides in WW II, namely Croatian partisans and the fascist Ustasha, and their contemporary followers, were supposed to put their past differences aside. Moreover, Tuđman argued that both the Croatian partisans and the fascist Ustashe were struggling for the same ideal – Croatian national freedom (Đurašković 2016: 776). This led to several contradictory claims by Tuđman during the election campaign in which he argued that Croats are not a genocidal nation and that they cannot be responsible for the Ustasha crimes, while at the same time arguing that "the Independent State of Croatia was not just a 'quisling' creation and a 'fascist regime' but also an expression of both the Croatian historic aspirations for an independent state" (Croatian Democratic Union 1990:8). This statement was widely quoted by the Serbian press during the campaign as a proof that Tuđman wanted to resurrect the Intendent State of Croatia and that the HDZ was a neo-Ustasha organization (Pauković 2008:19).

For example, in an article in the *NIN* newspapers, issued in March 1990 it was stated that:

> Every fifty years someone remembers that Serbs who are living here should be discriminated, proclaim them for something else or exile them from Croatia (…) Today we are coming near to the end of another fifty years period, when Franjo Tuđman is rejuvenating Pavelić's ideas from fifty years ago about an ethnically cleansed Croatia, about a genocide against the Serbs. About Croatia, cleansed of Serbs. But, Tuđman does not have Hitler and Mussolini to back him, as Pavelić did (Pauković 2008: 24).

When Tuđman visited the predominantly ethnic Serb town of Benkovac on the 18th of March 1990 there was an alleged assassination attempt on his life. Although there was a large crowd of HDZ supporters who came to hear Tuđman's speech a counter-protest was organized by the local Serbs. They chanted at Tuđman and his HDZ supporters "Ustasha, Ustasha," "Down with Tuđman and Artuković, "You will not slaughter us as you did in 1941," "Serbia, Serbia," "You rose up to slaughter us," "You came to our land and you plan to take it from us" (Pauković 2008: 24). Tuđman tried to respond to these chants by saying that "In our program we guarantee full equality with all nations, even to the Serbs in Croatia, in the same way that they are guaranteed to us, but we will not allow the creation of Greater Serbia in [the territory of] Croatia." After the stage was covered with eggs, beer bottles were thrown at HDZ supporters, Tuđman said "Do not be afraid brothers, if they want to kill us – let them! I am sad that this is happening. We are guaranteeing the Serbs all the same rights as to ourselves, but we will not allow them to dominate over us" (Pauković 2008: 24).

Tuđman's HDZ won the first democratic elections in Croatia which were held in April and May 1990. HDZ received 58% of the seats in the parliament, while the Croatian Communist Party won 30%. According to the ethnic composition of the voters, 98% of HDZ voters were Croats. The Serbian Democratic Party's voters were exclusively ethnic Serbs, without the support of any other ethnic minority in Croatia. The Croatian Communist Party's voters were ethnically mixed, 52% were Croats, 28% Serbs and 17% Yugoslavs. According to estimates 46% of all ethnic Serbs in Croatia supported the Croatian Communists, and about 23% of ethnic Serbs in Croatia voted for the Serbian Democratic Party (Pauković 2008: 24). This data would suggest that the radical nationalist Serbs failed to mobilize the majority of ethnic Serbs in Croatia.

Moreover, according to the survey about ethnic relation in Yugoslavia which was conducted in the 1990s, and included 4,232 respondents, 7% believed that the country would not break up

into separate states, and 62% reported that "Yugoslav" affiliation was very or quite important for them. Respondents described their workplace relationships in the following way: 36% characterized them as good, 28% as satisfactory and only 6% as bad or very bad. When it came to relations between neighbors of different ethnicities respondents answered that 57% considered these relations to be good, 28% as satisfactory, 12% as bad or very bad (Oberschall 2000: 988). Therefore, sociologist Anthony Oberschall concluded that: "for the majority of Yugoslavs, on the eve of the Yugoslav wars, nationalist contention in the public arena did not translate into hostile interpersonal ethnic relations" (Oberschall 2000: 988).

Soon after HDZ took power, in accordance with their program of anti-Communism, they started to cleanse the official institutions of Communist symbols and started introducing "new" Croatian state symbols. This caused outrage among some of the local Croatian Serbs. As early as July 1990 policemen from the predominantly Serbian populated Knin district refused to wear new Croatian uniforms, because they allegedly resembled those of the Ustasha – this was the introduction to the secession of Krajina from Croatia (Perica 2002: 162). It seems that the core issue revolved around the symbol of the checkerboard which was supposed to be printed on all the police uniforms. Some of the Serb policemen complained that the checkerboard was an Ustasha symbol and that they wouldn't wear it. However, Sabrina Ramet noted that "Serbs also complained about the *šahovnica*, the red-and-white checkerboard emblem, in the new Croatia coat-of-arms, alleging – falsely – that it was a throwback to the days of Pavelić and his Ustaša movement. But, in fact, the *šahovnica* had been featured in the Croatian coat-of-arms, since the end of the thirteenth century and had also been used during the socialist era, as the Serbs must have known" (Rahmet 2005: 6). The Croatian checkerboard was indeed a part of the symbolism of Croatia during the socialist period, however, it was not displayed publicly almost anywhere.

In the meantime, most Serbian politicians both within Serbia proper and in Croatia intensified their propaganda based on memory politics related to the history of the Ustasha movement. For example, in Spring 1991, Vuk Drašković, by that time the leader of the opposition, noted that

> If war comes, I fear most for the fate of the Croatian people. In Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia there isn't a Serb to whom the Croats don't owe several liters of blood. There isn't a house in which someone wasn't massacred… So, I understand why Serbs, if the war comes, would like to fight against the Croats Denich 1994: 381).

A wave of ceremonial excavations with the remains of the Ustasha victims were initiated and took the form of political gatherings. Some of these excavations were televised in Serbia. For example, on the 4th of August 1991, on one of such televised ceremonies, Dobrica Ćosić, initially one of the most prominent ideologues of Milošević's regime, held a speech at the reburial ceremony and noted that

> One of the greatest sins of my generation, is this funeral which we perform fifty years too late, the funeral of Prebilovac martyrs. We committed this sin because we foolishly believed that by forgetting the Ustasha crime we contributed to the brotherhood of the Serbian and Croatian peoples (de la Brosse 2003: 53).

One of the main events directly tied to the instrumental usage of memory politics related to the history of the Ustasha movement for direct political purposes was Operation Labrador. The operation was launched in August of 1991 by OPERA (Operativna Grupa za Propagandni Rad), a section of the Yugoslav Army's Counterintelligence Service which had the aim of desta-

bilizing Croatia, discrediting its government in front of local Croatian Serbs, and most importantly to defame Croatia in the eyes of the world in order to block its international recognition. Members of OPERA organized a terrorist attack on the Zagreb Jewish community offices by planting the explosives in the building, and they also planted explosives on the Jewish graves on the Mirogoj cemetery. According to a captured member of the OPERA group the objective of their mission was

> that the Croatian authorities should be represented and shown as being pro-fascist or, rather, to create animosity, that the Jews should have animosity towards the Croatian authorities in Zagreb. Another terrorist attack was also being planned on the synagogue in Zagreb. However, that was never carried out because the members of the Labrador operation had to flee to Belgrade because they were in danger of being arrested (ICTY 2002: 12735).

Therefore, the main aim of the OPERA group was to depict the Croatian leadership as the continuation of the Ustasha movement. Due to the prominence of Ustasha antisemitism and its involvement in the Holocaust, the international community was supposed to be convinced that the Croatian government was neo-Ustasha.

The argument that the Croatian government was a resurrected Ustasha movement was also used to rally support for the Serbs at the international level. For example, Patriarch Pavle of Serbia released a circular to all Orthodox churches on the 13th of December 1991 in which he was seeking the protection of Croatian Serbs from "the Croatian neo-fascist regime – the successor of the Ustašas who massacred 700,000 Orthodox Serbs in World War II" Perica 2002: 160. The conflict in Croatia was often depicted as a clash with the Vatican which wanted to destroy Serbia. For example, in one of the street protests an elderly woman was waving a banner on which was written "Vatican Satan," "the Pope should go to Jasenovac! The Pope is an Ustasha" (de la Brosse (2003: 68). Similar arguments were also used in connection to Germany. For example, Željko Ražnatović Arkan held a speech in summer of 1992 in Benkovac where he noted that

> the Serbian people are fighting against fascism. It is fighting against fascist Germany. Understand, that the Ustaša are a small and poor people and we could eat them for breakfast but behind them stands the Third Reich. Remember that. Those tanks were not made in Zagreb, but in fascist Germany. Understand that if it is necessary we will go all the way to Berlin and liberate them as well from this new fascism.

References to the Croats as Ustasha remained consistent throughout the war in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina and served the purpose of creating the security dilemma through which the Serbian elite in Knin and in Belgrade could mobilize the local population for their political aims. This strategy of reliance on memory politics was not fully successful as long as Yugoslav institutions were firmly in place, however when their corrosion took place and security stopped being a transnational concern due to the fragmentation of the security apparatus, the increased reliance on memory politics brought results. This is confirmed through various testimonies of contemporary "ordinary men." For example, according to the testimony of a certain Bogdan Denitch: "Everyone was traumatized by all the talk of world war two atrocities… even those who had seemed immune to nationalism. Old personal ties and friendships crumbled as many intellectuals I knew, as well as friends and family members, rallied to the defense of their own nation. The pressure to do so was immense" (Oberschall 2000: 990-991). According to another interview sociologist Anthony Oberschall conducted with a Serb he stated that: "We were afraid because nationalists revived the memory of World War II atrocities… nationalist graffiti on walls

awakened fears of past memories: it was a sign that minorities [Serbs in Croatia] would not be respected and safe" (Oberschall 2000: 991).

The Third Wave: Detente and the EU Accession (1995-2012)

After the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina ended in 1995, reliance on memory politics related to the history of the Ustasha movement had lost its functional quality due to the need for increased demobilization of the population. The Serbian elite, still headed by Milošević, avoided using the term Ustasha in their official propaganda and the two states went on a path of normalization of international relations – especially after the death of Tuđman in Croatia in 1999 and the removal of Milošević in 2000. Croatia submitted the request to receive candidate status for membership in the EU in 2003. With the start of the EU accession, Croatia was provided with incentives to quell any attempts of Ustasha apologists or neo-Ustasha organizations to enter the political mainstream. Political scientist Stevo Đurašković noted that

> During the 2000s, the EU-accession process and the succeeding HDZ government led by Ivo Sanader underwent a kind of Europeanization of the politics of memory and focused on the revival of the Croatian anti-fascist legacy while simultaneously removing all memorials and plaques as well street names commemorating the Ustaša (Đurašković 2016: 783).

The Croatian political elite, regardless whether they were coming from the center-left Social Democratic Party (SDP) or the center-right Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) agreed that there would be zero-tolerance for any sort of attempts of revitalization of the Ustasha movement. The Ustasha apologists would not be allowed space in the state or the mainstream media and any form of glorification of the Ustasha would be immediately quelled. This policy was not only related to future attempts, but was also implemented retroactively. For example, in 2004, the Mayor of Sinj decided to remove a commemorative plaque on which it was written "To the Ustasha who died for the Independent State of Croatia," which was installed on the 10th of April 1993 by the right wing Croatian Party of Rights (Hrvatska Stranka Prava, HSP, "Uklonjena spomen-ploča ustašama s pročelja zgrade u Sinju," Index.hr, 10.12.2004. Available at: http://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/uklonjena-spomenploca-ustasama-s-procelja-zgrade-u-sinju/238752.aspx). In September 2008, a large concrete-made letter "U" was removed from the Pakovo Selo near Drniš. The concrete structure was originally installed in 1993. After it was taken down, the HDZ Regional Governor, Goran Pauk, requested full support from the public and the war veterans to prevent any such future structure in their community ("U Pakovu selu uklonjeno betonsko „U"," Index.hr, 22.09.2008. Available at: http://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/u-pakovu-selu-uklonjeno-betonsko-u/403064.aspx). Moreover, in 2008 a Croatian emigrant from the US decided to finance the construction of the monument to Jure Frančetić, a Ustasha war criminal and the commander of infamous Crna Legija (The Black Legion) unit. The monument was removed within the week of its erection ("Postaviti spomenik ustaši ili urinirati na javnom mjestu – ista stvar" Index.hr, 28.02.2008. Avilable at: https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/postaviti-spomenik-ustasi-ili-urinirati-na-javnom-mjestu-ista-stvar/399969.aspx).

In December 2008, the Minister of Education coming from the ranks of the HDZ, Dragan Primorac, noted in an interview to *Die Presse* that "Our children learn in schools that the Second World War was a horrible time of fascism and Nazism, which must never repeat again. They are taught that the state of Croatia was founded on antifascism, and that these were the principles on which we fought for our independence" ("Primorac za Die Presse: U Hrvatskoj je nulta tolerancija prema nacizmu," Index.hr, 05.12.2008. Available at: http://www.index.hr/vijesti/

clanak/primorac-za-die-presse-u-hrvatskoj-je-nulta-tolerancija-prema-nacizmu/412396.aspx). In April 2009, a number of Croatian bishops decided to visit Jasenovac, the president of the Croatian Bishop Conference and the archbishop of Srijem Marin Srakić together with Bishop of Požega Antun Škvorčević, Đuro Gašparović, and Đuro Hranić, they repeated the words of Stepinac that Jasenovac is a "disgrace for the Croatian people" ("Čudo biblijskih razmjera: Biskupi u Jasenovcu," Index.hr, 03.04.2009. Available at: http://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/cudo-biblijskih-razmjera-biskupi-u-jasenovcu/428261.aspx).

Fourth Wave: Illiberal Populist Memory Politics (2012-2018)

Soon after becoming the prime minister of the center-left coalition in 2011, Zoran Milanović started to push the idea to abandon the official parliamentary commemoration of Bleiburg which was introduced by the center-left government in 2000. The government financed the commemoration with half a million kuna, an equivalent to about 65,000 Euros (Klauškim 2012). Milanović argued that the crowd gathering at the Bleiburg field, to commemorate the executions of the tens of thousands of Ustasha members and their collaborators, glorified the Ustasha movement. The retraction of the sponsorship for the Bleiburg commemoration immediately caused a counter-reaction in the center-right and far-right and led to the mobilization of the far-right.

The election of the new president of the HDZ, Tomislav Karamarko in 2012 marked a major departure from the established norms of conduct of HDZ in the past decade. Karamarko decided to rely on the marginal far-right groups whom he introduced into the pre-election coalition. Karamarko introduced the Croatian Party of Rights – Ante Starčević, a marginal, but radical political party into the mainstream of Croatian politics. He also promoted far-right media personalities such as Velimir Bujanec and gave them prominence in the Croatian media. Karamarko also forged an alliance with revisionist historians such as Bruna Esih and Zlatko Hasanbegović. Although, Karamarko's rule over the HDZ was relatively brief because he was forced to resign in 2016, the alliance of far-right groups which he introduced to mainstream politics remained stable and outlived his political career.

The alliance between the 1) revisionist historians, 2) conservative and anti-abortionist NGOs; 3) far-right media personalities and 4) radical elements in the Catholic church, is based on illiberal populism. One of the ways these groups implement their populist rhetoric is by attacking the official narratives related to WW II history. The consensus among political elites of the center-left and the center-right about memory politics which was forged during the EU accession is now being increasingly attacked by the populist alliance.

The populist alliance in Croatia argues that the mainstream history and the elite which stands behind the current memory politics related to the Homeland War and the Second World War distorts the genuine history of "the Croatian people." For example, Marko Jurič, a far-right media personality argued in 2016 that the salute *Za Dom Spremni* [For Homeland Ready],[2] was an "old Croatian salute" and recommended that people should salute him in such way whenever they saw him. In one of his shows Jurič proclaimed that people should be afraid of walking next to the Serbian Orthodox Church in Zagreb because "their children could become the victims of Chetnik slaughter!" The Council for Electronic Media suspended Jurič's TV show for three days because of hate speech. The far-right organized a protest on which over 5,000 par-

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2 The salute *Za Dom Spremni* was used by the members of the Ustasha movement and performed the same function as the salute *Siel Heil* in Nazi Germany.

ticipants gathered and forced the head of the Council for Electronic Media to resign. The chants *Za Dom Spremni* were repeatedly heard during the protest. The head of the Council for Electronic Media, Mirjana Rakić, was depicted as a Communist Commissar with a gun as a direct reference to the Bleiburg massacres, and she was proclaimed to be anti-Croatian. A similar event was orchestrated against Hrvoje Hribar, the head of the Croatian audio-visual center in 2017, he too was forced to resign. The mass mobilization of far-right supporters based on issues related to memory politics became one of the main populist strategies in their aim to weaken independent institutions, by arguing that those whom they target are distorting Croatian history, that Croatian institutions are remnants of communist rule and that they are pro-Yugoslav and anti-Croatian.

Virtually all these four groups also showed elements of outright apologism for the Ustasha movement. The web portal tied to the NGO *U ime obitelji* (In the Name of the Family) titled *Narod.hr* (People.hr) often brings news and anniversaries related to the history of the Ustasha-led Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska, NDH) which was in existence from 1941-1945. In 2016 the website described Jure Francetić as a national hero of the NDH, they depicted him without any criticism while publishing excerpts which depict him as a "biblical warrior" ("Markićkin portal sjetion se rođendana "biblijskog ratnika" Jure Francetića, to im je najčitanija vijest," Index.hr, 03.07.2016. Avilable at: https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/mar-kickin-portal-sjetio-se-rodjendana-biblijskog-ratnika-jure-francetica-to-im-najcitanija-vijest/903895.aspx?fb_comment_id=1355705114459137_1355717451124570#f3815d66ba4a d34). They also uncritically wrote about Ante Pavelić. ("Markićkin portal obilježio i Pavelićev rođendan: retuširali mu biografiju i objasnili tko su ustaše," Index.hr, 14.07.2016. Avilable at: https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/Markickin-portal-obiljezio-i-Pavelicev-rodendan-Retusir-ali-mu-biografiju-i-objasnili-tko-su-ustase/906350.aspx). Scholars dealing with the activities of the NGO *U ime obitelji* claim that many of its leaders have formal connections with the institutions of the Catholic Church (Petričušić, Antonija; Čehulić,Mateja, Čepo, Dario. "Gaining Political Power by Utilizing Opportunity Structures: An Analysis of the Conservative Religious-Political Movement in Croatia" *Croatian Political Science Review*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (2017): 77).

Radical elements within the Catholic Church are also involved in the same process. The most prominent example is the activity of Bishop Vlado Košić. In September 2016 he held a sermon in which he tried to discredit the center-left coalition government led by SDP by attacking them on the grounds of memory politics and LGBT rights. Košić argued that the current government does not recognize that the greatest tragedy that happened to the Croatian people was the Bleiburg massacre. He then rhetorically asked "how would it be possible to vote for those politicians who do not acknowledge the crimes over their own nation in history" ("Biskup Košić na misi pozvao vjernike da ne glasaju za SDP." Index.hr, 04.09.2016. Available at: https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/biskup-kosic-ponovo-politizira-s-oltara-ne-glasajte-za-one-koji-su-donijeli-lex-perkovic/917216.aspx). Košić added that the "true Catholics cannot support those who are against the idea of marriage as a union between a woman and a man. These sorts of politicians cannot be elected by Catholics" ("Biskup Košić na misi pozvao vjernike da ne glasaju za SDP." Index.hr, 04.09.2016. Available at: https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/biskup-kosic-ponovo-politizira-s-oltara-ne-glasajte-za-one-koji-su-donijeli-lex-perkovic/917216.aspx).

However, Košić gave the most evident Ustasha apologist statement in October 2017 when he openly said that: "The Ustasha were not a fascist movement but an organized military defense of Croatia as a state. Even Alojzije Stepinac and Franjo Tuđman spoke positively about

that (Independent State of Croatia) state. These (Ustasha) units used all available means to defend the state – this was also a part of their pledge" (Biskup Košić: Ustaštvo nije bilo fašizam nego obrana Hrvatske." Index.hr, 26.10.2017. Available on: https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/biskup-kosic-ustastvo-nije-bio-fasizam-nego-obrana-hrvatske/1003495.aspx). Although many politicians and members of the public expected Church leadership to punish Košić for such statements, or simply distance themselves from his – this did not happen. As a matter of fact in April 2018 Košić was praised by Archbishop Bozanić who said that "as an Archbishop I want to show special appreciation to Bishop of Sisak Monsignor Košić and also I want to thank him for all the things that he is doing" ("Bozanić nahvalio Košića za sve što čini, a onda su popričali o partizanskim zločinima." Index.hr, 17.04.2018).

Conclusion

Examination of all four waves of the memory politics related to the history of the Ustasha movement provides us with an opportunity to observe the continuities and discontinuities between different motives, incentives, and circumstances which influence memory politics. The four waves provide us with an excellent case for a diachronic comparison between different evolutionary phases of the development of memory politics.

When it comes to continuities, we can conclude that both the second wave (1986-1995) and the fourth wave (2012-?) used memory politics related to WW II as an issue which was deeply securitized. Part of the Serbian elite used memory politics related to the Ustasha movement in order to mobilize ethnic Serbs by instilling them with fear and triggering a spiraling security dilemma. During the fourth wave, on the other hand, the Croatian far-right populists are securitizing the internal enemies marked as the communist elite. This communist elite which is still ruling Croatia is supposedly anti-Croatian and represents a national security threat. All four waves of memory politics, but the second and the fourth one in particular, show that history is a power vessel for pushing certain political values into the political arena. Memory politics takes the form of a rhetorical/ideological glue for the creation of a common political platform and represents a certain kind of consensus building between different interest groups. In both the second and the fourth wave memory politics is used as an effective mobilizational tool and a populist strategy with the intention of destroying or subjugating of state institutions.

There are also certain discontinuities between the second and the fourth wave of memory politics. While in the second wave memory politics successfully triggered the security dilemma which escalated the conflict, the fourth wave triggering of the security dilemma seems to be failing. In this manner, the fourth wave more resembles the first wave in which memory politics is more successful in challenging the dominant narrative than in the construction of the new one.

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CONSTRUCTING THE 'PEOPLE': CITIZEN POPULISM AGAINST ETHNIC HEGEMONY IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA IN LIGHT OF THE 2013–2014 PROTESTS

Igor Stipić

Abstract

This article, essentially following the contributions of Gramsci and Laclau on hegemony and populism (a non-normative view), analyzes the possibilities for Bosnia-Herzegovinian (BiH) society to challenge its predominantly unaccountable and authoritarian political structures, taking as a point of departure the 2013–2014 outburst of protests and social mobilization. The analysis is situated in a context of specific cultural and social conditions marked by the ideological hegemony of ethnic discourse. In this sense, unprecedented levels of solidarity among BiH ethnic societies by signaling an end to chronic depolitization that had plagued this socio-political space ever since the transition to democracy, served as an opportunity for the construction of a new universal signification that could break with the coherence of the existing discourse and offer an antagonistic frontier different than the one characterized by the ethnic question. This incipient appearance of a social project rivaling deeply entrenched ethnic democracy, appearing at a time of (minor) organic crisis, offered, mainly through the logic of displacement of an already established political frontier, a new perspective on the BiH political scene. This war of position provides fertile ground for the development of what could be defined as "citizen populism". By taking the BiH citizens, the system outcasts par excellence, to the center of the political stage, social movements offer a chance to replace the well-established notion of ethnic subjects with that of fully-fledged citizens. Additionally, this article considers the problematique of building bonds of equivalences in both socially and ethnically heterogeneous social movements that demand accountability from existing structures, while rejecting its own projection via political society, a sin qua non for representation of demands.

Introduction: Idea, Methodology and Organization

After decades of political lethargy, the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) rose in protests that became known as the most significant uprising in the short independent and democratic history of the country. The uprisings followed no particular stages of development. In a matter of hours, after the beginning of country-wide demonstrations, it seemed that BiH was about to go to the streets. This was considered a source of horror for ethno-national elites, exemplified in the destruction of government buildings and people demanding the right to have a future, as it was covered by the media. The prospect of citizen solidarity, seemingly reaching the forgotten unity of three ethnic groups, symbolized a real earthquake to the well-known narrative of the trans-historical and a-historical hatred directing the country. The new narrative entered the political space of the political system, and embodied it, in the view of the political elites. The narrative of people crossing the well-entrenched borders of ethnic hatred brought down the ethnically painted facades of the polis in which citizens were held as prisoners of the political class.

Once contextualized in the space of BiH Dayton politics, the issue of narratives and construction of "the people" embodies the most important aspect of the protests. In this sense, the present article, besides explaining the appearance, developments and results of the protests, focuses on the conflicting narratives over the constitution of the BiH political subject. By analyzing emerging discourses, I aim to expose how the subjectivity or perception of the world can be constructed, maintained or debated in the public space, taking as a case study the 2013–2014 protests in BiH. By analyzing competing discourses, based on ethno-national and citizen concerns, the aim is to see how they intend to create a distinct conception of "the people".

Research was carried out by using methods of on-site participant observation in the cities of Sarajevo and Mostar during the Bebolucija and Tuzla Uprisings. This included informal talks with participants of the protests, and interviews with activists from Mostar, Banja Luka and Sarajevo. This was complemented with content and discourse analysis of publicly available media and protest materials that appeared during the period of social mobilizations.

Additionally, it seems important to think of the BiH case in relation to the larger context of Central and Eastern Europe. The dominant character of what came to be perceived as unsuccessful democratic transitions, resulting in a crisis of institutionalism and rising social inequality, have in some cases opened the doors to various populist and authoritarian options (in BiH, this happened at the very establishment of democracy) inside mainstream public discourse.

The article is organized as follows. The first part explains the theoretical framework used for the analysis. The second part discusses the construction of ethno-national hegemony in BiH after the end of the civil war in 1995. Later, questions related to the rise of a new competing citizen narrative are addressed, while also analyzing the resistance of the ethno-national discourse. Finally, there will be attempts to explain the downfall of the protests and the continued dominance of an ethno-national narrative in the polis.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework is constructed by combining models of discourse theory (Laclau & Mouffe in Jorgensen & Phillips 2002), hegemony (Gramsci in Bates 1975), and populism (Laclau 2005). First and foremost, discourse theory asserts how social reality is principally constructed through discourses. This socially accepted "reality" is what Laclau defines as objectivity, claiming that "discourse is the primary terrain of the constitution of objectivity as such" (Laclau 2005: 68). Thus, rather than having social obviousness defined a-priori, social knowledge, beliefs and identities derived from them are fully discursive. Consequently, as the meaning of an imagined whole we usually refer to is "never completed or total" (Laclau & Mouffe in Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 38); "the society" – the primary object of social knowledge and invoked totality – turns into a site of struggles to create and fix meaning. Consequently, contests over names and definitions of totality, such as regional belonging and its limits, identity, class, nation or other demarcations are not necessarily as durable or eternal as some may assert, but belong to unending "struggles over the monopoly of the power to make people see and believe" (Bourdieu 1991: 221). Therefore, discourses, due to their ability to make and unmake groups, hold the key to understating the constructed nature of what is understood as a legitimate definition of the social world.

The production of identities and the social reality that accompanies them requires a radical investment in the specific conceptual creation. Thus, the meaning of totality (i.e., society, people, nation, class) can only be grounded *a-posteriori* as it is produced by the means of symbols and through rhetoric, articulation and naming around certain nodal points which become "privileged signs around which a discourse is organized" (Laclau & Mouffe in Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 27). In this sense, "symbolic power is a power of constructing reality" (Bourdieu 1991: 166) as it is "the symbolic framework of a society that sustains a certain regime" (Lefort in Laclau 2005: 166). Thus, "symbols are the instruments *par excellence* of "social integration: as instruments of knowledge and communication, they make it possible for there to be a consensus on the meaning of the social world, a consensus which contributes fundamentally to the reproduction of the social order" (Bourdieu 1991: 166).

These signs, or signifiers, are essentially empty as they have no specific content which is conceptually established and unchangeable. Rather, the meaning of the socially established discourse "can never be ultimately fixed" (Laclau & Mouffe in Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 24) and it is essentially contingent – possible but not necessary. In this way, signifiers (nodal points, privileged signs), besides being empty, are also floating, implying that the battle over determination of their meaning by various discourses is never finished. Thus, as social totality remains nothing more than an imagined identity, words given to it, such as "people", "country", or "nation" (objectified through discourses), represent both empty and floating signifiers, and in this way become sites of political struggle. In this sense, the very act of naming, representing an embodiment of reality, is central for the creation of objectivity because it crystalizes the meaning of the unknown and fuzzy world by "diffusing a state of feeling which had not previously found any form of discursive representation" (Laclau 2005: 45).

The act of naming, or a conceptual grasping of social totality, inevitably involves building a frontier that differentiates the imagined totality from something other than itself (Laclau 2005). In other words, to achieve its fullness, an imagined totality has to introduce an excluded element, a "constitutive exteriority" (Staten in Mouffe 2005), which becomes an element "that the totality expels from itself in order to constitute itself" (Laclau 2005: 70). In this way, totality is established only vis-à-vis an excluded element, as all other differences can only find internal cohesion in their common rejection of the constitutive exteriority. As Laclau (2005: 70) notes, "it is through the demonization of a section of the population that a society reaches a sense of its own cohesion". In this sense, "identity is always relationally organized; the subject is something because it is contrasted with something that it is not" (Laclau & Mouffe in Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 43). This act of creating a frontier between "us" and "them" represents a closure, and it is a *sine qua non* of totality as such, because otherwise, differences that keep existing inside of this totality would be insurmountable. Essentially, "without some kind of closure, however precarious it might be, there would be no signification and no identity" (Laclau 2005: 70). Likewise, the construction of a frontier plays a constitutive role for the ideological makeover of any identity as it reveals how identity is nothing more than an "identification with a subject's position in a discursive structure" (Laclau & Mouffe in Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 43).

Both the temporality and contingency of objectivity are masked through hegemony which arises as "some fixations of meaning become so conventionalized that we think of them as natural" (Laclau & Mouffe in Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 26). Simply put, hegemony is related to the creation of social consensus over the meaning, as "no social fullness is achievable except through hegemony" (Laclau 2005: 116). Arising as a dominant consensual vision and the division of the social world, hegemonic intervention makes subjects, rather than being fragmented between

various discourses, over-determined by a particular vision of social reality. The concept of hegemony demonstrates how "the production of meaning is a key instrument for the stabilization of power relations" (Laclau & Mouffe in Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 32), as it is the over-determination of subjects that makes other possible narratives seem impossible, exactly due to its ability to represent itself in the name of totality. In this sense, Gramsci (in Bates 1975) affirms how the battle in superstructure is basically a battle for the control over civil society – a marketplace of ideas and public opinion, where culture, ideology and symbols play a central role.

Nevertheless, even hegemonic creations suffer from their constitutive and contingent character, which even when hidden for a time implies a closure that is only temporary and is thus always in danger of being reconstituted and invaded by other discourses. As Laclau (2005: 226) notes, "history is rather a discontinuous succession of hegemonic formations that cannot be ordered by a script transcending their contingent meaning". In this sense, official historiographies, unquestionable at certain periods, can at other times be contested, allowing for a counter-vision, one that probably has been dormant for prolonged periods of time, to take its place and gain momentum in the creation of other types of objectivity. Mouffe and Laclau (in Jorgensen & Phillips 2002: 27) designate these excluded possibilities as the "field of discursivity", which "is a reservoir for the surplus of meaning".

This change of narrative, or troubles in superstructure, usually takes place during moments that Gramsci (in Bates 1975) defines as organic crisis. Organic crisis appears once a social upheaval pairs with deep economic, social and political issues that overwhelm certain social spaces. When the system encounters troubles in performing its main functions (providing food, security, employment, hope in the future, etc.) people are more likely to reject previous objectivities, abandon dominant parties and thus stop believing in previously unquestionable "truths". At such times, a systemic dislocation occurs, making people (due to the inherent human need for a sense of perception of time, space and history) more willing to accept new meanings of the social – which can be delivered by competing discourses able to project a horizon of a new totality. As this happens, there is a radical break from previous formations and an emergence of the new historical period can take place.

Being at the root of any populist, anti-institutional outburst, the resulting chasm between the people (firstly emerging as crowds) and power (political elites and state institutions) opens up a space for both discursive and political alternatives. As certain regimes demonstrate themselves unable to contain the excess of demands coming from the people within the existing institutional system, dominant discourses may lose their ability to totalize social reality and the name of "the people". If this process unfolds, a dialectic vision of a unified history of a historical bloc is unlikely to be maintained, making existing social logics incompatible with previously dominant narratives. For this reason, "people", as a historical and political subject, may require a new conceptualizing framework. An opportunity for politics, therefore, arises, populist forces – those invoking, challenging or creating the name of "the people" (filling the vacuum) – can contest and even subvert previous systems of beliefs, offering alternative discourses by reconstructing around a new popular core, thus constructing a new social totality. Therefore, populism, a political logic emerging at times of deep institutional crisis, essentially breaks the coherence of existing discourses as it disputes the naming of social totality and consensus over its meaning. Lying at the heart of politics, and essentially nothing more than the practice of naming and constructing "the people" (answering the essential question "Who are the people?"), populism appears as one of the ways to construct unity inside of groups (Laclau

2005).Thus, "constituting 'the people' […] reveals representation for what it is: the primary terrain of constitution of social objectivity" (Laclau 2005: 68).

Nevertheless, new visions of organizing society still have to struggle over the "true" meaning with the old ones. This battle for meaning, a "battle for articulating social majorities around certain discourses" (Hall in Galvan 2011: 130), a battle for constituting objectivity, or a logic of displacement of political frontiers is what Gramsci defines as a "war of position". The frontiers are never immobile but changing in the constant battle over inscription of meaning into the "empty signifiers" and movement of "floating signifiers". It is here where the political game of constructing "the people" essentially takes place.

In a nutshell, discursive theory affirms that the political field is "the site *par excellence* in which agents seek to form and transform visions of the world and thereby the world itself" (Bourdieu 1991: 26). The political struggle consists of creating knowledge of the social world, entailing a constant process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of categories of perception of our social reality. Therefore, "political logics are related to the institution of the social" (Laclau 2005: 117).

The Hegemony of Ethno-National Discourse in Bosnia-Herzegovina

During the organic crisis (i.e. skyrocketing inflation and unemployment) that seriously affected all communist regimes in Eastern Europe, the Yugoslav space entered the process in which previous objectivities ceased to function for most of its citizens. In this climate, resulting in fear of both an unstable present and an unpredictable future, ethno-national populists emerged as a political force able to harvest existing uncertainties, crystalizing the fuzzy reality into a discourse which offered a sense of both historical continuity and a better future. Ethnic populism essentially signified a "way to fill the void left behind by the failure, powerlessness and perceived incapability of other ideologies, political projects and programs to fulfill the hopes of the people" (Hobsbawm 1993: 158). As with any populist creation, it represented a "utopia of those who lost faith in other programs, or have lost the support of previous political and social stabilities" (Hobsbawm 1993: 158). At such times of crisis, ethno-national populism achieved moral, intellectual and political pre-eminence, converting fragmented subjects into ones over-determined by a specific type of objectivity. Consequently, ever since the early 1990s, BiH citizens have had their consensual meaning of the social world discursively created by the means of what can be called "ethno-national populism".

BiH was established in 1995 by the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) that ended the three-year-long civil war. Following this, the DPA divided BiH into two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH, divided into ten cantons with a Bosniak-Muslim and Croat majority) and the Republic of Srpska (RS, centralized with a Serb majority). Annex four of this agreement, also serving as the constitution, by making constitutive peoples (ethnic groups) into constitutional bearers of the new democratic society, overwhelmingly emphasizes the primacy of the collective (ethnic) over individual rights. By understanding the competition between different ethnic groups as the only real embodiment of the BiH political game, the DPA created a type of citizenship according to which a citizen once stripped of his ethnic identification becomes a concept emptied of meaning and actual political agency. For example, citizens can only elect representatives of their own groups for the offices of the Presidency and the House of Peoples (parliament). Likewise, citizens who identify themselves as something other than constitutive

peoples (i.e. Jew, Roma, Slovak, Ukrainian, Bosnian and/or Herzegovinian) cannot run for office. Such an absurdity was denounced by the decision of the European Court of Human Rights which, in the case of Sejdic-Finci, ordered (unsuccessfully) this constitutional specificity to be reverted. Correspondingly, in BiH, citizenship, as a link between individuals and the state, is largely understood through the prism of ethnicity (Guzina 2005: 227). As Mujkic (2016) notes, in this situation, a concept of individual citizenry is an abstract and "un-real" notion, merely formal and administrative. Thus, in BiH, the failure to develop a universalistic and republican notion of citizenship, and its complete subordination to the nationalist notion, makes citizenship itself into some pre-political fact unaffected by the formation of political opinion and will of the citizens themselves (Habermas 1996).

Unsurprisingly, the frontier to be built by ethno-populist discourse in the post-Yugoslav space of BiH, on which a whole ideological content of identity depends, made strict and insurmountable lines of particular homogenous ethno-religious communities. This type of frontier, due to its exclusivity, was authoritarian and anti-pluralist in character. Following this, in celebration of the particularism of a supposed national culture – one to be principally defined by religion – ethno-national populism established strict limits of community and reduced the plurality usually present in populist movements into a singularity of ethnicity. It found its constitutive exteriority in other ethnic groups living in the BiH space, constructing a type of border which at times led to practices of ethnic cleansing or even genocide. This new imagined social totality resulted in subjects defined by a strong nationalism, accompanied by powerful national social majority movements that, as a result of their pursuit of a clean and healthy society, led to the logic of authoritarian collectivism. In this environment, empty signifiers of "nation" or "people", came to be exclusively related to ethnic identities, disabling the opportunity for them to be extended over inter-ethnic boundaries.

Furthermore, ethno-national discourse, once it had won the contest of being the only legitimate incarnation of BiH social reality, quickly managed to turn into a hegemonic narrative, creating a particular symbolic framework that sustained it in the new historical period. In order to ensure the continuous exercise of hegemony, the maintenance of social consensus, and the credibility of ethnic social objectivity, Ethno-Bureaucratic Patrimonialism (EBP)[3] (Stipic 2017: 102) had to focus on the reproduction of its particular discourse because the "social formation which did not reproduce the conditions of its production at the same time as it was produced was doomed to die" (Marx in Althusser 1984: 1). This reproduction of conditions of production of such a particular social objectivity was essentially assured by the complete domination of what Althusser (1984) terms "Ideological State Apparatuses" (ISAs: educational, religious, cultural and political institutions) by each ethnic regime inside of BiH.

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3   Ethno Bureaucratic Patrimonialism (EBP) is the term I use to define a type of political regime established in BiH during what is normally considered as the second transition to democracy. In this sense, EBP represents a political regime inside of which political behaviour is overdetermined by: 1) the absolute hegemony of ethno-national objectivity of the social world; and 2) absolute patrimonialization of the bureaucratic public office, which is the main employer in the economy. While ethno-national hegemony leads to a conversion of what are supposed to be citizens into politically instrumentalized subjects, ensuring an absolute monopoly of ethno-national parties over political life, patrimonialization of the public office, leading to the patrimonialization of the state itself, has the power to discipline citizens in such a way that it turns an impersonal relationship between independent voters and politicians into a disciplined relationship between patrons and their clients. In such an environment, the exercise of political power, derived nominally from the people, becomes entirely discretionary, as rules and limits are imposed directly by the political administrators.

First and foremost, in BiH, the ISA has ensured, through the complete control it exercises over the educational system, the very first institution a child interacts with, and enormous power over the socialization of its future citizens. Especially in societies that face divisions and inter-group tensions, education is a powerful potential source of both integrationist and dis-integrationist forces. In the case of BiH, all children study under three different educational programs, and if by some "mistake" the school is attended by students from different ethnic groups, these are kept separate from each other in the infamous invention of "two schools under one roof".[4] Unsurprisingly, the research called "Education in BiH: What do we teach the children?" (Fond otvoreno drustvo 2007), has demonstrated that the textbooks of the national group of subjects (history, religion, language, geography) are "equally directed at promoting one people, one part of the country, one religion, one cultural heritage, this being the one to which the majority of population on a particular territory on which the books are used belongs" (Fond otvoreno drustvo 2007: 178–179). Thus, in BiH, an official history propagated through educational institutions becomes an important dis-integrationist mechanism in the hands of the ruling ethno-elites. An attempt by ethno-linguistic-intellectuals to make the Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian languages (which literally contain fewer differences than various Italian dialects or many versions of Spanish in Latin America) strictly differentiated and quasi unintelligible to one another, clearly demonstrates how "in the essence of language nationalism we find issues of power, status, politics and ideology, and not of communication or even culture" (Hobsbawm 1993: 121). Similarly, a large proportion of the print media, controlled to a great extent by the main ethno-national parties, serves the purpose of paying lip service to the defense of ethno-national "truths", thus leaving little or no space for other interpretations (Perisic 2010). Finally, Catholicism, Islam and Orthodoxy, three dominant monotheistic religions in the country, which are also the main source of differences between existing ethnic groups and a "hallmark of nationhood in the Balkans" (Perica 2002), are quite successfully misused (due to their possession of universal truths and monopoly on morality), with or without the approval of the religious leaders, to emphasize the clear borders and "enormous" differences that exist between Croats, Bosniaks and Serbs (Abazovic 2006).

BiH political elites are involved, through public discourses, in maintaining "civil wars of memory" (Kuljic 2005). By making the word "threat" into the most significant embodiment of BiH reality, ethno-politicians foster an environment in which constant dangers to and conspiracies against "our" survival become the main news of the day. To that end, the empty signifier of "vital national interest", (mis)used for any type of manipulation, converts every political game in BiH into a zero-sum game between existing ethnic groups. This leads to what Mujkic (2006: 66) defines as ethnopolitics that in the case of BiH, represents a "political context in which citizenship of a person is predisposed by his or her kinship, his or her belonging to this or that group of common, or more explicitly by his or her blood origin". In this sense, ethnopolitics and the hegemony of the ethnic, by superimposing the notion of particularism of cultural community, bound together by origin and fate over the notion of universalism present in an egalitarian legal community (Habermas 1996), effectively empties the BiH state of its citizens.

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4   "Two schools under one roof" represents a particular BiH invention in which students of various ethnic groups that live together in a certain area come to be physically segregated into different classrooms and timeslots of the same school building they share, all with the aim that their interaction is maximally reduced.

Contextualizing the Protests

BiH society was never characterized by a serious protest culture. Due to the specific type of historically structured learning (O'Donnell 1994), it passed from the Middle Ages into the Ottoman period, later to the Kingdom and Federation of Yugoslavia, to finally democratic transition through the act of war fought for nationalistic and not democratic ideals. It lacks any kind of enlightenment period in its history. Its recent transition towards democracy is stripped of any kind of deeper sense of democratic ideals and culture, being rather dominated by the ghosts of an authoritarian past (and present). Thus, in the first 15 years of Dayton, few progressive protests took the streets. Among the few that appeared, it would be important to take into account the 2008 protest in Sarajevo against street violence (after the murder of a teenager), the 2009 protest of Tuzla University students (after a corrupted process of scholarship selection), and the 2012 Save Picin Park (Park je nas) protest in Banja Luka (after plans for the construction of a mall in a popular park). Instead of appearing as organized social movements, however, demonstrations of dissatisfaction tend to arise for ad-hoc reasons, exploding almost out of nowhere and tending to build themselves from scratch.

In 2013 and 2014, it was barely different. *Bebolucija* itself was completely free of any serious organizational maneuvering and rather exemplified yet another (the most massive to date) spontaneous outburst of dissent. *Bebolucija* effectively started when one activist made a post on Facebook (on June 5, 2013) in which he declared his outrage with the failure of MPs to pass a law allowing newborns to obtain their citizen identification number (JMBG). The parliamentary procedure was stalled when the Serb representatives demanded a clear differentiation in ID numbering between respective BiH entities, refusing to proceed with the law they denounced as threatening their "vital national interest". The demands were particularly relevant bearing in mind the case of Belmina, a little girl that needed JMBG in order to travel abroad for medical treatment and who became the main symbol of the protests. Sadly, she passed away during the protests.

As Zoran Ivancic (2013), an activist who started the protest, claimed: "First to respond to my post was a friend of Belmina's parents […] Once I got back at 11am and checked Facebook, there were several people who contacted some more people and arranged a plan among each other. We met at 12:45pm close to the parliament building […] The next morning, more people who found additional information on another Facebook group (organized by desperate parents) came and joined us." This unexpected citizen action achieved its apogee on the night between the 6th and 7th of June as protesters encircled parliament, blocking MPs and foreign investors from freely exiting. In the following days, according to most media outlets, the size of the crowd in Sarajevo reached 10,000, while other cities from both entities like Mostar, Zenica and Banja Luka joined in the protest. Thus, *Bebolucija* was born as a spontaneous outrage and not as an organized action. At first, protesters only demanded the JMBG issue to be resolved, but in a matter of days, due to the troubling social and economic state of BiH, the protest reflected a spectrum of social demands, the main one being the demand for the resignation of all ministers at cantonal, entity and state levels (symbolized by an action on July 1, 2013 called OTKAZ (Come out and fire them). Even though the protest managed to mobilize many thousands during the first weeks (especially after the JMBG law was adopted) they eventually died out at the beginning of July.

Likewise, the Tuzla uprisings broke out once the wider population decided to join the month-long and fruitless demands of factory workers requesting a resolution of the corrupt post-war privatization that had left many either out of work or without regular (in most cases any) pay-

checks. Tuzla was the most important industrial centre in BiH during communist Yugoslavia. Even if the post-war privatization process had affected it, factories left from the communist period still offer the main source of employment in this city.

As was the case with *Bebolucija*, the second uprising erupted out of the blue once Aldin Siranovic, an unemployed citizen of Tuzla, created a Facebook group on February 5th and called "50,000 people on the streets for the better future". On the 6th of February there were around 6,000 people on the streets and on the 7th, around 10,000 people took over Tuzla. In Tuzla and around the country ad-hoc protests arose not only to support Tuzla workers but to denounce a completely dysfunctional state. In such a state of absolute rage, the buildings of cantonal governments in Tuzla, Zenica, Sarajevo, Bihac and Mostar went down in flames. Similarly, in the town of Mostar, two buildings belonging to the main ethno-national parties, SDA (Bosniak) and HDZ (Croat), were set on fire. Also, in the town of Bihac, demonstrators surrounded the house of the cantonal minister, demanding an immediate resignation. The main demand of the protesters – the resignation of ministers on all levels – was partially fulfilled when four cantonal governments were brought down (Tuzla, Sarajevo, Bihac, Zenica). The protests, involving 28 cities, were the biggest to have ever occured in BiH, appearing in areas dominated by both Bosniaks (Tesanj, Srebrenik, Gorazde, Bugojno etc.), Croats (Orasje, Livno etc.), and also in the mixed areas of Mostar, Travnik, Brcko Distrikt and Jajce. Due to both police and societal pressure, there were no major protests in RS, but some groups from the entity started collaborating with their counterparts from FBiH during and after uprisings (i.e. in Banja Luka and Prijedor).

After several weeks, protesters directed their energy from the streets towards the organization of *plenum* (citizen assembly), which can be understood as the third step in this two-year-long social mobilization. *Plenum*, organized in 22 cities around the country, with the idea of serving as some kind of an instrument of direct democracy, functions as a social institution in which citizens can hear each other, discuss political matters, exercise pressure on and monitor the work of elected officials, and commonly elaborate demands which are to be directed towards authorities. The general rule of the *plenum* is one person one voice, giving everyone the right to speak, and each proposal is decided upon at the end of each session by majority vote. Thus, the *plenum* emerged as a way for citizenry to enter the space completely occupied by the political elites, attempting to exert influence over political action. Overall, during the plena, citizens elaborated demands that dealt with issues prevalent in BiH democracy: widespread corruption, disrespect of human rights, high wages in the political-administrative sector, bad conditions in health care and education, and high unemployment. Even though the *plenum* did not develop in RS due to both state and societal pressures, it was nevertheless marked by a multi-ethnic character. For example, in Mostar, participants demanded the constitutionality of Serb (and any other) minority in the HN Canton (which has been rejected by both the Bosniak and Croat elites). Also, groups from some cities in RS became informally involved (such as Social Justice in Prijedor and the Banja Luka Social Center) and started cooperating (and still do so) with their counterparts in FBiH (Radovic, 2016). Likewise, in multi-ethnic cities in FBiH, a *plenum* has been organized by participants coming from all three ethnic groups. In the town of Travnik, the *plenum* and protests themselves were symbolically initiated by three students, each belonging to different constitutive peoples. Overall, the *plenum* phenomenon remained active until mid-May 2014, when it was stopped due to the floods which affected great parts of the country, leaving around 100,000 people temporarily displaced. After this, the practice of *plenum* was only continued in Zenica and Gracanica, while it transformed into informal groups in several cities (Movement for Social Justice in Bihac, Informal Group for Social Justice in Prijedor (RS), Network "5F7" Tuzla) (Milan 2015).

The Protests of 2013–2014: Constructing "the People" as Citizens

The protests of 2013–2014, without question, were the most significant social uprising in the modern history of Bosnia-Herzegovina. They were a clear example of the institutional chasm separating people from power (a first precondition for the rise of populism and also a factor leading to some kind of [organic] crisis). Thus, the power to get things done, embodied in political institutions, unable to process rising demands, could no longer be considered in the service of citizens. Institutional unresponsiveness was strikingly clear as, without JMBG, a citizen is unregistered by the state bureaucracy, and as such does not legally exist (Mujkic 2016). More precisely, newborns left without the right to citizenship were concomitantly stripped of any other right (i.e. a passport). As Arendtian (1958) states, citizenship is the right to have rights. Consequently, as we could observe during the protests, JMBG or the Tuzla crisis simply pushed citizens beyond their limit of patience with the existing system, erupting in a country-wide festival of civil disobedience. In both instances, a crisis (crystalizing in JMBG and Tuzla but appearing due to socio-economic conditions) was followed by various protests in both entities (involving war veterans, ecologists, students, pensioners, teachers), as the list of problems to complain about is almost endless in a country in which 60% of young people want to migrate (Bljesak 2016), 40% live at or below the poverty line (Slobodna Evropa 2016), the monthly salary of most people moves between 100 and 300 euros (Andrijanic 2014), most pensions are below 150 euros (Andrijanic 2014), youth unemployment stands at 57.9% (DW 2014a), corruption reaches the highest levels in Europe, and politicians still make around 2,200 euros per month (DW 2014a) (way above the regional average, which stands below 1,000 euros). Some of the usual reasons for protests, demonstrating the complete abyss between people and power, can be read from the following comments recorded during demonstrations.

"The list of reasons for human rage and frustration is too long" (Ljubanovic 2013); "I am twenty years old, I go to university and hope for nothing" (Mrkic & Radevic 2014); "I came here to support people who do not have anything anymore, from whom they have taken everything" (Mrkic & Radevic 2014); "I have two sons waiting for jobs, I don't have anything to live for, I just want change" (Tacno 2014); "The movement emerged not as the fruit of hope, but of despair" (Toe 2013).

Socio-economic conditions and street demonstrations fed into each other in the creation of a crisis. Thus, the situation created by Tuzla and JMBG served to clearly polarize the public space between citizens and institutions, causing a crisis in a previously dominant type of objectivity. By the simple act of people taking to the streets in protest (creating crowds), occupying public spaces, attacking buildings that embody political power and demanding the resignation of those who, for two decades claimed to represent their (ethnic) peoples, the previous narrative that sustained the functioning of an ethno-national regime was challenged, only exacerbating the (minor) organic crisis.

The easily understandable and emotional example of abandonment of babies and workers by the state served to clearly demonstrate the standoff between the weakest (babies, workers, and thus ordinary citizens) and the most powerful (the political elites) (Kazaz 2013). Consequently, babies and disenfranchised workers turned into empty signifiers of too many problems affecting the citizens of BiH. Thus, the discourse most elaborated during the protests turned to issues of citizenship (due to the clear denial of citizenship to babies) that became the master signifier for all the issues affecting various sectors of population. In this sense, the JBMG crisis or events that sparked the protests in Tuzla, acquired centrality in the public space and their

particularities came to signify a total chain of social demands. As a heterogeneous mass rose together, it came to embody, by confronting institutions as a unified whole and not as a variety of separate demands, a popular demand. By putting into question well-embedded social objectivities and opening spaces for discourses, that up until that point had belonged to the field of discursiveness, and surplus of meaning, protests symbolized a direct announcement of the beginning of politics – that "denunciation of tacit contract of adherence to the established order" (Bourdieu 1991: 127).

Furthermore, by strictly differentiating itself from the previous ethno-nationalist notion, one on whose legacy it nevertheless had to operate, the new discourse proclaimed (in a protest organizer's opening declaration) that the new "people" were to be "We, the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina". On the other hand, the "constitutive other: was to become:

"You, the political elites […] are to blame for the fact that our babies do not have identification numbers. You are to blame that we do not live but survive […] You need to be in our service, and not we in yours. We do not care if the baby comes from Banja Luka, Mostar or Sarajevo [indicating cities with different ethnic majorities]. To us, you are all equally responsible and guilty" (Buka 2013b).

In this sense, the new "people" of more inclusive identity, cutting across the plurality of ethnic identities, grounded its very unity in the rejection of corrupt ethno-national elites, making it into an excluded element for rival hegemonic construction. Thus, the new frontier implied a clear division between corrupt political elites and abandoned citizens. Here, the common denominator of people = citizens exemplified (as no other concept could) the absolute outsiders of the BiH ethno-dominated social reality, the system outcasts *par excellence*, the unrepresented ones, something comparable to Marx's *lumpenproletariat* or Lacan's *caput mortuum* (the residue left in a tube after a chemical experiment) (Laclau 2005). Thus, by filling the emptiness of a citizen concept with various diverging social demands, the new discourse cast the citizens of BiH for the first time as relevant historical actors, bringing them to the center of the political stage and constructing a movement that I would term "citizen populism".

By conducting participant observation, informal talks and an analysis of media reports, the trans-ethnic character of the protests was made evident. Thus, during the *Bebolucija* fieldwork in Mostar and Sarajevo, we could see people from the Bosniak-Muslim-dominant areas (Zenica, Srebrenik, Gradacac, Tuzla, Gorazde, etc.), Croat-dominant areas (Capljina, Ljubuski, Siroki Brijeg, Livno, Tomislavgrad, etc.) and also from Serb-dominant areas (Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Trebinje, Prijedor, etc.). We also witnessed banners stating: "Banja Luka for JMBG", "Banja Luka and Sarajevo: Rise up together", "Antifascist Banja Luka", "Capljina, Ljubuski and Siroki Brijeg for JMBG" (Tacno 2013; Buka 2013d). Also, an informal group of citizens organized protests in Banja Luka showing banners that declared that the "national belonging of our dearest is called a child" and (directly responding to Serb politicians who spread misinformation about the occupied parliament), "Stop bullshitting about how you are in danger and do your work! Banja Luka for JMBG" (Buka 2013c). JMBG protests were defined as a "citizen initiative, fighting for the basic human rights of all citizens, confronting nationalism and all other types of discrimination, hoping to establish solidarity among different groups" (Buka 2013).

The 2014 uprising was also of a clearly citizen and multi-ethnic character, something confirmed during our fieldwork (mostly in Mostar during participant observation and interviews with Abrasevic activists (a youth educational and cultural center, standing at the ex-war division line, that promotes cooperation among young people of different ethnic backgrounds and it served as a place where the Mostar plenum was held).

Media content analysis pointed in the same direction. For example, the Mostar plenum invited people to participate "against maintenance of war division lines, and for society based on social justice!" (Bljesak 2014). Also, graffiti showing "Death to Nationalism", "Stop Nationalism", and "Stop to National Divisions" covered the walls of a municipal house in Tuzla, that was set on fire, and banners that appeared in protests around the country stating "We are hungry in three languages", "Screw you and your three constitutive people", "Our Unity = Your Destruction" clearly defined the identity of those that the protesters were up against.

The discursive practices of protesters show how citizen populism created a discourse of a country based on the revolutionary-democratic concept of nation, downplaying the previously dominant nationalistic concept. Consequently, the state was to be identified with people as sovereign citizens (Hobsbawm 1993), where all political subjects are equal regardless of their ethnicity. The denominations given to plenums ("Plenum of Citizens"), or that assigned to the day marking the beginning of protests ("Day of Citizen Courage"), by strictly avoiding any use of national identification and downplaying those who attempted to do so (like the Anti-Dayton group), tried to open up the horizons of non-ethnic bases of solidarity in BiH society. Therefore, a new discourse focused on building social and class solidarity, one that transcends inter-ethnic lines, announcing what Klix (2016) called "times when social justice overcame all divisions". In this sense, the notion of class division, embodied in an empty signifier of "social justice" turned into one of the nodal points of the new narrative. A frank comment from one protester clearly demonstrates this feeling: "This is a real chance for people to realize how we are all in deep shit, all of us, Croats, Serbs and Bosniaks. The thing that connects us is that my generation will not even have pensions, nor free education or healthcare, opportunities for employment, whereas the state will serve only the rich" (Anadolija 2014).

Citizen discourse completely changed the meaning of empty signifiers of "nation" and "freedom". One of the most visible banners during the protests, stating that "Freedom is My Nation" (from an informal group of citizens in Mostar) embodies in the best way the change made to these two signifiers. The sign is a challenge to the dominant discourse's nodal point, "Ethnicity is my Nation", as it replaces the exclusionary notion of ethnicity with freedom – an inclusive category to be claimed by all citizens of the country both on a personal and collective level. In this sense, the wordplay around empty signifiers of freedom and nation introduced a fight over the appropriation of such words by completely different political movements, thus well exemplifying their floating character.

Finally, it can be argued that the institutionalization of *Plenum* emerged as a case *par excellence* of what could fit into the notion of citizen populism. People did effectively, through the very institution of direct democracy, imagine themselves as nothing more than citizens of a particular state. In this way, by creating an institution of egalitarian citizenship, they completely stripped themselves of an ethnic primacy deeply embodied in the primordial character of ethno-national discourse. As such, the mobilization and plenums that followed, not emerging from any type of protest organized structurally, developed as a radical action of sovereign citizenry, embodying the case in which plebs claimed to become the new populous. Consequently, by becoming a name (citizens) in its absence, the 2013–2014 protests signified the rise of "Citizen Populism" in BiH. In this sense, "Citizen Populism" appears as a type of contextually specific (Dayton BiH) movement phenomenon that: a) embodies a discursive tactic which fills the emptiness of the citizen concept with various issues overwhelming the BiH socio-political space; b) attempts, by constructing "the people" as citizens, to offer a sense of social integration different to the one propagated by an ethno-national project of the social.

The Ethno-National Narrative Fights Back

As was noted in the theoretical framework, any discourse that attempts to institute a new social objectivity must reckon with the resistance to hegemonic narratives that occupy a dominant position in the social space at the time. Thus, citizen discourse had to successfully challenge a deeply embedded ethno-national one and weaken its grip on social reality. Ethno-national elites tried to perpetuate the type of subjectivity able to maintain the continuity of historical unity that served their interests. Ethno-national discourse had as its goal – in order to ensure continuity of its historical bloc – the maintenance of dominance over a citizen's imagination and the perpetuation of ethno-national objectivity.

First of all, ethno-national elites tried to delegitimize the unity of protesters by means of representing them as being in service of the "constitutive other" and thus "against us" – the only true "people". With this in mind, those proclaiming themselves as representatives of the Serb "people" essentially identified the protests as an attempt by unitarists in Sarajevo (the capital of both the BiH and FBiH where a majority of the population is Bosniak-muslim) to overthrow the Republic of Srpska. For example, the president of the RS entity, Milorad Dodik, while commenting on the blockade of parliament, stated how the protests were organized by Bosniak parties, some foreign embassies, and certain NGOs with the aim of threatening the security of Serbian representatives (Buka 2013e). He added how Serbian and Croat representatives were held as hostages while Bosniaks could leave the parliament as they pleased (a verified lie) (Kresic 2013). Perpetuating a similar narrative, a newspaper in the RS released a piece with the title on its front page: "Demonstrators were promised guns for attack on RS!!!" (Prometej 2014). Similarly, the Serbian representative in parliament, Aleksandra Petrovic, tweeted during the blockade, "Protests in front of the Parliament are the idea of Bosniak parties, aimed at lynching us from RS. The building is surrounded and they are calling on us Serbs" (Bursac 2013). Another representative, Zivkovic, stated how "parliament is being converted into a camp, and we from the RS are the targets" (Buka 2013a). When commenting on the protests in an interview given after the end of crisis, President Dodik concluded how "citizen rights are not an issue, but the real issue is to negate national rights to people that want them" (Kresic 2013).

Secondly, Croat ethno-national elites and media connected to them followed a similar line of thought. Nino Raspudic, an academic connected to the regime, proclaimed how "protest is a Bosniak spring! Croats will not join" (Prometej 2014). At the same time, Dragan Covic, president of the most important party claiming to represent the interests of the Croat people (HDZ BiH), affirmed how protests represent a "wish to make a unitary Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina which would finally convert it into an entity of the Bosniak people, just like the RS is an entity of the Serbian people" (Prometej 2014). The webpage Poskok.info constructed a similar narrative, claiming how protests represent "Greater-Bosniak politics and as such are a faithful copy of Greater-Serbian politics from the end of 1980s" (Prometej 2014). At the same time, the newspaper daily *Vecernji List* emphasized how the protests and plenums that followed are essentially in the service of Bosniak politics, making an argument that overwhelmingly emphasized setting the government and party buildings on fire situated on the "Croat side" of Mostar. By choosing to ignore similar damage done to properties belonging to the Bosniak ethno-parties on the "Muslim side" of the city, the newspaper aimed to forge an environment of fear and inter-ethnic conflict, a powerful method in a city that still hadn't healed its war wounds.

Thirdly, Bosniak representatives likewise propagated an ethno-national discourse of fear and hate. Thus, SDP proclaimed how protests are "well-planned operations against the country of Bosnia-Herzegovina, organized by SANU (the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts – in the

past connected with propagating ideas of Greater Serbia), and in no way represent protests of socially endangered citizens" (Prometej 2014). The president of the same party, Zlatko Lagumdzija, claimed how protesters wanted to establish a third entity of Croat people (referring to an idea about the Croatian part of the country that would separate from FBiH) (Prometej 2014). The webpage drmaj.ba created an explanation stating how "considering the Western factor, this smells of pro-Greater-Croatia intervention" (Prometej 2014).

Ethno-national elites, frightened by the cracks appearing in the regime they had successfully established by the end of the civil war, tried to divert from the real significance of the protests by propagating the well-embedded notions of fear and hate, thus perpetuating once again the "civil wars of memory" in the hope of maintaining an ethno-national logic as the only relevant embodiment of BiH reality.

Protesters Retreat, Ethno-National Hegemony Continues (but crumbling?)

By the late spring of 2014, protests, and the plenums that followed, had lost the energy that had characterized them before. According to our informants, the idea of the *plenum* was partially usurped by agents of the political class and by the fact that *plenum* failed to show any real progress or effects on the political stage. The reasons for failure are many, but most of them lie in the fact that the chain of demands could not be sufficiently expanded in BiH society at the time. The protestors simply failed to engage the necessary critical mass of people. In any case, it would have been difficult to expect subjectivity in BiH to change so drastically and rather quickly after so many years of absolute hegemony of ethno-national discourse. However, resistance offered by the citizen discourse, coming at times of crisis, must still be rightly characterized as the most important social awakening and challenge to ethno-nationalism in the short history of an independent and procedurally democratic BiH.

To begin with, it cannot be denied that chains of the ethno-national narrative still proved unbreakable for many. As time progressed, various demonstrations that were happening outside of areas with a Bosniak-Muslim majority found themselves obliged to create a clear distance from anything happening in the so-called political Sarajevo. In this sense, student protesters in Banja Luka (the capital of the RS) made sure to clarify how they were in no way connected to movements happening in the other entity. Marking their territory clearly with RS flags, they decided to play on the terrain established by the dominant ethno-national discourse. However, it is important to note how Nikola Dronjak, the leader of the protests, recognized that students avoided identification with the wider BiH protests out of fear that the government would scapegoat them as the enemies of the RS (Bursac 2013a). Dronjak declared how unemployment, criminality and corruption, together with economic and social misery were the common denominators of all citizens of BiH. Similarly, in the city of Mostar, many of those that otherwise found reasons to announce their dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs believed in the narrative of the Bosniak spring, only showing themselves reluctant to unite with those who are not "us". Additionally, the existence of social fear and police repression was another major factor in play. For example, local police strictly prohibited demonstrators from crossing war-separation lines or to enter the "Croat" side of the city, so as to avoid "mixing".

Secondly, when explaining anything that goes on in BiH, one cannot avoid taking into account that the main engine of the economy and the main employer in this country is the public administration, accounting for about 55–65% of total GDP (Zelenika 2014). Out of a total number of about 720,000 people working in BiH, around 240,000 of them are employed in institutions,

firms and agencies in state ownership (BHAS 2016). Besides, a striking level of unemployment (around 45%, youth unemployment being at 60%) (UNDP 2016), only exacerbates the power of ethno-national parties that hold the sources of survival. In this sense, a social structure where a professional middle class hardly exists, and where most jobs are obtained through party membership understandably paves the way for the patrimonialization of relations between those controlling companies (political parties) and their client-employees (the citizens) (Stipic 2017). Pairing this with the fact that BiH can be understood as what Zizek terms a "society of general permissibility" (Zizek in Blagovcanin 2013), the arbitrariness that reigns in this polis increases the factor of fear and its influence over social behaviour. This factor can, to a large extent, explain the behaviour of some social groups. By enjoying a certain life stability, the middle-class employed in the public sector preferred not to join the protests, thus accepting the existing institutional framework as being preferable to undertaking actions which it considered threatening its current social standing. As Emir Fetahovic, a protester and plenum organizer from Travnik notes, in BiH "fear is stronger than the desire for a better life […] as many people are afraid to join the movement because in one way or another, they are somehow dependent on the power structure, fearing that either they or their family member could lose the job and have problems" (DW 2014).

A third major reason that has strongly determined the fate of the movement has been the unwillingness of protesters to connect, cooperate or be associated with any kind of party. An official proclamation of JMBG protest organizers stated how "Politicians and political parties have nothing to offer to us" (Buka 2013). One of the main organizers also stressed that "the first imperative of this mobilization was to avoid the interference of any organization or party" (Toe 2013). Such a decision obviously came about as the result of a citizen character (i.e., not involved in corruption) that protesters were aiming to construct and was likewise most definitely influenced by the disillusionment people felt towards any kind of party or organization. While such an attitude towards politicians and parties that were in office for years and did nothing is unsurprising and well deserved, this behaviour was no different even towards those parties determined to deconstructing the ethno-national narratives. As Denis Gratz of "Nasa Stranka" (Our Party) noted at the time: "they (the protesters) were obsessed by the fear that some party could exploit them. A naïve, if understandable, position. I have deep respect for citizens who are protesting, but there is one thing that unfortunately they do not understand: putting all parties into the same kettle is a dangerous game. Most protesters are young people who do not even vote. But the politicians in power in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been there for twenty years, and the only way to send them home is to beat them in the elections" (Toe 2013). In this sense, protesters, which appear as a crowd when taking to the streets can hardly expect to make their voices heard without some kind of more organized movement that could offer them direction and representation at higher levels of political decision making (something that can't be done by *Plenum*). As Dean (2016: 26) notes, while a "crowd provides an opportunity for the emergence of a political subject", the "perspective which gives body to the political subject is the party." As political experience shows, radical movements cannot simply avoid the state, because being the alternative to seizing or abandoning the state is false; the real challenge remains in transforming the state itself (Zizek in Dean 2016:149-150). It is rather naïve to believe that BiH politicians, at least the ones holding power at the moment, will voluntarily and on the advice of citizens, proceed with the recognition of demands as legitimate and change the type of behaviour they have been practising for decades. Thus, as the state presents a barrier to political change, gaining control of the state remains an important goal. It is difficult, at least in terms of the current institutional structures of most political regimes, that such control could come from any other point than through party politics. It seems that the electoral success of

parties like Syriza or Podemos, even if certainly not free from deserved criticism and unresolved issues, present a possible direction to take. As Dean (2016: 250) notes, "anyone who is unwilling to talk about the party should not talk about political transformation". Thus, while society and politics in BiH remain separate universes, an idea cherished by some that things will change for good without direct political engagement seems rather delusional.

Conclusions and Final Remarks

This article had as its central interest the struggle over identity formation in present-day BiH and its effects on the creation of a specific political situation in the country. In order to investigate this topic, a theoretical framework was constructed by combining discourse theory with those of hegemony and populism. While discourse theory is chosen as it predominantly can explain the construction of social reality, hegemony serves as an explanation of why a certain social order comes to be considered so natural that it represents a consensus on the meaning of the social. Additionally, populism explains the process of contestation over the identity of "the people", whose construction – the most invoked subject in the history of modernity – becomes a political operation *par excellence*.

Ever since the end of the civil war and the beginning of Dayton history in BiH, the dominant ethno-national discourse, emerging from ethno-national populism, has over-determined subjects in such a way to reach hegemonic proportions, and effectively closed off all other possible political and discursive opportunities. It has stabilized power relations around the imagined social totality defined by strong nationalism, authoritarianism and anti-pluralism, converting "the people" into nothing more than instrumentalized ethno subjects, while making ethnic identity the principle political identity in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Nevertheless, the protests of 2013–2014, served as a clear example of the institutional chasm separating people from power, and led to the movement that we define as "citizen populism". Appearing at the time of a minor organic crisis, citizen populism aimed to create a new conception of "the people". It caused a crisis in the type of objectivity propagated and established by the ethno-national narrative, opening a way to struggle over the name of "the people" and announcing the first real beginning of politics in the short history of the country. The protesters, by rejecting the notions of the old and embedded BiH political identities, opened a way towards a cognitive subversion and a suspension of adherence to the dominant subjectivity, thus "announcing the possibility of changing the social world by changing its representation" (Bourdieu 1991: 128). The new "people" – the citizens of BiH – of more inclusive identity, cutting across the plurality of ethnic identities, grounded its very unity in a rejection of the corrupt ethno-national elites, bringing the citizens, *system outcasts par excellence* (now destined to form the new people), to the centre of the political stage, thus forging a previously unimaginable interpretation of BiH social reality.

Unfortunately, protests and the plenums that followed them in the end somehow deflated and eventually lost the war of position, or the battle over social majorities. The biggest problem resulted from the fact that the chain of demands could not be sufficiently expanded in BiH society at the time. One of the reasons for people not joining the mobilization was that the chains of the ethno-national narrative still weighed too heavily on many. In addition, patrimonialization of the bureaucratic office, with its enormous power to discipline, had the effect of keeping the middle classes away from the protests. Finally, protesters made the mistake of rejecting any kind of cooperation with parties that follow similar citizen narratives, forgetting that the state in its current institutional arrangement presents a real barrier to political change.

It is important to note, however, that despite this criticism, the social movements of 2013–2014 signify the single most important political moment in the history of Dayton BiH. Once placed in the specific socio-political and historical context of BiH democracy, the importance of the trans-ethnic character of these protests cannot be overstated. Thus, the protests, introducing concepts of common purpose and solidarity between ethnic groups and replacing the notion of "vital national interest" with that of "social justice", need to be praised for even beginning to change the framework of understanding BiH reality. In this sense, the new construction of "the people", exemplified through the discursive practice of protesters and by the institutionalization of *Plenum*, represented a most democratizing act as it effectively, if only partially and briefly, managed to convert ethno-national subjects into fully-fledged citizens. If nothing else, there is a great hope that the protests can serve as a school for the future.

In conclusion, it is unavoidable to think about how, taking into account the BiH example and CEE perspectives, "in a world where barely 10 out of 180 nations can with conviction affirm that their citizens in any kind of real sense belong to one ethnic or language community, nationalism (or nationalist populism) based on creating such homogeneity is not only undesirable, but is to a great extent auto-destructive" (Hobsbawm 1993: 202). Other types of more progressive populisms may offer a chance for different political paradigms in times of crisis.

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DECAYING MONUMENTS, DECAYING STATES: POPULIST POLITICS OF REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING AT THE PARTISAN CEMETARY IN MOSTAR

Marija Ivanovic

Abstract

The partisan cemetery in Mostar, an imposing necropolis, is a masterpiece of the architect-philosopher Bogdan Bogdanović, dedicated to those who died fighting fascism. As such, it represents a clear reflection of the official memory and identity politics of the former Yugoslavia. Today, more than 50 years after it was constructed, the memorial is left to ruthless Time, seemingly sharing the faith of the country whose memory it was supposed to immortalize. Nevertheless, although in a state of decay, the cemetery has not lost its potency to incite emotions and command political mobilization. In the current post-socialist BiH environment, the site has emerged as a place of contested interpretations of the Yugoslav past and concomitantly the BiH present. Reflecting the emptiness left by the dissolution of the old state, the cemetery becomes a lieux de memoire *around which float different discourses, each offering a specific reading of the memorial and the past associated with it. In this sense, besides witnessing regular yearly commemorations to the victory over fascism, the environment of the necropolis is dominated by silent ideological battles with Nazi and Ustasha insignia, and graffiti of the separatist movements. All these symbols, each with their own particular meanings in the local context, co-exist in this monument to Brotherhood and Unity, contesting the ideology behind it, and with it, the current politics of identity, memory, and statehood in BiH. This article studies the Partisan Memorial as a point of contestation, investigating how various populist discourses of new mnemonic entrepreneurs interpret its symbolism, offering a comprehensive understanding of how the political sphere influences collective memory and the creation of a new socio-political context and its associated political subjects, in the city of Mostar.*

Introduction

The partisan cemetery in Mostar is an imposing masterpiece of the architect-philosopher Bogdan Bogdanović. The monument is dedicated to those who died fighting fascism, and as such, it represents a clear reflection of the official memory and identity politics of the former Yugoslavia. After the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the 1992-1995 wars, the memorial site was, for the most part, left to ruthless Time, seemingly sharing the fate of the country whose memory it was supposed to immortalize. Nevertheless, although in the state of decay, the cemetery has not lost its potency to incite emotions and command political mobilization. For example, those gathered on the monument to mark 25th November as Bosnia and Herzegovina's (BiH) statehood day were verbally and physically attacked by a group of young men, most likely ethnic Croats, who in their minds were protecting their side of the town from the "communists" (see: https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/na-partizanskom-groblju-u-mostaru-napadnuti-studenti-te-gosti-iz-srbije-i-hrvatske/171124141). Moreover, at the entrance to the necropolis, one is immediately struck with the Nazi and Ustasha (the puppet regime of the Nazis in Croatia) insi-

gnia, and few steps later, calls for "Third Entity" (the idea advocated by some political factions of BiH Croats that aims at establishing an autonomous Croat entity inside of territory of BiH) . All of these symbols, each with their own particular meaning in the local context, co-exist in this monument to Brotherhood and Unity, contesting the ideology behind it, and with it, the current politics of identity, memory, and statehood in BiH.

In his essay "Mostar's City of Dead, and Mostar – Dead City", Bogdanović (1997) explains: "The Partisan necropolis was a miniature representation of Mostar, a replica of the city on the Neretva river". Arguably, the statement still holds true today, but both the monument and meanings derived from it, placed inside of a very different context, have gone through a serious process of metamorphosis. Epitomizing the transitional change that destroyed – together with Yugoslavia – its old symbolic power, the "new" Partisan cemetery of a post-socialist context emerges as a site where different mnemonic entrepreneurs are trying to impose their respective hegemonic interpretations, filling the vacuum created by the destruction of the old order. In this light, memory, and more specifically, collective memory (Halbwach 1992) becomes one of the arenas in which various actors try to reassert their interpretation of BiH reality. For this reason, the Partisan memorial emerges as a point of contestation, as various populist discourses interpret its symbolism differently, extracting from it a variety of memories that become important markers of identity for their desired political subjects (Laclau 2005).

Keeping in mind the high saliency of identity politics in Mostar, it comes as no surprise that the city is dominated by two ethno-national parties, namely the Croat HDZ and Bosniak SDA. While these are the dominant ethno-national parties, one possible challenger to politics of nationalism, at least nominally, is the Social Democratic Party (SDP). It advocates a multi-ethnic BiH, but nevertheless stands guilty of flirting with ethno-nationalism. All three parties evoke particular memories from the Yugoslav *oublie de reserve* (Ricoeur 2004) – while leaving others to oblivion – in order to cement particular group identities (Moll 2013). It is precisely during the process of "unmixing" and "undoing" the common memories that BiH - and with it, Mostar – transited from one type of imagined community (Anderson 2006) to another, reflecting the wider wave of changes implicit in the dissolution of Yugoslavia. In this context, the Partisan cemetery, and the powerful symbolism it embodies, becomes a *lieux de memoire* (Nora 1989) around which float different discourses, each of them offering a specific reading of the past and concomitantly, the present.

The present essay will analyze commemorations taking place at the monument together with the discursive practices that espouse notions closely identified with the symbolism of Partisan cemetery (e.g. fascism and antifascism) in order to show how interpretations (and representations) of pastness (Tonkin) result in particular political subjectivities. More to the point, it is in the discursive and commemorative practices of three actors - HDZ BiH, SDA, SDP – who take Partisan memorial as a reference point where the populist instrumentalization of different memories results in the construction of clear fault lines between 'us' and 'them' (see Laclau 2005). Additionally, in order to provide a more holistic picture of dynamics occurring at Partisan cemetery, the perspective of several activists who carried out performances at the monument will be also analyzed.

Theoretical Framework: Collective Memory, Identity, Populism and Space

The following theoretical framework relates to four concepts: collective memory, identity, populism and space. Keeping this in mind, the first section will be an introduction to memory studies, followed by the intersection of (collective) memory and identity. Next, the notion of populism will be introduced as it closely relates to the two concepts mentioned above. Lastly, space will be briefly discussed in the context of where politics of memory, identity and populism meet.

There is an ongoing debate in academia over the nature of memory. Is it an individual faculty or a collective one? How does memory come to life in our heads? Why do we remember particular things, while others fall into oblivion? The existence of many concepts that designate a similar notion, namely social memory (Olick and Robbins 1998), cultural memory (Assmann and Czaplicka1995) and collective memory (Halbawchs 1980) implies attempts to introduce more clarity to the field itself and to contribute to its utility. Even though "memory" is filed and decentralized and without a central premise (Olick and Robbins 1998), it nevertheless represents an important area of study, one that is worth examining when talking about the notion of identity, "which has taken on the status of a sacred object, an 'ultimate concern' worth fighting for and dying for" (Gillis 1994: 3). The following section establishes a theoretical framework for discussing (collective) memory, and will briefly begin by outlining the history of the term, its different conceptualizations, and its relationship with identity, populism and space.

Studies on (collective) memory are a product of several major changes that reshaped people's relationship to memory, and as such, are a product of "a particular time and a particular place" (Olick et al. 2011) provide a short overview of the events that increased academic interest in this field, highlighting: a) modernity's understanding of time, b) changes in the social structure and c) age of the individual. Briefly, collective memory became relevant in times when social differentiation increased as "people from different milieus congregate together in polyglot urban settings" where "the bonds of commonality are much less obvious" (Olick et al. 2011: 11).

The term collective memory can be traced to its founding fathers, and even though all beginnings are arbitrary, here we will set the line with Emil Durkheim and his student Maurice Halbwachs. In the 1920s Halbwachs – building on Durkheim's concept of collective consciousness – posited that memory (i.e. remembering and forgetting) is not a purely individual cognitive faculty, but rather processes that take place within social frameworks (Halbwachs in Coser 1992). In the words of Halbwachs (quoted in Gedi and Elam 1996: 36), "individual images which serve to describe the inner occurrences in the mind" are "like raw materials of a dream", more precisely, they cannot be considered as true 'recollections' for they do not draw from clear perceptions such are possible only in social environment" (quoted in Gedi and Elam 1996: 36). In the words of Olick, "memory is a matter of how minds work together in society, how their operations are not simply mediated but are structured by social arrangements" (Olick and Robbins 1998: 109). Understood in this way, collective memory envisioned by Halbwachs and his followers succumbs to heavy criticism for the "complete obliteration of the individual consciousness as real and determinant" (Gedi and Elam 1996: 36). For this reason, many theoreticians of memory will attempt to nuance the concept of collective memory and rid it of its over-determinant tones; but one thing that unites them all is "the belief in memory as an actual living entity" (Gedi and Elam 1996: 34).

Nora (1989: 8) explained this nicely, by highlighting that "Memory is life (…) It remains in permanent evolution." What is implied here is that "*memory work* is embedded in complex class,

gender, and power relations that determine what is remembered (and forgotten) by whom and for what end" (Gills 1994: 3). Seen from this perspective, individual memory is determined by the (specificity of) groups one belongs to, and as group identities are in permanent change – although nominally the same over time – simultaneously the content of memory also transforms, representing a fluid (Cengic 2017) rather than a static phenomena. In short, memory is perceived as "multiple and yet specific; collective, plural, and yet individual" (Nora 1989: 9). Even though Funkenstein (quoted in Gedi and Elam 1996) rightly demonstrates his skepticism when it comes to groups having their own 'consciousness' (or memory for that matter), because even if a "nation or a society can[not] be said to exist (…) [as a] single organism with a mind, or a will, or a memory of its own" one cannot deny that groups foster particular "representations of their pastness" (Tonkin 1992:10). Assmann's and Czaplicka's (1995) insight in how people form their memory in communication with others, namely with groups who "conceive their unity and peculiarity through a common image of the past", emphasizes a relational and interactive characteristics attributed to memory. Here it might be better to talk about memory as a particular representation of the past, rather than history, as the latter represents a pool of possibilities – i.e. contingencies – that, in order to become 'history that matters', need to be woven into coherent and unidirectional narratives of the past. So although groups cannot be said to have a memory or will of their own per se, their members are nonetheless bound by shared perceptions of past experiences that can be said to have the potential to crystalize into collective (or social) memory.

Understood in this way, memory is closely tied to group's and consequently, to one's own sense of identity. Smith (1999:10) advances this view as he argues "memory, almost by definition, is integral to cultural identity, and the cultivation of shared memories is essential to the survival and destiny of such collective identities." Likewise, it is not just remembering that matters, as for Renan (1882: 3) says, "Forgetting, I would even say historical error, is an essential factor in the creation of a nation" – one of the largest groups with shared identity. In the words of Olick and Levi (2011: 10) memory becomes increasingly important once that "collective identity is no longer so obvious as it once was." From this discussion, one can infer the mutually dependent relationship between memory and identity as "The core meaning of any individual or group identity, namely, a sense of sameness over time and space is sustained by remembering; and what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity" (Gillis 1994: 2). In order to better understand how the content of collective memory comes into being, we will turn now to actors who engage in it.

As previous paragraphs demonstrated, this work follows the approach that all (collective) memory is essentially a social enterprise, and as such, it implies the engagement of different actors who carry out *memory work*. Many academics draw a sharp distinction between two groups of mnemonic entrepreneurs, namely, those in power that endorse a specific memory regime and those below who, at best, contest it. In contrast, I would concur with Kubrik and Bernhard (2014: 5) that this view "can lead to oversimplification" as the authors are quite right to affirm that one party can "prefer a combination of status quo and non-status quo positions" (Kubrik and Bernhard 2014: 5).

In order to better understand the mechanism of social memory, insights from Bourdieu (1989) will be borrowed. Bourdieu (1989) conceptualized 'social reality' in terms of space where every actor takes on a position that is equivalent to the current amount and structure of capital s/he possesses. The relations among actors are determined by "their proximity to, neighborhood with, or distance from each other, and also by their relative position, above, below or yet in between" (Bourdieu 1989: 16). In turn, this implies that some actors exercise more power than

others, as their stocks of capital are greater. Consequently, it comes as no surprise why places in general change their outlook with a change of political regime (or even with a party turnover in government). Bourdieu's (1989) understanding of social space can be nicely paired with *memory work* (Gillis 1994), as it allows us to detect the constant struggles that are involved in the forging of collective remembrance and forgetting, a perspective that avoids the dichotomies of 'negative' imposed official memory regimes versus 'positive' bottom-up strategies. Instead, each actor's engagement with memory work is seen simply as a product of his/her position in social space, a reflection of his/her particular perspective. Additionally, actors who find themselves closer to each other in social space have more properties in common (Bourdieu 1989), and in this discussion of memory this translates to group membership and shared representations of past.

In this regard, it is not just social space that is important to be considered when thinking about social memory. Physical space also plays a crucial role, as it is here that memory materializes itself and exists in different forms. More precisely, mnemonic actors use their position in former space in order to make interventions and representations in the material world, and in this way reflect implicit social relations that are (re)produced in the social sphere onto the canvass of 'real world'. As 'true' and lived memory becomes less and less accessible to the individual (Nora 1989) – due to mentioned changes inherent in modernity, which take place within ever shorter intervals of time – *lieux de memoire* need to be created in order to suspend certain events in historical time. It is precisely these 'islands of time' – in the words of Assmann and Czaplicka (1995)– that represent incarnations of social memory in time and physical space. It can be argued that physical space, together with the interventions that are carried out in it, come to represent a perfect reflection of the social arena where different actors want to inscribe their worldviews.

Another aspect of memory that needs to be discussed is its place relative to the past, present and future. These relations are closely intertwined with the fluidity of social memory. Mnemonic actors, taking on memory work in the present, find their raw material in *pastness* (Tonkin 1992), and then, in accordance with their horizons of the future, carry out their memory practices. Olick et al. (2011: 10) posit "[the] implication that memory is formed largely in the present rather than in the past, and is thus to be seen from the perspective of contemporary interests." By picking and choosing which aspects of the past to bring forward, memory practices, as are calendars for example, incessantly "enabling and constraining [people's] abilities to remember different pasts" (Zerubavel quoted in Olick and Robinns 1998: 116).

In this last part of the theoretical framework, the concept of populism will be introduced. Populism, as understood here, denotes the "character of the people" (Panizza 2008), meaning designating a historical community and, consequently, a political subject belonging to it. In this sense, populism is closely intertwined with both identity politics, and social memory, since the latter can serve as a mechanism of inclusion and exclusion of people in a particular group, drawing the lines between those who belong and those who do not. Becoming the foundation for imagining and naming the groups, populist memory practices rely on particular readings of the past in order to cement identities and legitimate the present social order.

The City as Text

This part of the essay represents an opening to the main subject of the work, namely, the Partisan cemetery in Mostar. In order to be able to talk about the monument, we will first talk about the social framework within which the memory practices take place, more precisely, about the city of Mostar. To begin with, we will expand a little bit on the theoretical considerations related to space, especially when talking about cities. Then we will zoom in to the Partisan cemetery to show the practices of remembering and forgetting at this monument.

Cities, as relatively delineated space "have the capacity to embody, materialize and represent collective memory, and to sublime it in space and time" (Radulovic 2013). Architecture is useful here because "together with the street names it encompasses all physical objects, monuments and the rest of urban iconography that transform the city in the space of historical memories, cultural imagery and political visions" (Azaryahu in Radulovic 2013). Usually when we talk about the identity of a city, we are talking about its architecture, and in most cities one dominant narrative prevails, or it may better be called symbolism, that is present throughout the city. Memory and identity politics are strongest, or most visible, in city centers, and the relations of center-periphery must always be kept in mind. Moreover the term „center" here is taken in its wider meaning, i.e., in centers of nations (capital cities), in the center of the capitals etc.

Reality also reminds us that there are also cities where "two or more dreams are fighting for their realization" (Radulovic 2013). In the literature, these urban settings are called frontiers – or, in a more determinant way, divided – cities (Radulovic 2013). Together with Nicosia, Jerusalem and others, Mostar is an example of a frontier city. Even though this is one of the most infamous characteristics of the city on the Neretva, it must be emphasized that it does not represent historical fatality; rather it is a product of political and historical contingencies that took place during the 1990s war. The vestiges of the conflict drew an imaginary line in the city's landscape, and although this is important to mention, one should also uncover the complexities that are left out when talking about "two cities living side by side" (ICG). More precisely, the Boulevard, a former front line, runs through the city's body, virtually cutting off its East parts – inhabited mostly by Bosniaks, from the ones in the West that are predominantly inhabited by Croats.

Mostar: Memory and Identity

Everywhere in BiH the continuum of time is split into a 'before' and an 'after', the cut-off point being the 1992-1995 war. When talking about the war in Mostar, it seems more pertinent to talk about of a collection of local wars (Bjelakovic and Strazzi 1999) rather than an ethnic war between Bosniaks and Croats. (This is corroborated by the fact that on the eve of the conflict 10,000 people attended the peace march organized by SDP (Palmberger 2016). By looking at the conflict through the perspective of elite preferences, Bjelakovic and Strazzi (1999: 74) demonstrate that "intense warfare was instrumental to a peculiar state-formation process," or, more precisely, "that in the Mostar 'conflict formation' primary specifics are to be found in the Bosnian Croat quest for the creation of an independent state within Bosnia and its consequent annexation to Croatia". This intention, together with the realities of population change and the framework of Dayton, BiH will largely determine the outlook and politics in today's Mostar.

To a great extent, the destiny of Mostar was affected by the way in which HDZ imagined to "solve" the Croat question in BiH. The party's strategy was not uniform over time. Grandits (2007) argues that in its beginnings HDZ leaders advocated for a unified BiH, but this changed when the "Herzegovina faction" took over the leadership of the party, Mate Boban being its most notorious representative. Calls for a third entity – and its annexation to Croatia proper – was the light motif of their politics. This had implications for Mostar, as the city took a central position in the imagined territory of Herzeg-Bosna. Mostar is the center for the larger geographical area that surrounds it, as it is one of the largest urban center in this area; it was the declared capital of HZ HB. On the other hand, in the Bosniak political imagery, Sarajevo (and not Mostar) played the role of the capital city, thus leaving Bosniaks in Mostar living in the periphery (ICG 2009). For example, many Bosniaks complained about how the help from Sarajevo arrived late, and how underarmed they were. Also, in the aftermath of war, a large bulk investment was channeled into West Mostar, while the same cannot be said for the East (Hromadzic), as Sarajevo ate the majority of the investment. In order to point out how this played out in the fissures of the city, I will offer a few examples.

The ARBiH was cut off for a while from arms supplies, while the HVO were better equipped. This meant that the east side suffered more destruction during the conflict, and consequently needed more funds for reconstruction. Due to the fact that Sarajevo-Mostar reflects a dichotomy of city-periphery, it is precisely the former where the majority of investments in BiH poured in. Contrary to this, the west side of Mostar was the recipient of much of the investments, drawing the most funds from Herzegovina and Croatia (Hromadzic 2017). Hromadzic (2017) describes that the "Croat part looks richer and is more tied up, it has wide and clean streets and three well stocked malls". At the same time, on the east side many of the ruined buildings are in the same state they were as after the war. Additionally, many of the administrative buildings and state companies (Aluminij) arbitrarily found themselves on the west side, which also meant, as they were income generators, increased the discrepancies between east and west.

Once the war stopped, the ethno-national parties, the Croat HDZ and the Bosniak SDA, assumed power. In order to demonstrate the consolidation of power in (West) Mostar, already in 1995 HDZ found it urgent to symbolically appropriate the space. One of their first moves was to change, i.e. "Croatize," the street names, introducing Croat history and geography, while removing anything reminiscent of the ethnic "other" or Yugoslavia (Radulovic 2013). Even though in a city of Mostar's size, street names are not in frequent use since spatial orientation is taken rather from buildings, bridges, and bars, this nonetheless shows what HDZ had in mind for Mostar. So not only were new memories, geographies and histories being created, but also the post-war reconstruction of particular places meant rather reconceptualization than reconstruction (Radulovic 2013). All of the above, coupled with the notion that erasing certain public spaces also meant erasing public memories (Carabelli 2016) – a special target being heterogeneous spaces (Coward in Carabelli 2016) – tells us the role Mostar was assigned in HDZ's dominant imaginary

The same thing cannot be said for the East side, where streets barely changed their names. Other than bringing destruction and tearing down the social fabric in the city on the Neretva, the war changed the composition of the people living there and its very outlook. According to the 1991 census, the Mostar municipality had 126,628 inhabitants, 34.6% were Muslims, 33.9% Croats, 18.8% Serbs, 10% Yugoslavs and 2.4% Others (Markovina 2014:154). Additionally, the

situation in the city itself was a bit different; the total population in 1991 was 75,856 inhabitants, 34% Muslims, 28.7% Serbs, 18.6% Croats, 15.2% Yugoslavs and 3.2% Others (Agency for Statistics, BiH 2007). In 2013, 44.1% of Mostaris declared themselves Bosniaks, 48.4% Croats, and 4% were Srbs (http://fzs.ba/index.php/popis-stanovnistva/popis-stanovnistva-2013/konacni-rezultati-popisa-2013/). In conjunction, many of the authors (see Hromadzic, Palmberger, Bjelakovic and Storzzi) emphasize that the majority of old Mostar families, largely the "intelligentsia as well as middle-class professionals" (Palberger) left the city, while a large part of the 'newcomers' to the west side were Croats fleeing other parts of BiH where they were subject to the cruelties of war. This is important because the ethnic makeup of the city was the basis upon which HDZ took power.

Commemorations and Discourses

In order to open the question of collective memory practices at the Partisan cemetery, we will briefly address commemorations that take place at the monument, as these are indicative of the politics of remembering and forgetting and are furthermore closely tied to the identity politics promoted by individual actors. When it comes to the SDP and SUBNOR – an organization whose president is a party member and a close friend of Mostar's SDP president – there are two main dates that are commemorated, the 14th of February (the day when the city was liberated from Axis occupation in 1945) and the 25th of November, when BiH was declared a Republic within the Yugoslav Federation in 1943. Both of these dates are closely tied to BiH's history within the Yugoslav Federation, which comes as no surprise since the SDP is the successor to the League of Communists in BiH, and as such draws much of its political capital from the afore-mentioned historical period. In this sense, SDP highlights how the names that are found at Partisan memorial come from different ethnic groups, and this forms the base for their multiethnic politics in Dayton BiH. It is useful here to remember Jansen's (2002) insightful observation that one should not automatically read actor's behavior positively or negatively depending on his stance on 'multiculturalism', but rather understand it as a function of the actor's position in social space, a comment that nicely ties into Bourdieu's theory that was outlined above. Overall, it can be affirmed that the SDP is exercising a politics of remembrance, rather than that of oblivion, when it comes to the history and symbolism embedded in the Partisan monument.

Unlike SDP, the other two political parties (HDZ and SDA), or at least their local branches, have remained largely absent from the monument itself, although with nuanced differences. In the case of the main Croat party (HDZ), none of its members have ever been to the monument, which is interesting to note since during the time frame of our investigation the mayor's office in Mostar (under whose administrative domain the monument is found) was controlled by HDZ. An instance that is even more telling of HDZ relations to the symbolism of the Partisan cemetery (namely, that it presents a reflection of the dominant politics of remembrance in Yugoslavia) is the party's president's assistance to the Bleiburg commemoration which emphasizes the victimhood of Croat people at the hands of Partisans, and consequently, at the hands of Yugoslavia – a notion that resonates in Herzegovina – the current HDZ power base – which was a stronghold for the Ustasha movement due to its poor socio-economic development (Grandits 2007).

Similar to the politics of HDZ, SDA members stayed away from the monument until 2017, when two of its state level (and not city level) politicians – Fadil Novalic, Prime Minister of Federation and Denis Zvizdic, Chairman of the Council of Minsters BiH – visited it. The date of their first

visit was not tied to any particular historical event, although this changed the second time around, when they arrived for the Day of Victory over Fascism, or Europe's Day.

From this rather short overview of commemorative practices at the monument it can be claimed that in contrast to SDP, both HDZ and SDA in Mostar do not deem the Partisan cemetery and its symbolism as important to its politics of collective memory – and concomitantly of identity building – if the yardstick for making this claim is the frequency of their visits to the monument. Moreover, HDZ's complete absence and its assistance to commemorations that highlight negative sides of the Yugoslav regime point in the direction rather of oblivion when it comes to the main prerogatives of the Yugoslav official memory regime as, for example, the exclusively positive role played by the partisans in WW II and their ability to attract followers from all peoples in the former country. If we think of HDZ and SDP commemorative practices at the cemetery in Mostar as two antipodes, SDA politics would fall somewhere in the middle, promoting remembrance but much more cautiously than HDZ. In order to dive more into the content of what is remembered and forgotten by each party and on what grounds, the next section will focus on discourse analysis of the respective actors' interpretations of the monument's symbolism.

As was mentioned in the introduction, the two words that are most associated with the Partisan Cemetery are fascism and antifascism. It is precisely by analyzing their current (re)interpretations that one finds out more about politics of (collective) memory and identity advanced by different actors. During his visit to the monument (November 6, 2017) SDA's representative Zvizdic affirmed "we cannot forget our famed past, so that future generations would not start forgetting what happened here approximately 20 years ago. Fascism occurred again on BiH territory, and once again, Mostar people, Bosnians and Herzegovinians fought against fascism" ([1]https://www.klix.ba/vijesti/bih/zvizdic-i-novalic-posjetili-partizansko-groblje-u-mostaru/171106077). The discursive tying of the WWII with the 1992-1995 war, especially by the common thread of fascism is a common practice in the dominant Bosniak memory narrative, which paints it as "a war of aggression by Serbia and Croatia" where "The Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats are present[ed] (…) as collaborators of Belgrade and Zagreb" (Moll 2013: page). This discursive practice, maybe not so obvious in Zvizdic's interpretation as he continued to emphasize how "all Mostar, Bosnians and Herzegovinians fought against fascism" nevertheless resurfaced more clearly in an interview with the secretary of the Mostar SDA who claimed that "in B [Bosniak] corpus there is no fascism, as compared with H [Bosnian Croat] and S [Bosnian Serb] corpuses." This narrative leads to the simplification of history in two regards, first it leaves to oblivion the fact that some Muslims joined the Ustashas during WW II (Malcolm 2002), and second, with regard to the more recent war, that Bosnian Croats and Bosniaks fought together in HVO forces, which were part of the H corpus and thus (in the interpretation of the SDA secretary) were fascist.

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SYMBOLIC CAPITAL OF FORGOTTEN HEROES: THE CASE OF ADMIRAL VLADIMIR BAROVIĆ

Astrea Pejović

Abstract

On September 29, 1991, at the dawn of Yugoslav 1990s wars, Yugoslav National Army (JNA) Navy Admiral Vladimir Barović (an ethnic Montenegrin) refused to bomb Dubrovnik and committed suicide at the military base on the Croatian island of Vis. Admiral Barović's suicide caused resentment in JNA military circles; however, overshadowed by war it gradually fell into oblivion. In March 2016, 25 years after the suicide, a Montenegrin NGO – Građanska Alijansa [Civic Alliance], demanded the Montenegrin government to give a medal of honor to the late admiral. The state reacted promptly and within three months President Filip Vujanović posthumously awarded Admiral Barović with a medal of honor.

In this paper, I analyze the case of Admiral Barović as a newly defined national hero. This case study is built upon the following main question: What is the social matrix that re-invents national heroes? Why are heroes crucial to society and how do they contribute to the construction of national identity in the aftermath of ethnic conflicts? The paper starts from the premise that Montenegro was on the side of the defeated after the Yugoslav wars. While living the consequences of this defeat, the state was also burdened to commemorate the wars, through different (internal and external) mnemonic agents. Memory politics in the context of defeat, as Horne (2008: 21) argues, represent "the crucial function of dealing with the disjuncture of defeat – this is with the difference between the world before defeat (which may already have been a disturbed or traumatic one) and the world of defeat". The paper analyses how the shape of commemoration and the choice of heroes was influenced and instrumentalized by state politics and searches for the social logic that framed Admiral Barović as a Montenegrin hero 25 years later, keeping in mind that the same government that honored him also fought the war in 1991 on the Yugoslav side.

The paper contributes to the field of anthropology of state aiming to generalize towards an understanding of nation-building processes in the context of defeat, pointing to the disadvantaged position of societies that have to commemorate defeat. The Montenegrin articulation of Admiral Barović's suicide is depicted as a mnemonic strategy that a defeated state creates in order to shed light on alternative narratives of the lost wars, constructing post-war citizenship through exemplary morality of the hero in question.

Additionally, the paper aims to contribute to the field of anthropology of suicide that endeavors to approach suicide ethnographically by detaching it from the prevalent psychological analysis. Anthropologists gathered around such initiative argue that "suicide should not simply be understood as a destructive act, but as a constructive one as well" (Staples and Widger 2012:186). This paper assumes suicide as a social act that generates communities, particularly, as an agent for the construction of new memory scapes. It aims to show how different social actors contest those suicides with the aim to controlling the influence they have over the processes of constructing political meaning making in the post-Yugoslav setting. While the anthropology of war and post-war contexts inevitably addresses death as a constitutive part of warfare, suicide in war, as a particular form of dying, has not been given enough attention by the discipline. This

paper aims to draw attention to this phenomenon by showcasing how an ethnographic approach to this destructive act can contribute to understanding the construction of new identities, communities and social relations in the afterlife of death.

Introduction

The popular representation of Montenegrin people in the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia was constructed through two meaning making processes – stereotypical jokes and literature. While the jokes represented Montenegrins as lazy, the literature canon was founded on such writers as Petar Petrović Njegoš and Marko Miljanov whose dominant topics delineated motives of humanitarianism and heroism (*čojstvo i junaštvo*). It could be argued that both meaning making processes served as a mechanism of inclusion for Montenegrins into the broader Yugoslav project. Jokes and joking relationships are often observed as the consensual process of an exchange of benign insults with the purpose to create a stronger sense of unity (Vučetić 2004; Radcliffe-Brown 1940; Žižek and Mortensen 2014). This is how Montenegrins were invented as the laziest of the Yugoslavs, the group that is the first to quit in running for a train or whose favorite animal is a snake, because it lays and walks at the same time. Although winning the competition for laziness, there was always competition among other Yugoslav peoples as well (stereotypically dumb Bosnians and stingy Slovenians) revealing brotherhood and unity even if mentalities are negatively depicted.

On the other hand, the canon of literature offered a somewhat different perspective on the people of the Southern Balkans. It was Montenegrins who won many battles, resisted Ottoman invasion and proved superhuman heroism from the medieval times to W W II. In the book, *Making the Nation, Breaking the Nation,* Andrew Watchel (1998) depicts Ivan Mažuranić's epic "Death of Smail-Aga Čengić" and shows how within the birth of Yugoslavia, it was Montenegrins who were taken as emblematically heroic:

> Mažuranić never mentions any South Slavic group besides the Montenegrins in his epic, but it was immediately clear to his readers that he considered them to be exemplary South Slavs and that the story as a whole is meant to be read as a kind of synecdoche; the victorious struggle against Smail-Aga Čengić stands in for an entire five-hundred-year history of resistance on the part of the South Slavs to the Turks (and, by extension, to other imperial powers) (Wachtel 1998: 44).

From laziness to heroism, these narratives were used to expose Montenegrins as a constitutive part of the Yugoslav people and contributed to the shared experience of living in peace inside the turbulent Balkans.

However, with the dissolution of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia the shared space of joking relationships and heroism became the antagonistic arena of ethnic enmities. In the process of taking sides during the dissolution, Montenegro joined Serbia in the decision to remain in what was left of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia. Montenegro had also played an important part in the "anti-bureaucratic revolution", a series of events that reinforced the position of Slobodan Milošević and opened the political arena for the succeeding wars (Bieber 2003). This paper will analyze the contemporary Montenegrin efforts to cope with its role in the events surrounding the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the defeat in the 1990s war,

focusing on the part the state took in the attack of the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) on Dubrovnik in late 1991, when departing from Montenegro, the JNA approached south Croatian border – Konvale region and the city of Dubrovnik. Military action started with the shelling of Dubrovnik which took 19 lives and continued into a 240 day-long siege.

Twenty-one years after the Dayton agreement that ended the 1991-95 war(s) in Yugoslavia, the region is still searching for reconciliation. Reconciliation seems, however, unachievable both inside the post-Yugoslav states and within them. Different social actors perceive the wars differently and fail to partake a dialogue. The establishment of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia aimed to institute a coherent historical narrative of the conflict. Failing to do so (Mihajlović Trbovc and Petrović 2017), different initiatives, mainly coming from the civil society, were introduced in order to reach consensus around the wars and responsibilities. The focus of the analyses is the case of the orders given to Vladimir Barović, a Yugoslav National Army Admiral of Montenegrin origin. Admiral Barović refused to bomb Dubrovnik at the very beginning of the war and committed suicide at the military base on the Croatian Island Vis on September 29, 1991. After years of silence about this particular case, the NGO "Građanska alijansa" called for the recognition of Admiral Barović as a national hero. Montenegrin president, Filip Vujanović, promptly responded to this appeal and awarded Admiral Barović with a posthumous medal of honor. Although a Yugoslav soldier, Admiral Barović was honored as a Montenegrin. This paper searches for the social logic behind this recognition, asking what the socio-political circumstances were that framed Admiral Barović as a Montenegrin hero and why he was recognized after twenty-five years of obscurity?

Montenegro as an Actor in the 1990s Wars in Yugoslavia - From Participation to Memory

The role of Montenegro in the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the 1990s wars is often overshadowed by the limelight that Serbia occupied. However, Montenegro played an important role in one of the first war-related events in October 1991 – the devastation of small towns and villages around Dubrovnik in the Konvale region, followed by the shelling and siege of Dubrovnik. (Bieber 2003: 18; Pavlović 2004). As Morrison notes, these events "shocked not only the wider public but regional experts, many of whom had eagerly consumed the works of Rebecca West and Mary Edith Durham, in which the Montenegrins were portrayed as heroic, brave and just" (Morrison 2008: 91). The attack on Dubrovnik had a specific symbolic meaning because the city stood for one of the most beautiful old cities on the coast of the Adriatic Sea, with both a rich history and cultural heritage.

Even though Montenegro started to depart from Serbian political domination already in the second half of the 1990s (although staying in the Federative Republic of Yugoslavia), the participation in the destruction of Dubrovnik, which was also noted as "a public relations fiasco" Nation 2003: 118), did not obtain an official narrative within Montenegro. On the level of collective memory, as Srđa Pavlović notes, these events are "informed by differences in understanding the reasons behind the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia and by different views of the internal dynamics of this process, all of which are shaped by strong emotional attachments to particular national paradigms"(Pavlovic 2005).

In order to deal with their role in the attack and siege of Dubrovnik, and to reinforce the relationship with Croatia, an extradition treaty was signed between the two parties on October 1, 2010. Before this official agreement, Montenegrin politicians issued official apologies to the people of Croatia already in 2000. Nevertheless, the apologies came from the prime minister Milo Đukanović and the president Svetozar Marović, who both were high-level political actors in the 1990s Yugoslavia. Svetozar Marović is the one who coined the slogan "War for Peace" [rat za mir] which is in Montenegrin society taken as a critical synonym for the 1990s wars. Mihajlović Trbovc and Petrović (2017) also argue that the apologies from the Montenegrin politicians were framed in such a way so as to avoid personal responsibility in the "War for Peace" "by putting all the blame for wrongdoings solely on the Yugoslav Army (controlled from Belgrade)".

Civil society also searches for the ways to cope with the disheartening events from the recent history. Montenegrin NGOs and public intellectuals organized a conference in 2011 "War for Peace – 20 Years Later" (Tomović 2017) in order to open a public discussion about the warfare around Dubrovnik. A year later, two Montenegrin NGOs and a Croatian center for dealing with past "Documenta", signed a joint public appeal regarding the prosecution of the responsible actors of the Dubrovnik attack (DOCUMENTA 2017). The most recent appeal came in March 2016, from the Montenegrin NGO "Građanska Alijansa" which addressed Montenegrin president Filip Vujanović with a demand to give a posthumous medal of honor to the late Yugoslav National Army Admiral Vladimir Barović, who committed a suicide on September 21, 1991 (Jovićević 2016).

The generally accepted narrative around the suicide of Admiral Barović tells the story of a Yugoslav soldier who did not want to attack Dubrovnik after he received the order. By killing himself, as the story goes, he declined to participate in an unjust war against the Croatian people, who did nothing wrong to Montenegrin people (Bernadić 2015; Vučković 2015; Nikolaidis 2017; Zemunović 2016). The narrative around the suicide of Admiral Barović was constructed mostly through various newspaper articles, primarily in Croatia, and the reasons for the suicide are drawn from the suicide note that was not available to the public, which also provoked minor reactions to the validity of the narrative (Vujičić 2016a, b, c). The "Građanska Alijansa" initiative found a positive response within the Montenegrin government, and the late admiral was honored in July 2016. Newspaper articles that followed the Barović honoring presented his behavior as a forgotten act of heroism. *Radio Free Europe* even did a survey among citizens of Montenegro with a question "Have you ever heard of Admiral Vladimir Barović" (Radio Slobodna Evropa 2017) exposing a significant level of unfamiliarity.

The Symbolic Capital of Forgotten Heroes

In the introduction of a comparative analysis of the socio-political functions of war commemorations in the United Kingdom and Russia, Natalya Danilova (2015) argues that the various state organized ceremonies that celebrate fallen soldiers serve to "re-imagine the experience of wars". She follows Hobsbawm's suggestion that "a turbulence of political and societal changes can be resolved through the 'invention' of the new rituals and symbols" that could be used as a means of dealing with a traumatic past (Danilova 2015: 2). Danilova notices that from the 1980s other interest groups from civil society entered the discourses of re-imagination of past through the commemorative practices, acting as an "alternative side of war commemora-

tion" (Danilova 2015: 5). In the Montenegrin case of Admiral Barović the appeal for the commemoration came from an NGO, but was promptly appropriated by the state. The promptness of the state to accomplish this particular civil society demand raises the question which socio-political function does Barović fulfil?

Admiral Barović represents a symbol that stood in opposition to the Montenegrin politics of the early 1990s. The general unawareness of his existence shows that until early 2016, neither his persona nor suicide were recognized as potent symbols. However, when public advocacy for recognition began, his suicide started to be interpreted as a consequence of a complex identity in the context of the disintegration of Yugoslavia. He was the Yugoslav Army soldier of Montenegrin origin who allegedly declined to attack Croatian people. The media reports, however, do not show him as someone who did not want to participate in the disintegration of Yugoslavia; by asserting that he did not want to attack the people of Croatia, he is portrayed as a Yugoslav who acknowledged different nationalities. Such a complex distribution of Admiral Barović's identity allows different political agendas to re-appropriate him and re-invent him as a hero. Debates around war-commemoration often ordinate around the de-politicization of the fallen war-heroes (Danilova 2015). In Barović's case, nevertheless, the very notion of de-politicization should be problematized. His commemoration could be understood as an attempt of re-politicization and re-invention of his persona into a political symbol of an ideologically new Montenegro.

The contemporary state of Montenegro diligently works on the project that imagines Montenegro's future as an EU country with NATO membership. The project is, however, led by a majority of people who supported the attack on Dubrovnik. In the analysis of discourses created around the politics of integration of Montenegro into NATO, Branko Banović argues that this desired future "necessarily demands an image of the appropriate past" (Banović 2016: 4). In this sense, the honoring of Admiral Barović could be understand as the creation of a symbol of a desired past, and of the positionality of the Montenegrin imagination in the 1990s war as exceptional. The complexity of Barović's identity and his intentionality to recognize Croatia as a sovereign state, as the narratives around his suicide indicate, allow Montenegro to translate this identity into a suitable one for the contemporary context. Furthermore, with the interpretation of his suicide as a heroic act, Montenegro could transform the Dubrovnik events from a "Public-relation fiasco" into a battle that will be remembered only by an emblematic case of heroism – a role that Montenegro has always played best.

Conclusion

The suicide of Admiral Barović is not a lone case within the Yugoslav National Army. On the same day when Admiral Barović took his life, another soldier, Major Milan Tepić committed suicide in the northern Croatian town of Bjelovar, taking 11 soldiers to death with him. Tepić and the soldiers were surrounded by the Croatian National Guard [Zbor narodone garde], a newly formed Croatian independence armed force, in a Yugoslav National Army barracks. In order not to allow the Croat forces to gain the position and the arms from the barracks, Tepić blew up both the barracks, himself and the soldiers. While Admiral Barović's suicide stayed forgotten in the mist of Yugoslav warfare, Tepić became a national hero immediately after his suicide. Furthermore, many streets throughout Serbia acquired his name and his deed is celebrated by a plaque in the Serbian Army Headquarters (telegraf.rs 2017). While Admiral

Barović did not want to attack Croatian people, which was a sufficient reason for the suicide, Major Tepić did not want to allow the Croatian militia to obtain Yugoslav National Army armaments, that could only be achieved with suicide. While Major Tepić was immediately recognized as a national hero and still remembered in Serbia as such, Admiral Barović was forgotten. The quietness about Barović obscured the factual truth about the event and his suicide today is open to re-interpretation and re-politicization by different "memory entrepreneurs" (Moll 2016). The re-politicization of the admiral's suicide could be understood as a tool for the re-imagination of a desired Montenegrin past in order to create a desired future. More importantly, Barović creates an important identity mark for the Montenegrin government as well – by recognizing him as a hero, the government distances itself from the problematic and traumatic past that was created by the same actors that are still in power. The case of Admiral Barović opens an important question about the translation of Yugoslav identity into national post-Yugoslav identities. This case shows that the memory of a Yugoslav soldier does not have to be a memory of Yugoslavia as well, but a ground for the legitimization and re-interpretation of historic events for the legitimization of desired futures.

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