

**CONTRADICTING HISTORICAL REVISIONIST MEMORY POLITICS,  
ETHNONATIONAL COLLECTIVISM, AND ANTI-TRANSFORMATION OF  
CONFLICTS IN FORMER-YUGOSLAVIA**

Faruk HADZIC<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Independent scholar/researcher, Bosnia and Herzegovina; faruk.hadzic01@gmail.com,  
ORCID: 0000-0003-1158-7858

---

Received: 25.03.2022

Accepted: 26.07.2022

---

**ABSTRACT**

The paper analyzes the normative-formative framework that denotes the connection between memory and identity as a crucial origin of conflicts. In addition to concerns about memory politics, historical revisionism and ethnonational identity collectivism, the paper dissolves the connection between phenomena highlighting outcomes of the peace process, transitional justice, and its ethical/moral connotations. The study argues that Western Balkan's sociopolitical stability depends on declining conflicting and contradictory memory order within radical sociopolitical processes. The revisionist contention memorializes conflicts and wars as the fundamental concept of ethnicity/religion/nation. It overlaps with the neoliberal and neoconservative reduction of all competitive relations, in which only the stronger have the right to existence. Discarding dominant ethnopolitical narratives is essential for conflict transformation and transitional justice for all ethnoreligious communities. The Balkan historical events and conflicting memory (WW2, Yugoslav wars) caused sociopolitical dominion shaping the collective behavior of ethnic groups. The damaging ethnic/religious practice of genocide denial and honoring war crimes within people's social lives can become a matrix for future conflicts. Placing memory politics with radical populism is a critical condition of collective identity politics in the former Yugoslavia. Scientific rationality can provide a solid path through the political ideologies anomalies. Scientific rationality can provide a solid path through the anomalies in the form of political ideologies.

**Keywords:** Former Yugoslavia, National identities, Ethnopolitics, Historical revisionism, Social memory.

## INTRODUCTION

Politicians frequently use mythologized understandings of the past to mobilize memory as an instrument of politics in the present. Yet, despite the post-war “memory boom,” collective remembrance remains a slippery concept. Verovsek argued that research into political memory should focus on (1) the substantive content of collective memory as expressed by actors within state institutions and (2) on the interactive channels through which ideas about the past are conveyed, disputed, silenced, and negotiated outside these formal settings. National memory politics in the former Yugoslavia are strongly marked by sociopolitical myths, heroic semantics and an auto-victimological mental structure that presents others as enemies/criminals and members of their collective as heroes and victims. Ivan Colovic (2016), writing about the Kosovo myth, emphasized that the political elites in Serbia and other countries are facing an important question. Are they ready to reconcile the past, national histories, and myths with the rapprochement project and de-erosion the collective images of the past, or would they instead join those who see a threat to the survival in this project of national independence and cultural individuality (Colovic, 2016). To outline the conceptual landscape that frames discussions of collective memory Wertsch and Rodriguer proposed three oppositions:

- Collective memory versus collective remembering
- History versus collective memory
- Individual memory versus collective remembering

From this perspective, collective remembering is viewed as an active process that often involves contention and contestation among people rather than a static body of knowledge they possess. Collective remembering is also considered as privileging identity formation and contestation over the sort of objective representation of the past that is the aspiration of formal historical analysis. And finally, while collective remembering involves individual minds, it also suggests something more in the form of socially situated individuals. This claim can usefully be formulated regarding how group members share a common set of cultural tools (e.g., narrative forms) and similar content (Wertsch and Rodriguer, 2008).

Western Balkans’ socio-political maturity depends on the moral exactitude of legal justice and ethno-political collective identity mechanism within conflicting memory order (Hadzic, 2021). The trials and verdicts of the International Hague Tribunal (ICTY) have failed to change the dominant ethnonational discourses, often contributing to reinforcing attitudes of denial and self-victimization. As a series of public opinion surveys indicate, the ICTY seems not to have persuaded populations in the various successor countries that the findings in its judgments are true. These surveys highlight strong relationships between the respondents’ ethnicity, their perception of the ICTY’s bias against their group, and their distrust of the ICTY and of its findings (Milanovic, 2016).

The introduction of innovative approaches in memory studies shows how recent memory studies focus on the cultural reproduction of dominant narratives in addition to top-down political discourse (Pavlakovic, 2020). Thus, three decades after the wars, Balkans does not have appropriate enlightenment. Parallel memory politics served by ethnonational identity antagonistic pluralism stem from a

fundamental speculative historical approach contributing to historical emptiness and silence that can create space for expansion hostile social notions. The historical revisionism and the memory of the “evil” developed into a behavioral practice in the Balkans (Hadzic, 2020).

From the world wars to the end of the 20th century, Balkan wars were at their core nationalist wars. The liberal model implies the assimilation of ethnic groups into one nation as a new typical value, in which the state constitutes an essential value content. Hereabouts, the identity of the largest ethnic group extends by assimilation to other ethnic communities. The degree of destruction, the innocent victims, the inconceivable dimensions of ethnic displacements, and the perspectives that result from these processes should be enough to exclude nationalism as such as criminality. However, there is “good” nationalism (legitimate aspiration of people for their state) and “bad” (reaching for fascism). The systematic destruction of cultural monument institutions has been proposed as indirect evidence of the desire to destroy entire ethnic groups referring to genocidal intentions defined by Markusen and Mennecke (2004). Ethnically clean spaces creators cannot legitimize joint criminal projects within the ruling liberal-democratic imaginary (restored by the contemporary global populist right-wing nationalism and fascist tendencies).

The year 2020 marked the 25th anniversary of the genocide against Bosniak in the UN “Safe Zone” of Srebrenica by B&H Serb Army and police forces in July 1995. After a quarter of a century, denial of the Srebrenica genocide not only persists but is bolder and more pervasive than ever before. In the last two years alone, the Bosnian Serb establishment has founded a revisionist commission supposedly tasked with uncovering the “truth” about what happened in Srebrenica. Serbian nationalists in Serbia and B&H continue to instrumentalize denial and minimization of the Srebrenica genocide in pursuit of their regional political agendas. Additionally, the B&H genocide continues to be a source of inspiration for far-right extremists across the globe, as evidenced by the brutal terrorist attacks in Oslo, Norway and in Christchurch, New Zealand (Turcalo and Karcic, 2021). The results harm interpersonal, i.e., interethnic relations in Western Balkans. Intergroup relations norms, corresponding values, and conflict transformation are questioned without legal restrictions and prohibitions on genocide denial. It contests any form of Justice since unjust societies necessarily produce dissatisfaction, and the conflict can occur again; consequently, violence and negative peace.

Despite the difficulties in rationalizing evil, memory can also be an integral part of rebuilding society in post-conflict societies. The clarification process of a troubled past does not only encompass memory or forgetting. The shadows of oblivion always accompany individual and collective human memories. The French philosopher Jean-Francois Lyotard believes that there are two ways of forgetting. The first is the destruction of all traces that remind one of the others so that nothing remains materially or spiritually to point to them (Lyotard, 1999). Such is the attitude of the current Balkan policies towards the anti-fascist heritage and monuments, which in the past thirty years have been everywhere desecrated and demolished in order to erase the memory of the fight against fascism, to destroy what connects different peoples and religions, so that at the same time nationalist and fascist policies. According to the same nationalist logic of “erasing the traces of others”, ethnic cleansing was carried out in which

everything reminiscent of others was destroyed, and after people were expelled, religious buildings were demolished, street names and even the appearance of entire cities changed (Bojic, 2019). The second type of oblivion refers to the so-called “perfect memory”, believing that what happened is fully explored and explained (Lyotard, 1999). However, factually determining what happened is only the first step in a long, demanding, and challenging process of building a shared culture of remembrance. However, there are two critical paradoxes of such patterns of past processing: the coexistence of conflicting discourses remembering and codifying the experiences of abjection with the same sets of significations which also induced the war traumas themselves (Mahmutovic, 2013).

Thanks to NGOs’ research, war events are mainly recognized. However, it did not change the collective culture of memory and sociopolitical memory models. The so-called memory of the victim turns into mere statistics. There is no memory of specific people and their suffering; the numbers have replaced the victims. Remembrance is also an unavoidable topic within religion, particularly the case with monotheistic religions, which, among other concerns, call themselves religions of remembrance, advocating reconciliation and the renunciation of revenge and violence (Bojic, 2019). Compared to the years behind, the amount of hate speech in the Balkans has increased, with vast hate speech through various socio-political propaganda. It is enough to make parallels about every election that takes place every other year and analyze hate speech content during election campaigns (Mrkic-Radevic, 2021). Unfortunately, politics find critical success in motivating voters in ethno-religious polarization, Bosnian Croat, a Catholic priest Niko Petonjić, from the Franciscan monastery, states. “There is a need for cooperation among people, but politics divides them. Politics intimidate them with that “Other” and portrays them negatively, states Juro Ascic, another Bosnian Croat Franciscan priest” (Hina, 2017).

There is a product of resentment, auto-victimological faith, and brutal annulment of the memories of others. Political acknowledgment of the “memory of evil” seems the first step toward true reconciliation. The various dimensions of memory and historiography serve as perspectives for observing the healing of individuals, i.e., post-war societies, and theoretical approaches to collective memory could be derived from Paul Ricoeur (2004). Socially relevant memory patterns condition how individuals remember as they strive to place themselves in a socio-historical framework. Purely Freudian and Jungian perspectives on the phenomenon of collective memory would be controversial and lead to unsatisfactory analysis; the first because they do not differentiate between group and individual psychology, and the second because they minimize the role of independent thinking. The analysis bridges psychological theory analysis of emerging political culture, using a psychological paradigm that moves from the needs of an individual to the social level.

National and religious collectives nurture a culture of exclusionary and selfish memories in which one’s sufferings and endured evils are remembered for longer and at the same time emphasize and exaggerate one’s heroism. In such a spiritual, social, and political atmosphere, memories accompanied a callous culture of forgetting evil and the suffering of others, which is diminished and often wholly denied. Dehumanizing memories fail sins ignoring other people’s sufferings, remains in a vicious circle of historical conflicts and nurtures hostilities from the past to prevent a common, transethnic, and trans-religious, humane

culture of memory in the present. Re-established hegemonist ideology's central features (authoritarianism nationalism) transpire. Ethnonationalism is more represented and accepted than before the conflicts. It retains the opportunity to mobilize the population in crisis and deteriorating geopolitical circumstances (Esterajher, 2013).

The conceptualization of national identity is based on several elements. One of them is "sameness", which tries to discursively unite or influence the state of consciousness of citizens in order to feel with the rest of the subjects that are classified in national identity as one, as a homogeneous whole. Discursive ways of achieving "sameness" and "unity" are various and fall primarily under the category of narrative identity or under the category of discursive strategies such as metaphors, personal references, spatial and temporal references in language, and the term "we" which can be used in various ways. Also, the concept of "identity" and "unity" is achieved by discursively merging individual identities of system-bound identities. Individuals, therefore, carry the characteristics of multiple collective identities. This fact alone indicates that a collective, national identity cannot be impeccably "pure" and homogeneous without the interference of other identities. Even those who fall under the common denominator of national identity do not have the same language, culture, beliefs, and values. National identity is a pure construction that seeks to artificially "purify" and strengthen by discursive action. One should be aware that collective identities have the foundations of their existence, that is, that they are based on some common elements that allow individuals to identify with each other.

National identities built and consolidated with the confessional/religious exclusivism (associated with ethnicity) manifested themselves as extremely impermeable and inflexible, and the rivalry between their national umbrella projects was almost irreconcilable in the post-Yugoslav societies (Hadzic, 2020). In the former Yugoslavia, strong ethnic-regional nationalism made it imperative to draw geographical boundaries around self-proclaimed national communities, even though this meant exterminating tens of thousands and displacing hundreds of thousands of people. Here the process of self-determination serves in both directions, unification and division, into parts: unification of ethnic relatives around a new symbol of the homeland (Slovenia, Croatia, B&H and Serbia), and at the same time dissolving long-standing social and economic ties that connected different national communities. Ironically, the argumentation of minority rights was done on behalf of the homeland of Greater Serbia, with deliberate ignorance of the rights of Muslims or Croats, the minority rounded up in the presumed Serbian enclaves. Lermarchand (2003) notes that in this ultranationalist version, the ideology of Greater Serbia speaks openly about the need to "cleanse Serbia of foreign elements". According to Lemarchand (2003), the phrase is borrowed from a 1937 memorandum authored by the leading theoretician of Greater Serbia, Vasa Cubrilovic; cited in Jacques Rupnik (1999), "L heritage partage du nationalisme serbe", *Critique Internationale*. Ironically, the same theme, only expressed in much stronger terms, was articulated in 1993 by a vital Serbian oppositionist leader, Vuk Draskovic: "We are not afraid of the excrements of the devils who are not of the same blood as us, no matter how numerous they may be. One people divided into five states, that is not possible; therefore, democratic Serbia will be the pivot around which all Serbian territories will be unified". The same can be said for the claims of Croatian nationalities in Krajina and other ethnically mixed areas that are set for the goal of

ethnic cleansing; after being abducted by Serbs in 1995, the Krajina region was cleansed entirely of Serb elements. Lemarchand notes (2003) that Michael Ignatieff says: “The greatest idea of national self-determination could be realized by destroying the multiethnic reality of the Balkans, in the name of the dream of violence on ethnic purity” (Ignatieff, 2003).

At the heart of the radical right’s policy is ethnocentrism. It is based on emphasizing the uniqueness and superiority of a particular national culture. Supporters of the radical right should not be sought exclusively among the “losers of transition”, but above all among people who seek a secure foothold in a time of uncertainty caused by the rapid changes caused by globalization. They find security in their national identity. These are people who shy away from the Other, believing that foreigners are endangering their national identity and the material goods of their nation. It is precisely the definition of the “Other” as an enemy. That is at the root of revisionist interpretations of the past. The myth of a homogeneous nation is at the heart of the radical right ideology. It is characteristic of nationalism that starts from the romantic notion of the nation as a single body, which essentially determines the language that reflects the “people’s soul”. It is about understanding the nation that places it somewhere “halfway between demos and ethnos” (Mikenberg, 2000). Similarly, one could say that the radical right is moving between two banks, the fascist and the conservative, once docking on one bank and once on the other, because one cannot always drive in the middle of a river (Ziegler, 2018). Therefore, it is not questionable that its anti-Enlightenment and nationalism sometimes have fascist features, but it is not a political position that wants to eradicate democratic institutions. It should be reiterated that the radical right wants democracy exclusively for the members of its nation and rejects the liberal elements of the modern Western political order.

This paper takes the case of former Yugoslavia related to the phenomena as an example. It aims to offer scientific rationality as a possible way to correct political ideologies anomalies. In addition to concerns about memory politics, historical revisionism, and ethnonational identity collectivism, the paper dissolves the connection between phenomena highlighting outcomes of the peace process, transitional justice, and its ethical and moral connotations. By considering the interrelation of the phenomena in post-Yugoslav societies, the paper analyzes the normative-formative framework that denotes the connection between memory and identity as a crucial origin of conflicts. The study argues that Western Balkan’s sociopolitical stability depends on declining conflicting and contradictory memory order within radical sociopolitical processes.

## METHODOLOGY

The general scientific methods such as analysis, synthesis, and description were used in the study. The paper included an extensive in-depth theoretical literature review on topics and examination of various sources such as primary documents relating to “social relations” (media accounts, academic reports, legislation). The critical focus was on interviews, statements, and arguments of multiple actors in written and video form (politicians, international community officials, war-crimes victims, raped women, war veterans, soldiers, citizens, and others). The aim was to represent the diverse sociopolitical positions and narratives and examine current sociopolitical, peace conditions and security dynamics. Includ-

ing comprehensive and diverse scientific background, reports, and sentiments, along with the interdisciplinary theoretical nature of the study and understanding, sought to get scientific rationality in post-conflict Balkans, i.e., former Yugoslavia.

## **NATIONAL IDENTITIES AND CONTRADICTING MEMORY POLITICS IN POST-YUGOSLAV SOCIETIES**

Collective identities, such as ethnic, national, cultural, and religious, are constructed slightly differently from subjective ones. However, they have some similarities. That collective itself must have something in common, something by which the members identify with each other, be it religion, common culture, language, or something completely different. In addition to identification, there is also differential identification. A collective can be defined as a set of individuals that has its characteristics and differs from another set of individuals. That “other” is present again.

The notions of national identity and national culture have become an essential part of public life, politics, transitional justice, and education in Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, and B&H. It is understood as an unquestionable fact that each nation has its own different culture and identity and that they come from the distant past, naturally given and unchangeable, separating the nation in question insurmountably from all other nations. Accordingly, one’s nation has been a historical constant in peoples or ethnic groups since ancient times. A typical sentiment is that nation has always existed, eternal and imperishable. It outlives short-lived creatures and generations in the form in which it is temporarily manifested. The mobilization of ethnopoltics-previously initiated in the war, ethnic cleansing, and mass war crimes is an instrument of demobilization of the public policy, portrayed as a “security threat”. “The immediate purpose of this violence was to demobilize the wider population, to prevent a successful anti-regime mobilization from toppling the existing structures of power in the republic shifting the focus of political discourse and action away from liberalization toward purported threats to the very existence of the nation newly defined in very narrow terms” (Gagnon, 2004). Nations are the foundations of human existence in that they exist neither a case nor morally irrelevant but are central to the realization of human satisfaction. Balkan nations use religion very vilely, art, science, or human customs, such as their dangerous interpretations of social relations. There is a mixture of priestly-political attitudes towards socio-historical reality.

Systematically, the ideologies and policies of the radical right have the following characteristics: a) the supremacy of the collective (nation, state) over the individual - in contrast, liberal democracy emphasizes the importance of the inviolable rights of the individual; b) anti-pluralism - the state and society should be homogeneous, and minorities are always a disruptive factor; c) anti-parliamentarism - reduction of politics to a friend-enemy relationship; d) an authoritarian state, which protects a homogeneous nation from liberal individualism and is the “logic” of universal human rights - they are there exclusively for members of their own nation; and e) the frequently present historical revisionism and anti-Semitism, which denies or relativizes fascist crimes and advocates a conspiracy theory about the Jewish world government; in recent times there has been f) intolerance towards Islam; and finally, d) emphasizing the importance

of “metapolitics” which, through the mastery of specific discourse, should win the “souls of people” and ensure the cultural hegemony of the right. Suppose the above definition of the radical right is applied to the situation in B&H. In that case, it can be noticed that the radical right of B&H has all these characteristics, but that elements of its ideology can be found in several other B&H parties. The central place of her ideology is occupied by ethnonationalism, religious fundamentalism, and anti-communism. B&H differs from the Western European right in its even more pronounced, extreme anti-communism. Namely, in the West, after the collapse of communist dictatorships, anti-communism becomes secondary, and the radical right considers “decadent” liberalism as its main enemy (Weiss, 2017).

As the Western Balkans countries aspire “formally” to join the European Union (EU), authoritarianism is frequently informal. Today in the Balkans, authoritarianism exists alongside formal democratic institutions. The result is that competitive authoritarian regimes use social polarization to retain power (Bieber, 2020). Since the 1990s in Serbia, the government until today has never allowed the debate to take place in public about the responsibility of representatives of state institutions for crimes committed during the wars. As a result, their dignity continued performing state functions, and some convicted war criminals came to power. However, as long as there is no wartime period decisive re-examination on a comprehensive level, institutions cannot provide stability and sincerity social capital.

At the same time, empirical research (e.g., Mudde, 2009) has shown that individuals prone to radical right-wing populism and the anti-elitist views that form the core of any populism tend toward authoritarianism views xenophobia, and nationalism. In such political and social conditions, the emergence of populist actors in the Balkans is not unexpected. Populism is a reaction to a more decisive social crisis. Breaking ethnic boundaries as an instrument that transcends ethnic boundaries and influences collective memory building is the memory of war crimes that will remain present. The lack of a precise mechanism, without manipulation capacity, suppresses a specific reconciliation form. Obstruction is certain political elites who do not solve issues is a phenomenon from the past. This phenomenon is not possible without the suspension of the memory required of people. Due to ethnonationalism, it is not essential whether certain information is accurate but politically engaging. In order to fully understand the importance and need for critical thinking, especially nowadays, when we are bombarded with unreliable and mostly untrue information that we absorb through various media, we must look at societies where critical thinking does not have a high degree of development and adoption. Such societies are numerous, especially in third-world countries, underdeveloped countries, and war-affected countries. Insufficient critical thinking leads to susceptibility and more significant influence of questioning authority, and thus to the impossibility of making one’s own decisions and expressing one’s own opinion, which is reflected today in the number of extremist and radical groups, both in underdeveloped and developed countries. It is the fact that critical thinking, and thus critical memory politics, is not approached as significant, particularly in the Western Balkans, and education does not provide it from an early age. The segregated ethnoreligious educational phenomenon “Two schools under one roof”<sup>2</sup> in B&H

<sup>2</sup> Schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina are based on ethnic-religious segregation and different curricula.

is already a marginalization and isolation of any “different” opinion.

Nevertheless, collective or national identity cannot mean complete purity without interfering with other ethnic, religious, or cultural identities. As artificial creations, the nation-states seek to “encircle one national identity” with their borders, which, to legitimize and maintain their borders, constantly reproduce repeatedly through essentialist and dogmatic narratives of shared history and essence. Defining a nation through culture is based on ethnicity, and it is linguistically defined. In such a construct, one of the most critical ideas that sustain this concept is the idea of community. It is reproduced through expressions such as nation as “soul”, “mental principle” determined by “joint possession of a rich heritage of memory”, “current agreement”, and “current will to live together and preserve heritage” (Wodak et al., 2009).

The fundamental doctrine is that the nation experienced glorious epochs full of heroes and flourishing, encouraging today’s members. This kind of approach is in prominent contradiction with the facts. The modern Croatian, Serbian, and Slovene nation-building were not completed before World War II (Kessler, 1997) Some Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims) link their national origins to Ottoman rule and allegiance to the Islamic cultural and civilizational circle (preserved mainly in Catholic monasteries). Bosnjani, meaning Bosnians, is the archaic name originating from the Middle Ages for inhabitants of B&H. The name is used and can be found in Bosnian written monuments appearing as earliest as the 12th century - the original name Bosnjanin (Latin *Bosnensis*) originally meant only a member of a medieval B&H political unit. Serbs, although the authentic heirs of the Orthodox share in the culture of the medieval Bosnian state, due to the predominantly Catholic character of that state and its civilizational connection with the Croatian medieval areas from Slavonia to Dalmatia, also did not keep the memory of the old state in their national tradition.

If we observe from the angle of European practice, the fact is that human identity is plural, multi-layered and complex. Of course, identity needs to be preserved, but it is a plural category. The civic option is rightly identified as an option based on civil society’s values, in fact, on “European values” or values placed in the liberal-democratic moral imagination. The complex country B&H is not an ethnically dominant and uniform society whose national state political articulation, i.e., territorial expression, a mono-national state, is the only form of survival of today’s political community. This political language is based on a crime against social plurality - which is propagandistically presented as something artificial and false, imposed - it is a crime against the sophisticated complexity of different identities and life forms whose interactions make up one society. The crime occurs with armed forces and physical extermination or administrative-institutional repression and a network of political-ideological measures.

The relationship between ethnonational policies, violence, and religion is visible in the wars of the 1990s, where the war in all national religions (Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Islam) found proponents of personal sacrifice for the good of nations. They have contributed to the development of trivial ideologies that have outgrown mere respect for the material and spiritual goods of their people. National identities built and consolidated with such confessional exclusivism (associated with ethnic) manifested themselves as extremely impermeable and inflexible, and the rivalry between their national umbrella projects was almost irreconcilable in the post-Yugoslav societies. Therefore, this form of national-

ism maintained a firm position in these societies' political processes (Hadzic, 2020). Why is the connection between religious and national identity so powerful in post-Yugoslav countries and nations? First, there is a deep connection between religion and what Miscevic (2006) calls vicious nationalism. "Nationalism that explicitly rejects universalization" and the right to exist, and its exclusivity makes it extreme - and unhealthy - both for such nationalism and for its neighbor (Miscevic, 2006).

National cultures constantly refocus their approach to history concerning the political changes that affect collective memory by historiography. Tragic events such as wars and more gradual ones such as social change modify how national communities perceive their past. In addition, a cultural debate on history involving both the professional public and civil society ennobles the collective memory of a people by constantly incorporating new narratives and discourses or giving the old ones a new framework. Indeed, "as cultures change, so do their practices of remembering and ideas of what is valuable and desirable to remember" (Brockmeier 2002). Milorad Dodik<sup>3</sup> is a leading figure of constant secessionist rhetorics. An analysis of Dodik's discourse in the study of Nada Beglerovic (2020) revealed Dodik's contradictions and inconsistencies and his ability to use various strategies when consistently discussing the (RS) identity and its relation to B&H. His discursive practices' populist and manipulative nature is evident by insinuations, allusions, and banal comparisons. The context of Dodik's discourses is viewed from an intertextual and interdiscursive perspective. Intertextuality revealed Dodik's contradictory statements, while inter-discursiveness showed that the concept of the referendum was intertwined with secession, independence, national identity, and role participation of the international community in B&H (Beglerovic, 2020).

In post-Yugoslav societies, religion is associated with violence and the erasure of the memory of others. Ethnic, national, and confessional affiliation in the former Yugoslavia add to political radicalization. Moreover, the nation and religion become "controversial" identification and mark others as potentially dangerous through a policy that allegedly aims to "affirm" and "protect" its people and their faith. Then in local historical and current circumstances, it essentially implies antagonism in the most dramatic conflicts (Hadzic, 2020). Everything reminiscent of another religion, culture, tradition, and customs were fanatically destroyed. In B&H, Serbia, Montenegro, and Croatia, ethnic-clerical hegemony and domination over the people's consciousness are responsible for the cultural collapse. Clerics, regardless of confessions, led hegemonic military projects and contributed to the myth of "leaders of the people" who heroically led the nations from war to peace. It is evidenced in numerous recordings and files revealed during the International Hage Tribunal processes on countless cases (Hadzic, 2021).

The Balkan security quandary's most meaningful discourse is who will control a piece of a particular territory (e.g., Kosovo-Serbia, Croatian-Serbian dispute; Albanians in Macedonia did not get territory but rights, while in B&H, ethnicity was gained, indicating increased opportunities for power over the domain). A historical legacy has mostly persisted and harms institutional relations and the

<sup>3</sup> Milorad Dodik is a Bosnian Serb politician (for a prolonged time on the USA sanctions and "black-list") serving as the 7th and current Serb member of the Presidency of B&H. Dodik and his SNSD Party have pursued an increasingly nationalist and separatist line, invoking the right of the Bosnian Serbs to self-determination. His time in power has been characterized by authoritarianism, repudiation of federal B&H institutions, and closer connections to Serbia and Russia.

consolidation of democratic institutions. The new nation-state structure of the Balkans has opened up many unresolved identity issues. We can undoubtedly point out the failed democratic transformation of post-Yugoslav societies. Although Croatia, an EU member, emerged victorious from the war on its territory (while the conquest war that that country waged for a part of the territory of B&H still does not have a clear outcome and political recognition). There are structural similarities regarding the production of reality between socialist and nationalist ideological apparatuses. Labeling acumens, civic liberal and democratic movement has failed to become dominant but on the brink of survival. Building a democratic society has not passed; no legal process has been completed (Dimitrijevic, 2001). The violent effect constructed a homogeneous political space imposing anti-liberal, authoritarian notions defining other beliefs as anti-Croat or anti-Serb. It leaves open the question of denial as a substantial risk for the future.

Many narratives about the great “leaders of the people” are constructions of ethnopoltics that emerged from the war as victors. “There are contradictory memory politics and disseminated religious myths of “innocence” under the socio-political ideologies within the leaders’ nationalist-archaic constructions whose “amnesia” results from their national-religious narcissism (Hadzic, 2020). A comparative analysis of marginal and dominant populism shows the spiritual matrix of anti-individualism and militant nationalism characterized by belief in conspiracies, fear of the other (foreign), hatred of differences between individuals, and peoples’ readiness to remove those disputes by force. Such destructive matrix energy has prospects in conflict societies. The finding confronts us with the darkest parts of the South Slavic peoples’ past. It is even stronger when we know that the same matrix exists in European fascism and Nazism history. From the “resistance against transcendence”, as Nolte showed, the forces that brought the world to the brink of disaster swung. However, the same matrix survived the war defeat and survived, not only in the underdeveloped world (Popov, 1993). Despite the tragic experiences, it is more than anxious to believe in the fatality of human nature, the supernatural being of the people, or the unchangeable fate of geographical space. Balkans, based on the insights of Istvan Bibo, “is not incapable of consolidation because it is inherently barbaric, but it is barbarized because due to the unfortunate circumstances of historical series of events pushed out of the way of European consolidation and no longer able to return to that path. Unfortunately, no absolute comfort in this area has occurred. The effort to resolve disputes by force, internal or external, leads only to new catastrophes” (Popov, 1993). It is about the predicament of the epoch and not just about tribal wars.

Once committed, a systematic mass crime seemingly inevitably obliges the criminal group to remain committed to the identity in whose name the crime was committed. We do not have to go into the differences between the regime and collective crimes, except that it should be emphasized that identity preparation is practically crucial for a common crime. However, crime alone is not the only reason for attachment. Srda Popovic showed that absolute interests are behind the crime and his thesis is elementary, just accurate. For the Serbian leadership in the second half of the 1980s, the only salvation from falling from power was accepting a nationalist self-victimizing ethnonational identity and overthrowing the federal state’s existing order. In addition to covering up crimes, the same interest remains active and strengthens newly established identity ties (Ilic, 2016).

The Balkan history is the building material of collective identities within the concept of “our vs. their martyrs”. It is immaterial what the ICTY is if the trial’s socio-cultural context is such that it makes it insignificant. Countries have developed cynical social mechanisms. The national/ethnoreligious collective denial inducted by the politically encouraged culture of fear and ethnoreligious antagonism is critical for a liberal peace stalemate and social (in)justice. Thus, a decades-long political matrix regarding the “ethnonational interest” and ethnic patriotic collectivism departed as exceptional nationalism (Hadzic, 2021).

In Belgrade, Serbia, 40 people gathered in front of a bakery owned by an attacked Albanian who wanted to show that they are for tolerance against nationalism. “A week earlier, radical right-wingers were in the same place”. Marko Milosavljevic, a Serbian human rights activist, who was born in 1991, at the time when the war in Croatia began, says: “The attack on the bakery has nothing to do with the fact that today we are still unable to talk about the Albanian victims of the war in Kosovo. And now, 20 years after the war. We in Serbia do not watch the complete conflict from 1998 to 1999, but only its end, the NATO bombing of Serbia. It is a central problem: only Serbian victims of the NATO bombing are mentioned, but not from previous conflicts that led to the intervention. I was slowly entering nationalism without even noticing it. That was the case until 2008 when Kosovo declared independence. We students were then given a strange invitation to take to the streets and demonstrate against it. I was ultimately part of that nationalist folklore. It was customary for me until a group started chanting “Nož, žica, Srebrenica”.<sup>4</sup> When I heard that, it was clear that it was wrong and that it was a kind of call for violence, and that it was better to move away from them. It was an essential experience (for me). However, I did not know what happened in Srebrenica. I was subsequently informed about it. Serbia’s problem is silence, and convicted war criminals come to influential positions after being released from prison. Such cases are long, i.e., Vladimir Lazarevic, was sentenced to 14 years in prison for Kosovo crimes. After serving his sentence, he flew from the Hague to Serbia on a Serbian government plane and was greeted with great honors. He is also a guest lecturer at the military academy (Smajic, 2019). Thus, human beings reflect obscure identity politics and social reality.

Periodically “Biće repriza!” (There Will Be a Repetition!) is added to the motto, celebrating the mass killings and threatening a future genocide (Wagner, 2008). Moreover, it should be clearly shown that the revisionist idea celebrates struggle, ultimately war, as the basic idea of the nation and overlaps with the neo-liberal and neoconservative reduction of all relations to struggle, competition in which only the stronger have the right to a good existence while all others “Excellence”, “competition”, “past and impact factors” doomed to mere survival (Cipek, 2019).

## HISTORICAL REVISIONISM AND MEMORY

If we go back further in the WW2 events, unlike the circumstances in Western Europe, in the former Yugoslavia we are witnessing the phenomenon of 4 “The Knife, The Barbed Wire, Srebrenica”). It is a Serbian chauvinist hatred motto that praises and honors the Srebrenica genocide of Bosniaks during the B&H war. It rhymes in Bosnian-Serbo-Croatian. It can be heard at football matches. The Serbian nationalist groups *Obraz*, the 1389 Movement, and the Serbian Radical Party promoted it. It appears in papers supporting war criminals, such as B&H Serb general c, Karadzic, and others (Wagner, 2008).

anti-communism without communists. All the liberal values that establish the Western democratic order have proclaimed some remnants of communism. Moreover, radical right politics advocate a similar thesis in Croatia. The basis of historical revisionism in the post-Yugoslav states, including B&H, is extreme anti-communism. On the one hand, this position seeks to rehabilitate fascist movements and quisling regimes and movements (Ustasha, Četnik<sup>5</sup>, foreign Muslim militias<sup>6</sup>), and on the other hand, to present the anti-fascist movement and the Communist-led NOB as absolutely criminal (Cipek, 2019). The inability of society and politics to shape collective memories of Ustashatism and Communism and evaluate past events (Cipek, 2009) spills over from politics and the media to various dimensions of society, including the academic community (Capo, 2015).

The revisionists distort the facts related to the wars of the 1990s, especially regarding the causes of the war, the victims, and the perpetrators of the crimes. The mental categorization of a nation is, for example, something that can discriminate against another who does not belong to that categorization. There are three different national narratives in former Yugoslavia about this, which often do not agree on the basic facts. The basis of the cult of the “sacred” past, such a collectivist pattern, is identifying cultural-ethnic and institutional-political identity, in which the political community fully identifies with the national or ethnic community (Hadzic, 2020). In this discernment, Kosovo is the most competent exemplar. It is considered the holy land of Serbian Orthodoxy, an actual museum of symbols, and a living past of centuries of conflict between Christians and Muslims. It is not remarkable that the initial spark of tension ignited precisely where the past was most accessible: the memory of betrayal, holy wars, mythical heroism, and unrequited defeats. The memory suddenly burst into the present, brutal and unstoppable (Jukic, 1996). The culture of denial culminated in the stagnation of social progress in building peace and reconciliation. It reflects the collective responsibility of society, leading to the conclusion of the necessity of each ethnicity victim’s honor, accepting the facts obtained through extensive research, and ultimately receiving the judgments by society to progress in the field of social development and reconciliation. For Croatia, the military action “Storm” in 1995 was considered a magnificent victory; the case of ethnic cleansing for Serbia. The attitudes of ordinary citizens have not changed significantly (Slobodna Europa, 2016). Revisionism is an ongoing process from the WW2 events to Yugoslav wars. In Kosovo or the B&H case, narratives intensified and continued.

The current Balkan policies towards the anti-fascist heritage and monuments (numerous examples) are such as that have been desecrated and destroyed everywhere in the past thirty years to erase the memory of the fight against fascism, to destroy what unites different peoples and religions, and to promote nationalist and fascist politics. It recalls the advent of communism, which leads to the encouragement of fascism. In Uzice, Tito’s followers are pushing for the return of his monument. One of the reasons people appreciate Tito’s monuments is that they are monuments throughout that period, the period of social and economic stability, overall security, and the international reputation of the former Yugoslavia. That should be nurtured.

<sup>5</sup> Četnik is an expression used to denote members of the Serbian nationalist-chauvinist movement of Greater Serbia ideology.

<sup>6</sup> Bosnian mujahideen were foreign Muslim volunteers who fought on the Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) side during the 1992–95 Bosnian War.

Milorad Dodik stated that the narrative about Srebrenica is a “false myth”. (Dnevni Avaz, 2019). World countries, the UN, the EU, and the ICTY have confirmed that the Serbian Army committed the genocide in Srebrenica in July 1995. Genocide denial and honoring convicted war criminals represent the Serbian “political mainstream” (BBC, 2022). Moreover, it is the ideological capability of ethnoreligious collective patriotism. Thus, RS Entity disputed the Srebrenica genocide of 8,372 Muslim men and boys and moved out of all state institutions, threatening the integrity of B&H’s entire political and legal system. The current holder of the high representative’s office in B&H, Christian Schmidt, confirmed in 2022 that he supported new legislation explicitly over the genocide denial. “The High Representative’s primary focus is on the apparent need to create the basis for a parliamentary legislative process through a broad social discussion involving social and religious stakeholders. However, he warns against politicizing the issue” (The Guardian, 2022).

Amendments to the B&H Criminal Code imposed by the International High Representative in late July 2021 prohibit public approval, denial, gross diminution, or attempts to justify genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity against a group of persons or a member of a race or skin color, religion, origin or national or ethnic affiliation, in a way that could incite violence or hatred towards them had not to change the condition. However, the imposed law in the last days of the mandate (of Austrian High Representative, Valentin Inzko), after more than a decade in B&H, did not lead country to reconciliation, prosperity, turning to the future (Sokol and Jukic, 2021). As a result, the National Assembly of the Republic of Srpska (RS)<sup>7</sup> (2021) adopted the Law on Non-Application of the Decision of the High Representative related to genocide denial. The year 2022 in B&H has been profoundly divided and faced the most frightening political crisis since the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords. It included war rhetorics, army appearances, a total blockade of state institutions, and absolute country collapse initiated by B&H Serbs led by Milorad Dodik. It led to unprecedented discord and hysteria that no one can assess where it is leading at the moment,” believes the editor of *Nezavisne Novine*, based in B&H Serb entity, RS entity<sup>8</sup>

“We are trampling on the third decade of the war. We have not moved an inch away from the war. The media also contribute to the hate and tensions.” We are infamous record-holders regarding poverty, crime, and corruption in the region, but that is irrelevant as long as laws are imposed and ethnonational narratives” (Sokol and Jukic, 2021).

The agents of historical revisionism have organized and strengthened institutionally. Vjekoslav Perica, a Croat historian, stated: “In sports arenas, kill, and slaughter are shouted, fascists march through the streets, mutual lawsuits are filed for genocide, military parades are held, provocative commemorations are organized in support of nationalism, genocide denied, and mythomania within the transitional crime, corruption, and interethnic hatred” (Perica, 2016). Throughout the world, attempts to revise WW2 results from falsifying historical facts are punishable. However, in post-Yugoslav countries, Hitler’s genocidal

<sup>7</sup> Republika Srpska is one of the two entities of B&H, the other being the Federation of B&H (FBiH). Additionally there is a one District, Brčko District (BDBiH).

<sup>8</sup> B&H has a bicameral legislature, and a three-member presidency made up of one member from each of the three major ethnic groups. However, the central government’s power is minimal, as the country is largely decentralized. It comprises two autonomous entities—the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska—and a third unit, the Brčko District, governed by its local government. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina furthermore consists of 10 cantons.

collaborator's political-military-paramilitary formations (ICTY convicts) commonly receive honor medals. Schools and streets are named after them. The rallies' celebration and commemoration of the events are accompanied by ceremonies regularly led by religious officials (Hadzic, 2020). The Srebrenica case is a compelling example of the conflicting memory maxima and denial.

Srebrenica should be significantly more prominent than symbolism, "theme", and paralleled national discursive (Bosniaks and Serbs) politics advertising within the framework of populist "national value" protection. At any point in any political process in B&H institutions, concerning any issue or problem, politics can face a wall of "vital national interest"<sup>9</sup> as absolute inviolability, holy place, which paralyzes politics, deprives it of meaning and purpose. The three-fold national values protection (i.e., Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats in B&H) is like a non-aggression pact, as a social contract implies the totalization of exclusivity, abolishing politics between inclusion and exclusion. It shows precisely the masked side of civilizational and existentially destructive activities of powerful ethno-political elites (Bajtal, 2010).

The Yugoslav leader Tito managed to rise above mass crimes and hatred and created a life framework that has provided peace and prosperity for many people for half a century. In socialist Yugoslavia, there was historical silence to answer the most problematic historical questions: the textbooks did not cover interethnic conflicts during the Second World War. However, currently, controversial and deeply divided memories of Ustashism and socialism/communism in Croatia persist, and their conflicts occur daily, although many years have passed since the collapse of the Ustasha and communist regimes. Discussions on World War II and Communist memories include the question of the role of Ustashes and Communists or, more precisely and, according to Vjeran Pavlakovic, the most critical issues and controversies such as the establishment of concentration camps, cooperation between the Roman Catholic Church and the Ustasha order, the relationship between anti-fascism and communism, post-war communist revenge and general repression (Pavlakovic 2014). The emergence of controversy over memory and ideology is less surprising in everyday politics and the media, although we would expect both labels to be used more carefully and responsibly. However, it is genuinely astonishing in the academic community, pointing to the ideologization of contemporary Croatian humanities and social sciences. In the hands of politicians and manipulators, the complex historical legacies and heterogeneous memories of World War II, Communism, and the 1990s War of Independence is often reduced to a simple and easy-to-use opposition that equates anti-Communists with Ustashes and Partisans with Communists. This totalizing stereotype was created in the Yugoslav era. However, while it was clear which side was negative and which was positive, this is not entirely clear in the post-Yugoslav era, and the assessment depends on the position from which the person speaks. Both equations are generalizing and historically incorrect reductions because not all anti-communists were Ustashes, nor were all partisans communists (nor Serbs). Since such a simplification of historical complexity can be used for ideological and political purposes, it was gladly used in the communist and post-communist eras. It is still used today to provide fertile ground for harmful political manipulations and discrediting (political) opponents (Capo, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> The protection of the vital national interest of the constituent peoples is the so-called 'mechanism' within the House of Peoples of the B&H Parliament which should ensure that no decision "of vital national interest" is made against the interests of any constituent nation.

There is an authentic culture of denial within conservative Serbia based on the literary conception of history (Aleksov, 2009). The literary conception of history attempts to reshape reality with mythological constructions, and it is an enduring element of Serbian sociopolitical life and cognition. One has to ask why the mythology is still powerful in contemporary Serbia and why this historic-symbolic capital can be activated in a society that is no longer pre-modern but a relatively modern and developed producer and consumer society. Therefore we should discuss this problem within the conceptual framework of the synchronism of the asynchronous in modern Serbia and modern society in general (Kaser and Halpern, 2000).

Croatia's political leaders publicly praise convicted war criminals. The current President of the Republic of Croatia, Zoran Milanovic stated in 2022: "So what if the Republic of Srpska (RS) Entity was created- based on a genocide? The USA was created on genocide. Many countries were created - based on war crimes" (Oslobodenje, 2022). At the same time, the attempt to create an "ethnoreligiously" pure Croatian entity on the B&H territory ended with multiple ICTY verdicts for war-crimes and crimes against humanity, against the entire political and military leadership of the "Herceg-Bosna"<sup>10</sup> and part of the political and military leadership of Croatia for a joint criminal enterprise. The future social and political relations are contested because of historical revisionism and persistent denial of the ICTY convictions by Croatian leadership and B&H Croat political parties. After the verdicts (ICTY, case number IT-04-74), Croatian president Grabar-Kitarovic stated: "No one, not even the Hague Tribunal, will write our history" (Slobodna Dalmacija, 2017).

The Hague Tribunal has failed to date change the discourses of self-victimization in individual national groups; on the contrary, it often even reinforced perspectives and lessons of denial and self-victimization. The situation at first glance confirms the statement: "We in B&H will live for a long time three truths and the "black and white" division of the world according to which they are" ours "good and moral, and they" there "evil and immoral" (Halimovic, 2017). There is a significant, fundamental difference between guilt and responsibility. Guilt is linked to the criminal act and the punishment that follows as a sanction. If we reduce post-Yugoslav history to the issue of individual guilt, which the Hague Tribunal and national courts determine, the point will be missed. The question arises in the moral sense: is it allowed to completely separate the criminals convicted by the Tribunal from the people whose name they committed crimes? In this way, we assume that peoples are a homogeneous community. Hereabouts, the nation is equally an individual. Thirty years after the wars, war criminals are treated as heroes in the family histories, and war veterans of a large part of the population. The Republic of Srpska (RS) entity in B&H represents a specific example in the world of warfare and violent hegemonic politics. Practically its complete political and military leadership was convicted of genocide and crimes against humanity. President of B&H Serb War-veterans and other former soldiers stated for BBC cameras: "We fought for our nation, freedom and our general Ratko Mladic<sup>11</sup>. Ratko Mladic is our hero and will always be our hero; I do not understand why people and the world do not/can not accept this. (...) They say that only Serbs were killing people. We are not that kind of people.

<sup>10</sup> The Croatian Republic of Herzeg-Bosnia was an unknown geopolitical entity and in B&H. Its administration was sanctioned in the International Criminal Tribunal of Former Yugoslavia in Hague (ICTY) as a joint criminal enterprise that committed crimes against humanity.

<sup>11</sup> B&H Serb general, serving life sentence for Genocide and crimes against humanity.

(...) If B&H politicians do not make an agreement and war emerge again, people who go to this war will never “come back.” We never returned (i.e., mentally and physically) from the last one (BBC, 2022). In these cases, an evaluation of whether war veterans identify with the “violent ethnonational project” for which their leaders, politicians, and war commanders were convicted as war criminals is needed. Unfortunately, however, it appears they are.

Opposed by an articulated call to memory (media, political), unwanted past parts are often skillfully silenced, while their articulation remains broken and scattered in various parts of society. The transition from individual to collective memory must rest on a clear awareness of events. It is not satisfactory to list the victims without any ethnic or other preferences. An image of the events themselves must be created that will unquestionably function throughout the region. The transition from individual to collective memory must rest on a clear awareness of events. Simultaneously, memory politics manipulation and revisionism justification complete political maneuverings. Is there the opportunity for this “marginalized” and subjectivized approach to evolve along with a new type of solidarity among the victims themselves to reach the level of public discourse? Ethno-national victimologists guard it. At the same time, many individual memories are suppressed, leading to the strengthening of national identity. For example, earlier narratives about WW2 included testimonies of passivity, i.e., a lack of resistance to Nazism, even in mass deportations. The new narrative has no place for such elements of memory. Serbs appropriate the memory of Jasenovac<sup>12</sup> turning it into one of the critical foundations of their identity. Apart from individual revisionism, there is no strong and organized historical revisionism in the Bosniak public and political elites. The naming of the school in Orašje after the anti-Semite and Nazi sympathizer Musta Mula Buladžić after the protests of Israel and the vast majority of the Bosniak public should be emphasized that politicians failed. An attempt by an SDA<sup>13</sup> politician to change the name of a street named after Josip Broz Tito also failed. It can be concluded that Bosniak historical revisionism does not have more comprehensive support because the partisan anti-fascist movement is strongly connected with the realization of the statehood of B&H and the process of national affirmation of Bosniaks through symbolic politics (Cipek, 2019).

The effect of the universal narrative of the Holocaust - which has become part of the international-legal and international-political institutional structure - on the countries of Eastern Europe is even more significant and more direct. In these countries, nationalist elites appropriate the Holocaust and human rights narrative to “nationalize” it and present their people as the greatest victims, as “other Jews”. Lea David (2020) sees similar processes - competition in sacrifice - after the war in the former Yugoslavia, especially in the Srebrenica narrative, which is based on the idea of genocide, comparable to the Holocaust (David, 2020). Crimes were broadcast live, becoming an indisputable fact of the modern global political, cultural and philosophical imaginary.

Almost thirty years later, in identifying “us” and “them” or “ours” or their war “victims”, a particular past is often reached for, revisionists intervening in history with the need to erase (deny) certain parts. Instead of a sincere and systematic

<sup>12</sup> Jasenovac was a concentration and extermination camp established in Croatia by the fascist state, Independent State of Croatia (NDH) in occupied Yugoslavia during WW2. The majority of victims were ethnic Serbs, Jews, Roma, and political dissidents.

<sup>13</sup> The Party of Democratic Action (SDA) is a Bosniak nationalist, conservative political party in B&H.

condemnation of the joint criminal enterprise in its entirety, in the optics of such perverted justice, this venture is sincerely and systematically tried to be normalized. It produces the “impossibility” of B&H, unsustainable suffering for all people they live in, obstructing institutions’ functioning, which should then be invoked as irrefutable proof of its impossibility uniformly produce apathy. The truth and justice are privatized and become only subjective truths, including “equally valuable”. People are left with this burden by sharing it with other equally marginalized individuals. There is a risk that old wounds will reopen and ethnic conflicts will break out (Roth, 2020).

## PEACE ENLIGHTENMENT AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

The very victim of Nazi ethnic cleansing and the genocidal hyper-nationalist project has formulated a deadly critical framework for understanding and fighting it, whom we can call the anti-peacebuilding, anti-state-building, and anti-genocidal moral imperative. Cohabitation is a precondition of sociopolitical life. Judith Butler (2018) argued: “We need to design institutions and policies that actively preserve and strengthen the unelected character of open-ended plural cohabitation. We live with those we do not choose and with whom we do not have a sense of direct belonging. Also, we are obliged to preserve those lives and the plurality of the open end” (Butler, 2018).

If like some national political elites in the post-Yugoslav countries, we reach for this prerogative, then we inevitably end up being the ones who will “decide which part of humanity can and cannot live” there with us. As a “prerogative of genocide”, this opposes the elementary plural logic of life, according to which settling on earth is something we cannot choose. It is the very condition of our existence, ethical and political beings. Without that heterogeneity of life that we cannot choose, there is no natural choice and absolute freedom (like Nazi Germany). Despite the criminal projects of imposing uniformity, Hannah Arendt (1994) is convinced that “the heterogeneity of the earth’s population is an irreversible condition of any social and political life” (Arendt, 1994). Disregarding this philosophical fact is senseless violence and can only be sustained by violence. To that extent, the crime against plural and heterogeneous B&H is more severe and represents a profoundly anti-civilization act. Martha Nussbaum (2019) stated: “we need to understand how group hatred can be diminished by social effort and institutional design” (Nussbaum, 2019). The ideological narratives, which coincide epistemically and eschatologically, have fallen into dysfunctional and ineffective scholastic debates when human communities need pluralistic rationality and plural sociological theories of social life. The rehabilitation of social plurality and heterogeneity, and justice are inseparable.

The public’s perception is that insufficient progress has been made in reconciliation and dialogue. The public opinion poll Prism Research (2013) results from most respondents believe that there has been no reconciliation process or defined the level of reconciliation as low or partial. In B&H, political projects were started by war and segregation among ethnic groups continues through education, within the discriminated educational phenomenon of “Two schools under one roof”. “There are those borders, we do not agree, and we do not want to interact”, a high school student from Mostar states, adding that he was never on the Old Bridge out of fear, because, as he says, “someone will recognize

that he is a Croat/Catholic and get into a fight". Four students express the same opinion. The same student states that he can recognize a "Muslim" crossing the bridge (Perspektiva, 2015). Ethnoreligious collectivism rises above individualism and does not liberate the human capacity to build a democratic society. It reflects in brought up and educated non-ethnonationalism and non-xenophobes individuals- personalities in fragile post-conflict Balkan societies. Affirmative indications of the adverse effects of B&H educational policies, ethnonational ideologies, philosophies, and ethnonational nonobjective party interests are required. Those policies obstruct critical peace and conflict transformation processes and potential initiatives necessary to establish peace, conflict resolution, and nonviolence. In this method, ethnonationalism takes supervision of its reproduction by cultivating new generations of future xenophobes (Hadzic, 2022).

The current circumstances may create the preconditions for further conflicts based on inconsistent understandings of the common past between the constituent peoples of B&H - Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), Bosnian Croats, and Bosnian Serbs. The ideological ethnonationalism has metastasized into a social organization's daily political discourse that produces uncritical subjects in all three constitutive ethnic governments (Hadzic, 2021). The current situation indicates that people in B&H, as the most complex state of former Yugoslavia multiculturalism, have not yet faced their past. Today, three collective memories are shaped by the demarcations between ethnoreligious groups to which all individuals belong. None of the three fundamental peoples of B&H fully acknowledges their mistakes, and sectarian memories and narratives are used to warn future generations not against evil itself but against its source, which is understood as what is ethnically or religiously different. The entire B&H people will eventually have to find ways to create a unique and inclusive collective memory, which they will then use whenever possible as a starting point in mourning the loss of a multicultural society (Diegoli, 2007).

Slobodanka Komljenac is a B&H Serb whose parents were executed in Kazani<sup>14</sup>. Overall, dealing with „Kazani“ and other cases calls for a different perspective on memory cultures in the post-Yugoslav space. Its characteristic is generally taken to conceal and deny one's crime, questioned and criticized, and a strong tendency toward self-victimization. She describes: "life goes on, it has become trivial to say you can forgive, you cannot forget. I do not watch political shows anymore; I cannot watch excavations, ossuaries, or identifications. Every day, I drink coffee with my friend (Bosniak) who was raped. Her son and husband were slaughtered in front of her eyes. We sit together and grieve. We met while buying cigarettes, and today we hang out quite usually. Her tears have more weight than mine because she was raped and lost a husband and child. I often think that if life already needed someone to take away from me, it was better to take away my parents than my child. Markings must exist and the memory of all innocent victims of war. That memory must be nurtured and exists, but one should turn to live. Let us turn to the living. I cannot give mine back, but let my grandchildren have a future." (Mreza za izgradnju Mira, 2019).

Does ideology make a lasting mark on the masses' consciousness, especially when its roots come from outside? Alternatively, his language must be radically

<sup>14</sup> The Kazani pit killings refer to the mass murder of predominantly ethnic Serbs living inside besieged Sarajevo by the forces of Mušan Topalović, commander, criminal, and B&H army outlaw during the B&H war. The B&H government (Bosniaks/Muslims) launched „Operation Trebević 2,“ which targeted his Brigade. During the operation, Caco and a few associates killed nine police officers and took several dozen civilians as hostages. He was killed in that operation.

changed and the historical context redefined. This emergence of myths is a critically imported instrument of political mobilization. In the histories of all three states, myths are two sides of the same ideological stamp; the aim is to give a historical trajectory and dynamic sound to the political agenda, in short, to give a new meaning to the past, to justify the genocidal present (Lemarchand, 2003).

Many factors affect our thinking, our actions and decisions. Although it seems trivial, the first factor is the senses and our attention. The human brain is programmed to guess what it sees, hears, feels. Our brains sometimes do not notice things we do not expect to happen. Our opinions are also influenced by emotions, beliefs, desires, and motives. However, even without mixing emotions, our inference is vulnerable, and we often make logical mistakes because we have wrong assumptions. The last factor is exposure to misinformation, prejudices, rumors, myths, and people who influence our opinion. What would a revolutionary theory look like that would lead to a culture of peace and justice, or how would its discursive practice be expressed? We can start from its historical-genealogical (developmental) aspect and overview some theories, knowledge, and practices that we can classify as revolutionary. Within the process of education and enlightenment, Socrates combined moral law and knowledge, saying that he who knows will never do evil (evil arises from ignorance), and that was the basis of his dialectic and ethics.

## CONCLUSION

Contradicting memory politics and historical revisionism related to genocidal war crimes directs societies into a state of conflict that prolongs suffering by other means. Stability is a matter of political and moral responsibility belonging to the metaphysical sphere. The critical power structures need a political will for reconciliation against the “de-historicization of crimes” within parallel memory politics. It could suppress personal memories and unilateral interpret traumatic and tragic events - less valid for political purposes. Denial and recognition resemble contradictory alternatives in this context, to which critical memory can add a more sustainable approach. A society in which people support war criminals within the political coercion cannot face its past. Therefore, self-criticism, and confrontation with the past, must encompass all nations. The revisionist contention memorializes conflicts and wars as the fundamental concept of ethnicity, religion, and nation. It overlaps with the neoliberal and neoconservative reduction of all competitive relations, in which only the stronger have the right to existence. In the fight against historical revisionism, the essential social democratic principles, human and civil rights, and solidarity must be affirmed. The mental categorization of a nation is, for example, something that can discriminate against another who does not belong to that categorization. The national mental categorization can be destructive when it seeks to legitimize the social/political exclusions or crimes committed against another group/collective identity. The Balkan, former Yugoslavia, is an example.

Balkan's sociopolitical stability depends on memory order. It is crucial to decrease parallel conflicting maxima. Awareness of a lethal event's proximity triggers community trust and searching for safe scientific knowledge and assessments. Discarding dominant ethnopolitical narratives is essential for conflict transformation and transitional justice for all ethnoreligious communities.

Placing memory politics with radical populism is a critical condition of collective identity politics in the former Yugoslavia. Within the political tensions, the culture of remembrance, and sociopolitical needs, repression is also formed in the interspace between memory and forgetting. It is a test model for the endurance of unwanted and unnecessary memories, those of the past that do not meet the present's needs. It is easy for an individual to decide on some suspension of memory in natural sensations. Revisionist and inaccurate memories should be excluded from ethnopolitical ownership, ethnoreligious ideologies, policies, and ceremonies. Thus, for sustainable peace, dignity, and reverence for particular human and empathic forms. Scientific rationality can provide a solid path through the anomalies in the form of political ideologies.

The Balkan historical events and conflicting memory (WW2/Yugoslav wars) caused sociopolitical dominion shaping the collective behavior of ethnic groups. The damaging ethnic/religious practice of genocide denial and honoring war crimes within people's social lives can become a matrix for future conflicts. It represents an ethnocentric rejection of liberal democracy; Balkans ethnoreligious groups have to take "engaged action". Balkan societies' equivalence of national, ethnic, and religious identity makes secularism infirm. It leads to the mythologizing of human life and procrastinating behind advanced societies. The Western model of state identity is a concept that teaches us that the state is not a tribal community. In the EU context, the region must become a neighborhood source of stability, partnership, cooperation and understanding, inducing a culture of peace. It is necessary to articulate the importance of the human community's enlightenment to confront a peace stalemate. Science and education are the long-term models of action on the path to deliverance from the Balkan world's deception in ethnonationalism antagonism. The development of a critical spirit is the fundamental role of the revolution theory to understand that the world is not enough to analyze and interpret but must also change it. Just as evolution teaches us that changes in nature never cease, revolution teaches us that social changes are constant, whether we notice or consciously influence them. However, unethical and amoral ethnopolitics open spaces for instrumental manipulations if people do not influence social reality.

## REFERENCES

Aleksov, Bojan (2009). *We the people, Austria, USA, Hungary*: Central European University Press.

Arendt, Hannah (1994). "Organized guilt and universal responsibility". In Jerome Kohn (Ed.), *Essays in Understanding: 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt Brace.

Bajtal, Esad (2010). "Psihosocijalni kontekst političkih elita u BiH (Psycho-social context of political elites in B&H)". *Almanah - Časopis za proučavanje, prezentaciju i zaštitu kulturno-istorijske baštine Bošnjaka/Muslimana*, No. 48-49: 227-240.

BBC News (2022). Fears of new conflict as Bosnia-Herzegovina faces growing Serb nationalism. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=slnnVL-GKeIM>. January 10, 2022.

Beglerovic, Nada (2020). *Milorad Dodik's Use of Contentious Rhetoric in (De)constructing Bosnia and Herzegovina's Identity: A Discourse-Historical Analysis*. Masaryk University Press.

Bieber, Florian (2021). *The Rise of Authoritarianism in the Western Balkans, New Perspectives on South-East Europe*. New York: Springer International Publishing.

Bojic, Drago (2019). Dehumanizirana sjećanja u kulturi zaborava (Dehumanized memories in a culture of forgetting). Retrieved from <https://www.tacno.net/ban-ja-luka/dehumanizirana-sjecanja-u-kulturi-zaborava/>. Accessed: 12.03.2022.

Brockmeier, Jens (2002). "Remembering and forgetting: Narrative as cultural memory". *Culture and Psychology*, Vol. 8(1): 15-43.

Butler, Judith (2018). *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Capo Zmegac, Jasna (2015). "Prijepori oko naslijeđa prošlosti i memorija u Hrvatskoj: znanstveno-popularna publikacija pod pritiskom ideologija (Controversies over the heritage of the past and memory in Croatia: a scientific-popular publication under the pressure of ideologies)". *Stud. ethnol. Croat.*, No. 27: 105-129. doi: 10.17234/SEC.27.3.

Case no. IT-04-74-T, ICTY, Second amended indictment: Prosecutor of the tribunal.

Cipek, Tihomir (2009). "Remembering 1945: Saving and Erasing. On the power of family narratives". In *Culture of Memory: 1945. Historical Breaks and Overcoming the Past*. Edited by Sulejman Bosto and Tihomir Cipek, Zagreb: Dispute.

Cipek, Tihomir (2019). *Historijski revizionizam u Bosni i Hercegovini, Socijaldemokratska politika sjećanja između dva totalitarizma (Historical revisionism in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Social Democratic politics of memory between two totalitarianisms)*. Sarajevo: Friedrich Erbert Stiftung.

Colovic, Ivan (2016). "Smrt na Kosovu Polju - Istorija kosovskog mita (Death in Kosovo field - A History of the Kosovo Myth)". Beograd: XX vek.

David, Lea (2020). *The Past Cannot Heal Us, The Dangers of Mandating Memo-*

*ry in the Name of Human Rights*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Diegoli, Tomasso (2007). *Kolektivno pamcenje u Bosni i Hercegovini*, Sarajevo: Fond otvoreno društvo Bosna i Hercegovina (Collective memory in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo: Open Society Fund Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Dimitrijevic, Nenad (2021). *Slučaj Jugoslavija: Socijalizam, Nacionalizam, Posledice (The Case of Yugoslavia: Socialism, Nationalism, Consequences)*. Beograd: Samizdat.

Dnevni Avaz (2019). *Žrtve rata poručile Dodiku: UN i EU potvrdili su da su genocid u Srebrenici počinili Vojska i MUP RS (War victims told Dodik: UN and EU confirmed that the genocide in Srebrenica was committed by the RS Army and MUP)* Retrieved <https://avaz.ba/vijesti/bih/475315/zrtve-rata-porucile-dodiku-un-i-eu-potvrdili-su-da-su-genocid-u-srebrenici-pocinili-vojska-i-mup-rs>. Accessed: 10.05.2022.

Esterajher, Josip (2013). *Velikosrpska ideologija u suvremenom srbijanskom društvu, nacrt za daljnja istraživanja (Greater Serbian ideology in contemporary Serbian society, a blueprint for further research)*. Zagreb: Institute of Social Sciences Ivo Pilar Library Collections.

Gagnon, Valère Philip (2004). *The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press

Hadzic, Faruk (2020). "The politicization of religion and the sacralized Balkan nations regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina". *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, 40(7): 105-132.

Hadzic, Faruk (2021). "Agnosticism and atheism as amoralism and anti-ideological sociopolitical paradigm in the Balkans, specifically in Bosnia and Herzegovina". *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, 41(2): 68-85.

Hadzic, Faruk (2021a). "Post-genocidal Balkans peace: Morality, memory and oblivion". *Journal of Balkan and Black Sea Studies*, 4(7): 89-112.

Hadzic, Faruk (2022). "Educational segregation and discrimination in Bosnia and Herzegovina and critical peace: transgression of ethnic-ideological utilization of youth". *Psychology Research on Education and Social Sciences*, 3(2): 25-40

Halimovic, Dzenana (2017). *Slobodna Europa, "Zarije Seizović: 'Tri istine u BiH" (Zarije Seizović: 'Three truths in BiH)*.

Hina, Ivo Lucic (2017). *Velika reportaža iz srednje Bosne "Ovo je još uvijek mali dio one stare Bosne u kojoj jedni drže do drugih, ali politika i nas dijeli..."* Retrieved from <https://www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/svijet/velika-reportaza-iz-srednje-bosne-ovo-je-jos-uvijek-mali-dio-one-stare-bosne-u-kojoj-jedni-drze-do-drugih-ali-politika-i-nas-dijeli-5881996>. Accessed: 10.06.2022.

Ignatieff, Michael (1993). *The Balkan Tragedy*. New York: The New York Review of Books.

Ilic, Dejan (2016). "Beskompromisni patriotizam Srđe Popovića" (Srdo Popović's uncompromising patriotism), Retrieved from <https://pescanik.net/beskompromisni-patriotizam-srde-popovica/>. Accessed: 12.02.2022.

Jukic, Jakov (1996). "Political religions and the memory of evil". *Društvena istraživanja: časopis za opća društvena pitanja*, 5(3-4): 23-24.

Jukic-Mujkic, Elvira and Anida Sokol (2021). *Mediacentar\_online, Kontekst i pozadina priče ključni u medijskim izvještajima o ratnim zločinima (Mediacen-*

tar\_online, The context and background of the story are key in media reports on war crimes). Retrieved from <https://www.media.ba/bs/magazin-novinarstvo/kontekst-i-pozadina-price-kljucni-u-medijskim-izvjestajima-o-ratnim-zlocinima>. Accessed: 12.01.2022.

Kaser, Karl and Joel M. Halpern (2000). "Historical myth and the invention of political folklore in contemporary Serbia". *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, 16(1): 89–107.

Kessler, Wolfgang (1997). Jugoslawien - Der Erste Versuch (Yugoslavia - The first attempt), In: *Der Balkan. Eine europäische Krisenregion in Geschichte und Gegenwart (Yugoslavia - The first attempt. In: The Balkans. A European crisis region, past and present)*, Hrsg. von Jürgen Elvert, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.

Lemarchand, Rene (2003). "Uporedjenja polja smrti: Ruanda, Kambodža i Bosna (Comparisons of the fields of death: Rwanda, Cambodia and Bosnia)", editor Steven L. B. Jensen, in: *Genocid: Slučajevi, Poredjenja i Savremene Rasprave (Genocide: Cases, Comparisons and Contemporary Debates)*. Copenhagen: Danish Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies. Retrieved from <http://institut-genocid.unsa.ba/userfiles/file/Genocid%20slucajevi%20Jensen.pdf>. Accessed: 15.12.2021.

Lyotard, Jean-François (1999). *Postmodern Fables Paperback*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Mahmutovic, Mirza (2013). "Medijska konstrukcija kolektivnih sjećanja: Tretman prošlosti u polju novinarstva s osvrtom na postdejtonsku BiH (Media construction of collective memories: Treatment of the past in the field of journalism with reference to post-Dayton BiH)". *Obrazovanje Odraslih: Časopis za Obrazovanje Odraslih i Kulturu*, No. 2: 39-67.

Mann, Michael (2012). *The Dark Side of Democracy, Explaining Ethnic Cleansing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Markusen, Eric and Martin Mennecke (2004). "Genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina". *Human Rights Review*, 5(4): 72-85. doi: 10.1007/s12142-004-1029-x.

Moltmann, Jürgen and Margaret Kohl (2004). *In the End-The Beginning: The Life of Hope*. Augsburg: Augsburg Fortress - eBooks Account.

Mrkic-Radevic, Branka (2021). Portal Udar, Govor mržnje, diskriminacija, uvrede: Mrzilački narativ prisutan je u BiH (Portal Udar, Hate speech, discrimination, insults: The hateful narrative is present in Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Mudde, Cas (2009). *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nussbaum, Martha C. (2019). *The monarchy of Fear*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Oslobodenje (2022). Milanović javno "otkrio karte" / Hrvati će ići u treći entitet, Srbi su nam saveznici - Pa šta ako je RS nastao na zločinu? (Milanović publicly "revealed the cards" / Croats will go to the third entity, Serbs are our allies - So what if the RS was founded on crime?). Retrieved from <https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/vijesti/bih/milanovic-javno-otkrio-karte-hrvati-ce-ici-u-treci-entitet-srbi-su-nam-saveznici-pa-sta-ako-je-rs-nastao-na-zlocinu-756757>. Accessed: 25.06.2022.

Pavlakovic, Vjeran (2014). "Fulfilling the Thousand-Year-Old Dream: Strete-

gies of Symbolic Nation-Building in Croatia”. In *U Strategies of Symbolic Nation-Building in South Eastern Europe*. Ur. Pal Kolstø, Farnham: Ashgate.

Pavlakovic, Vjeran (2020). “Memory politics in the former Yugoslavia”. *Rocznik Instytutu Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, (18): 9-32. doi: <https://doi.org/10.36874/RIESW.2020.2.1>.

Perica, Vjekoslav (2016). “Hrvatska Je danas najjača scena etničkog i klerikalnog nacionalizma na Balkanu (Today, Croatia is the most vital scene of ethnic and clerical nationalism in the Balkans)”. Radio gornji grad.

Perica, Vjekoslav (2019). Willy Brandt u balkanskom getu (Will Brandt in the Balkan ghetto). Pescanik.

Popov, Nebojsa (1993). Kultura sećanja: Srpski populizam, od marginalne do dominantne pojave (Culture of memory: Serbian populism, from marginal to dominant occurrence), addition, No. 135.

Predstavništvo Republike srpske u Srbiji, (2021). Tribina “Republika Srpska pred novim izazovima (Conference “Republika Srpska facing new challenges)””.

Prism Research (2013). Public opinion poll results, analytical report. United Nations Resident Coordinator’s Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Roth, Michael (2020). Pomirenje Je kamenit put (Reconciliation is a rocky path). German embassy in Sarajevo.

Slobodna Dalmacija (2017). Grabar Kitarović o presudi hrvatskoj šestorki: Nitko drugi, pa ni Haški sud, neće pisati našu povijest! (Grabar Kitarović on the verdict of the Croatian six: No one else, not even the Hague Court, will write our history!). Retrieved from <https://slobodnadalmacija.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/grabar-kitarovic-o-presudihrvatskoj-sestorki-nitko-drugi-pa-ni-haski-sud-neece-pisati-nasu-povijest519541>. December 20, 2021.

Slobodna Europa, (2016). Potpuno suprotno o ‘Oluji’ i nakon više od dva desetljeća (Quite the opposite of ‘Storm’ and after more than two decades)”. Retrieved from <https://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/olujja-potpuno-suprotni-stavovi-i-posli-je-21-godine/27896141.html>. Accessed: 10.03.2022.

Smajic, Mehmed (2019). “Uljepšana slika osuđenih ubojica - Balkan i ratni zločini (Beautified image of convicted murderers - the Balkans and war crimes)”.

Turcalo, Sead and Hikmet Karcic (2021). Bosnian genocide denial and triumphalism: origins, impact and prevention, Sarajevo: University of Sarajevo in cooperation with Srebrenica Memorial Center. Retrieved from <https://fpn.unsa.ba/b/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/BOSNIAN%20GENOCIDE%20DENIAL%20AND%20TRIUMPHALISM.pdf>. Accessed: 10.06.2022.

Verovsek, Peter J. (2016). “Collective memory, politics, and the influence of the past: The politics of memory as a research paradigm”. *Politics Groups and Identities*, 4(3): 529-543. doi: [doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2016.1167094](https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2016.1167094).

Wertsch, James V. and Henry L. Roediger III (2008). “Collective memory: Conceptual foundations and theoretical approaches”. *Memory*, 16(3): 318-326. doi: [10.1080/09658210701801434](https://doi.org/10.1080/09658210701801434).

Wodak, Ruth, Rudolf de Cillia, Martin Reisigl and Karin Liebhart (2009). *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*. Edinburg: Edinburg University Press.