

# TOMORROW PEOPLE, WHERE IS YOUR PAST?<sup>1</sup> Mapping of post-war national identities in new Yugoslav states

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## INTRODUCTION

From 1989 to 2009, dramatic changes occurred on the political scene in Western Balkans region. The war in Croatia and Bosnia was one of first wars in history to be broadcasted live and to be fully covered by media. For the people in the areas of conflict it was a living hell, while for the growing international public the logical explanation of this reality show war-game had to be oversimplified. Therefore the caricature of the Yugoslavia's tragedy was described as a war of ethnicities or religions, a "cultural" rather than "ideological" war.

The debate over identities overrated ethnicity, religion, nationality and so-called "identity politics" in general, thus was concentrated only to one dimension of the general problem. This paper explores the question of identity for the cases of Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia from the constructivism perspective.

Thus, the main assumption is based on double "identity making" levels: individual and international. Individual level is represented by three variables that contribute to the definition of national identity. The author is considering the influence of ethnicity, religion and language as of tools that the state is using in creating new post-war nations. Moreover, the international community is remodeling national identities as well, in particular by conditionality and EU integration process that is reinforced by the cooperation with international tribunals.

Special section is dedicated to the new mythmaking and identity mutations. In the Balkan's region there are multiple truth versions of recent war dynamics, which are building new narrative traditions of nations in question. The detainees' "shows and performances" in courtrooms of International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) are creating postmodern myths in ex-Yugoslav society. Those myths have been conceived together with the myths of rebirth of nationalism and their impact is huge although their appearance on the political scene is quite recent<sup>2</sup>.

Ex-Yugoslavia's successor states' "nationhood" is mostly symbolic, however, as for the past two decades the newly formed states worked continuously on nation making, identity analysis should focus on identification of the official national founding myths composed, imposed and maintained by the state. In the comparative perspective through international

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<sup>1</sup> Ziggy Marley

<sup>2</sup> Sabrina P. Ramet, *The Dissolution of Yugoslavia: Competing Narratives of Resentment and Blame*, 2007

dimension, this paper considers the assessment of the new products compatibility with each other and with the democratization and Europeanization in the Balkans.

### **CONSTRUCTIVISM IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

Ex-Yugoslav republic, now independent states, have passed through painful process of identity change influenced by various factors. The theoretical approach that the author is following is based on constructivism.

The notion of change in international relations theory is closely linked with the importance that is attached to the structure of the international system. Traditional realist writers emphasized the adaptation of state behaviour to the structure of the international system. Structure was determined by the states' relative positioning in relation to other states based on military capabilities, economic resources and geostrategic position. The "bureaucrat", by adapting its actions to the actual facts, was perceived as being ideal to cope with the requirements of international affairs.

Forty years after Carr introduced the notion of the bureaucrat, Kenneth Waltz challenged the idea of structure being only determined by the state level and the arrangements of its elements<sup>3</sup>. For Waltz, structure is determined by the ordering principle of the international system, anarchy. The self-help system, with which states are confronted, is causally determined by anarchy. In this conception of structure, change is beyond reach. Waltz' approach, based on the immutability of structure, provoked criticism that was particularly aimed at the "static" nature of structure.

The constructivist approach that became popular in international relations in the 1980s pointed to the reciprocity of structure and states that are acting under it. According to Alexander Wendt, the system of self-help is only one of various possible structures under anarchy<sup>4</sup>. The reason for the existence of a self-help system is not causally determined by anarchy. Rather, it has developed out of interaction and is reinforced by interaction – identities and interests of states arise only in relation to others. Interaction is based on intersubjective meaning, thus constituting the structure. Actors' identities play a key role in the process of achieving intersubjective meaning. Most important and unlike structural realism, Wendt considers identities and interests as acquired by the states through interaction, thus being socially constructed and not exogenously given.

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<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State, and War*, New York, 1959

<sup>4</sup> Alexander Wendt, *Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics*, in *International Organization*, vol. 46, no. 2, 1992

By changing actors' identities, change of socially constructed realities is possible. Or, as Wendt puts it, "identities may be hard to change, but they are not carved in stone"<sup>5</sup>. Wendt distinguishes between two different concepts of agent identity: firstly, social identities, which are constructed through interaction at the international level. Secondly, he introduces the notion of "corporate identity", which is comprised of a set of interests and can be found at the domestic level. This 'corporate identity' is regarded as being existent prior to the interaction with other actors. It is given exogenously.

Another theorist of constructivism, Martha Finnemore, has been influential in examining the way in which international organizations are involved in these processes of the social construction of actor's perceptions of their interests. This concept has been particularly important for the Western Balkans since the consolidation of cooperation with ICTY in 2003 and the beginning of EU integration process. In *National Interests In International Society*, Finnemore attempts to "develop a systemic approach to understanding state interests and state behavior by investigating an international structure, not of power, but of meaning and social value"<sup>6</sup>.

Historical aspect deserves certainly special place in this study. The study of identity construction is not an end in itself. National formation accompanied by identity mutations in the aftermath of the Croatia and Bosnia war will certainly become a "new history" of lands and peoples under consideration.

Fragile national elements present in Western Balkan countries enter in Wuthnow's category of "communities of discourse" rather than in nation-states one<sup>7</sup>. Wuthnow's analysis demonstrates that ideological movements are best viewed as a combination of intellectual innovations and their realization in the production of cultural products. And, because the latter requires both resources and groups motivated to produce them, the success of new intellectual movements is always mediated by material and political conditions: "the shaping of ideology is thus historically contingent".

Thus, previously utilized ethno-confessional labels for the Balkan groups have become outdated. Real social problems, such as poverty and class injustice merged into faith and ethnicities questions. This authentic search for the proper identity is now available only in the remaining sources, i.e. ethnicity, religion, myth and new forms of nationhood.

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<sup>5</sup>Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, New York, 1999

<sup>6</sup> Martha Finnemore, *National Interests In International Society*, Cornell University Press, 2006

<sup>7</sup> Robert Wuthnow, *Communities of Discourse: Ideology and Social Structure in the Reformation, Enlightenment, and European Socialism*, Harvard University Press, 1990

Already towards the end of the 80s "national communism", or better "Titoism" was changing decisively to ethnic nationalism under the guise of anticommunism, democratization, transition, even peace building and reconciliation. In consequence, followers of Marx had successfully transformed themselves into ethnic nationalist. The old utopian union of all workers seems to dilate into new slogan: "Peoples of all Balkans, identify yourselves!"<sup>8</sup>

The following pages try to reconstruct identity and mythmaking of the past twenty years.

## **NATIONALISM AND MYTHMAKING**

The outbreak of 1991-1995 war in Yugoslavia was a result of ethnic nationalistic ambitions aiming at destroying the multiethnic federation. During the conflict approximately 150 000 people had died, 250 000 were injured while 2,5 million persons became refugees or IDPs after being expelled from their homes.

Massive war crimes had been committed, such as confining people to concentration camps, executions without trial, mass expulsions of civilian population and creation of ethnically homogenous territories. Therefore, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) was established by United Nations Security Council resolution 827<sup>9</sup>. This resolution was passed on 25 May 1993 in the face of the serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in the territory of the former Yugoslavia since 1991, and as a response to the threat to international peace and security posed by those serious violations. Contribution that ICTY gave to the comparative genocide studies was, among other, the concept of "ethnic cleansing" as a form of genocide.

The Balkan wars of the 1990s were fought among several untied ethnic nationalistic fronts each seeking statehood and nationhood and each contesting borders, myths and identities of rival groups. It should perhaps be stressed that only the Serbs had a notion of national entitlement, captured in the phrase "Heavenly Serbia"<sup>10</sup>, while all the peoples of Yugoslavia have seen themselves as victims, including the Slovenes.

The dissolution of Yugoslavia happened due to multiple factors. Samuel Huntington in his book "The clash of civilizations" claimed that, after the Cold War, important distinctions among peoples were not ideological, political or economic, but cultural. Furthermore,

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<sup>8</sup>The Marx and Engels' slogan was: *Proletarier aller Länder, vereinigt euch!*

<sup>9</sup>Full text is available on <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N93/306/28/IMG/N9330628.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>10</sup>Notion Heavenly Serbia derives from the 1389 Battle of Kosovo Polje, in which a messenger from Saint Elias offered Prince Lazar a "heavenly kingdom" in accepting Serbian defeat

Huntington argues that people and nations *in primis* attempting to answer the question: Who we are?

Considering the influence of culture in civil wars, we certainly cannot put aside economic problems and ideologies. The collapse of Yugoslavia is much more complex question than dialectic of cultures. It encloses also economic decay, political illegitimacy of communist system, structural factors and the failure to develop a common historical narrative.

Shared historical narrative, involving shared myths, shared heroes, shared challenges, shared experiences and shared resentments is what ties a community together. It is moreover a precondition for nationhood. For a multiethnic state to be stable over the long term, it is necessary that the historical narratives of the constituent peoples be purged of mutual resentment, mutual recrimination and mutual blame.

The failure of the socialist state of Yugoslavia was marked by ethnic mobilization but was it state which set the system on a trajectory in which ethnic mobilization became a logical choice for ambitious leaders, or was it ethnic mobilization which played the most critical role in breaking up the state? The assumption this paper is based on is that it is actually the state that created new, post-war nations. Ambitious leaders saw their chance in fragile political structure and therefore reinforced nationalistic propaganda. The vast autonomy of the six republics, extending to the development autonomous educational and media systems, made its contribution to the dissolution of the country.

The differences in perceptions of both more remote and more proximate history also help to account for the receptivity of the population to certain propaganda themes, indeed to different propaganda themes.

It was wide-spread belief that the economic struggles were caused by other nationality groups. The clash between "us" and "them" was strongly underlined, and each group had a tendency to see one's own country or nation or group as the victim of a conspiracy organized by other nation or group. Gellner argued that the national sentiment that relies on the relation and the comparison with the others would be politically more effective if nationalists had as fine a sensibility to the wrongs committed by their nation as they have to those committed against it<sup>11</sup>.

Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks remember the past differently and although there are differences of historical memory within each group, one can speak of there being a dominant but evolving historical narrative among each of these national groups. This diversity of historical memory created resources which may be tapped by ambitious leaders.

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<sup>11</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Cornell University Press, 1983

More than 150 years ago, John Stuart Mill warned that when members of different nationality groups in a multiethnic state read different newspapers and books and maintain alternative sources of information, democracy becomes difficult to establish or maintain. Nation itself could be interpreted as a product of communication and collective self-interpretation. Of course, as Jean Paul Sartre argued in his work, people operate within concrete historical contexts, with given resources, opportunities and challenges. Indeed, not all Serbs supported Milošević, not all Croats supported Tudjman, not all Bosniaks supported Izetbegovic.

When the nation has a clear dominant historical narrative, then collective self-interpretation could be expected to have certain consequences for the political behavior. Unfortunately, Yugoslavism began as an idea people thought that if they did not already have a common historical narrative they could develop one.

Nationalism can be considered as a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundary should not pass across political one. Nationalism is therefore primarily a political principle, where political and the national unit should be congruent. Throughout the history, whenever nationalism has taken root, it has tended to prevail with ease over other modern ideologies.

A nation's historical narrative is refined gradually in response to dramatic events and as a result also of changes in school curricula, editorial policies and other factors. History textbooks in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia became largely different, with the widespread characteristic aiming to minimize the common history. A number of historical facts necessary for understanding logical consequences leading to one mutual state were just left out, while periods of past conflicts were underlined and explained to details<sup>12</sup>.

For example, regimes of Slobodan Milošević and Franjo Tudjman were particularly interested in discrediting the anti-nationalism propounded by the socialist regime and therefore quickly set about demonizing Tito as a "totalitarian Bolshevik".

Serbian schoolbooks in Milošević time began to equate the Partisans and the collaborationist Četniks as equally "anti-fascist" while Croatian schoolbooks portrayed the Croatian collaborators as "heroes and defenders of national capitalism", representing the NDH<sup>13</sup> as a "victim" and demonizing the Partisans.

Croatian textbooks minimized World War II Ustaša crimes while magnifying the number of victims of communist repression and crimes committed against Croats by the World

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<sup>12</sup> Maria Todorova, *Balkan Identities: Nation and Memory*, NYU Press, 2004

<sup>13</sup> Nezavisna Država Hrvatska (Independent State of Croatia) was a World War II puppet state of Nazi Germany organized on a part of Axis-occupied Yugoslavia.

War II Serb guerilla Četniks. The apologist tendency reached its “natural” culmination in the adoption for Croatian elementary schools of history textbooks in which the NDH was represented as a “state of high culture” and in which the word “genocide” did not even appear.

Nationalistic tendencies in Serbia were explicitly revealed in 1986 Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Art (SANU) signed by number of academics and culturally influential persons<sup>14</sup>. Resentment centered on the federal system which the authors of the memorandum claimed had been devised to strip Serbia of its legitimate jurisdiction over Montenegro and much of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Moreover, there was also resentment in connection with the autonomous province of Kosovo.

On the “other side” should be outlined the movement of 1967-1971 called “Croatian Spring” when Croats sought to expand their political, economic and cultural autonomy. It was an era of Croatian secessionism in which Ustaša-type ideas were revived.

As we already mentioned, nations in Western Balkans were the product of new-formed states. Thus, the primary theme in the way the Yugoslav meltdown played out in Bosnia was the concept of state. Milošević was seeking to establish a “Greater Serbia”, Tudjman was excited at the prospect of restoring the borders of the Banovina, and Izetbegović wanted to preserve the Bosnian republic within its existing borders<sup>15</sup>.

## **THE ROLE OF RELIGION**

Religion is one of the most significant and “secure” ways for distinguishing ethnics, and later states and nations in post-Yugoslav period. Three largest religious organizations were among the principal engineers of the crisis and conflict and their role will be exposed in this chapter.

### **Islam and Muslim nationalism in Bosnia**

Islam in Bosnia took important part in nation formation. As a first step it passed through the phases of politicization and nationalization. Bosnian leader Alija Izetbegović became convinced that nothing else but creation of an Islamic state could secure survival for Europe's only native Muslim community.

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<sup>14</sup> Full text of Memorandum is available on: [http://sr.wikisource.org/wiki/Memorandum\\_SANU](http://sr.wikisource.org/wiki/Memorandum_SANU)

<sup>15</sup> Greater Serbia borders were proposed by Vojislav Šešelj's Serbian Radical Party in the late 1980s and the 1990s. They extend to the Benkovac-Karlovac-Pakrac-Baranja line in the north in present-day Croatia and to Vardar Macedonia in the south in the present day Republic of Macedonia. Banovina Hrvatska was founded inside the Kingdom of Yugoslavia according to the political agreement between president of Yugoslav Government Dragiša Cvetković and the leader of HSS (Croatian Peasant Party) Vlatko Maček. Its territory was much wider than actual Croatian state.

Religion boomed, but so did a “new” history, without which a nation cannot exist. In countries with a Muslim majority, as well as in the offices of the Muslim-dominated Federation, everyone was required to use the traditional Muslim salute, “Selaam aleikum”<sup>16</sup>.

In 1999 and 2000 when the ailing Izetbegovic retired from politics, the attempted Islamic revolution in Bosnia and Herzegovina lost momentum. The influential Muslim leader Haris Silajdžić opted for a European-oriented secular and moderate “Party for BiH.”

### **Catholicism in Croatia**

Catholicism had a direct ties with the state of Croatia. The church helped the coming-to-power of the nationalistic historian Franjo Tudjman and its Croatian Democratic Community. Symbols were changing in the new Croatia. As a result, agreement between Zagreb and Vatican granted permanent financial assistance to the Church from the state budget. State of Vatican was also the first foreign state to recognize Croatia after its proclamation of independence.

Regimes like Tudjman’s are relatively short-lived and terminate either with dictators’ deaths, corruption scandals, coups or a combination of these factors. Corruption scandals and abuses of privatization policies shook the country as early as 1993. It became public after Tudjman’s death in December 1999 that the regime’s as well as the Church’s officials were involved in money laundering, profiteering, speculations in real estate and financial scandals.

One of the new symbols of Croatia that deserves special attention is the Medjugorje “miracle”<sup>17</sup>. It had followed the same pattern of “fall” erosion and disenchantment that manifested in other concurrent religious and quasi-religious phenomena such as nationalism, ethnoclericalism and communism.

According to a Croatian opposition weekly, the Franciscans from Medjugorje and the nearby monastery Široki Brijeg amassed wealth through the ownership of the Bank of Herzegovina and other forms of Mafia-style business that boomed in the broader region during the 1990s<sup>18</sup>. The political, military and “Mafia” background of local affairs however did not harm the Madonna’s cult. On the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2001, the local Franciscan provincial Tomislav Pervan said that without the miracle at Medjugorje there would not have been the Croatian independent state existing today and that it was the Madonna of Medjugorje who put Croatia on the map of world nation-states.

### **Orthodox religion in Serbia**

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<sup>16</sup> Vjekoslav Perica, *Balkan Idols*, Oxford, 2002

<sup>17</sup> Medjugorje miracle refers to the vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary by those who believe that she appeared to six Herzegovinian Croat children starting on June 24, 1981, in the town of Medjugorje in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

<sup>18</sup> Vjekoslav Perica, *Balkan Idols*, Oxford, 2002

The regime of Slobodan Milošević never used religion for assessment of new Serbian nation. Still, no Serb cleric or bishop ever condemned any Serb criminal, not even those tried and sentenced at the ICTY. In 1996 and 1997 the patriarch of Serbia, Pavle, was among several dozen nationalistic intellectuals who signed declarations demanding that Karadžić and another war crimes suspect, General Ratko Mladić, be pardoned by the ICTY in the Hague.

The new Serb saints, recognized in great number after the 1991-1995 war, were to consolidate one of the founding myths of the new Serbia-the Jasenovac myth<sup>19</sup>. As the "second Serbian Golgotha", the Jasenovac myth combined the myth of the nation's origin, that is, the Kosovo myth, with the myth of the nation's rebirth in the 1990s. It consecrated the link between past and present and between heavenly and earthly Serbia.

It is also true that the Church contributed to the fall of Milošević, who had failed to create a greater Serbia and abandoned the sacred battle for Kosovo. The Serbian Orthodox Church did condemn the war criminal Milošević but not because he was a bad man. Actually, the Church blamed him for not having been even worse.

Religious institutions failed to conduct a tolerant dialogue about their common past and find like views on any important issue. Even though some of the Churches officials attended peace talks on various occasions, no direct merit can be assigned to them for the end of any conflict.

After the war and the creation of the new nations, each post-Yugoslav "successor state" went down its own path of degradation. And only the growing influence of myth and religion helped some people to believe that the new was better than the old.

## **MYTHS FROM THE PAST – EXAMPLE OF KOSOVO**

History as an intellectual construct "is concretized as a part of the everyday spatio-temporal world"<sup>20</sup>. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of June 1389, Serbian army was defeated by Ottoman Empire in so-called battle of Kosovo. Heavy losses suffered by Serbia resulted in its reduction to a vassal state. Events that happened just before and after the battle were described in Serbian epic poetry, in particular in Kosovo cycle.

Literary material from Kosovo cycle epic tradition entered into a definition of national culture and into the popular imagination of the nation. The rhetorical force of the heroic epic ideology appropriately effective at the narrative level, along with peoples' intimate knowledge

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<sup>19</sup> Jasenovac concentration camp was the largest extermination camp in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) during World War II.

<sup>20</sup> Andrew Lass, *Romantic Documents and Political Monuments: The Meaning- Fulfilment of History in 19th Century Czech Nationalism*, in *American Ethnologist*, 1988

of epic stories and heroes made its way into other discourses, such as the nationalist where it became a political advantage of a kind.

Even though narrative tradition did not change the outcome of the historical battle of Kosovo, i.e. the defeat, for the Kosovo syndrome it is "glory" that counts, not the "defeat". In popular perception Kosovo became a paradigm of a just struggle, self-sacrifice and dying on the "cross of honor" for a "golden freedom"<sup>21</sup>. The image of martyr nation has its first "material proof" in the Kosovo battle; its apologies present suffering because of presumed bright future "historically determinate" for the "chosen nation"<sup>22</sup>.

Kosovo as a historical event, as an ever present mythic-religious reality or as a popular epic tradition all seem to be interchangeable notions. It explains how peoples read themselves from their narratives at specific times. Many epic images and attitudes toward "us" and "them" have also been politically contextualized in nationalist discourses in both the nineteenth and twentieth century.

The Kosovo myth theme can also be understood in terms of religious nationalism. Battle of Kosovo is for Serbs a showdown between the Christian Serbs and Muslim Turks allowing contemporary Muslim Albanians to be conflated with the fourteenth-century Turks in some speeches. This fact underlines historical incoherence of recently used myths, as Albanians, Catholic in the period of battle of Kosovo, fought together with Serbian army.

Further, both religious and nationalist discourses share a certain fatalistic rhetoric but while religion conceptualizes in terms of ontological fatalities (death/resurrection), nationalism operates in terms of historical ones (war/rebirth of a nation). Fragile national identity is therefore encouraged as the hope to see the nation blooming is very high, especially after the wars and conflicts. The cosmic dimension in religious interpretations (Christian, Islamic) eventually becomes integrated as a moral component in the identity of a group.

In Serbian self-definition of cultural, religious and national identity, Kosovo is not a negligible thing, a mere "myth" like any story-telling; it is a narrative that continues to interact with reality in a unique way. Kosovo in fact moved in Serbian collective mind from a historical place into a spiritual space.

One recent episode confirms still strong presence of Kosovo myth into national consciousness. Belgrade actor Žarko Laušević that played the role of Miloš Obilić, young Serbian knight that gave his life for the glory of Serbia and killed Ottoman sultan Murat, was

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<sup>21</sup> A formula which frequently occurred in nineteenth century verse and prose

<sup>22</sup> Milošević spread the idea of Serbs being the oldest, chosen nation, the cradle of civilization. Therefore, the Serbian nation was the victim of a giant conspiracy of Vatican, Comintern, Islam, Judaism and Masson movement. The only way out would be self-defense and "preventive" foundation of the Greater Serbia.

tried for double murder. This fact taken from chronicle would not be extraordinary at all, but it provoked the creation of various organization aiming to save the “unjustly” condemned actor-hero. This episode introduces the phenomena of modern heroes that pop-up during and after the war.

### **WAR CRIMINALS – NEW NATIONAL HEROES**

It is no secret that many criminals actively participated in the wars in former Yugoslavia. They took part in different volunteer paramilitary units, sometimes owned private armies or were just playing under the command of the regular armed forces.

Their appearance on the wider public scene seem like anachronistic phenomena, warlords and their gangs are in a way closer in nature to wars fought prior to the emergence of modern nations with their armies. A lot of new heroes came from the mafia underground, like for example Mladen Naletilić Tuta, tried from war crimes before the ICTY, or Željko Ražnatović Arkan, accused by ICTY as well, but killed before the transfer to The Hague<sup>23</sup>.

Public attention that they drew upon was due to their self-representation as saviors, modern Robin Hoods that were not robbing from the rich, but from the enemy. This image was completely opposite to what they were doing for real, i.e. war profiteering the unfair division of the burdens of defending the city of Sarajevo during the siege.

These criminals acquired their reputation as brave fighters for the national cause in varying situations; the Sarajevo “gangster guerillas” took what they wanted from their fellow citizens. In contrast their counterparts on the Croatian and Serbian sides were able to “provide” for themselves well without the social alibi simply by robbing members of the “enemy” nation.

They all came to prominence as national fighters and as such were tacitly or explicitly recognized by both the military and other higher influential authorities of the nations they claimed to be fighting for. Authorities in the states caught up in crisis and war, tried to be free of them in various ways once their services were no longer needed. That explains their actual situation: they are either tried before the ICTY, or delivered to special national courts for war crimes.

Hobsbawm called this phenomena “social banditry”<sup>24</sup>. Modern bandits are living a drama as national saviors and avengers, but they do not belong to the ruling elite and often live outside the law. War criminal hero is usually not embodied of specific national traits or values. He is

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<sup>23</sup> Maria Todorova, *Balkan Identities: Nation and Memory*, NYU Press, 2004

<sup>24</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780 : programme, myth, reality*, Cambridge University Press, 1990

not a representative of a nation or a symbol of its identity. He fights for us, but he's not one of us; that is why the state can easily dismantle his myth.

In the construction and war-propaganda promotion of new national hero-desperados on the Serbian and Croatian sides, the evocative "hajduk" tradition too played a role.<sup>25</sup> The criminal past of these new war heroes can also be harmonized with their virtues as sacrificial fighters for the national cause on the basis of theological argument, helpfully evoked by sacred stories of repentance, of the return of the prodigal son, or of a šehid (Muslim martyr) who were redeemed and received a place in heaven having laid down their life in the struggle for their faith.

Heroisation is not a procedure by which something unacceptable, disgusting, bad or strange to a normal person is changed into acceptable, ideal, good, understandable, familiar behavior. What former hajduks and other bandits did, and what the mafia does now in creating the heroes is not the transformation into noble moral champions but rather their impressive and indelible violence.

War criminals very often do not lose their charisma even when they are accused for serious breaches of humanitarian law. Vojislav Šešelj, leader of the Serbian Radical Party, is accused by the ICTY for crimes against humanity such as persecutions on political, racial or religious grounds, deportation, inhumane acts and for the violations of the laws or customs of war (i.e. murder, torture, cruel treatment, wanton destruction of villages, or devastation not justified by military necessity, destruction or wilful damage done to institutions dedicated to religion or education, plunder of public or private property)<sup>26</sup>. His constant provocations in the courtroom seem to prolong the impression that he is untouchable, even after being detained for several years. Intimidation of witnesses and court staff is transforming the direct television coverage into some kind of reality show, that certain number of people watch even for fun.

After the arrest of Radovan Karadžić on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2008 the myth of "Ratko and Radovan" as brave soldiers started to fall. Perception that two criminals at large were heroically enduring their exile for the sake of the Serbian nation collapsed once discovered that Karadžić was a fraud. His aura of heroism was stripped once he was exposed as a self-seeking charlatan and criminal.

However, this event is not going change immediately attitude among Serbian people about war criminals. As Serbian cultural analyst Milena Šešić Dragičević has noted, "everyone

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<sup>25</sup> In Balkan folkloric tradition, the hajduk is a romanticized hero figure who steals from, and leads his fighters into battle against, the Ottoman oppressors.

<sup>26</sup> [http://www.icty.org/x/cases/seselj/cis/en/cis\\_seselj\\_en.pdf](http://www.icty.org/x/cases/seselj/cis/en/cis_seselj_en.pdf)

now talks about Radovan Karadžić, aka Dragan Dabić, but people in Serbia still do not talk about Srebrenica".<sup>27</sup>

## **LANGUAGE AS A MARKER OF ETHNIC IDENTITY**

In the 1980s, linkage of language and ethnic identity became irreversible with the rise of nationalism in ex-Yugoslavia. Ethno-linguistic nationalism aroused emotional reactions, not logical ones.

As Fishman suggested<sup>28</sup>, many discussions of ethnicity begin with the struggle to define it and in Yugoslavia that was a really difficult task because the ethnic terms have been fluid. Not only have members of a given group switched their ethnic allegiances over time but the preferred ethnic labels also have changed.

Therefore, the objective aspect of ethnicity, which contains "immutable" factors such as language, race, geography, religion and ancestry had to be reinforced. In the former Yugoslavia language has proven to be neither an objective factor, nor an immutable one, and religion and ancestry have been insufficient in determining group identity. It is well-known that through the policies of ethnic cleansing, the nationalist leaders in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia sought to create new states in which language, ethnic affiliation, religion and territory would all correspond.

Today's Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin and Serbian language all developed from Stokavian dialect, one of the three main dialects whose names originate in the divergent forms of the interrogative pronoun "what". Southern variant of the Stokavian dialect, ijekavian, was taken as a standard at the beginning, but changed over the time in some territories. Stokavian passed several key historical phases: 1) 1836-99, it was implemented as the standard in Western and Southern Stokavian areas, 2) 1913-1939 when the proponents of the Eastern, Stokavian-ekavian (Serbian) dialects championed their own dialect at the expense of the Southern Stokavian/ijekavian dialect, 3) 1954-1974 when the Southern dialect became synonymous with the Western variant (Croato-Serbian) of the joint language, 4) 1991-present, when the four successor languages to Serbo-Croatian have all claimed ownership of the Southern Neo-Stokavian/ijekavian dialect.<sup>29</sup>

There are two important agreement that aimed to unify mutually intelligible variants of Stokavian dialect. First attempt was made in 1850 with Vienna Literary Agreement, where it

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<sup>27</sup> Iva Martinović, *Karadzic's secret life draws tourists*, in IWPR Tribunal Update no.564, 2008

<sup>28</sup> Joshua Fishman, *Advances in language planning*, The Hague – Paris, 1974

<sup>29</sup> Robert David Greenberg, *Language and identity in Balkans*, Oxford, 2007

was discussed how it might have been possible to understand each other and to unite in one common literature.<sup>30</sup>

In 1954 was signed so-called Novi Sad Agreement that established two standard variants of Stokavian dialect: Serbo-Croatian or Eastern variant and Croat-Serbian or Western variant.<sup>31</sup> In Tito's Yugoslavia the language unity was one of the foundations for maintain ethnic unity throughout Yugoslavia. Under Tito's Socialist regime, all forms of nationalism, including linguistic nationalism were suppressed.

The internal Serbo-Croatian language unity was precarious at best and never truly embraced by its speakers from the rival ethnic groups. Just as the peoples of Yugoslavia would not unify under the guise of a non-ethnic Yugoslav identity, they refused to strengthen their linguistic unity, or to transform Serbo-Croatian language into a unitary Yugoslav language.

Unified language was contested as soon as it was proposed and officially accepted. In the first unified South Slavic state (1918-1941), language controversies contributed to an atmosphere of ethnic animosity between the state's Serb and Croat communities. The period of extreme purism in Croatia was at the time of the Croatian Fascist state (1941-1945) when Croatian was declared a separate language from Serbian. The increase in linguistic autonomy of the republics was affirmed in the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution, further undermining the Novi Sad Agreement. Article 171 of the Constitution recognized the right of each Yugoslav constituent people/nation to use its own language at the republican and provincial levels.<sup>32</sup> As a result, the Socialist Republics of Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Montenegro declared their own "standard linguistic idioms" in their territories, yielding a unified language with three republican standard idioms alongside the Serbian (Eastern) standard variant.

In the territory of the former Yugoslavia, however, no such splitting could be achieved in a precise manner, since occurred along ethnic lines, rather than geographic or political boundaries. Moreover, the split has not taken place in either an orderly or a planned manner. The stokavian/ijekavian dialect became a marker of Croat linguistic identity, while the Stokavian/ekavian dialect marked Serb linguistic identity.

The emergence of four successor languages to Serbo-Croatian since 1991 suggests that language birth in the Balkans came as a direct result of the explosive nationalist policies in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro. Serbo-Croatian has not disappeared due

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<sup>30</sup> Full text of the Agreement is available on: [http://hr.wikisource.org/wiki/Be%C4%8Dki\\_knji%C5%BEevni\\_dogovor](http://hr.wikisource.org/wiki/Be%C4%8Dki_knji%C5%BEevni_dogovor)

<sup>31</sup> Full text of the Agreement is available on: <http://www.ihj.hr/oHrJeziku-Novosadski.html>

<sup>32</sup> Član 171.:Pripadnici narodnosti imaju, u skladu sa ustavom i zakonom, pravo na upotrebu svog jezika i pisma u ostvarivanju svojih prava i dužnosti, kao i u postupku pred državnim organima i organizacijama koje vrše javna ovlašćenja.Pripadnici naroda i narodnosti Jugoslavije na teritoriji svake republike, odnosno autonomne pokrajine, imaju pravo na nastavu na svom jeziku u skladu sa zakonom

to the death of its final speaker, nor has it been overwhelmed by a stronger neighboring language through a process known as “language shift.”

In general, one language is developing through either *Abstand* or *Ausbau* processes. The former refers to languages that drifted apart “naturally”, while the latter occurred due to the external non-linguistic factors.

The successor languages of unified Serbo-Croatian, i.e. Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian and Montenegrin, had been in various kinds of *Ausbau* relationships during Tito’s Yugoslavia, but the demise of the territorial borders contributed to “nominal language death”, which Kloss defined as a phenomenon caused by the splitting of a language or the intentional downgrading of a standard language to the status of a dialect.<sup>33</sup>

Eminent linguist Bugarski claimed that the unified language had a strong external identity but a weak internal identity.<sup>34</sup> The external identity was strong because most non-Yugoslavs never questioned the unity of the language, by contrast Croats, Montenegrins and Bosnian Muslims began asserting their local varieties.

In the 1990s Croats, whose variant of Serbo-Croatian had been quite similar to the Serbian variant save for the alphabets and slight differences in vocabulary and syntax, initiated a campaign of language purification, purging forms deemed to be “Serbian” and replacing them with old Croatian forms or crafting new ones from “pure” Croatian roots.

Situation in Bosnia was even more complex. Bosnian Croats and Serbs claimed that their mother tongue were respectively Croatian and Serbian, while Bosniacs “have chosen” Bosnian language. The first instruments for the codification of a new Bosnian language were written while war was raging in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the future of the Bosnian state was still unclear.

In Republika Srpska, one of two Bosnian entities with Serbian majority, ijekavian standard was always in use. Still, the government of Republika Srpska came closer than ever before to declaring the ekavian dialect as the new Serbian standard. This action was prompted in the fall of 1993 by a purely political decision of the Bosnian Serbs. Bugarski wrote that the decision of the Bosnian Serb leadership was “a political decree without precedent, a special kind of violence against the language and its speakers, based on the ideology of a Cyrillic and ekavian Greater Serbia.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Heinz Kloss, *Umriss eines Forschungsprogrammes zum Thema “Sprachentod*, in *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 1984

<sup>34</sup> Ranko Bugarski, *Serbo-Croatian: how many languages?*, in *Die Sprachen Südosteuropas heute*, 2000

<sup>35</sup> Robert David Greenberg, *Language and identity in Balkans*, Oxford, 2007

Demands for translators for Croatian and Bosnian may have seemed outrageous in 1991, but in 1995 at the Dayton peace talks, each party requested translators at the talks. The Serbs, Croats and Bosniacs suddenly could not understand each other. With the publication of the Dayton peace accords in Bosnian, Bosnian language obtained legitimacy and international recognition. Of the three peoples/nations of post-Dayton Bosnia-Herzegovina, only the Bosniacs have truly embraced the name "Bosnian language."

In conclusion, every standard language can be described as a result of a relations between politics and linguistics. The creation of Montenegrin and Bosnian language are definitely contemporary phenomena and are created as a consequence of the much broader political situation.

At present is absurd to speak only about the division of Serbian and Croatian language. Other two languages should be viewed under the light not only of Novi Sad Agreement or until 1990, but also after the creation of new nation-states.

#### **UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL**

Together with the various efforts to underline the differences between post-Yugoslav nations, on the international level lot of actions were undertaken in order to bring closer Western Balkans republics.

New successor countries started painful but vitally important procedure of leaving behind nationalist ideology that led to the wars and are in a process of trying to assume justice, human rights and interstate association as the paradigm of a new national identity.

History of Balkans passed a long way in last twenty years from communism to extreme nationalism and mass murder, from war to European integration and association among states. The countries concerned need to come to terms with the war crimes of the 1990s and go through the painful but essential process of breaking free from the nationalist ideologies that led to the wars and assume justice, human rights and interstate association as the paradigm of a new national identity.

Process of European Integration is defined by so-called "Copenhagen criteria", which set out in 1993 political conditions expected of aspirant EU member states, such as functioning democratic institutions, the rule of law and respect for human and minority rights. The Balkans have introduces a new and very important dimension to European conditionality, by expanding the Copenhagen criteria to include full cooperation with the ICTY.

EU political conditionality was intended to support the efforts of new political leaders to redefine national goals away from the nationalist enmities of the past and focus firmly on

tasks related to building a better future. This chapter describes the actual situation of Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia on their way to European Union.

### **Croatia**

Croatian foreign policy and its attitude towards war crimes can be divided into two periods: first one includes period from 1990 to 1999 when Franjo Tudjman was on power and the second one is from 2000 until present.

Main obstacle to Croatia's earlier membership were issues of transitional justice in general, and long-delayed cooperation with the ICTY. When HDZ was on power, they developed a rhetorical strategy of equating "the tribunal's indictment against Croatia's war heroes with attacks on the dignity and legitimacy of the so-called Homeland war."<sup>36</sup> Homeland war was one of the main elements of the official narrative about the political identity of the new Croatian state. For Croatian nationalists it was difficult to accept that one day, in an enlarged EU, there would be no heavily guarded border with Serbia or Bosnia-Herzegovina. Tudjman criticism of the EU was also based on its alleged failure to support Croatia during the most difficult times of the conflict – in particular prior to the destruction of Vukovar, in November 1991.

Changes of the Croatian foreign policy after the death of Tudjman. By 2000, the majority of Croatian electorate opposed the significant influence that Herzegovian Croats, among whom extreme nationalists, suspected of being linked with organized crime, had over policy-making in Croatia during the time of Franjo Tudjman. The external factors played an important and largely constructive role in supporting the anti-extremist forces in Croatian politics.

Croatia finally started Stabilization and Association Process in 1999 which included both full cooperation with the ICTY and regional reconciliation among the political conditions. In November 2000, SAA was launched in Zagreb and it was signed in 2001. The lack of cooperation with the ICTY halted the process of EU accession once again, and it was only in 2003 that Croatia realized that one possible road to Brussels leads via the capitals of the neighbouring countries primarily Belgrade and Sarajevo. Anyway, last obstacle was removed in December 2005 after the arrest of General Gotovina, accused before ICTY for war crimes.

In April 2009 Croatia became member of NATO, while currently the EU integration process is on "stand-by" due to the problematic political relationship with Slovenia.

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<sup>36</sup> Victor Peskin and Mieczyslaw Bodudzynski, *International Justice and Domestic Politics: Post-Tudjman Croatia and the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia*, Europe-Asia Studies, 2003

## Serbia

Political changes in the Western Balkans following the end of Tudjman's and Milošević's regime in Croatia and Serbia respectively, opened a realistic perspective for all countries of the region to move closer to membership of the EU.

The initial flurry of action and commitment to war crimes prosecution and corruption after 5 October 2000<sup>37</sup> ended with the assassination of Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjić in March 2003. Djindjić was assassinated in a joint action of various groups belonging to the underworld network of organized crime and parts of the Serbian police Unit for Special Operation (Jedinica za Specijalne Operacije). This case demonstrated that the link between state structures that were loyal to the former president, Slobodan Milošević, and the criminal underworld are still strong in Serbia.

Serbia's history of reluctance to cooperate with the ICTY since 2000 had been in large part due to the machinations of first elected president in post-Milošević era, Vojislav Koštunica. Koštunica has never been pro ICTY and his increasingly nationalist stance highlighted his real opinions on the war, crimes and international justice.

Suspicious surrounding the security sector and its involvement in shielding war criminals Mladić and Karadžić, while at large, increased because of revelations that Mladić was in receipt of a military pension up until 2002, and that members of the MUP were involved in assuring his protection at least until 2005<sup>38</sup>.

In practical terms, real cooperation with the ICTY was rendered almost impossible, because the different segments of the Serbian government and its security services were seemingly working in diametrically opposite directions.

After the death of Djindjić different governments made some feeble attempts to deal with the war crimes issue, with every attempt being severely undermined or criticized by large and vocal parties such as the SRS.

Mechanisms of transitional justice, such as laws on war crimes, investigations, tribunals and commissions, were never fully developed or had no real political support. Denial of Serbian involvement and responsibility has remained almost constant among the civil society.

The society is polarized in two segments: the first uncritically believes that all blame lies with "the other side" and that Mladić, Milošević and Karadžić are victims of a global anti-

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<sup>37</sup> Consequently to the fraud at the 2000 presidential elections, regime of Slobodan Milošević downfall on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2000 after protests held throughout the country

<sup>38</sup> It is significant that during the period of Mladić's protection, the Minister of Defense was actual Serbian president Boris Tadić

Serb conspiracy. The second group has no illusions about crimes committed by the Serbs, and believes that the nation has to confront them. They are undecided with regard to what happened, and what the truth is about the ex-Yugoslav wars, and there is much confusion about Serb involvement in those events.

ICTY was largely perceived by the Serbian public as an instrument of political blackmail on the part of Europe. As more, EU conditionality has always been strict and the Serbian government has been put under constant pressure in order to fulfill its promise to deliver Mladić.

Latest developments showed that the price to pay for shielding a notorious war criminals from justice proved to be too high for the Serbs. General perception is changing slowly, but constantly, especially after the arrest of Radovan Karadžić in July 2008.

### **Bosnia**

Bosnia-Herzegovina have a very complex situation due to the strong ethnic and political division at the national level. The dominant strategy of political elites of keeping groups internally homogeneous and isolated from each other has been based on the fear of "others" and on a revisionist attitude to recent history regarded to war crimes and goals of war campaigns. Thus, the efforts to provide restorative justice, have been obstructed primarily due to the institutionalization of ethnic division.

EU is certainly the best framework for a society that has been so badly damaged by war and events that occurred in its aftermath. The broad support for EU membership fluctuating between 70% and 80% across the whole country is based on the association of the EU with economic prosperity and the rule of law.<sup>39</sup>

So far on its way to the EU, Bosnia-Herzegovina signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the EU on 16 June 2008. Bosnia gained previously the entry into NATO's Partnership for Peace program in November 2006.

### **EU conditionality in practice**

Former Prosecutor of ICTY, Carla del Ponte estimated that "90% of all indictees brought to justice are a direct result of conditionality applied by the EU".<sup>40</sup>

For the EU member states, as for the US, ICTY conditionality was a policy tool in their overall relations with the Western Balkans, used mainly for political purposes rather than to press for justice for all victims in the fight against impunity. Consequently, when the

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<sup>39</sup> Tija Memišević in *War Crimes, Conditionality and EU Integration in Western Balkans*, Chaillot Paper, June 2009

<sup>40</sup> Florence Hartmann in *War Crimes, Conditionality and EU Integration in Western Balkans*, Chaillot Paper, June 2009

Prosecutor's assessments were not serving their goals, EU and US leaders ignored the Prosecutor's opinion or interpreted it as they wished.

This was the case in November 2006 when Serbia was offered membership in NATO's partnership for Peace; or a year later, when the EU initiated the SAA; or in March 2008 when the EU signed the SAA despite Serbia's failure to fully cooperate with the ICTY.

The long-standing approach that "full cooperation" with the ICTY entails Serbia arresting and handing over Mladić and the remaining fugitives began to be disputed by a growing number of EU leaders. In view of the concurrent developments in Serbian politics and the domestic reaction to Kosovo's independence, the EU decided to sign the SAA before the 11 May 2008 elections. Still, it is quite difficult to imagine any Western Balkan country in the EU with only partial realization of requested conditions.

## **PROBLEMS ORIGINATING FROM THE STABILITY PACT AND STABILIZATION AND ASSOCIATION PROCESS**

The conditionality mechanism based on the good experience of the big bang enlargement functioned on principles of differentiation among states, reform process and equal benefits for all the interested countries. Differentiation, a real push factor during the previous enlargement, in the case of Western Balkans actually represents a problem that Kramer named "stabilization dilemma."<sup>41</sup> European Commission's regional approach grants less aid to the states that are least stable in the terms of democratic structures, reforms and functioning institutions. In the case of international protectorates such as Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, or semi-protectorate like Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia it is almost impossible to follow the quick steps of reforms Croatia is undertaking. Furthermore, Bosnia and Herzegovina must pass the constitutional reform before entering the EU. Bosnian constitution, i.e. Appendix 4 of the Dayton Peace Agreement does not comply with the European standards and it was firstly conceived only as a permanent tool aiming to stop inter-ethnic animosities. The actual "two entities" structure must be abolished before the ratification of Stabilization and Association Agreement. On the other side the EU is not in the rush of changing the actual situation. Kosovo is in even worse position as five EU members do not recognize its unilateral declaration of independence. In order to become a full member of the EU, all twenty seven member countries have to agree upon, which is currently impossible in the case of Kosovo. Kosovo's final status could initiate separatist pretensions of Republika

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<sup>41</sup> Heinz Kramer, "The European Union in the Balkans: Another Step towards European

Srpska, one of the Bosnian entities mostly inhabited by Serbs. Therefore, the EU is practically not insisting for the Bosnian and Herzegovinean constitutional reform as this point could show again its inner differences and weaknesses.

One of the decisive areas where the conditionality could play an important role are political reforms. Political stability cannot be equated to the economic development. Failing to acknowledge this, both SP and SAP are not leading to a strategic institution-building process that could have important long-term benefits for the region. EU conditionality should function as an incentive for the national governments to proceed with unpopular policies and prepare for integration. The real problem comes, however, when the SAP countries lack the commitment. Unpopular measures are imposed in general in Bosnia and Herzegovina or in Kosovo through the Office of the Special Representative and lift the burden from the state accountability. EU conditionality can have the catalyst effect in bringing the reforms, but only if those reforms are not overridden by domestic inner interests. As Gergana Noucheva<sup>42</sup> noticed correctly, in the case of complex post-conflict political system like the one in countries of the former Yugoslavia, the presence of sovereignty-linked demands provokes political mobilization against the EU conditionality. Cases in which sub-state aspirations or self-determination elements are present cannot comply with the strategy planned in Brussels.

Even though international intervention and transition in Western Balkans played a huge role in shaping structure of the states in the region, we are far away from concluding that this process is completed. Secretary-General of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Hido Biscevic suggested that we all “live in an unfinished peace, unfinished transition, unfinished building of freestanding countries, and unfinished social stabilization”<sup>43</sup>. Almost half of the SAP countries are facing the problem of statutory issues and unfinished state-building process. Having made the international presence critical to the transition process, now international community need to face the challenge and maintain or reinforce its commitment in the region in order to see Western Balkan countries achieving transition process. Commitment deficit is very present on the other part as well. Political elites in some of the SAP countries still did not precisely tie reforms and EU integration as one of the main priorities, despite the declarative value of the engagement for the integration. Therefore skepticism towards the EU is a result of a daily life politics that is unable to bring closer the idea of eventual membership in the EU. Regional ownership has to be assumed in order to

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<sup>42</sup> Noutcheva, Gergana, EU Conditionality, State Sovereignty and the Compliance Patterns of Balkan States, Centre for European Policy Studies, 2006

<sup>43</sup> Dnevi Avaz, March 17, 2009, Sarajevo

produce more viable reforms. Protectorate mentality and the serious lack of accountability especially in the countries with major international community presence, is not the right way to ensure a sustainable and interactive reforms process.

## **EU INTEGRATION OF WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES – FUTURE PERSPECTIVES**

Due to the huge media propaganda, in the eyes of the local populations in the region, EU conditionality is equaled with the ICTY component of the integration criteria. Although the pressure coming from the Tribunal itself and the UN can be described as “quite political”, quest for the justice in the region is addressed only to the short-term outcomes, such as bringing the remaining fugitives to the court. Therefore other transitional justice mechanisms such as truth seeking and truth telling are completely masked and underdeveloped. In the region where history is constructed of emotional memory it is essential to explain on larger scale what happened during the wars in Croatia and Bosnia. Like in the communist period of the former Yugoslavia, nowadays history is more of each nationality’s collective emotional memory rather than common factual history. Thus, simplification of the each country’s accountability before the ICTY cannot be expressed by the name of two indictees. Cooperation with the ICTY has proved the most difficult issue in the SAP context, and has dominated the EU’s external relations agenda with Yugoslav successor countries. The ICTY is considered to be a key factor in rebuilding the rule of law in the region, as well as ending impunity for crimes described by the international criminal law. Very often the ICTY is cited as the element that supposes to bring the reconciliation in the region. On the contrary, it was widely used by nationalist forces to demonstrate the persistent victimization of entire nations. By adopting narrow understanding of transitional justice and focusing exclusively on full cooperation with the Tribunal, the EU missed the chance to intensify its leverage and help greater regional cooperation and rule of law establishment.

Important part of the conditionality should be focused on the social and economic issues. Welfare problems are nowadays much more present than old ethnic matters. High unemployed, poverty, corruption and organized crime are most important questions to tackle, as seen from the public opinion eyes. The social impact of the crisis, if not addressed urgently, could lead to new instabilities in the EU’s backyard. In any case, as advise Stubbs and Venancio<sup>44</sup>, a modeling of the EU’s Open Method of Coordination should represent a framework for all future strategies having precise long-term goals and clear outcomes. More coherent and concrete goals addressed perspective could bring a more effective policy. For

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<sup>44</sup> Paul Stubbs, Moises Venancio, *Compounding the Crisis? International Assistance in the Western Balkans*, *European Perspectives – Journal on European Perspectives of the Western Balkans*, 2009

example conditionality and social learning should be connected and clearly serve the same goal.

As already outlined in the introduction, one of the biggest problems present in the Western Balkan countries is growing wave of nationalism. Lack of relevance of certain EU priorities and conditionality instruments to the specific needs of the people in the region and the awareness of democratic deficit the EU is carrying itself, has turned public opinion towards less reformist political parties. State of dilemma before sovereignty issues has had an intensive propaganda work from both media and political elites. Borders problems are to be resolved inside wider Europe, the EU High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy confirmed several times inviting therefore the former Yugoslav countries not to resign from fulfilling the necessary conditions for the accession. One of the possible problems could be the perception of the different treatment of the abovementioned countries. After the French and Dutch "no" to the EU constitution in 2005 and Irish refusal of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, EU member states leaders warned that no further enlargement could be possible without the adoption of the treaty. In recent geopolitical balance Croatia is certain to enter the Union probably next year, whereas the situation is rather different for the remaining countries. In the meantime also the situation on the territory changes, as currently the EU is not the only player in town, but Turkey and Russia have their openly expressed interests within the region as well. Still, the author of this text is convinced that only future integration within the EU could resolve such delicate questions as Kosovo's independence or Bosnia constitutional reform. Perhaps more importantly, integration in EU political institutions could bring an end to the regional disputes over borders and discourage nationalists from contesting further border changes. To assure such path towards "ever closer union" the EU institutions should put a major pressure on Western Balkans' governing elites, providing them with clear and well defined goals to fulfill. Finally, previous experience proved positive response to incentives of regional bottom-up approach and demand for reforms, which makes the integration possible only if wanted from both sides with the same dose of commitment.

## **CONCLUSION**

The identities in post-Yugoslav countries can be understand as a balanced game of inner centripetal forces such as ethnicity, religion, myths and language; and external centrifugal ones aiming to keep those nations together.

Culturally very close, but seeking the way out of fifty years old Yugoslavian dream, new countries developed to perfection "obsession for details". Differences that were previously easily overcome gained new meanings and suppressed common past.

Only after the end war new identities were formed on the basis of cultural factors, while the conflict itself started as a consequence of much broader set of issues: economic decay, unsustainable political system and conviction in the historical determinism. Culture is thus a consequence and not the cause of nation as a state product.

Nations are held together largely by force and by emotion. In the midst of the crisis of the 1980s, millions loved the united Yugoslavia and thought it would survive. When the federation began to crumble in the 1980s, the country was defended by emotions alone and by the fragile lost generation alone<sup>45</sup>.

During the 1990s, although the name was appropriated by the Milošević regime in today's states of Serbia and Montenegro, vestiges of the former Yugoslavia began to disappear. A million-strong group known not long ago as "Yugoslavs by nationality" has vanished. As early as 1992 occurred the revival of the primordial identities at the expense of the Yugoslav identity. Some of the "Yugoslavs by nationality" were forced to change nationality and others became disillusioned and undetermined about who they are, while many discovered the traditional religious and ethnic identities and became neophytes.

Religion became very important for the identity mutations in Western Balkans, as it is thanks to the church and state, that one ethnic community becomes a nation. Peter Berger has written that "upsurges of religion" in the modern era are, in most cases, political movements "that use religion as a convenient legitimacy for political agendas based on non-religious interests".<sup>46</sup>

New myths about the notorious war criminals as heroes were paradoxically strengthened after their appearance before the ICTY. Most probably this image will change once the transitional justice process is completed and national courts for war crimes start massive and unbiased trials. In general, national courts have a greater impact on the society and its values and benefits than international tribunals. Through national proceedings, societies more directly face their own problems and mistakes and learn from them. It has been argued that for example, national proceedings had a much stronger psychological and moral impact on population and contributed more to the denazification of the Germany than Nuremberg and other international trials<sup>47</sup>.

Lately, one new myth of "old Yugoslavia" has been created outside countries in question. A new social sentiment, termed by the press Yugonostalgia, spread among the young

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<sup>45</sup> Lost generation is a term referred to people born from 1950s and 1980s that experienced war, interrupted their education and were not able to adapt to the corruption, unemployment and growing tabloid culture

<sup>46</sup> Peter Berger, *National Interest*, 1996

<sup>47</sup> Ivan Šimonović, *Dealing with the Legacy of Past War Crimes and Human Rights Abuses*, 2004

and old generations of once much more free, proud and prosperous Yugoslavs and presently representing a huge group of ex-Yugoslav diasporas. While nationalist regimes labored at prolonging nationalist euphoria, more and more people experienced nostalgia. Yugonostalgia sites mushroomed in cyberspace. One website presented a new country called "Cyber Yugoslavia." It was a "virtual nation", without a territory, existing only in cyberspace and bringing together all those who had left the country to live abroad or who had left but shared nostalgic sentiments for the old times of brotherhood, unity and dignity.

Certainly, the most important cohesive element for the nations of Western Balkans is the EU integration conditionality. Approximately 70% of population in every post-Yugoslav country is supporting the idea of joining together the European Union. Economic benefits that are expected once obtained the membership in the EU, cannot be achieved before the democratization and reconciliation process.

The problem of reconciliation as one of the most important in post-conflict societies, is possible only by systematic, persistent, long-lasting confrontation with past in order to create a democratic environment. If we don't face the past, if the perpetrators of war crimes are not brought before the justice, there's a great probability that the past happens to us once again.

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