

Post-Socialist Ethnic Symbolism, Suppression of Yugoslav Social Memory, and Radical Populism Psychology

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ABSTRACT

The paper argues that post-socialist neoliberal democracy is hindered by the exposed or conditioned ethnic symbolic radical populism, particularly in the post-Yugoslav ethnonationalism political behavior. Moreover, the approach toward the fascist ideology symbols disregards the communist social memory of stability and human security and a collectivism-oriented community. Neoliberal globalization has strengthened national identities, supported by the war-related creation of ethnic homogenous territories. Consequently, former Yugoslavia's historical conflicting memory cultures from WW2 to the Yugoslav wars present enduring processes within sociopolitical ethnic-religious traditions. The collective historical and social memory that forms people's identities is manipulated, falsified, reduced, and politically instrumentalized. Contemporary ethnic-symbolic politics communicate through conservative political orientations: re-traditionalism behavior (including some left-wingers) advocates public acceptance. Historical anti-fascism actors have been stigmatized within attitudes toward fascist ideology symbolism and traditional Balkan sociopolitical mythologies. Frequent use of (often) antagonistic ethnic symbolism in textual, rhetorical and visual forms expresses it. Various methods of conducting historical revisionism in the symbolic and ideological vocations decrease Yugoslavia's social memory. Institutional and non-institutional engagement is normatively needed in a battle for correct memory. Citizens' participation in political decision-making outside the ethnoreligious paradigm is crucial. The consequence of populist political orders in ethnoreligious partitioned post-socialism is ethnic-symbolic collectivism. It oppresses individual identity and excludes the possibility of distinct classification. Contemporary notions of autonomy and mind, adapted to modern society, provide a theoretical framework for formulating political strategies in a post-national context. Acquisitive components of civil society and the society's stagnation due to slow consolidation can abruptly transform into political apathy motivating violent disorder. Accordingly, many sociopolitical realities symbolize and indicate that "democratized" post-socialist and post-Yugoslav states are more "inadequate" and "ineffective" than Yugoslavia.

Keywords: post-socialism, ethnic symbolism, radical populism, political psychology, Yugoslav social memory, ethnopoltics, historical revisionism

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Introduction

Global politics (globally meaning comprehensive) is an ever-changing field, with if nothing else, a pace of change that accelerates over time. It refers to all elements within the system, not just the system as a whole. While such an approach acknowledges that a significant (and perhaps growing) spectrum of political interactions is now taking place globally, it rejects the idea that the global level has, in any sense, transcended policy at the national, local, or in that case, any other level. From this perspective, the advent of global politics does not imply that international politics should be consigned to the dustbin of history. Rather, "the global" and "the international" coexist; they complement one another and should not be seen as rival or incompatible modes of understanding (Heywood, 2014). A decade ago, nationalism seemed like a marginal phenomenon, essentially responding to the loss of regional power in the globalized world. The resurgence of nationalism in post-socialist European countries (Hungary, Slovakia, Poland) and the strengthening right-wing parties in Western Europe (Germany, France, The Netherlands) is a transient expression of socioeconomic discontent reaction to the Europeanization and globalization process.

Nevertheless, the demand for dignity and resentment policies point to political community challenges. The line of separation is often strengthened through mistrust and intolerance. This is also periodically evident through manifest ethnonationalist violence and nationalism, as in the Balkan wars. When socialism fell in Eastern Europe and Eastern European countries, with more or less success, the transition to becoming liberal democracies with a capitalist economy was initiated - the Balkan region did not take that path. Instead, it relied on one, perhaps the most dangerous ideology, ethnonationalism. Drawing on the work of Ernest Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm, Cas Mudde defines nationalism as "a political doctrine that seeks to match cultural and political communities, such as nations and states." In other words, the critical goal of nationalism is to achieve a monocultural state (Mudde, 2007). In this sense, Mudde refers to ethnic nationalism in which the ethnic community is considered the "primary or fundamental unit," while the state is considered the political will of the ethnic community.

The Allied victory in WW2 set the stage for democratic development in the Federal Republic of Germany, Japan, and Italy, and finally in Portugal and Spain. Nevertheless, with all the legitimacies that did not, at least verbally, literally stand behind the universalist spirit of the political Enlightenment, the ground slipped away. However, on the other hand, great expectations and hopes soon continued in short or selective memory and political pragmatism and cynicism of new geostrategic divisions, new power games, and cold wars. Moral universalism (as the initial capital of victory) melted before the clash of opposing ideological paradigms, militaristic contests, and economic wars. True, the defeat of totalitarianism opened up promising new opportunities for the world, but the course of political and cultural history after 1945 spilled over into the backwaters of partial national-state and nation-centric interests or interest alliances (Habermas, 1998). The year 1945 in political and cultural memory (as well as in very concrete political actions) is presented as reworked, selectively (re) interpreted, instrumentalized, and adjusted to situational political interests and relations of political forces. The ideological amalgams, alterations, revaluations - whether the result of continuing and traditionalizing individual or collective experiences and memories of "Victory" or "defeat" in 1945, either in the form of the revitalization of old ideological struggles, myths, and prejudices (after the breakup of the former Yugoslavia and the loss of the center of ideological control) - especially after the experience of the 1991-1995 war and military aggression against Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) (Bosto & Cipek, 2009). The "Yugoslavia case" will never stop creating various fears and ghostly-atavistic illusions for the right, but also be an inexhaustible source of activist-theoretical reflections and lessons on the achievements of emancipatory-universalist policies for leftists. This indicates the natural character of the achieved levels of transition in people today and here, in a space euphemistically called a region -instead of fairy tales about liberal values democracy and prosperity in a market economy, a period marked by wars served as a brutal marking of the original accumulation and restoration of capital (in the manner of the already started criminal privatizations of the once social, and then state ownership)- we have come to the truth about the former Yugoslavia transition (Hromadzic, 2020).

In modern democracies, but also during their history, they resort to corrections of the classical understanding of democracy to establish effective control of the eruptive power of the most prominent ethnic group as a significant feature of a multicultural society. Consociation, federalism, decentralization, various forms of autonomy and self-government, and affirmative action are the most common forms of democratic governance in multicultural societies. Civic democracies also emphasize interculturalism as a particular strategy for regulating social relations. In contrast, populism, as a rule, violates the ideal of good governance in multiethnic societies. It advocates citizen participation in political life through the institute of direct democracy that lacks the subtlety to reconcile specific interests that derive from the ethnocultural identities of citizens. The parties of the left have lost to nationalists precisely among those poor or working-class voters who should be their strongest supporters (Fukuyama, 2018). The European working class did

not fall under the banner of the Socialist International in 1914 with the beginning of the First World War but with its national leaders. "The message of the awakening was intended for the classes. It was delivered to nations by a terrible postal error" (Gellner, 2009). Francis Fukuyama (2018) believes a similar condition happened to the Arab Spring events: a letter addressed to classes, delivered to religion. Instead of a social revolution demanding a better standard of living and greater civil liberties and rights, we got a religious revolution and demanded more political Islam in public life and consequently fewer individual freedoms. A comparable situation occurred and is resulting in all newly formed post-Yugoslav societies. To a greater or lesser extent, all post-Yugoslav societies, in economics, human dignity, rights, and freedoms, delay following a vibrant Western Europe. However, the most dominant dispositions are national, ethnic, religious, cultural, or linguistic identity. In the former Yugoslav countries, ethnic, national, and religious affiliation add to political radicalization. As a form of political power, politicized religions are, psychologically speaking, unconscious non-faiths. Due to the new national-state theoretical inadequacy (i.e., nationalism as an ideology), religion is used as an instrument of socialization and legitimization of new national-political state subjects. When 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 (Hadžić, 2020).

The populism that "threatens others" is found in racial, ethnic, and religious differences; "xenophobic" populism. Fear from diversity, distrust according to immigrant cultures, rhetoric, prejudices, and stereotypes quickly lead the "mass" into nationalism, racism, chauvinism - features of xenophobic populism. As a rule, populism based on xenophobia is bad populism; it is the enemy of multiculturalism, causes instability, destroys connective social relations, exists in conflicts and fear. At its core are fear and the construction of the enemy. Umberto Eco's essay "Constructing the Enemy" indicates that we are in the process of history that has been accompanied by the need to identify the enemy concerning whom we evaluate and confirm our value system. That need is so strong that if there is no real enemy, we tend to "construct" it, and that matrix implies the construction of stereotypes about us as the embodiment of good and "Them" as the cause and embodiment of evil. The myth of the "evil" Jew, which has been around for centuries, deposited irrational hatred toward members of its own nation. It had a crescendo in the Holocaust. Bulgarian ethnologist Adela Peeva indirectly described Balkan ethnic antagonism in the documentary "Whose is this song."¹ It follows the melody of a folk song in different countries (Albania, Bulgaria, B&H, Macedonia, Turkey, and Serbia) but has a different text and hence is different. Thus, each Balkan nation thinks that "their" song is the best and that other nations cannot write and compose a beautiful song. Small-scale narcissism and ethnocentrism are breeding grounds for populism, putting the unscrupulous diversity of cultures, languages, and religions at the center of achieving a political goal (Bašić, 2017). "A nation is a narration, a story that people tell about themselves to land meaning to their social world." All these are discursive sketches that represent differences between social classes, ethnic groups, genders, and others and are shaped by the efforts of cultural power. It is better to say cultural powers because the actors of power in discourse are changeable (Wodak et al., 2009). In this context, the relevance of neoconservative forces will be expressed in antagonistic rhetoric and growing radical populist propaganda that relies on sovereignist principles in public appearances.

Long before the European Union (EU) was founded, the South Slavs created a community that would bring together differences and unite many South Slavic similarities for peace, stability, human security, and economic prosperity. Indeed, Yugoslavia was not ideal because it was totalitarian. However, it was a more liberal, gentle form of communism for almost the entire period of its existence.

In a Modern Diplomacy article, "How Yugoslavia was Syrianized 25 years ago", first published by New Eastern Outlook under the title: "A Yugoslavian Fantasy: 24th versus 149th Place," English expert Phil Butler argued that if Yugoslavia survived, the country would be a world power and Belgrade - Europe's capital. He writes: "But what if Yugoslavia had survived? What if the tremendous ethnic-socialist experiment had worked? Our world would be totally different today. With the Non-Aligned Movement of Nation-states (NAM) operating within its current borders, the EU would be less potent and far less influential geopolitically. All of Europe might have led to Belgrade and, from there, into the six republics (currently seven) now fighting for crumbs from Brussels. To galvanise how my fantasy Yugoslavian nation might look, I will leave you with the relative economic situations of current Balkans states and Yugoslavia's GDP in 1991, positioned at 24th among world nations. As of 2015, B&H is 112th economically, and conditions are worsening. Still, the poor Bosnians think joining the EU will solve all problems. Croatia is currently 76th in the world economically, but Bloomberg just named the country one of the 10 worst on Earth. Macedonia ranks 130th, with agriculture being the only real industry, and unemployment is above 40%. Despite the tiny country's sheer beauty, Montenegro is 149th among world nations. Like some other former republics, Montenegro believes EU ascension will

¹ See: Dimitrova D. (2012). Youtube, "Whose is this song"

solve everything. Serbia is ranked 87th in GDP. Slovenia ranks 81st in GDP and is a potential miracle if tourism and other industries continue to grow there. I recall a moment of prosperity in the former Yugoslavia, the 1984 Olympics in Sarajevo, B&H. Those were the first Winter Olympics ever held in a Communist nation. The torch relay through Dubrovnik, then Split, Ljubljana, Zagreb, and countless other Yugoslavian cities culminated in a proud moment in Sarajevo. The names of the gold medal athletes there have become blurred in my mind now, but the little wolf mascot Vučko, created by the Slovenian painter Jože Trobec, is framed in my mind's eye for some reason. In a cartoon in Yugoslavia at the time, the little wolf represented the people of these Balkan nations well. Wolves are prominent in Yugoslavian fables; they are the embodiment of courage and strength, and they also symbolise winter. As I type this final text, I think about what Yugoslavia's courageous and strong people might have won had outsiders not interrupted their destinies. 24th place is a far cry from 149th in the Olympics. As for Yugoslavia, that nation is gone forever. First, Yugoslavia fell apart because of the West's influence, as the West did not find it suitable to have a powerful country in the heart of Europe. Second, Yugoslavia would have never fallen apart if the Yugoslav people did not have that seed of breakdown if they were not fertile ground for downfall." (Butler, 2016) Thus, it is evident that the people of Yugoslavia had much more opportunities in the past than they do today. They enjoyed excellent social welfare, a high socioeconomic status, economic prosperity, critical human security, and one of the most reputable passports globally, highly respected in the West and the East. The society was multi-ethnic, and people took pride in being Yugoslavs.

It would be wrong to ignore or underestimate national conflicts as the cause of the instability of Yugoslavia. However, it did represent the best and most inventive solution to various national issues in the region. Presently, Yugoslavia and Yugoslav nostalgia seem to have fewer in post-Yugoslav states. On the contrary, the impression is that there are more and more radical supporters - or at least they are more and more visible in the public, nationalist, and religious-fundamentalist organizations. After the collapse of the communist systems in Europe and the collapse of the USSR, it became clear that space was opening up for the restoration of traditional values and new versions of the interpretation of national history. At the forefront of this process are right-wing political parties that, rooted in traditionalism, create party policies based on their policies of remembrance.

For the actual demonstration of the nation's construction and, most importantly, its memory, the Yugoslav case is one of the better examples, not only because the whole construction of Yugoslavia was built and dismantled in more than a century. Hence, it is available for research and that in this framework, the Yugoslav state was quite successful for a certain period. Nevertheless, the fact is that after the Second World War, socialist Yugoslavia became a kind of European success story. Between 1960-1980, it had one of the highest economic growth rates in the world, a decent standard of living, free medical care and education, a guaranteed right to work, one of the most respected passports, one-month paid vacation, a literacy rate of over 90 percent, and a life expectancy of 73 years, in terms of living standards and freedoms ahead of most Eastern European countries and certain branches of the economy ahead of some Western European countries. After Tito's death, the most significant fact was that civil democracies did not replace communism but ethnonational ones. The contradictions between the political and economic spheres did not enable Yugoslavia's pacific self-transformation but extensive violence (Hadžić, 2021). In 1981, when the Albanians from Kosovo demanded a republic, it was called a counter-revolution while the socialist ideology was still valid. Suddenly, in the mid-1980s, a new wave came that was no longer called a counter-revolution -meaning in the socialist-style: revolution and counter-revolution- but was called an ethnic-religious threat.

Unlike historical culture resulting from educational, institutional, and ideological efforts around "unity of forms in which historical knowledge is presented in one society," culture of memory unites activities within different socio-cultural areas. It is based on the abilities of individual (ethnic, social, moral) communities to actively shape the pluralism of cognitive and moral consensus in society. The connection of personal memories with the social context, the influence of inherited beliefs, prejudices, and tacit knowledge with which individuals manifest their belonging to a particular community (Kirin, 2009). The thematization of the Yugoslav case is inspiring because it can simultaneously point out the advantages and limitations of the functions of shared social memory in multiethnic and multireligious societies and the deep dependence of the state's survival on the skill of working on national memory. However, the short spring of civil society concepts and the formation of social capital in the 1980s quickly turned into the ethnicization of Yugoslav society. The consequences were, in principle, ethnically homogeneous communities whose internal social capital was produced to the detriment of restrictions and the struggle against other ethnic communities. Just as globally, parallel universes of migrants and the local population meet and intertwine only by the necessity of life, so parallelism sometimes coexists in the Balkans. Often there are no authentic touches and among which there is a latent possibility of conflict. It is confirmed by forms of less national and religious imprisonment, retrograde, and authoritarian mindset supporting a way of life that nurtured patriarchalism and religious and national exclusivism (Hadžić, 2021).

The countries of the Western Balkans during the 1990s were dominated by competitive authoritarian regimes that

combined multi-party elections with nationalist rhetoric and the privatization of the state to related business interests. The current competitive authoritarian systems are structurally different from those of the 1990s. After a move towards democratization in the early 2000s across the region, authoritarian practices began re-appearing in the late 2000s. This form of competitive authoritarianism results from weak democratic structures, facilitated by the weakening and insufficient transformative power of external actors, first and foremost the EU (Biener, 2018). There are similar practices of populism and authoritarian regimes. Populism is very pragmatic; like a chameleon, it adapts to different political goals and connects with other ideologies like nationalism, ethnonationalism, socialism, and authoritarianism (Pajnik, 2019). The sentence "Now one can beat you expect your Police" echoes in the Balkans from April 1987, in the commotion that arose during the demonstrations in front of the House culture in the field of Kosovo, addressed to the citizens by the then President of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia, Slobodan Milosevic. At first glance, there is nothing disputable in the sentence. Violence is not the way to resolve any dispute, and the state is obliged to prevent it. However, suppose the context in which this sentence was uttered is understood. In that case, when Slobodan Milosevic addressed ethnic Serbs and Montenegrins and the force was expressed by members of the "people's" militia in predominantly ethnic Albanians, it got a different meaning. Especially, since it is after Milosevic uttered it, he gained widespread support, which he did welcome in the preparations for the Eighth Session of the Central Committee of the League of Communists Serbia, where he dealt with dissidents and became one of the most influential politicians in the area of the former Yugoslavia (Basic, 2015). Slobodan Milosevic spread the politics of the strong leader, a "savior of the people." He "directly" conveyed the "will of the people" and mobilized them on some comprehensive and emotional majority principle. It had the form of politics with a democratic face but an authoritarian configuration.

In all Yugoslav republics, Slovenia, Croatia, B&H, Serbia (with the autonomous provinces of Kosovo and Vojvodina), Montenegro, and Macedonia, citizens defined themselves as belonging first to the Yugoslav state, followed by their republic. Is the unanimous condemnation of the Declaration² on a Common Language of all the states of the former Yugoslavia sufficient? Is this the end of the crisis with the "Yugoslavs" and social memory in this region? For example, the Croatian (the EU member) intellectual community, it is true, reacted to this provocation with a quality harangue, according to the laws of nature - but thus, the danger of Yugoslavism is not even remotely suppressed because, in addition to the public, there are also private - therefore secret - manifestations of deviant behavior. What about, for example, those citizens of Croatia who did not sign the Declaration but remember Yugoslavia in a more favorable light than is tolerable? The countries do not have a mechanism, i.e., equipped to determine such personages. In order to protect national interests, it is necessary to step into the space of personal memories and clear out Yugoslavia, which is being preserved there, which is squatting in deception and arranging for a favorable moment to take to the open stage and take on epidemic proportions. It is reasonable to believe that many undermine Croatia through personal memories without us even noticing it. Reasonably, the creators and signatories of the Declaration on a Common Language intended to open just that rift, to make people think that the truth could be more important than the state. Far from being the first case of insidious factual extremism, namely the efforts to weaken and derogate state-building enthusiasm by bare facts. Therefore, the Yugoslavs and the general chase launched against them are trying to redirect to their benefit, sowing doubt in the meaning and strength of the Croatian state (Ivancic, 2017). It also implies other post-Yugoslav countries.

There are conflicting memories of Ustashism and communism in Croatia, and conflicts over the memory regime occur daily, even though 75 and 30 years have passed since the disappearance of the Ustasha and communist orders, respectively (Capo, 2015). Moreover, the conflicting memories are reproduced by politicians and politicized media, and this is precisely why the signifiers "communist" and "Ustasha" are empowered in everyday discourse. Moreover, anti-fascist and partisan monuments are an unwanted heritage in all post-communist states, particularly in the case of former Yugoslavia states. Unlike the post-communist countries of the Eastern Bloc, where the personalities of the political system were essentially glorified through public sculpture, it should be emphasized that the post-socialist countries of Yugoslavia are among the countries with the highest number of casualties in World War II, to the extent of commemorating the victims. It is also important to say that monuments in the Eastern Bloc countries have been publicly removed or touristed. The logic of capitalism, dictated by the instinct for expansion and accumulation of capital, in addition to being emancipated into a more aggressive degree of dynamics by the concept of neoliberal capitalism, carried out the so-called doctrine of shock, which is not based on gradual reform, instead of on the rapid and destructive dismantling of the old social infrastructure of life in order to create a capitalist paradigm in sterile conditions, but also to overtake the first dissatisfaction with the real effects of capitalist realism.

² See: Jezici i nacionalizmi, Deklaracija, Retrieved from <http://jezicinacionalizmi.com/deklaracija/>

Even in liberal democracies such as the USA, “the new politics of abuse, cronyism, corruption, cruelty, and violence are also a kind of remix and repetition of the past. They are all things we have seen before under fascism. Sadly, far too many seem to greet this abusive remix and repetition with all the pleasurable fondness and charm of nostalgia. Fortunately, the remix resistance to this abusive fascist politics is an equally inescapable part of our culture, and it is growing too. The same digital tools being used by fascists are simultaneously being used against fascists through the production of a politicized, anti-fascist art that is both a response and a weapon against fascism. The struggle continues even though the terrain has shifted. The remix of racism, anti-Semitism, and fascism has become a potent force in our current political culture. It is in the White House. It is in the news. It is a part of daily life” (Stanovsky, 2017). We live in a world dominated by images in which the images shape political events and how we understand them. Indeed, visual images not only represent and reflect the world but also affect and reshape the embedded ideologies and the connected systems of values they carry out. Thus, regarding fascism, the visual strategy allows readers to see the transnational rise of the right as it fed off the agitated energies of modernity and mobilized shared political and aesthetic tropes. Using photography, graphic arts, architecture, monuments, and film—rather than written documents alone—produces a portable concept of fascism, useful for grappling with the upsurge of the global right a century ago and today (Thomas & Eley, 2020).

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. The monument was removed in 1991 when the country began to sink into a new war. The city used to be called “Tito’s Uzice” because of the role it played in the fight of Yugoslav partisans against fascist forces and almost every street was named after a fighter while the five-meter-tall statue of the then-leader dominated the city’s central spot - Partisan Square. Monuments to Josip Broz Tito have been erected throughout the former Yugoslavia, and in some places, they are still visited by those who gladly remember the shared state. The statues were erected in several places throughout the former Yugoslavia, in Kumrovec, in front of Tito’s birthplace. However, he was attacked by unknown perpetrators by activating an explosive device in 2004. It is speculated that the attack was carried out in response to the Croatian government removing monuments to the Ustasas³ (Ristic, 2013). 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.

As one of the younger psychological disciplines, political psychology, among other issues, has been trying to discover what drives, directs, slows down, and determines the role and position of the individual in the structure of relationships and processes relevant to his political behavior. The individual as part of the more comprehensive and complex social structures and relations that prevail in it, for the psychological understanding of political processes, is the critical bearer of political action and its perception, beliefs, opinions, values, and interests (along with all other “external” factors) are the basis of political behavior and action. Political psychology from the individual’s position is interested in the individual’s perception of the politically relevant environment, his satisfied and unmet needs, attitudes he forms about the politically relevant environment, and the behavior that results from all this (Siber, 1998). Research on political behavior that seeks to shed light on the nature of the relationship between politics and the individual has intensified in recent decades in psychological science across several scientific fields (social psychology, personality psychology, political psychology), but the rapid development of political behavior research has not, and there is still no consistency in the operationalization of political behavior. In addition, situational and cultural characteristics of the individual, such as socioeconomic status, religious affiliation, and place of residence, initially dominated the explanation of preference and participation of individuals in political activities (Houghton, 2009). However, he later clarifies the role of personality dispositional variables in an individual’s political activity.

Social psychology, political psychology, and political science provide valuable research directions and a stimulating analytical framework for sociopolitical events. Underlining the role of social psychology in this frame is critical and can provide outputs relevant not only to academics but, critically, to policymakers and educators. Such outputs can potentially be used to increase political literacy from an early age, allowing a more critical evaluation of populist messages and, possibly, minimizing populist appeal. However, it remains to be tested and would undoubtedly require active, fluent collaboration among relevant stakeholders (such as researchers, practitioners, and educators) (Stathi and Guerra, 2021). Furthermore, the interaction between the mind of a political being and his environment occurs in a

³ The Ustaše was a Croatian fascist and ultranationalist organization active, as one organization, between 1929 and 1945, formally known as the Ustaša – Croatian Revolutionary Movement. During World War II, its members murdered hundreds of thousands of Serbs, Jews, Roma, and political dissidents in Yugoslavia.

cognitive process. It involves receiving and interpreting information from the outside. The cognitive process leads to voluntary action, where the voluntary action of the actor is the result of his/her decision to act (Cottam et al., 2010). Interest in public policy actors, and thus their will, is research into the decision-making process; the way we make our choices (Smith & Larimer, 2009). In this sense, the literature on public policy often uses rational choice theory. In an ideal rational world, public policies and option decisions are objective and consider the optimal efficiency and effectiveness of the chosen solutions. B&H's three maximalist nationalisms in B&H pushed into a two-entity and District (i.e., Brčko District) division. First, Serb nationalists do not appreciate (like) the B&H framework; although minimal, Bosniak nationalists do not like the entity division, while the least numerous Bosnian Croats want their entity. Nada Beglerovic (2020), in the Discourse-historical analysis of the behavior of Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik, has uncovered the identity formation of democratic antagonism. B&H has a complicated institutional setup. It has a political system that appears to be ethnonational, allowing political elites with different aspirations to maintain power by using nationalist rhetoric. With his rhetoric, Dodik not only portrays his vision and construction of the Republic of Srpska entity (the other entity is the Federation of B&H) and Serb identity, but he also emphasizes ethnic antagonism. Dodik instrumentalizes the past, or his version of it, to portray national victimization, which might serve as a pretext for a political or armed attack on the "other." Dodik plays the ethnic/religious card and tries to rekindle forgotten ideas or create non-existent grievances. Dodik's rhetoric, more nationalistic by the day, exposes him as a bulwark against a united B&H. Dodik may not be willing to forswear brinkmanship, which has turned out, although a gamble to be beneficial for him in the past (Beglerovic, 2020).

At the same time, public opinion research focuses mainly on how political influence is exercised through communication and how such influence manifests in forming political will. Instead, propaganda is a means by which political beliefs and notes are made palatable and famous in a technological society; this is essential for forming political will, but it does not necessarily result in harmful effects. Political manipulations and far-right populism have become the primary political tools in the Western Balkans. As a result, negative peace seems to have become, even decades after the wars, the most significant epochal reach and value in this region, and the fundamental values that adorn civilized nations such as a good standard of living, a strong economy, and mutual respect for the other and the difference will have to wait for other generations and some better times (Iseric, 2018). Albert Hirschman's 1970 study "Exit, Voice, and Loyalty" uses the terms "going out," "voice," and "loyalty" to describe how members of businesses, organizations, and states behave in problematic situations or crises. "Going out" means withdrawing from a group that has faced problems, "voice" describes a situation in which members offer solutions to overcome a crisis, while "loyalty" means expressing support and commitment to group leadership. These three types of responses can also be applied to voter behavior. The "exit" option implies political abstinence; voting for new parties and options can be understood as a "vote," while voting for mainstream, established parties means "loyalty." The application of Hirschman's model to the results of local elections suggests that no significant change has taken place in Croatia. Most Croatian citizens opted for the "exit" option, i.e., political abstinence (Salaj & Grbesa, 2021).

The truth about the Yugoslav transition is that it is not a given linear-historical, evolutionary-progressive construct, from some imaginary point and according to the imaginary point, but just the opposite. We are witnessing the reversible nature of the transition that takes us back to social conditions, relations, and circumstances of the backwardness of late feudalism, clothed in the thin cloak of (neo) colonial capitalism from the European (semi) periphery, what preceded our short a historical episode of emancipation through socialism. It is a picture of the former Yugoslavia transition reflecting re-feudalized societies in disintegration, ideologically and practically produced conditions of late-capitalist exploitative realities (Hromadzic, 2020). Nationalism used populist strategies while exploiting frustrations with the former order and national identity complexes accumulated under the Yugoslav policy of disciplining nationalisms, and exploited after the fall of the socialist ideological concept and established itself as the leading hegemonic force. However, because nationalism, unlike capitalism, prioritizes the politics of identity, that identity has been exposed to radical purification and censorship of the cultural-memorial heritage of socialism — that is, the politics of oblivion. Absolute to irrationality by war polarization, in the unilateral exclusion of the socialist concept, nationalism fatally rejected the fruits of the socialist modernization of society. In antagonism, it is critical to note that nationalism, which was fundamentally confronted with all paradigms of the socialist period (Markovina, 2015), was not so interested in alternative modernism offered by the West with capitalist liberalism. Then, for the pre-modern and anti-modern concepts of its own "long 19th century" (Duda, 2010), wanting to establish continuity with its imaginary past rather than synchronous integration with the values of modern Western societies. The least that an exemplary Croatian patriot needs is to remember how an undemocratic order with one party that does not allow the exploitation of workers can be less cynical than a parliamentary façade of capital than the possibility of voting for one of a hundred political parties and each supporting exploitation. Castration of memory is one of the better ways for an exemplary Croatian patriot to

exercise his right to be exploited. Furthermore, along the way, to erase the remaining traces of modernity at the expense of hearth fanaticism (Ivancic, 2017).

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.

Throughout the world, attempts to revise the results of World War II falsification of historical facts are punishable. However, in the former Yugoslavia, collaborators of Hitler's genocidal machines and members of political-military/paramilitary formations (including convicts of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia) regularly receive pensions and medals. Schools and streets are named after them, and they are celebrated at rallies. Ceremonies regularly led by religious officials accompany the commemoration of the events (e.g., the gathering of Chetniks members at the-Ravna Gora movement, tributing Draza Mihajlovic). Paradoxically, World War II strongmen, the Croat Ante Pavelić⁴, and the Serb, Draža Mihailović⁵ and their Ustaša and Četnik followers are being praised by nationalists and clerics of the region as patriots. At the same time, genuine anti-fascists and communists have acquired the stigma of national traitors. According to some media, Ustaša, Četniks, and the like are becoming more and more noble (Hadžić, 2020). Politics of parallel memory⁶ and a revisionist historical narrative within the politics of fear spread influence among young people among whom ethno-political indoctrination has reception and is left to chance, creating solid preconditions for hostilities in future generations to escalate into violence in specific political-economic circumstances (Hadzic, 2020).

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, g) 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 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,

⁴ Ante Pavelić was a Croatian politician and dictator. He founded and headed the fascist ultranationalist organization known as the Ustaše in 1929 and governed the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), a fascist puppet state built out of parts of occupied Yugoslavia by the authorities of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, from 1941 to 1945.

⁵ Draža Mihailović was the leader of the Četniks detachments of the Yugoslav Army during World War II. His ambitions were: the struggle for the liberty of our whole nation under the scepter of His Majesty King Peter II; the creation of a Great Yugoslavia and within it of a Great Serbia which is to be ethnically pure and is to include Serbia, Montenegro, B&H, Srijem, the Banat, and Bačka; the struggle for the inclusion into Yugoslavia of all still unliberated Slovene territories under the Italians and Germans (Trieste, Gorizia, Istria, and Carinthia) as well as Bulgaria, and northern Albania with Skadar; the cleansing of the state territory of all national minorities and national elements; the creation of contiguous frontiers between Serbia and Montenegro, as well as between Serbia and Slovenia by cleansing the Muslim population from Sandžak and the Muslim and Croat populations from B&H.

⁶ For example: For Croatia, the military action "Storm" in 1995 (The last major battle of the war was a significant factor in the outcome, against the self-declared) was considered a magnificent victory. For Serbia, it was a case of ethnic cleansing. The attitudes of ordinary citizens, Serbs, and Croats, have not changed significantly. Many believe that the relations between the two states on the anniversary of "Storm" are becoming tenser each year. The fight against revisionism is an ongoing process. In the case of B&H, that story intensified in 2006 and continues to this day. The agents of revisionism have organized and strengthened institutionally (Slobodna Europa, 2016).

2017). Unlike the circumstances in Western Europe, in B&H, we are witnessing the phenomenon of 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 radical anti-communism. On the one hand, this position seeks to rehabilitate fascist movements and quisling regimes and movements (Ustasha, Chetnik⁷, foreign Muslim militias⁸), and on the other hand, to present the anti-fascist movement and the Communist-led NOB⁹ as absolutely criminal (Cipek, 2019). The inability of society and politics to shape collective memories of Ustashism 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).

Croatian President Zoran Milanovic, and the most dominant Croatian socialist left-wing party, SDP, relativized the Srebrenica genocide twice in 2021, creating a more prominent dishonor than the one that led to his unworthy comments about Europe's most significant war crime since World War II. Thus, willingly or unwillingly, Milanovic added to his now-established practice of supporting Milorad Dodik's¹⁰ secessionist policy towards B&H's willingness to participate in even more destructive than bad politics; it prevents good in advance: relativizing crimes, insulting victims, and denying the truth (Pavelic, 2021). Moreover, paradoxically, World War II strongmen, the Croat Ante Pavelić and the Serb Draža Mihailović are being praised by nationalists and clerics of the post-Yugoslav region as patriots. At the same time, genuine anti-fascists and communists have acquired the stigma of national traitors. According to some media, Ustaša, Četniks, and the like are becoming nobler. Finally, humankind's great concern stems from the increasingly aggressive foreign policy, xenophobic sentiment, and the growing inclination of the autocratic populist government to stop the transition of violence to democracy in the scientifically-technologically and culturally-spiritually objectively connected global community (Hadžić, 2020).

Method, Research Design, and Literature Review

Both general scientific (deduction, analysis, and synthesis) were used in the study. In addition, the study included an in-depth theoretical literature review and examination of a range of other sources such as primary documents relating to "social relations" (media accounts and academic reports). Research on populism traverses multiple disciplines, theoretical frameworks, and methodologies. The roles of social psychology, political psychology, political science, political sociology, and peace and conflict scholarship could help us better understand contemporary populism associated with ethnic nationalism. The interdisciplinary theoretical nature of the study and understanding helps us avoid several traps within descent-based attributes, ethnic and political contextual factors that are challenging to generate over a brief period in post-conflict divided societies like the Balkans, i.e., former Yugoslavia.

Discussion and Results

Ethnic symbolism is ideologically appropriated and manipulated by the conservative right to restore traditional values and a symbolic heritage that is considered politically acceptable. Politically acceptable parties of the right consider the historical heritage and values of the establishment before the communist rule. Therefore, worldview and political cleansing are carried out from individual and collective memories directly related to the period of communism. There is a renaming of streets and squares, demolition of monuments, and even those representing symbols of participation in the anti-fascist coalition and the fight against fascist evil. The execution sites of those defeated in World War II are being rehabilitated and celebrated. This practice of the politics of remembrance is represented by the political parties of the right, which are in parallel fighting to realize other values related to the conservative worldview by winning on a symbolic level.

Josip Broz Tito was known symbolically-politically and nationally as the "greatest son of the Yugoslav people," loved

⁷ Četnik is an expression used to denote members of the Serbian nationalist-chauvinist movement of Greater Serbia ideology. The word "Chetnik" has changed its meaning throughout history. It was used in the 19th century and early 20th century in Serbia, Macedonia, Dalmatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Today's meaning of Chetnik is Members of a Serbian military organization with a distinctly nationalist chauvinistic Greater Serbia goal. A Yugoslav royalist and Serbian nationalist movement and guerrilla force in Axis-occupied Yugoslavia. Although it was not a homogeneous movement, it was led by Draža Mihailović.

⁸ Bosnian mujahideen were foreign Muslim volunteers who fought on the Bosniak (Bosnian Muslim) side during the 1992–95 Bosnian War. They first arrived in central Bosnia in the second half of 1992, intending to help their Bosnian Muslim co-religionists in fights against Serb and Croat forces. Estimates of their numbers vary from 500 to 6,000.

⁹ It is the national liberation struggle of Yugoslavia during the Second World War. Although most world and domestic historians consider the People's Liberation Struggle one of the greatest struggles of World War II, neo-Nazis, Balkans Ustasha, Chetnik, and similar movements often try to denigrate and portray it as harmful.

¹⁰ He is a Bosnian Serb politician serving as the 7th and current Serb member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the collective federal head of state. Dodik has been on the US Department's black-list for many years, and his time in power has been characterized by authoritarianism, repudiation of Bosnian federal institutions, and closer connections to Serbia and Russia (Kovacevic, 2019).

Figure 1. in Pula, Croatia, Tito's monuments are dotted with Ustasha far-right, ethno/national/religious symbols, and fascist messages with the Nazism inscription "The park of Ante Pavelić"



Source: GlasSrpske, 2021.

by many Yugoslavians (particularly the working class). Vojislav Šešelj, a Serbian (B&H-born) right-wing politician, an academician, convicted war criminal (ICTY) and founder of The Serbian Radical Party (SRS), an ultranationalist political party in Serbia and B&H, with his supporters on May 4, 1991, on the day of Tito's death (May 4, 1980), wanted to drive a "hawthorn stake" into Tito's graveyard in Belgrade, Serbia. He also requested that the body of the former president of Yugoslavia be removed from Serbia to his native Kumrovec in Croatia. Seselj stated in 2017: "When we then brought a hawthorn stake to Tito's grave, it was a demonstration that this evil (Tito) must leave Serbia. Of course, I had courage, but you cannot hack a granite grave with a hawthorn stake. It was symbolic, and then we managed to destroy the cult of Tito. He added that even after so many years, he still has the same opinion about Broz: "He was an autocrat and criminal who brought great evil. He killed more Serbs than Hitler, and we must constantly remind our people of that. As soon as "We Radicals" come to power, we will expel that Vampire from Dedinje¹¹." (Vecernji, 2017) This ethno-nationalist anti-Yugoslavian propaganda by Seselj influenced ordinary people's acceptance of collective violence and participation in violence during the wars (military brigade of Vojislav Seselj "Sesljeovci"¹²). Besides, Seselj's radical nationalism was not just advocating and justifying the coercion and violence of Serbs against non-Serbs. It has activated the suppression of Yugoslav social memory through radical populism behaviour.

Based on the assertion of the supremacy of the Serbs among the Yugoslav peoples, untruths and abuse of history - a common propaganda technique of xenophobic nationalist discourse - Seselj denies the Serbian enemies within the former Yugoslavia the right to a state, territory and borders that in any way limit the Serbian goal of uniting all Serbs, even and when they are a small local minority. The consequences of Seselj's ethnic nationalism are accepting and justifying coercion and violence in the relations between Serbs and non-Serbs and rejecting non-violent resolution of conflicts between states and peoples. Since ethnic groups hate each other and have always been so, the statecraft in areas with mixed populations consists in separating them. Since the Serbian goal of uniting all Serbs into one state is legitimate and there can be no compromise on it, provided that the Serbian opponents reject the Serbian demands, the separation will be forced (expulsion) to the detriment of the non-Serbs. (Oberschall, 2009)

Hence, Mudde points out that "nationalism, xenophobia, racism, a strong state, anti-democracy, tradition, and revisionism are the fundamental ideological characteristics of right-wing parties" (Mudde, 2000). Other actors of society, with their contributions, also participate in restoring traditional values and attempting to legitimize and

¹¹ The neighbourhood of Belgrade, Serbia.

¹² The White Eagles, also known as Šešeljevci or Vigilantes, were a Chetniks paramilitary formation that participated in armed conflicts and committed war-crimes on the territories of Croatia and B&H during the war in Croatia and B&H.

implement the memory policies of conservative parties. "It primarily refers to the circle of intellectuals and the media, which side with traditionalism and revisionist activities within the right by their actions. Others are free shooters" (Freedon, 2006). Therefore, the presence of numerous actors in creating and accepting a particular policy of remembrance based on a symbolic struggle will result in numerous consequences for democracy. Thus, political revisionism and threats to liberal democracy, especially conservative party activities, occur.

Furthermore, Yugo-nostalgia paradoxically harkens back to a shared cultural history, even as it provides the raw material for new national identities that continue dividing the former Yugoslav republics (Volcic, 2007). 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 is denied, and mythomania within the transitional crime, corruption, and interethnic hatred" (Perica, 2016). Both classical and modern theorists believe that ethnicity is primarily a political phenomenon. The basis of a collectivist pattern in post-Yugoslav countries is the identification of cultural-ethnic and institutional-political factors by which the political community fully identifies with the national or ethnic community. As an ideology of a pure kind, ethnicism in the former Yugoslavia is a speculative skill of "counting blood cells" and a controversial rule "in the people's name." Such undisguised exclusivity of self-selected nominations prevents any possible communion and dialogue between them. It enabled political decision-makers, within the pernicious ideological-pragmatic manipulation of nationalized religion to serve daily political goals, to act according to the matrix of the old feudal-imperialist conception that each community and each territory has its religion and each individual belongs first to his/her community, and only then to the political space. The connection between ethnonational policies, violence, and religion is visible in recent wars, where war has found proponents of personal sacrifice for the nation's good in all national religions (Hadžić, 2020). Thus, for obvious reasons, the former Yugoslavia requires a unique approach: religious references were reactivated in a war frame to the most destructive genocidal apocalypse in the heart of Europe. In a study on the involvement of religions in the war, the sociologist, Srdjan Vrcan, concluded that it is about strengthening the link between Orthodoxy and nationalism in Serbia, the affirmation of ecclesiae militants in a climate that is very conducive to Catholic integration in Croatia, and the strengthening of pan-Islamism in B&H. He argues that "religions have shown, in the Yugoslav crisis, that (...) they are more capable of distancing than of uniting, of separating than of gathering, of opposing than of bringing together, of igniting rather than calming." In the early 1990s, the multiethnic tradition could not resist the nationalism that had penetrated through all the pores of disintegrating communism. Consequently, various anti-communist and nationalist elements began to gain increasing influence (Hadžić, 2020).

According to Ivan Siber, following the psychological literature, nationalism implies the "pathology of the national, in a priori negative, hostile attitude towards members of other nations" (Siber, 2007). One of the central criticisms considers authoritarianism and political orientations. In this sense, Shils states that Adorno and co-workers were committed exclusively to right-wing authoritarianism, with fascists at the right and democrats at the other, offering equivalent characteristics to the authoritarian left (Siber, 1998). Therefore, it signifies a syndrome of psychological traits possessed by a non-free individual in a non-free society.

The nature of social change in advanced developed societies has prompted the re-actualization and even redefinition of the concept of civil society. There are multiple reasons for the problematization of civil pluralism and the relationship between civil society and the state. At the same time, the social changes in Central and Southeastern European societies after the fall of socialism were even more profound and more comprehensive. After the Dayton Peace Agreement, B&H, some calling it "little Yugoslavia," found themselves in the so-called "double transition." B&H is the only post-socialist country of all former socialist states that had a war at the beginning of transforming the social and political system. This fact marks it different from other countries regarding political and economic measures in the post-war phase and transition. The ideological ethnonationalism has metastasized into a social organization's daily political discourse that produces uncritical subjects in all three constitutive ethnic governments. Spiritual usurpation has moved into the realm of identity (Hadžić, 2021). B&H's imposed ethnopolitical concept of "constituent peoples" removes the civic order and decreases political collectivism. The Dayton Peace Accords patterned ethnic-religious exclusions and the unconstitutional "hybrid" identities (Hadžić, 2020). However, the Critical Peace and Conflict Studies should be primarily concerned with the quality and nature of peace in cultural (ethnic/religious), social, economic, and political terms, ranging from the international system to the state and communities.

The policy of conservative parties in the 21st century is undoubtedly leveled by awakened ethnonationalism that finds their present and future from radical history. The return to the past implies a battle for the symbols, values, and dormant ideas during communism. In an active state of vigilance and political significance, conservative practices of political parties ideologically and subjectively approach the choice of motives, myths, symbols, and other components related to ethnic-symbolic discourse. Such an approach to historical heritage produces the existence of revisionism, but one that

aims to belittle, degrade, reject anti-fascist values and symbolism accepted after World War II, and which is now not considered state-building and desirable in the period of newly formed states and political systems after 1989. Continuity is a critical determinant in forming national identities from ethnic symbolism. It can be seen that conservative and right-wing parties use the mentioned approach, which is realized in solid political symbolism exhausted in different historical stages. The issue is manifested in the flirtation of ethnic symbols with fascist structures during World War II. Above all, thanks to quisling regimes (i.e., Croatian NDH¹³). It is precisely the apologists of such quisling creations in modern politics who wage revisionist battles in the field of an ethnic symbolic narrative that, selectively used, threatens democratic values and justifies the consequences of fascist atrocities. In their public activities, conservative parties abound in activities that promote ethnic symbols of a revisionist character. The goal is their affirmation and general social acceptance, even though most of these symbols from the right-wing propaganda apparatus are infected with elements of fascist symbolism. Moreover, the membership of an ethnic community is based on ethnic criteria such as the principle of origin and nationality (Mudde, 2000).

The communists could not separate society from the state and set out immediately after the war to totalitarianism. The one-party system meant a one-party state as well as a one-party society. The separation of party and state from religion and national civic organizations involved dismantling all social non-communist organizations, including cultural and humanitarian ones. The Orthodoxy of the communist movement was proved by the power of reckoning with the national past. Neither religious communities nor believers were exempted from this calculation. They were allowed to exist outside the state and politics. It was ensured by many religious officials and the majority of believers in the anti-fascist struggle. Socialism sought and built people of a "new forge," non-national, anti-religious, infinitely loyal to the movement and its historical goals. However, 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.

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, according to Vjerran 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 not surprising in everyday politics and the media, although we 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 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. Today, it still provides fertile ground for harmful political manipulations and discrediting (political) opponents (Capo, 2015).

Presently, "imposing an obligation to remember the Yugoslav and socialist past exclusively in dark tones is the most explicit testimony to the darkness in which we live today" (Ivancic, 2017). Nevertheless, nothing that has anything to do with the system of socialist Yugoslavia must be remembered in a favorable light. Such treacherous memories should be covered entirely by the powerful clichés that label the totalitarian past: Goli otok¹⁴, Bleiburg¹⁵, and related. For example, people in socialism solved their housing queries without difficulties and enjoyed free education, health care,

¹³ The Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*) was a World War II-era puppet state of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. It was established in parts of occupied Yugoslavia after the invasion by the Axis powers. Its territory consisted of most modern-day Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and some parts of modern-day Serbia and Slovenia and excluded many Croat-populated areas in Dalmatia, Istria, and Međimurje regions (today, part of Croatia).

¹⁴ It is an uninhabited island that was the site of a political prison used when Croatia was part of Yugoslavia. The prison was in operation between 1949 and 1989.

¹⁵ The Bleiburg event occurred in May 1945, at the end of World War II in Europe. Tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians associated with the Axis powers fled Yugoslavia to Austria as the Soviet Union (Red Army) and Yugoslav Partisans took control. When they reached Austria, the British refused to accept their surrender and instead directed them to the Partisans. The war prisoners were subjected to forced marches and columns captured by other Partisans in Yugoslavia. Tens of thousands were executed; others were taken to forced labor camps, where more died from harsh conditions. The events are named for the Austrian border town of Bleiburg, where the initial repatriation was carried out.

and social security – at an incomparably higher level than today. Moreover, it should be overshadowed by memories of people with fear and discomfort who went to Church or Mosque, which they do entirely freely today.

Everyday citizens witness the fact, which is confirmed by the analytical mechanisms offered by political psychology, that the world we live in is elusive and ideal, which is recognized by experts who, according to Smith & Larimer, see at least two reasons: consider rational decision making unrealistic when it comes to public policy. These are political and practical restrictions. Namely, citizens, as the most numerous political actors, strive for current solutions to current problems, which significantly limits the time frame for the preparation and implementation of public policies and thus the ability to make optimally rational decisions. Moreover, in the sphere of practice, the complexity of problems and issues that focus on public policies or proposals goes well beyond people's cognitive capacities as political actors (Smith & Larimer, 2009). However, it is not entirely realistic to expect the ability of political actors to obtain all relevant information, nor to recognize all possible consequences and results of the considered options for action, and of course, can only see a limited number of options. Reality limits the rationality of decision-making. Ivan Siber starts from the definition of political behavior as any behavior aimed at maintaining or changing the existing structure and power, leaving a vast space for interpretation of which specific behaviors and activities constitute political behavior (Siber, 1998). In the operationalization of this notion, Milas (2007), by political behavior, implies attitudes and actions initiated to achieve certain principles and values and thus somewhat more concretely determines the key variables that make up this notion.

Although we still do not have a clear definition of this concept, at least in the field of political psychology, political behavior on a manifest and measurable level in most current theoretical discussions is seen through two primary forms of political involvement: political activity, i.e., the quantity and quality of the political activity, and orientation, that is, the ideological-value orientation of the individual, which is reflected in the direction and degree of ideological saturation of political behavior (Siber, 1998). For Jacques Ellul, the technical capacity that characterizes political propaganda in modern society is a cause for ambivalence because propaganda is an instrument of public manipulation and deception. Nevertheless, as he defines it, propaganda is a necessary means by which institutions can match the scale of major societal problems (Ellul, 2021). In either case, propaganda is appropriately understood as a modern manifestation of instrumental reason. Furthermore, ethnocentrism is one of the main characteristics of political actions and preferences in the Western Balkans, primarily in B&H (some call it tiny Yugoslavia). For years, B&H's political elites pursued an identity policy, forming their political goals exclusively against other ethnic groups. They also derive their legitimacy from each of their ethnic groups. Out of fear of the domination of another group and the desire for their domination, it gives them power and ensures the status quo. Such a policy of identity in the form of political populism proved harmful for B&H because political elites put the idea of ethnocentrism before the idea of citizenship, and the idea of collectivism before the idea of individualism which brought B&H to a state of economic prosperity and the typical rule of law (Jahic, 2020).

History is the remembered past to which we no longer have an "organic" relation—the past that is no longer an essential part of our lives—while collective memory is the active past that forms our identities. Memory inevitably gives way to history as we lose touch with our pasts. Historical revisionism and the "evil" memory developed into a behavioral practice in the Western Balkans (Hadžić, 2020). The rhetoric of the President of Croatia, Zoran Milanovic in 2021, is, if not denial, then certainly relativization of the Srebrenica genocide. It all started on Monday, November 29, in the House of Peoples of the B&H Parliamentary Assembly. Three members of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) of B&H - Dragan Covic¹⁶, Marina Penedes, and Lidija Bradara - supported the proposal of the Serbian People's Club, in which Dodik's SNSD and SDS party proposed repealing Valentin Inzko's prominent law banning genocide denial in B&H. It should be noted that this is the Law on Amendments to the Criminal Code of B&H of July 28, 2021, according to which the Criminal Code of B&H introduced very similar provisions prohibiting genocide denial and incitement to hatred, as the Republic of Croatia has in its Criminal Code. Dragan Covic's political move - direct Croatian support for Milorad Dodik and Serbian president Aleksandar Vucic's¹⁷ denial of the Srebrenica genocide - sparked anger in B&H and Croatia (Pavelic, 2021). Moreover, a common phrase in the Balkans is "Lack of political will." It is a situation where even governments change and do not adopt different public policies. It reflects on why people fail to change how they manage such points. "The citizens have become hostages of a widespread culture of

¹⁶ He is a Bosnian Croat politician who served as the 4th Croat member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina from 2002 to 2005 and from 2014 to 2018. He is the current President of the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ B&H) and is a member of the national House of Peoples.

¹⁷ He is a Serbian politician serving as the President of Serbia since 2017 and as the President of the populist Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) since 2012. He is the former leader of Vojislav Seselj's Serbian Radical Party (SRS), a far-right party whose core ideology is based on Serbian nationalism and creating a Greater Serbia. He was one of the SRS's volunteers who visited the army that kept the Bosnian capital, Sarajevo (Ciric, 2018), under the most prolonged siege in modern history. He has been described as an authoritarian, autocratic, or illiberal democratic regime, noting shortened press freedom (Bieber, 2018).

mistrust. It is paradoxical that the democratization of society has led to a decrease in trust in democratic institutions and that the universal demand for transparency will not restore lost trust but will deepen distrust in political institutions and political leaders. History testifies that civil distrust in government is a crucial element of any democratic system, but when a certain threshold is exceeded, such distrust weakens the position of citizens. "if you do not trust anyone, you cannot change anything" (Krastev, 2013).

This paper's section is related to "radical populism behavior and social memory." Therefore, I will start with the historical background. In 1945, the events gained new dimensions, values, and accents in various dimensions of social life in the former Yugoslavia. Thus, in the new political and ideological self-understanding, culture and art, and the systems of upbringing and education.

It is evidenced by the research contributions of this collection, which is broadly thematic and problematic: the first thematic block entitled Politics of the Past shows that cultural memory is subject to shaping and instrumentalization and that ideological and political projects significantly mediate it. The outcome of world wars (e.g., theory, ideology, and utopia of Marxism and communism and projects of national emancipation) are on the energy and pathos of victory coupled with the myth of the historical project of the revolution. The analysis of the heritage of 1945, which obliges and co-shapes memory, includes the ethical, moral question of crime and punishment, that is, the question of guilt and its ethical reflection. The topic of women's culture of memory, as well as articles on the semantics of social memory narratives (namely "marked" and "unmarked" in the structure of social memory constructed and instrumentalized within the national state and its self-representation), is an equally important dimension of memory that co-shapes sociocultural actions and interactions. It is a complementary study of communities and memory regimes and their relations to power relations but also concerns their corrective in the norm of responsibility. Finally, this perspective of the politics of the past finds its philosophical illumination in the article interpreted by National Socialism and Fascism in light of the epochal project of subject destruction (destruction ideologically and biologically) given in naturalism as a means of power politics. In a particular historical (local and regional) context of Yugoslav national histories from the point of view of the culture of memory, i.e., given the contents and forms of that memory - it turns out that 1945 is in political and cultural memory, in very concrete political actions present as reworked, selectively (re) interpreted, instrumentalized and adjusted to situational political interests and relations of political forces. Whether it is the result of continuing and traditionalizing individual or collective experiences and memories (according to the 1945 "victory" or "defeat" matrix), or in the form of revitalizing old ideological struggles, myths, and prejudices (after the breakup of the former Yugoslavia and the loss of ideological control) - especially after the experience of the 1991-1995 war, i.e., military aggression against Croatia and B&H. The year 1945 thus gained new dimensions, values, and accents in different dimensions of social life: in the new political and ideological self-understanding, culture and art, and education systems (Bosto & Cipek, 2009).

Because Yugoslavia is an example of a country that began to disappear when it gave up on constructing a standard memory, and that disappeared when it was no longer able to control the public imagination of different "communities of memory" (Vahtel, 1998). Considering that social memory is usually constructed in one of three ways that often coincide and mix, it evaporates down to establishing and symbolically representing social cohesion, legitimizing institutions, and the status of authority. Ultimately, strengthening socialization, shared beliefs, and values, then it is clear that the post-war Yugoslav society applied all these procedures and that, in that period, given the previous non-consolidation, it did so with great success. Newcomers' ethnocultural identities in the former Yugoslavia were found in the inevitable phase of subsequent consolidation of national identities and state creations. Research of political myths in the former Yugoslavia, especially those concerning Serbian political mythologization, pointed out the dimension of political myths. Its (manipulative) essence wants to distort rather than hide crucial facts from political reality, especially political history.

Those actors who produce myths are most often the rare institutions themselves. "The fact that a nation is a story does not challenge its reality because myths are not mystifications" (Wodak et al., 2009). Moreover, political myths have a vital role in creating the political basis for designing the basics of the emergence and establishment of a political community. This is because founding myths becomes such an unavoidable segment of the consciousness of the Constitution of national political order regardless of its size and character. Myths bridge the collective and individual gap between the individual, the ethnic group, and the political community (Despotovic, 2019). Moreover, the revisionism of official history, ethnoreligious school curricula reform, cultural and media production, and the national literary canon have mostly been completed.

Without a doubt, a Yugoslav is, among other things, anyone who does not agree to discipline and control of memory, and who surrenders to unedited memory. If someone remembers better days from the period of Yugoslavia, he has no faith, but he is openly hostile to it. Even if it is intimacy or mere nostalgia, there is no such thing as "mere nostalgia." It

is a big mistake to believe that there is harmless nostalgia, especially when dealing with Yugonostalgia. As the famous demonologist, Mitja Velikonja said, "There is no greater insult to the existing order than the uncritical celebration of the previous one." What if the deviant people we address do not practice "uncritical celebration" of the previous regime but remember its reality? Modern Yugoslavs, the most dangerous varieties, do just that; they glorify Yugoslavia through the process of real memory. They assume that the former state, despite all its democratic deficits, was superior to the creations created after its disintegration, including Croatia. Some of the more daring zealots of such a profile even explicitly explain it. For example: "When you look back, you see pure progress" (Ivancic, 2017).

Populism provides meaning and personal significance to the leader and his/her followers. It incorporates the role of charismatic leadership, authoritarianism, and nationalism and the use of conspiracy narratives and persuasive strategies. There is the rise of the radical right throughout Europe. Some of its symptoms refer to historical revisionism. Theories of totalitarianism are used in public not to strengthen a democratic political culture but almost exclusively as a powerful and adverse political tool. Egocentricity, Machiavellianism, and populism are a "dark triad" of personality traits that create political depravity. Radical populists display a serious disordered personality that is ego-syntonic and frequently is not amenable to clinical intervention.

The former Yugoslavia's mono-state media transformed before the conflict, replacing "dying socialist terminology" with demagoguery, irrationality, radical rhetoric, agony, destiny decisions, and "God-sent messages and roles" (Thompson, 2000) and framings of visual politics and emotions began to occupy sociopolitical consciousness of each ethnicity, nation, and religion in former Yugoslav countries. The aggressive collective mobilization began in the name of the nation and its faith. Moreover, a new process occurred during the wars in former Yugoslavia and after the brutal conflicts, including genocide, ethnic cleansing, culturocide, and the creation of pure ethno-religious entities/states. Proceeding heretofore to national (ethnic, religious) identity in the former Yugoslavia puts populists in a position of superiority over others as a "shelter" that develops its greatness. It could not be expressed in global (regional) competition, flourishing in Poland, Hungary, the United States (Trump era), and the Balkans. The overemphasis on one's nation, ethnicity, and religion is accompanied by the closure of borders, sociopolitical hegemonism, and the creation of destructive discontent against neighbors in the post-war Western Balkans. Populist parties - whether in power or opposition - discredit all supranational alliances. As a result, the UN, NATO, the EU, and all the achievements created over decades, which harmonized the interests of different countries and tried to prevent conflicts, have often been put to unrestricted use.

We can define populism as a political ideology based on an understanding of politics as a conflict between a good and honest people and an immoral and corrupt established political elite. The typical features of all populist options are frequent positive references to the people and general political anti-elitism. At the same time, these options differ significantly in their understanding of the people and attitudes toward certain social groups (e.g., minorities). Earlier sociological and political science research in Croatia has included, for example, populist actors and parties such as Željko Kerum¹⁸, Most, Živi Zid, Mislav Kolakušić, and Miroslav Škoro. However, the last local elections have shown that many Croatian citizens understand politics as a conflict between good people and a wrong political establishment (Salaj & Grbesa, 2021). Speaking on the show on Croatian state television, the mayor of Split, Zeljko Kerum, insulted Serbs. In an interview with journalist Aleksandar Stankovic, Kerum said he did not want Serbs and Montenegrins in Split (the second-biggest Croatian city), nor in his family as he is Catholic. He is also against Serbian investors doing business in Croatia. "I would not bring Serbs. They have never brought us (Croatians) anything good. Neither they nor the Montenegrins", said the mayor of Split (RTS, 2009).

The notion of populism is often associated with the terms resentment and frustration attributed to sympathizers of such policies, but one should be careful with such a definition. Outraged individuals do not exist independently but always concern superiors from whom they subconsciously demand recognition and respect; "resentment leads people to the slow poisoning of their souls" (Muller, 2016). Such psychological diagnoses confirm the people's opinion about the ruling elites who underestimate and belittle others while failing to fulfill their liberal democratic ideals. Frustration, anger, and resentment do not exist by themselves, but most people can explain why they feel that way. It does not mean that the reasons for the frustration of the people can be taken for granted or that they are entirely credible, but it is also not good to transfer the debate about the injustice caused by the indignation of citizens to the field of social psychology (Muller, 2016). Muller states, "Not only is it disparaging to explain the whole phenomenon as an unarticulated political

¹⁸ Željko Kerum is a Croatian entrepreneur and politician who served as Mayor of Split from 2009 to 2013. Kerum has been known to own expensive cars including a Hummer, a Mercedes S500, a BMW 7, a Maybach 62, a Ferrari F430, and a Ferrari 599 GTB Fiorano. His Cessna Citation X, a business jet worth approximately \$17 million, is the most expensive privately owned aircraft in Croatia. In 2009, he surprised the public by publicly announcing he was divorcing his wife to be with his pregnant mistress Fani Horvat, who was nearly 25 years his junior. The news caused many in the media to point out the hypocrisy in his political image, where he has consistently presented himself as a supporter of traditional values, christianity and a conservative world view, but had been participating in an extramarital affair (Net.hr, 2009).

expression of alleged "losers in the modernization process," but it is not the correct explanation (Muller, 2016). As interest in the study of populism rises, social psychology scholars strive to understand (social) psychological factors associated with it. Social psychology, political psychology, and the political science framework are highly topical and may provide an avenue of communication of current theoretical and empirical perspectives that will stimulate an informed discussion on understanding the appeal of populism, its consequences, and ways of tackling it. This way, we aim to spark a scientific dialogue that will enhance social psychological theory and practice and advance understanding of contemporary (and future) sociopolitical issues (Stathi & Guerra, 2021).

Pragmatic Slobodan Milošević's Populism at the end of the 80s and beginning of the 90s encouraged the nationalists and chauvinists that existed among Serbs and Albanians and among other peoples of the former Yugoslavia and their political leaders to openly advocate the disintegration of Yugoslavia at all costs, even at the cost of civil war and ethnic cleansing. Milošević was not the most passionate nationalist in the Balkans, nor was he the only politician contributing to the catastrophic outcome of the disintegration of Yugoslavia, but the "right" populism that was used sparingly to achieve political goals is a feature of his overall policies (Basic, 2017). The consequences of such a policy are still being felt today - decades later, the mentioned sentences in the region are interethnic relations bad, national policies multiculturalism is segregative, and the ethnic distance of the peoples in the region is a clear indication of xenophobia (Basic, 2015). The former President of the Republic of Croatia, Kolinda Grabar Kitarović, addressed the public on the occasion of the final verdict of the Hague Tribunal against six Bosnian Croats, which confirmed their sentences, for crimes against humanity, during the Herceg-Bosna (HB BiH)¹⁹. It should be recalled that General Slobodan Praljak drank a bottle of poison during the sentencing, from which he died a few hours later. Praljak said he "is not a war criminal and rejects this verdict with contempt." President Grabar Kitarović stated in 2017, "Dear Croats and all citizens. At the outset, I would like to express my condolences to the family of Slobodan Praljak, a man who preferred to give his life rather than live convicted of acts he firmly believed he had not committed. His act deeply touched the Croatian people (...) No one else, not even the International Hague Tribunal, will write our Croatian history!" (Slobodna Dalmacija, 2017).

The relative strength of right-wing populism combining an ideology of rejecting elites and institutions and calling for a "people" with xenophobic and nationalist elements sets political systems at risk of new forms of authoritarianism. Nenad Kecmanovic, a Bosnian Serb academic and politician, notes at the conference entitled "Republika Srpska in the face of new challenges" in 2021, "We have a dangerous rift for some other entity competencies to move to Sarajevo by re-voting in the joint B&H Parliamentary Assembly by votes and procedures. However, nothing and no one will help us unless Serbs are united and determined. If nothing else, we should endure until the US is weak enough, and Russia and China become strong enough to establish a global balance of power." He predicts, "The Bosniak appeal to the empire will fail again!" (Conference "Republika Srpska facing new challenges," 2021). Florian Bieber confirmed that authoritarianism exists alongside formal democratic institutions today in the Balkans. The result is that competitive authoritarian regimes use social polarization to retain power (Bieber, 2020). Many narratives about the great "leaders of the people" are constructions of ethnopolitics that emerged from the war as victors. There are parallel 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 (Hadžić, 2020). "Populism is not just antiliberal; it is anti-democratic—the permanent shadow of representative politics" (Muller, 2016).

The dominance of populist political parties is visible today in societies without a significant democratic background and countries with a long democratic tradition and a developed system of democratic institutions, where populist parties dominate or participate in parliamentary coalitions, increasingly controlling the legislature, judiciary, and executive, which allow them to bring their populist programs into institutions. As a result, the ruling regimes enjoy significant support. If political platforms abuse the support of people, it often leads to an authoritarian concept of society, which ultimately ends in a personal autocratic dictatorship of the national leader, with severe consequences for democratic institutions, human rights and freedoms, and minority groups, which as a rule leads to poverty, violence, and war (Hadžić, 2020). In the study "The Authoritarian Personality," authoritarianism is "a general predisposition to glorify, subordinate and uncritical of the authoritarian figures of their group, taking the position of punishing non-members of the group in the name of some moral authority" (Mudde, 2000). In the study, Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, and Levinson, presented the results of research "begun in 1943 on the relationship between personality structure and political behavior, more specifically on prejudice against Jews and dramatic events in Nazi Germany" (Siber, 1998). The research included a potentially fascist personality, i.e., acceptance of fascist ideology, whose structure is such that

¹⁹ It was an unrecognized geopolitical entity and proto-state in Bosnia and Herzegovina, proclaimed on November 18, 1991, under the name Croatian Community of Herzeg-Bosnia.

it expresses exceptional susceptibility to anti-democratic propaganda, including anti-Semitism. In authoritarianism, nationalism was one of the main features.

If we rely on the latest official voter lists in Croatia, it would mean that two million citizens did not exercise their right to vote in the recent elections. One of these citizens probably chose a physical "exit" and left Croatia, looking for "happiness" in migrating to other countries. However, most of these citizens have decided to mentally "get out" of Croatian politics, probably convinced that their political engagement can change nothing significant. As such, most Croatian citizens opt for political abstinence and apathy; such a situation is not new and has been going on for a long time. Moreover, this category of citizens "won" an absolute majority in the parliamentary elections for the first time, last year, i.e., exceeded 50 percent. Unfortunately, Croatia ranked second in the European Union, behind Romania, with the lowest turnout in the parliamentary elections. The second-largest group in local elections in which we can classify citizens is "loyalty." Thus, it means voting for traditional parties such as HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union, major conservative, center-right political party), SDP (the largest social-democratic Croatian center-left political party), and other established parties IDS, HNS, HSS, HSLS, HSP, PGS. The election results show that close to a million citizens who participated in the elections decided on this option. The smallest group, which we will return to later, consists of citizens who have chosen to "vote." We mean voting for new political movements, platforms, and parties, such as "We Can," the Homeland Movement, Center, and Focus, but also for independent candidates (Salaj & Grbesa, 2021).

There is an atmosphere of aggressive intolerance of the homogenized discourse of monolithic nationalism as evidenced by the pressure on authors who are somewhat more critically distant from the euphoria of collectivism, irrationalism of the masses, and the production of populist-demagogic myths and narratives. The "witch from Rio," who led the protagonists of the affair to emigrate, moved from the cultural motherland to dissident status. In order to illustrate the discursive unification and suspension of individual difference in the name of national unity, Baker (2016) singles out the symbolism of the appearance of all essential names of the Croatian stage in the so-called Croatian Band-Aid, were gathered in one choir, they sang verses of a patriotic character (Baker, 2016).

The acceleration of capitalism realism and its implementation was significantly due to the consensus of former socialist societies on the uncritical acceptance of the capitalist paradigm, motivated more by images of imaginary Western capitalism and the consumerist spectacle of a utopian society of abundance than by a fundamental understanding of capitalism. In that sense, Western analysts were surprised mainly by the pace with which post-socialist societies accepted capitalism. However, they were surprised by everything: the fall of socialism, the peaceful disintegration of the USSR, and the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia. William Outhwaite and Larry Ray (2005) explicitly addressed this subject in *Social Theory and Postcommunism*. Moreover, Slovenia, for example, which has prospered economically in the post-Yugoslav era, generates forms of nostalgia that counter the current bare-knuckled competition of its aggressive form of "catch-up" capitalism (Volcic, 2007). The truth about the former Yugoslavia disenfranchisement, economic and social hopelessness, abolition of all fundamental preconditions for some form of sovereign policies, institutionalized nationalism, neoconservatism, and neo-fascisms adhering to assigned positions of unimportant margins and appropriate places (semi) peripheral colonies. Taking this perspective, with a retrospective view that points to cracks and discontinuities within the embellished hegemonic narrative epoch, the picture of our transition is becoming dystopian dark (Hromadzic, 2020).

Just as the works of the despised Marxist theory have been thrown out of sight en masse and thoroughly when this theory was to be especially reactivated due to the current class social changes and the project of introducing a capitalist order, the enthusiasm of the then "cultural grammar" obscured the critical knowledge and methods of the postmodern mind, from deconstructive anti-essentialism to cultural studies. Thus, the ideological unmasking and denaturalization of fundamental cultural and social aporia. They are inclined to the side of Lyotard's statement about disbelief in great stories, Derrida's views on "inscription(s) of absence in the constitution of every identity" (Biti, 1997), Derrida's findings of paradox in labeling strategies under the paradigm of logocentrism and its exegesis of contradictions in every statement. Foucault analyzes discursive networks as the dissemination of power, regulation, supervision, and discipline and even by the buoyancy of mythical thought. First, the mythological discourse of militant nationalism is justifiably assessed as a winning narrative in the once open post-communist market of ideologies, a narrative whose name one will most directly succeed in taking the vacant seat of power and gain unquestionable legitimacy from the masses. Gal Kirn rightly assesses that it is no coincidence that the referendum question on state, i.e., national and ethnic independence, was not formulated in the necessary form in which it should have been posed given the true nature of entering the transition process: "Do you want to be in the next decade?" Witnesses to the increase of class differences and unemployment, reduction of annual vacations and pensions, and privatization of health services? (Popović and Gajić, 2011).

Although, on the other hand, accumulating throughout history a destructive eruptiveness if, in the natural evolutionary

rhythm, it is hindered and made unfinished by the truncated processes of (modern) nation-building, mostly political subordination. The persistence of these forces is illustrated by both the NDH creation and the interethnic conflicts. The Yugoslav community disintegrated due to the necessity to fulfill evolutionary stages even when they are historically asynchronous (NDH-opting with fascism) or anachronistic. A dream on the threshold of the 21st century, when the globalist paradigm of the nation-state as a political unit, and in this context even more important economic sovereignty, has taken over, making it a disenfranchised relic of the overgrown order. With a retro-utopian perspective – a tilt that another demonologist, Predrag Brebanović, even called retro-yu-utopia – they understood that it was not just a struggle for memories, but, rather, a struggle with memories. They do not forget. They are behaving in a terroristic manner. As far as Yugoslavia is concerned, these actors suspect that untamed memory contains an explosive charge, so they place their destructive hopes in a model of timed memory (Ivancic, 2017).

It should be added as a guarantee against the "erasure" of the temporal effect, i.e., the passage of time, thus establishing itself as a transgenerational and transtemporal memory structure. Therefore, the authors will often explain the publication of their notes in the prefaces or introductory chapters with the characteristically repeated expression "kidnapped from oblivion." In such a crucial historical moment of the threat of war, legality comes into force. As formulated by Assman, "Since the culture of memory is not biologically hereditary," and "group memory has no neurological basis" as individual memory (processed by anatomy), it is replaced by culture" so that sociocultural "synapses" perform the memory tasks of the collective mind of the community through time, transgenerationally. That is, how the contents of organic memory through various symbolic expressions, i.e., cultural and artistic genres, would be "culturally maintained through generations" (Assmann, 2011). In this context, many productions are initially and explicitly motivated to publish purposefully in the function of a document, regardless of qualitative reach or historiographical significance, accumulating on the documentary corpus as a potential for which only time, or some indefinite moment of pragmatic necessity in the future. The bulkiness of these plants, detachments mobilized for the above purposes, produced innumerable amounts of material in missions of ethnonational importance.

In the post-socialist circumstances in such a denigration of the general situation (by absolutizing individual examples), the Croatian left-wing party "Živi Zid"²⁰ out in particular.

An essential function of this strategy is to alleviate the politically emotionalized, from which populism lives, and which, at the same time, makes it hardly subject to any argument because a rational approach has little chance of mass mobilized feelings. The character of the enemy, who hinder the well-being of the populace (from "elites" to migrants), mark what can be called a "neurotic behavior," without which such movements can hardly exist. Because contemporary populism can mix different ideologies (which Mussolini and Hitler had already started with, but gradually brought the worldview components of their promotional actions "in order"), the enemy's characters vary but are given almost powers and influence on everyday life. This is well illustrated by the attitude of the Polish and Hungarian leaders – but also the Croatian and Serbian far-right. Numerous major right-wing parties in (Western) Europe are signaling a "return to the center," such as the Austrian and Dutch Christian Democrats. However, this "political center" reflects the populist radical right much more strongly than a decade ago. In addition, right-wing extremist parties are still represented in all right-wing factions in the European Parliament, while extreme right-wing positions on immigration and Islam are propagated in almost all factions, including the Social Democrats. Amid the general strike initiated by the opposition in 2002, Venezuelan Hugo Chavez stated, "This is not about whether you are for Chavez or against Chavez, but about patriots being against the enemies of the homeland" (Zuquete, 2008).

Elections in post-conflict societies such as post-Yugoslavia show how solid and unbreakable collective identity policies are. National-ethnic-religious identities are at the forefront. Even those environments where collective identities are not threatened are marked by political competition in the national and religious flattery of the electorate. Apart from ethnonationalism, the ideology of a considerable number of Balkan politicians is characterized by power continuance. Most of the former members of the League of Communists represent anti-communism and ethnonationalism. The solid non-freedom, above all the suffocation of press freedom, exists in the region. There are elements of the cult of personality of today's Balkan leaders. However, a cult is not created only around the leader. The cult of inviolability around undebatable topics is considered to affect the core of the national quintessence and the survival of the ethnic nations. Given the limited space, we will consider the example of Serbia in this section (although most post-Yugoslav countries represent comparable patterns). In Serbia, managing fears and anxieties is used as political fuel and distributed to the people with the help of the media. As a result, a coalition of quasi-right populism has changed its content: nationalism

²⁰ Živi Zid (English "Live Wall") is a political movement and a Croatian parliamentary party that brings together all social strata and groups that overlooks ideological divisions and directs all its energy to solving fundamental social problems. The party accepts the label "left or right" because it is rightmost when one should stand for home and leftmost when one should stand by the people.

has been transformed, proclaimed self-sufficiency has opened the way to Europeanism, and the ranking of "dangerous others" has also changed, but the matrix of political behavior has remained the same. From the position of a clear parliamentary majority, it absolutizes the principle and importance of the majority, belittles the role and importance of the minority, and creates intolerance of dissent and criticism. "Dangerous others" – are ranked instrumentally according to the needs of the given moment – sometimes they are Americans, once Croats, Albanians, or Bosniaks. As competitors on the political scene, the political elites of the former regime and tycoons are treated as "dangerous others," but also all those who are ready to criticize and do not obey the policy of one man who controls not only the ruling coalition but almost all of the state, even independent institutions, and critical state media and tabloids (Lutovac Markovic, 2017). Thus, the policy of anti-pluralism is an essential feature of Populism in Serbia today.

The source of mistrust is "the general belief that powerful interests have captured democratic institutions in many Western democracies and that citizens are powerless to change that" (Krastev, 2013). Only a change in this belief can lead to the "liberation" of institutions. It is in some way evidenced by the theory of public value, which offers the concept of exercising power through networked communities, where the focus of public authority is shifted from the state and the market to civil society. For proponents of this new paradigm of government, it is an adequate model of governance in a constantly changing context, permeated by a diverse population, burdened with complex, volatile, and risk-sensitive needs. *Public policies* are strategies shaped by civil society and implemented through networks and partnerships in such an environment (Krastev, 2013).

We know from social capital theory that trust is generated at the level of individuals, families, groups, networks, and communities and the relationships that govern within them, and this is an additional reason why the issue of political will should not be left to political rhetoric. It is because of, even worse, manipulation. There is a well-founded suspicion that the way our networks and communities are organized and function can be linked to the transformations of political will on which the success of public policies that seek to change and humanize society depends. We must examine, prove and put these foundations in the function of progress.

There is a constant struggle between lesser and greater patriotism, for example, BH, Bosniaks, Croats, or Serbs. Civic parties, incapable and unable to introduce their policies into public space and eager to seize power, also resort to state, national, and religious identity policies, thus destroying the possibility of civil society in the long run. The desire for ethnonational and religious freedoms have turned into slavery to one's nation and religion, to a greater or lesser extent in all former Yugoslavia societies. The more insolvent and more educationally and culturally neglected societies are, the more complex civic and social policies are. The more requests there are for collective consolidation, the less freedom an individual has. The longing for recognition, which the Greek philosophers called the third part of the soul (thymós), also concerns man's economic status. Paradoxically, the socially marginalized, uneducated people are most often classified with identity policies in the first place, which is not a change in their social status but a more robust ethnic, national, and religious connection.

The political elites of B&H, despite their daily actions, aggressively invoking God, Faith, and the Sublime, thus practically embodying the most mundane, transparent-pragmatic combination of the economic-political type of personality axiologically. Observing this combination of descriptive categories of humanistic psychology, the most important representative of the theoretical Erich Fromm's twentieth-century humanism is an exploitative character who, with all his strength and "cunning of the mind," takes away everything he needs. The exploitative type of view "(...) is painted with a mixture of hostility and manipulation" (Bajtal, 2009). The difference is that "populists justify their actions by claiming that they are the only ones representing the people, and this allows them to engage very openly in such practices" (Muller, 2016). Interestingly, corrupt practices often do not harm populist politicians because they justify such behavior by fighting for the people in conflict with the elites. However, in the Western Balkans, they are the most dominant elites. Milorad Dodik, a Bosnian Serb politician on the US State Department "black-list," is a leading figure of constant secessionist rhetoric. An analysis of Dodik's discourse in the study by Nađa Beglerović (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 the role participation of the international community in B&H (Beglerovic, 2020).

What do visual representations of War and Peace in Serbia and B&H, the most critical discourse of former Yugoslavia multiculturalism, and the most fragile Western Balkan country, look like today? How can post-conflict peace-building in the Western Balkans be achieved and promoted through creative approaches, and what are the potential challenges and limitations in realizing postwar peace-building through creative approaches? Based on primary qualitative visual

data and interview data generated on the photographic exhibition of “War of Memories” curated in 2017 by the Centre for Non-Violent Action, a civil society organization working on the theme of postwar peace-building in Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) and Serbia, findings suggest the creative initiatives can play a positive role at the individual level, but their translation into macro-level sustainable social Peace is challenging, as long as the structural impediments to Peace, prevailing unequal ethnic power relations and ethnicized social and political ordering of the society remain unaddressed (Jeremic & Jayasundara, 2022). Furthermore, by analyzing numerous media narratives and visual presentations in the B&H, we have the existence of ethnoreligious and ethnopolitical symbolism and uncritical idioms: "the Muslim side, Muslim government, Serbian/Orthodox New Year, Serbian forests, Muslim-Croat/Catholic federation, Muslim-majority municipalities, Muslim intellectuals, etc." (Karabegovic, 2017). The total clerical ethnicization of public consciousness enabled the most comprehensive open support for any unethical practices committed in the name of the "people." Thus, divisive ethnonationalism/ethnoreligious rhetoric and disagreements continue to permeate the sociopolitical climate, hampering democratic progress. Media and public communication practices are determined by and contribute to social stagnation.

Conclusion

Contemporary ethnic-symbolic politics communicate through conservative political orientations: re-traditionalism behavior patterns of political conservatism (including some left-wingers) advocate public acceptance. Historical anti-fascism actors have been stigmatized within their attitude toward the fascist ideology symbolism and Balkan's sociopolitical mythologies. Shaping the doubled existence produces growing nationalism. Neoliberal globalization has strengthened national identities, supported by the war-related creation of ethnic homogenous territories. Frequent use of (often) antagonistic ethnic symbolism in textual, rhetorical and visual forms expresses this. Various methods of conducting historical revisionism in the symbolic and ideological vocation decrease Yugoslavia's social memory. Radical political populism is a powerful tribal identity and collectivist ideology. It often leads to social, intra-state, inter-state conflicts, and peace stalemates, particularly in post-conflict and fragile societies such as the Balkans. There does not seem to be much difference between populism and authoritarian regimes. One of the main features and consequences of populist political orders in ethnoreligious partitioned post-socialism is ethnic-symbolic collectivism. Ethnopolitics oppresses individual interests, social groups, and identity in the name of the ethnoreligious collective. It excludes the possibility of distinct classification, which is the basis for authoritarian and totalitarian order. The common good defines some authority, and all who disagree are considered competitors. The national position requires definition through the ethnoreligious origin (i.e., B&H- Bosnia and Herzegovina); democratically retrogressive and controversial positions.

Former Yugoslavia's historical conflicting memory cultures from WW2 to the Yugoslav wars present enduring processes within sociopolitical ethnic-religious traditions. Unfortunately, the active collective historical and social memory which forms people's identities is manipulated, falsified, reduced, and politically instrumentalized. Moreover, institutional and non-institutional engagement is normatively needed in a battle for correct memory and citizens' participation in political decision-making outside the ethnoreligious paradigm. Furthermore, it must not act out the nationalization of memory to achieve full Croatia(zation), Bosnian(zation), Serbian(zation), Montenegro(zation) of memory, not only in general but also individually.

Ethnonational policy dominance can be practically mitigated by creating conditions for more prominent participation of citizens in political decision-making outside the ethnoreligious paradigm. Contemporary notions of autonomy and mind, adapted to modern society, provide a theoretical framework for formulating political strategies in a post-national context. Acquisitive components of civil society and the society's stagnation due to slow consolidation can abruptly transform into political apathy motivating violent disorder. Accordingly, many sociopolitical realities symbolize and indicate that "democratized" post-socialist and post-Yugoslav states are more "inadequate" and "ineffective" than Yugoslavia.

Post-Yugoslav civil societies, regarding the community development within the democratic, multicultural, and liberal direction should recognize, define and influence public interest policies —the process of shaping political will. If citizens reject adverse ethnopolitical behavior practices and accept the progressive public policies as objectification of the political will. Therefore, as a fundamental human survival strategy, the public policy community's social life can transform sociopolitics.

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