This paper examines the memory practices of the memorial complex at Mrakovica at the Kozara National Park in the Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The original concept of the memorial site, founded in 1972, was to keep the Kozara-epos alive. The erected monument, the memorial wall and the museum were built to remember one of the biggest battles during the Second World War on Yugoslav soil during which more than ten thousand Partisan fighters and civilians lost their lives. During the communist era the memorial site fit into the official memory frame: the high number of casualties, especially civilians, was put into the foreground and the Partisans in their struggle for liberation were glorified. The key component of the official narrative was the slogan brotherhood and unity. After the armed conflict in the 1990s, the site underwent several transformations. New memorial frames were set by nationalists; thus history and memory were thereby de- and reconstructed. The new narrative included not only victims of the Second World War but exclusively those victims belonging to the ethnic group of Serbs of the First World War and the conflict in 1992-95. In 2012, the exhibition at the museum was reopened after it had undergone another re-conceptualization, another reconstruction of history and memory. Analysing documents, interviews, and ethnographic observations which I gathered during several research trips to Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2010-2013, I will show in this study that a political transition towards a nationalist approach of history was clearly visible during the 1990s at the memorial site. But even though
the new exhibition, installed in 2012 at the museum, offers a less one-sided and provocative approach, a political transition concerning the memory conflicts which reflects the still existing gap between different ethnic groups is not evident.

**Key words / Ključne riječi:** Bosnia and Herzegovina, monuments, Second World War, Bosnian War 1992-1995, memory culture.

**Introduction**

Almost twenty years after the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina ended with the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995, the post-war society within the country is still struggling with the aftermath of the war. This struggle is especially visible on the memory level. The history of the Second World War and the country’s own involvement in it, the imposed memory frame during the communist era, and the conflict in the 1990s created different narratives among the follow-up states of the Former Yugoslavia and also among different social groups within the countries. Bosnia and Herzegovina shows special characteristics in the ongoing memory conflict. Prijedor in the Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the area of my interest, provides an interesting case study. In the aftermath of the war from 1992-1995 the different ethnic groups living there regularly clash on the memory level, with each group focussing on its own suffering, denying war crimes and causing provocation of the others at numerous events.1 Just recently, a new mass grave was discovered in the Prijedor region in the Republika Srpska, the Serbian entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the area suffered from a severe ethnic cleansing campaign during the conflict in the 1990s and became known for notorious camps which were erected in 1992. Up until today, approximately 1,000 persons remain missing in the region. As my former research has shown, survivors and family members of victims struggle with the search for the missing and with their desire to commemorate the events which took place.2 But not only since the 1990s has memory culture served as a more or less visible platform for conflict in the area. The history of the Second World War had always been a focal point to serve political purposes but it has not been static.

This research focuses on the memorial practices of a memorial complex which is located at Mrakovica, the so-called tip of a mountain range in the Kozara National Park which lies in the Prijedor Region.3 Inaugurated by Tito himself in 1972, the monument, the memorial wall and the museum commemorate the Kozara epos, the suffering and fighting of Partisans and civilians during World War II at Mount Kozara.4 Over time and with changing men in power the memorial complex proves to be a site where history and memory has been constructed, de- and reconstructed, predominantly for political interests.

The Second World War represents a significant part of world and especially European history. Etienne François noted that “the memory of the Second World War has played a key role in the cultures of memory and still is, and that the identity of the contemporary European countries is built on the legacy of the Second World War.”5 Nowhere does the memory of the darkest time of the history of the 20th century seem to have lost its importance, continuing all the way to the present. Nevertheless, there are signs “that for the majority of Europeans the Second World War and genocide have not found their way into history, yet.”6 François speaks of Gegenwart der Vergangenheit – the presence of the past. The process of remembering the Second World War in the years after 1945 until today has not been static but has undergone several changes, which attracts the interest of scientific researchers. Master narratives, as François describes them, had a great influence after the war, were accepted by the majority of people and generally not questioned for a long time. Such master narratives included, above all, the defeat of nationalism and the German Empire, the worship of the soldiers, especially the Partisans, highlighting the heroes and victims and condemnation of the Nazi regime and its sympathizers. With the acquisition of such master narratives, the men in power in each country understood how to put recent history into perspective. Nevertheless, it began in the early 1960s, accelerated in the 1970s and 1980s, first in Germany and then in other Western countries that these master narratives underwent critical questioning. Finally, with the collapse of the Soviet Union the master narratives, or what was left of them, had to give way to new narratives, which dealt with painful memories which were previously concealed or suppressed. The collective memory of Europe developed a sense of duty of coming

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5 JOKIĆ, Nacionalni Park Kozara, Prijedor, 20.
7 bid.
to terms with the past and commemorating the events of the Second World War.8

The memory of the Second World War in the former Yugoslavia and its successor states offers some special characteristics. In the 1950s and 1960s the anti-fascist perspective was presented almost exclusively. It included the Partisan myth, the victory over fascism and a clear differentiation between resisters and collaborators. The war was presented to the population solely as a national liberation war to push the civil war, which had taken place, into the background.9 The new state was built on the legacy of the Second World War and the glorification of the Partisans under the slogan of brotherhood and unity. The communist regime fully understood how to present the official memory frame to the population at all times and in all places. Memories which threatened the stability of the new state and the claim to power of the new government were neglected.10 Thus, those in power imposed a memory frame which did not allow the much needed processing of the events of the Second World War. After Tito’s death, nationalists took advantage of this fact. Conflicts on the memorial level appeared and were exploited and radicalized for political purposes. The prescribed master narrative had to give way to new interpretations of nationalist groups. A decoding of the events of the Second World War could especially be noticed on the Serbian side from the mid-1980s on. The Serbian Četnik-movement for example was no longer accused of collaborating with the allies, but attributed their acts as self-defence of the Serbian people. Perpetrators were suddenly transformed into heroes, and the former heroes, fighters of common cause, were transformed into perpetrators. With the disintegration of the country at the end of the 1980s, the Yugoslav narrative ceased to exist and had to give way to various national narratives.11 Several studies attempt to establish the connection between the politics of memory and the escalation of violence in the early 1990s. Heike Karge refers to several studies which dealt with this problem, such as the investigations of Jansen and Bax, who undertook the experiment to show the interdependence of the Second World War and the war in the 1990s in the local narrative or the field of comparative textbook research and the history of historiography. Still others dedicated their work to the topic of post-socialist cultures of remembrance in the former Yugoslavia.12

In the following, I analyze the memory practices at the memorial complex at Mrakovica in the Prijedor region. The study is based on documents, interviews, and ethnographic observations which I gathered during several research trips to Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2010-2013.13 This study provides background information on the rise of the Partisan movement and the events at Mount Kozara in 1942, followed by the memory practices of the Kozara battle during Communist times, a brief overview of the situation in Prijedor during the conflict in the 1990s and the process of de- and reconstructing history and memory at the site from the beginning of the war in 1992 up until today. The relevance of local studies is emphasized through the heterogeneous war experiences in different areas and their communities. When it comes to the history of a war and the efforts to remember the events which took place, I do therefore agree with Young who claims the necessity for “every site […] to be grasped in its [own] local context”14 and not to analyse a memorial only according to its “conception and execution among historical realities, but also their current and changing lives, even their eventual destruction. This is to draw back into view the very process, the many complicated historical, political, and aesthetics axes, on which memory is being constructed.”15

Studying the memorial complex at Mrakovica and monuments in general, as Pavlaković explains, is of high value:

13 Most of the relevant information for the analysis of the memorial complex at Kozara was gathered on a two months research trip to Prijedor between July and August 2013. I sincerely thank the Bayerisches Hochschulzentrum für Mittel-, Ost- und Südosteuropa (BAYHOST) for financing this research trip.
“Public monuments are perhaps the most readily visible examples of a country’s culture of memory, and are therefore also often at the center of controversies during periods of political transitions. [...] Along with other kinds of memory which are not necessarily physical (public holidays, national symbols, institutions, etc.), monuments play an important role in celebrating a nation’s victories and commemorating its dead. But precisely because they are physical objects [...] monuments both represent a regime’s official interpretation of the past as well as challenge a new administration’s ability to overcome a problematic historical legacy. Thus the construction, destruction, restoration, or censorship of a country’s monuments allows scholars to analyze how political elites seek to transmit their ideological worldview and the mechanisms they use in molding the past for contemporary political legitimacy.”

Using the stated approaches, I’m analyzing how history and its remembrance at Mrakovica has been constructed, de- and reconstructed since its instalment up to the present day and therefore “reveal the many layers of meaning in [...] memorials and to examine the process by which such monuments are understood.”

We will come to see that during socialist times the memorial complex was founded to keep the Kozara-epos alive and was made to fit into the official memorial frame. The narrative included a high number of casualties, especially civilians, and the glorification of the Partisan fighters under the slogan of brotherhood and unity. The imposed official master narrative was hardly questioned for decades. During the armed conflict in the 1990s, the site underwent a transformation. New memorial frames were set up by nationalists. The new narrative referred not only to the victims of the Second World War but exclusively those victims belonging to the ethnic group of Serbs of the First World War and the conflict in 1992-1995. The exhibition had undergone another reconceptualization, before being reopened in July 2012. At first sight, it seems that measures have been taken to come to terms with the past and offer a less nationalist perspective for visitors. But while Pavlaković argues that memorial sites often tend to be the center of political legitimacy.

The Beginning of the Partisan Movement and the Battle of Kozara in 1942

The First Yugoslavia ceased to exist with the surrender on 17 April 1941. As a result of the division of the land by Hitler and Mussolini, areas were annexed, occupied or declared ‘independent’. Bosnia and Herzegovina and large parts of Croatia became part of the Independent State of Croatia, (NDH - Nezavisna Država Hrvatska, 1941-1945), with Ante Pavelić as its leader. Approximately 6.3 million people lived in the newly formed state, of which 3.3 million were Croats, 2 million Serbs, 700,000 Muslims, 150,000 Germans and other minorities. The extermination of Jews and Roma and the fight against the resistance movement were inextricably connected. The Ustaša government proceeded against the orthodox population while the Muslims were declared to be Croats belonging to the Muslim faith. Within four months after the establishment of the NDH, more than 100,000 Serbs were expelled from the territory, many of them being deported to the concentration camp Jasenovac. Despite the new government, communists remained organized. In July and August 1941 the command structure was reorganized and Tito was appointed as its leader. Approximately 6.3 million people lived in the newly formed state, of which 3.3 million were Croats, 2 million Serbs, 700,000 Muslims, 150,000 Germans and other minorities. The extermination of Jews and Roma and the fight against the resistance movement were inextricably connected. The Ustaša government proceeded against the orthodox population while the Muslims were declared to be Croats belonging to the Muslim faith. Within four months after the establishment of the NDH, more than 100,000 Serbs were expelled from the territory, many of them being deported to the concentration camp Jasenovac. Despite the new government, communists remained organized. In July and August 1941 the command structure was reorganized and Tito was appointed as its leader. Under his command the 6,000 to 8,000 members of the Communist Party (KPI - Komunistička partija Jugoslavije) and at least 30,000 members of the Communist Youth (SKOJ – Savez komunističke omladine Jugoslavije) were ready for battle. On 4 July 1941, after the German attack on the Soviet Union and almost two weeks after the first anti-German Partisan action in Croatia, the KPI leadership called for an armed uprising from their hiding place in Belgrade. The number of Partisan fighters rose continuously and increased to more than 300,000 in 1943-1944. On 16 September 1941 Hitler

17 YOUNG, The Texture of Memory. Holocaust Memorials and Meaning, 10.
ordered the destruction of the resistance movement in the South East region. Zoja Kozara suffered a first attack in November 1941. The attempt to completely expel the Partisans from the area failed. Due to the lack of troops the offense lasted only two days. Despite “the powerful Ustasha-Home Guard garrison” and the 2nd Krajina Partisan Unit managed to gain control over Prijedor on 16 May 1942. During the takeover the Partisans succeeded in taking 1,300 enemy soldiers captive, seizing a large amount of ammunition and shutting down a significant part of the communications system in Bosnia. According to Dulić it remains unclear what happened after the takeover. Analyzing NDH documents Dulić concluded interrogations accompanied by torture, which eventually ended in the killing of more than 300 Croats and Muslims, were likely to have happened. The Partisans justified their actions by accusing the captives, mostly soldiers, of committing crimes, but also civilians for collaborating and belonging to the enemy as such. Shortly thereafter, the Germans and the NDH struck back. They launched a second offensive to regain control over the region on 10 June which lasted until 30 July. The German General Friedrich Stahl had sent over 38,000 soldiers, the majority being Ustaše, to surround and kill the 3,500 Partisans. A plaque at the museum at Kozara states the following:

“The 10th of June 1942, one of the greatest battles of the National Liberation War had begun. The battle for Kozara. Ten times stronger enemy, backed up with strong artillery fire, airplanes and aviation, began their attack on free territory with the aim of destruction of Partisan forces. In 24 hours combat which lasted from the 10th to the 30th of June 1942, the Partisan forces caused great losses to enemy forces and seized a great deal of arms. With their heroic fight suffering great losses, Kozara Partisans were defending their positions protecting that way 500 wounded soldiers and 80000 women, children and old people who run away before enemy atrocities.”

The aggressor regained control eventually. The offensive at Kozara differed from all the others that had previously taken place on Yugoslav soil. The difference showed in the attempt to deport the population of the region and, therefore, prohibit it from being a refugee for Partisans any longer. This meant the relocation of the entire civilian population. “According to the estimate of the District Committee, the Partisans lost (including local population) between 10,000 and 15,000 people and approximately 70,000 and 80,000 people were sent to concentration camps”, about 50,000 women and children among them. According to Veljko Rudić the number of child victims was as high as 20,000. A plaque at the museum states the “[t]otal number of people killed is over 45,000. 38,188 were victims of fascist terror, 13,186 of them were children, 68,600 Kozara people were allocated in concentration camps and 23,858 of them were children.” Even though the offensive was counted as a success by the Germans and the NDH leaders, they did not destroy the Partisan movement of Mount Kozara. From the time the Germans regained control over the region until the final liberation of Prijedor on 14 June 1944, the population suffered terror, especially targeted against Serbs and communists.
The Memorial Complex at Mrakovica during Communist Yugoslavia

Numerous monuments, various songs, poems and movies create a diverse memory culture of the events at Mount Kozara during the Second World War. About 120 monuments dedicated to the Partisans can be found in the Prijedor region. The best known monument devoted to the Kozara-epos is the memorial complex at Mrakovica. It was erected at an altitude of 806 metres in the center of the National Park Kozara. Mrakovica was created by Dušan Džamonja, a sculptor from Zagreb. Funds were provided by labor and social organizations and voluntary donations by people from all over Yugoslavia. It was officially opened on 10 September 1972 by Tito himself:

“The battle of Kozara is over, Kozara was solemnly crowned.”

The central part consists of a monument, a memorial wall and a museum. The vertical sculpture is at the center of the complex. It rises to a height of 33 metres. The sculpture was built of reinforced concrete with integrated vertical slats made of steel. The light reflection was said to be seen from a great distance and intended to symbolize freedom. It is surrounded by cement blocks with a length of up to 30 metres pointing in the direction of the sculpture to symbolize the physical pressure of the enemies on Kozara. Mihić describes the architect’s aim to create the impression of a kind of aggression which kills all living organs. The horizontal sides of the monument symbolize hostile aggression, whereas the central vertical part symbolizes death, victory and the heroism of the people. “The artist wanted it to represent the greatness of the victory against one dark ideology – against Fascism and Nazism.”

Behind the monument is a memorial wall with the following inscription at the entrance “Oh Kozara, you don’t need any rain, you are watered by the blood of our heroes.” An eternal flame could be found in the middle, surrounded by the memorial wall. It has 9,931 of the names of killed anti-fascists inscribed. According to the curator of the memorial complex, Čika Mića, it is “one of the longest lists of this kind in this part of the world. 96 % of the names are Serbs, 2 % Bosniaks, 1 % Croats and others.” As historian Simone Malavoliti points out, the importance lies in the arrangement of the names. They were arranged by village to point out the participation of all villages in the fight against fascism. Back then,

where mothers don’t give birth to traitors.”

34 The most famous song about the suffering of the people is Slojanka Majka Knezevštjeka by Skender Kaslević. A collection of poems and songs can be found in Gosvet Kozara. Izbor sjećanja, književnih zapisa i pjesama; The among the Yugoslav population well known movie Kozara by Veljko Bulajić can be found online on various websites: “Watch Kozara (1962) Free Online”, FGuide, http://www.fguide.com/kozara-9202a0c94006041800000001seebfeh (05.10.2013).

35 Rodić explained this monument boom with the number of child victims, 20,000. He underlined that never in a war before had the number of child victims been this high. Interview with Veljko Rodić, 20.08.2013.

36 MIHIĆ, Kozara: Priroda, Čovjek, Istorija; JOKIĆ, Nacionalni Park Kozara, Prijedor, 3.

37 Prijedor, 1972; see also MIHIĆ, Kozara: Priroda, Čovjek, Istorija; JOKIĆ, Nacionalni Park Kozara, Prijedor, 3.

38 The inscriptions are no longer visible.

39 The inscriptions are no longer visible.

40 MIHIĆ, Kozara: Priroda, Čovjek, Istorija, 808.
The War in the Prijedor Region – From a Master Narrative to a Different Narrative

During the Bosnian War of 1992-95 the Prijedor region became particularly known because of the camps which were erected as a result of an ethnic cleansing campaign in 1992. The nationalist ideology, which was mainly used by politicians and spread in the media, steadily gained influence. According to a census in 1991 the demographic structure showed a slight majority of Bosniaks (44.4%), followed by Serbs (42.5%), Croats (5.6%), Yugoslavs (5.7%), and Others (2.2%). This changed dramatically with the outbreak of war. On 30 April 1992 Serb forces seized control over Prijedor. The non-Serb population was immediately affected after the takeover. In the course of the ethnic cleansing campaign, many boys and men were taken to the camps Omarska, Trnovac, and Keratnjak. The camp Omarska became known worldwide because of the brutality with which camp detainees were interrogated, tortured and often killed. The Omarska camp was closed in early August under pressure from the international community but living conditions for the non-Serb population in the area hardly improved. Since the Dayton peace agreement in 1995 the Prijedor municipality is part of the Serbian entity, Republika Srpska, in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Today, Prijedor is mainly inhabited by Bosnian Serbs, while Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats are minorities. Only a few who suffered and survived the ethnic cleansing returned permanently.

Whereas the events of the Second World War at Mrakovica were presented under the banner of brotherhood and unity by the communist regime, this master narrative had to give way to a more nationalist interpretation of the events at Kozara. As early as during the war, changes became visible. A cross was erected at the plateau at the preparatory part of the memorial complex. This added religious symbolism which was not to be found there before and was clearly directed against the Bosnian-Muslim population. Additionally, the exhibition was changed and remained like this at least until 2008. Already the title of the exhibition, *Serbian genocide in the 20th century: 1914-1918; 1941-1945; 1991 – ?*, introduced this clear nationalist tendency. As Malavolti points out, the question mark is of importance. In his view, it clearly “stands for a simple, yet evocative, rhetorical question: ‘Isn’t the umpteenth genocide against Serbs about to happen again?’” The new exhibition was shown at several different places in Serbia and the Republika Srpska before it finally arrived at the Kozara museum. It

48 Simone MALAVOLTI, “Too much Memory, Too much Oblivion”, Osservatorio balcani e caucaso, http://www.balcanicaucao.org/area/Balcani/Un-viaggio-tra-le-memorie-divise-103668, 20.02.2009 (the link for the article never worked. I contacted the editorial of Osservatorio balcani e caucaso which then send me version of the article.)
51 Interview with Veljko Rosić: 20.08.2013. Rodić, born in 1941, also explained to me that he had worked ‘up there’ for more than thirty years and also gave history lessons. Driven by the history and suffering of his own family, his father was killed in one of the battles, he became involved in commemorating and communicating the events. During the history lessons he would provide general information about the area and the symbolism of the memorial complex. But his focus would be on the height of the monument and the suffering of the children. The height for him stands for those who fought and won. They stand above all evil, above the small enemy. During the interview he pointed out that most of the 20,000 child victims were Serbs.
52 MIHIC, Kozara. Priroda, Cosjek. Istoriija, 810.
53 MALAVOLTI, „Too much Memory, Too much Oblivion“.
54 Grejko JOKIĆ, Nacionalni Park Kozara: Prijedor, 24.
55 MALAVOLTI, „Too much Memory, Too much Oblivion“.
was introduced to visitors as a temporary exhibition, which it was clearly not. It presented a one-sided story of “[...] the general persecution of the Serb population throughout the 20th century in a partial and exploitative way.” The exhibition for example displayed a poster showing piled up dead bodies. These were framed by the inscription “Serbs are the Victims. Vukovar, 1991.” Another poster entitled “The Continuity of a Crime – ‘The Final Settlement of the Serbian Question in Croatia’”. It included two pictures on the left which presented the years 1941-1945 and three pictures to the right describing the years 1991-1995, among other things, showing dead bodies. The number of pictures and the extent to which abused, tortured and disfigured bodies and actual body parts were displayed was striking throughout the entire exhibition. The pictures showed disrupted heads, open flesh wounds, gouged eyes. A different poster showed a male civilian on his knees, a soldier behind with a gun pointing at him and a catholic priest who is holding a cross up in front of him. The heading says “Convert... or die! Catholic Persecution in Yugoslavia During World War II.” The message of the exhibition was clear. It was to emphasize the suffering of the Serb population. When a group of representatives of Memorial Centers and NGOs visited the memorial complex in 2011, the curator stated the following about the condition and the exhibition of the museum:

“This building was in a bad condition so we are reconstructing it. We will make a better exhibition and lights, a modern one, like in Jasenovac. My colleague and I went there twice and technically it was very well done. It’s another thing what we think of the exhibition. I will tell you nothing about the exhibition here because, actually, we don’t have the exhibition. We have parts of the old exhibition that is the vertical part, which is damaged and old and dating back to 1982. [...] So whatever you see here is only until 4 July. Whatever you see here is better not to see, because there is nothing to be seen. It is not pretty... Some of the photos are gruesome and my duty is to warn you, especially the ladies, not to go.”

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63 MALAVOLTI, Too much Memory, Too much Oblivion”.
64 Vukovar is a town located in eastern Croatia, bordering Serbia. “In late August 1991 the Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA) laid siege to the city and overrun it three months later. Vukovar was largely destroyed by JNA shelling and hundreds of persons were killed. In the last days of the siege, several hundred people sought refuge at the Vukovar Hospital. On 20 November 1991, Serb military forces removed at least 200 non-Serb individuals from the hospital and transported them to a remote execution site near the Ovčara farm, where they were shot and buried in a mass grave.” “Vukovar”, ICTY, http://www.ictry.org/sections/TheCases/InteractiveMap (05.10.2013).
65 Museum at Mrakovica, 13.08.2013.
67 Ibid.
69 MALAVOLTI, , Too much Memory, Too much Oblivion”.
4 July 2012 marked the seventieth anniversary of the events on Mount Kozara.\textsuperscript{72} On the day of the commemoration the new exhibition was opened at the museum.\textsuperscript{73} In the efforts to compare the new permanent exhibition compared to the former one, it clearly stands out with its use of new technology.\textsuperscript{74} The new approach is quite similar to other modern exhibitions and is very reminiscent of the part of the exhibition dedicated to World War II in the Museum of Republika Srpska in Banja Luka.\textsuperscript{75} The new exhibition displays weapons, documents and images. Most inscriptions, Cyrillic or English, which describe pictures showing refugees, prisoners or dead bodies generally refer to those in the pictures as ‘people’ and therefore avoid underlining the ethnic group they belong to: “Germans taking captured people from Kozara” or “Kozara liberation soldiers helping refugees to flee from enemy invasion”. Additionally, “Kozara National Heroes” are listed by name and a part of the exhibition, entitled “They were just children”, addresses the child victims. Even though images of dead children are shown, it can be concluded that the new exhibition avoids making many gruesome pictures available to visitors. The previously described posters which were displayed at the former ‘temporary’ exhibition are no longer displayed, and a link to the First World War or the war in the 1990s is not evident anymore. Some inscriptions which were carved in stone or engraved in wood were made illegible. Nevertheless, there are also some exhibition boards which explicitly point out the number of Serbian victims like for example one board listing the crimes committed to civilians at Potkozarje stating “100,000 Serbian men and women”.

Unmistakably, the newly installed permanent exhibition differs from the ‘temporary’ one which focused exclusively on the suffering of one ethnic group. The involvement of the LDA in the process of re-conceptualizing the exhibition cannot be underestimated. The round table was organized as a result of the initiative which took years to happen and eventually led to the new permanent exhibition.\textsuperscript{76} But unlike during the 1990s, this time a political transition is not evident. Reports stated that Milorad Dodik, president of Republika Srpska, commented on the commemoration on 4 July 2012 as follows:

“The battle of Kozara is a fine example in the struggle for liberation. As on of the first battles of the Partisan movement during the Second World War, we commemorate with humbleness and in memory the dead of this time. In bold and divisive battle, the Serbian Partisans of this region defended the lives of more than 60,000 people in the encirclement of the Ustasha and German soldiers. The Battle of Kozara [...] showed the indestructibility of the people and the Republika Srpska was created as a late response of national affiliation of the Second World War.”\textsuperscript{77}

Furthermore, he stressed the historical fact that “[...] the partisans in the liberation war were Serbs. Only when members of different nations saw how the war would end and when it was clear who would emerge victorious, did they join the partisans. It is important to stress this because of those who nowadays try to twist history and falsely earn praise.”\textsuperscript{78}

Dodik uses clear nationalist rhetoric. This is significant since the past has demonstrated before what impact sharp nationalist rhetoric can have on a local level, especially in the follow-up states of the former Yugoslavia. Even though the new exhibition shows a less one-sided and provocative approach, a political transition towards a less nationalist attitude towards history cannot be witnessed at Mrakovica and the Prijedor region.

Conclusion

Since its instalment in 1972 the memorial complex at Mrakovica has been used to serve political interests. For Tito the site marked one of many places to secure the stability of the new state which was based on the legacy of the Second World War. The imposed official memory frame with its key components was


\textsuperscript{73} The main commemoration of the Battle of Kozara takes place annually on July 4th and is organized by the local veterans’ organisation. Furthermore, additional commemorations take place throughout the whole year to communicate the events of the region during the Second World War. E.g. April 1st marks the day of the shooting of Stevanović who is thought to be killed in the night of 31 March to 1 April and is therefore commemorated. More commemorations take place as listed: 24 April: the outbreak of prisoners at the former concentration camp at Jasenovac; 9 May: Day of Victory over Fascism (various local commemorations at different places); 21 May: establishment of the brigade Krajiska; 4 July: main commemoration on Mrakovica; Every last Sunday in June: memorial service at Patrija for the breakthrough of the partisans who were surrounded by the enemy at this time; 27 July: commemorations at different places to remember the beginning of the liberation war. Other commemorations take place on 2 August, every 1st Sunday in September and on 22 December. Interview with Veljo RODIć, 20.08.2013. This first interview with Rodić was conducted as part of my dissertation project. Further detailed research regarding the numerous partisans’ monuments and commemorations in the region is needed.

\textsuperscript{74} Interview with Sladan MIJEVIĆ (LDA), 17.07.2013.

\textsuperscript{75} “Sećanje na svuvenu bithku na Kozari”, NOVOĆT online, <http://www.novostirov.rs/vesti/naslovna/aktuelno.293.html>., 03.07.2012 (05.10.2013).

\textsuperscript{76} Museum of Republika Srpska at Banja Luka, 15.08.2013.

\textsuperscript{77} Museum at Mrakovica, 13.08.2013.

\textsuperscript{78} Museum of the Republika Srpska at Banja Luka, 15.08.2013.
presented to the public at Mrakovica. It included the glorification of the Partisans and the suffering and torture of civilians but the civil war that had taken place earlier was pushed into the background. When nationalist voices became heard and gained influence the master narrative had to give way to a more nationalist interpretation of the Second World War. A new exhibition was installed. The new narrative included the history and the victims of the First World War, the Second World War and the War in the 1990s of Serbs only. A political transition towards a nationalist approach to history was clearly visible. First attempts to change the 'temporary' exhibition were made by the LDA as early as 2000. The NGO's efforts in the process of re-conceptualizing which eventually led to the opening of the new permanent exhibition on 4 July 2012 cannot be underestimated. Therefore, the involvement of the international community remains crucial. Dodik's clear nationalist rhetoric at the seventieth anniversary of the commemoration of the events at Mount Kozara is significant since the past has shown many times what impact it can have on a local level. Even though the new exhibition shows a less one-sided and provocative approach, a political transition at the memory level is not evident at this time. The constructed, de- and reconstructed history and memory of the Second World War and the conflict in the 1990s remain inseparably intertwined to serve political interests leaving intact the division between the different remaining ethnic groups.