
War Monuments: Instruments of Nation-building in Bosnia and Herzegovina

ANIDA SOKOL

Sapienza University of Rome

Summary

This article gives an overview of the three main mutually exclusive ethno-national narratives developed during and after the war (1992–1995) in Bosnia and Herzegovina through one of the main instruments of memory politics, i.e., monuments, which have been erected in large numbers in the last two decades. Through the analysis of symbols, shapes and inscriptions, the aim is to show how war monuments in Bosnia and Herzegovina serve as instruments of nation-building processes, i.e., strategies of identity consolidation and how they function as “containers of symbolism”. Unlike in the other Yugoslav successor states, in Bosnia and Herzegovina there is more than one nation-building project, with two being related to the “outside motherlands”, Serbia and Croatia, and one to the state. After a general overview of the memorialization process in Bosnia and Herzegovina and its political and legal frameworks, the author focuses on war monuments and narratives of the three ethno-national groups and gives some examples of monuments that represent the fourth, civic, or “unconstituent” narrative, which is very rare and marginal.

Keywords: Monuments, War, Nation-building, Identity, Bosnia-Herzegovina

Introduction

In the last decades of the twentieth century, there was an unprecedented “return of the past”. According to John Keane, “crisis periods also prompt awareness of the crucial political importance of the past for the present” (1988: 204). This was especially prominent in the East, where “there has been a process of a ... (catching-up) nation-building, for which often a more distant past has been invented. Where national collective memories have been increasingly ‘desacralized’ and democratized in the West, there seems to be a desperate need for founding myths – just as there was after 1945 – in the East” (Müller, 2002: 9). New states needed new pasts and new identities and the “invention of tradition” would have been less dramatic if it

was not followed by genocide and persecution (Kuljić, 2005: 22). Moreover, as the Norwegian scholar Pål Kolstø writes, the third wave of nation-building, which took place with the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, had much shorter timespans and more prominent direct and indirect methods of identity consolidation, within which the construction and manipulation of symbols and rituals have been playing increasingly crucial roles (2014: 4). Nowhere was this more obvious than in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a former Yugoslav state with a very complex ethnic structure, which experienced the worst political and identity crisis due to the devastating war of 1992–1995.

The aim of this paper is to give an overview of the three mutually exclusive ethno-national narratives developed during and after the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina through the analysis of one of the main instruments of memory politics, i.e., monuments, which have been erected in large numbers in the last two decades. The goal is to show how war monuments in Bosnia and Herzegovina serve as instruments of nation-building processes, i.e., strategies of identity consolidation, aimed at building a sense of solidarity and common identity among the population (ibid.: 3–4). As containers of symbolism that give expression to different parameters of symbolic nation-building – ethnic and religious culture, geographical and historical imagination (ibid.: 13) – and, as sites of ceremonies and rituals, material, symbolic and functional *lieux de mémoire* (Nora, 1989: 18), monuments are an indispensable part of nation-building processes.

Unlike in the other Yugoslav successor states, where strategies of identity consolidation are carried out on the state level, since the majority of population in them are “titular”, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the construction of shared identities is fragmented between the three “constituent” peoples, *narodi* or ethno-national groups, with two being related to their “outside motherlands”, Serbia and Croatia, and one to the state. Thus, according to Kolstø and Jelovica, more than one nation-building project can be identified in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Kolstø and Jelovica, 2014: 242): 1) Bosniak, which is connected to the state but includes only one ethno-national group and is concentrated mostly in one part of the country, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina; 2) Serb, a nation-building process of the Republic of Srpska (RS – *Republika Srpska*), seen as a state of its own; and 3) Croat, which can be associated with the calls of Croat leaders for a third entity. In this multi-layered, nonlinear nation-building framework, with a very complex memory landscape, what is very prominent is what Jan Assmann, listing the functions of cultural memory, calls “concretion of identity”, “a kind of identificatory determination in a ‘positive’ (we are this) or a ‘negative’ (that is our opposite) sense” (1995: 130). Portraying mutually exclusive narratives of the past, war monuments in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not only show self-images of one group but also that of the enemy,

which, according to Assmann, can take dangerous forms. In the paper, after a general overview of the memorialization process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, its political and legal framework, I will focus on war monuments and narratives of the three ethno-national groups and give some examples of monuments that represent the fourth, civic, or what I will call here “unconstituent” narrative, which is very rare and marginal and based on civic-state identification.

Postwar Memorialization Process

Strategies of Memory Politics

As regime changes are usually followed by changes in memory politics, in Bosnia and Herzegovina there were a number of nationalist “responses” or “strategies” (Dragičević Šešić, 2011: 31–46). The first strategy was the destruction of the common communist past and pre-war collective memory or the appropriation of the memory of the antifascist struggle for the current prevailing ethno-national ideologies (Karačić, 2012: 17–90). The second was the destruction of all the traces of non-Bosniak, non-Serb or non-Croat elements on ethnically cleansed territories, which before the war were ethnically mixed, targets of which were especially religious objects (Riedlmayer, 1995: 7–11; 2007: 107–132). And the third strategy, the subject of this article, was the construction of a new memory, or rather three “constituent” memories, based on the nationalist, mutually exclusive Bosniak, Serb and Croat narratives of the last war and newly-created or revived ethno-national myths, within which prewar events and figures also gained new interpretation (for example Gavrilo Princip or Draža Mihailović). Within the three nation-building projects, the last war is a “foundational myth”, which, twisted and loaded with old myths and “usable pasts” (Smith, 1997: 37) employed in the construction of war narratives, was used to legitimize the new ethno-national regimes. In Smith’s words, “[i]n order to create a convincing representation of the ‘nation’, a worthy and distinctive past must be rediscovered and appropriated. Only then can the nation aspire to a glorious destiny for which its citizens may be expected to make some sacrifices” (ibid.: 36). Just as tales of glory from distant historical pasts and those of injustices from the Second World War were used for the mobilization of masses at the beginning of the 1990s, the war dynamics of 1992–1995 were crucial for the consolidation of postwar identities and stabilization of new regimes. These strategies were followed and supported by changes in urban spaces: streets and squares gained new names, mostly from heroic pasts, new mosques and churches were built – as religion is the main pillar of identity differentiation, even if religious practices have become largely irrelevant (Kolstø, 2014: 6) – and in almost every municipality a monument or a memorial plaque dedicated to military and civilian victims of one ethno-national group of the war of 1992–1995 was erected. Monuments have a number of functions in public

spaces: to mark whose territory it is, to demarcate the territory, to tell the official narrative of the majority population of one area, to transfer the narrative (in public spaces the narrative is easily transferred to the public), to demonstrate power, to give the illusion of creating something for eternity, to provoke the other, or to repel the other (Dragičević Šešić, 2011: 33).

All over the country, monuments which emphasized religious and emotional elements have been built near the locations of atrocities, in school yards, in central squares, in front of public institutions, and in places of burial, while memorial plaques can be seen on the walls of religious, educational, residential, and government buildings. They are not as “glorious” and monumental as those built in former Yugoslavia; many were hastily erected during or immediately after the war with the task “to remember and never forget”. However, in the last decade there have been a number of monuments with artistic and architectural value, and many are planned for the upcoming years. Most of the monuments in the RS (Republic of Srpska), which has centralized and coordinated memory politics, are dedicated to the Army of the Republic of Srpska (VRS – *Vojska Republike Srpske*) and Serb civilian victims, while in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, where memory politics differs between cantons and even towns depending whether Bosniaks or Croats are in majority, monuments commemorate the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina (*Armija Bosne i Hercegovine*, ABiH), the Croatian Defense Council (*Hrvatsko vijeće odbrane*, HVO), and Bosniak and Croat civilian victims.

Political and Legal Framework

The reason for the existence of the three official and mutually exclusive narratives within the borders of one small state can be found in the fact that the war ended without victorious and defeated sides. Thus, there was no winning side to impose one official narrative or collective memory, as there was, for example, in Croatia. Bosniaks, Serbs, and Croats have different views regarding “who lost and who won the war”, where each group sees itself as the victim. Three conflicting interpretations of wartime events and the roles played by the military forces in the conflict exist, within which the main argument is “our people were fighting a defensive war”. According to the study of Ronald Kostić, each ethno-national group considers its army formation as the *defender*; the majority of Croats and Bosniaks characterize the war as aggression, while Serbs regard it as a civil war (2012: 655–657). Moreover, the externally negotiated peace talks, the Dayton Peace Accords, left Bosnia and Herzegovina a decentralized country without any power over the memory discourse or nation-building process. The country lacks one state-level law that would control the erection of monuments. Instead, the process is based on the laws of the two entities, the cantons of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and

the Brčko District, but experience has shown that the erection of war monuments usually entirely depends on the willingness of the local administration to grant the necessary permits (Ministarstvo za ljudska prava i izbjeglice, 2012: 61–64). One of the only two state laws that address the issue of memorialization is Article 20 of the Law on Missing Persons (*Zakon o nestalim osobama*), which gives the families of missing persons or their associations the right to request that locations of burials and exhumations, individual or joint, be marked, contingent on approvals from the Missing Persons Institute and the local government (Institut za nestale osobe, 2004). The other law is the Criteria for School Names and Symbols (*Kriteriji za školske nazive i simbole*), according to which eligible school symbols are war memorial plaques with the names of those who were killed, the year of birth and the year of suffering and that do not contain interpretations and qualifications of the war, as well as memorials that are free of offensive and unacceptable messages. However, an analysis of the implementation of this law from 2008 confirmed that it is not respected and that 556 schools in the country (about 27 per cent of the total) have disputed symbols that are mostly related to the memorials to fallen soldiers from the last war (*Fondacija lokalne demokratije*, 2008: 29).

Dissonant Memories and the Cult of Victimhood

The uncoordinated approach to memorialization and the malfunctioning legal framework create a situation in which, on the one hand, the majority group in one local community has the “liberty” to commemorate only their victims and their military formations, only those aspects that are part of their ethno-national narratives, and disregard facts that could mar the image of freedom-fighters and victims of historical injustices. On the other hand, minority groups or the “Others” are not allowed to mark the places of their suffering even if war crimes have been documented by numerous national and international actors, including the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). One well-known case is the Omarska mine near Prijedor, where the surviving inmates of the Omarska concentration camp are still waiting for the construction of a memorial center and the exhumation of missing persons. The place where the camp was located is now held by the steel giant ArcelorMittal, further complicating the situation (Vulliamy, 2012). Thus, “too much memory” in Bosnia and Herzegovina is followed by collective amnesia, not only regarding the communist past and the marginalization of the common Yugoslav history, but also, and especially so, regarding the atrocities committed by all the groups in the last war. Ernest Renan’s famous lecture on what keeps a nation together still holds true: it is not only the will to remember, but also the will to forget, a crucial factor in the creation of a nation. A certain denial about the events of the past is present on all levels of Bosnian and Herzegovinian society, as Tepić writes:

Denial of certain facts from the 1992-1995 conflict, or the creativeness of interpretation to include negation, is furthermore connected to the culture of victimhood in BiH, whereby ‘everybody wants to be a victim’. Such victimhood, at the (ethnic) group level and individual level, implies denial of the Other. It is important for people to present themselves as the ones who were on the ‘right’ side, which removes any (collective) guilt and attempts to evade being marked as an aggressor by others (2012: 22).

Dissonant memories within one ethnically cleansed territory are not given space and when they are, monuments to different narratives are usually erected in peripheral or secluded areas, in places with a high number of returnees, such as in Kozarac near Prijedor (Irwin and Šarić, 2010) or due to pressures of the international community – as in the case of the Srebrenica-Potočari Memorial Center (Duijzings, 2007: 165). However, they have different significance for different groups: to some they are sacred, to others blasphemous. The meaning of monuments for every ethno-national group is constructed by their own ethno-national understanding of the past. As Assmann, referring to Maurice Halbwachs, writes:

Cultural memory works by reconstructing, that is, it always relates its knowledge to an actual and contemporary situation. True, it is fixed in immovable figures of memory and stores of knowledge, but every contemporary context relates to these differently, sometimes by appropriation, sometimes by criticism, sometimes by preservation or by transformation (1995: 130).

What can be observed in the Bosnian and Herzegovinian context is that different meanings of one monument especially intensify, become prominent and even more contrasting when that particular monument and its content are verbally and even physically attacked, usually by the other group. In these situations, ethno-national sentiments rise and the need to defend one’s own nation and its rights becomes very prominent, which can also lead to mass protests. Following the protests by local Serbs during the monument crisis in Višegrad, local police removed the term genocide from a monument for Bosniak victims on the Stražište Muslim Cemetery, which had been erected in May 2012 (Džidić, 2014; Jukić, 2012). While Serbs claim that no verdict proved that genocide was committed in Višegrad and that the term is only another way to negatively portray the Serb nation, Bosniaks see the forced removal of the word genocide as a denial of the crimes committed against them. This and similar incidents of the “war on memory”, prove that war monuments are not meaningless and unnoticeable structures in public spaces but relevant and sacred *lieux de mémoire* that have the potential to arouse different sentiments, pride, sadness and anger, and, as such, are powerful and even dangerous tools in the hands of the ethno-national regimes.

The Three Ethno-national Narratives

The Bosniak-Bosnian Identity Dilemma

During the 1990s, there was a “catching up” of Bosniak nation-building. Unlike the much older Serbian ethno-national myths, the Bosniak narrative and ethno-national symbols were mostly developed in this period. Elma Hašimbegović and Darko Gavrilović speak about the role of historians such as Mustafa Imamović and Enver Imamović in the development of the stories and myths about the Bosnian Muslims as the chosen people and the oldest native inhabitants of the country (Hašimbegović and Gavrilović, 2011: 29). In particular, the latter is accredited for introducing the symbol of the golden lily, *fleur-de-lis*, into the public discourse in the 1990s, tracing its origin back to a special endemic subspecies *lilium bosniacum*, a flower that grows only in the mountains of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which means that it predates the Middle Ages (ibid.: 30).

Another part of history that has been revived is the medieval period, particularly focused on the heretical Bosnian Church, traditionally connected to Bogomils, who were neither Catholics nor Orthodox and thus are very convenient for the Bosniak nation-building process (ibid.: 27–28). All these elements were very visible in the web propaganda materials for the first postwar census of 2013 which urged people to declare themselves Bosniaks, mainly through initiatives such as *Bitno je biti Bošnjak* (It is important to be Bosniak) and *Ja sam Bošnjak, vjera mi je Islam, jezik mi je bosanski* (I am a Bosniak, my religion is Islam, my language is Bosnian). Videos with citations from different historical periods were very popular and circulated on the Internet and social networks (*Bitno je biti Bošnjak*). The fact that the historical citations in the videos used the term Bosniak was interpreted as a proof that this particular group has always existed, and the quotes were followed by images of lilies, medieval knights, warriors, *stećci* (medieval tombstones), and historical persons such as Husein Gradašević, a general who fought against the Ottomans, with images of dragon that allude to him (he is often referred to “Zmaj od Bosne”, “the Dragon of Bosnia”). Bosniak intellectuals and religious leaders, such as Sejfudin Tokić and Muhamed Filipović, also took part. The latter claimed that without the “autochthonous” Bosniak people, Bosnia and Herzegovina would not exist, and that for hundreds of years they had not been allowed to be called by their real name, Bosniak, for which they had to pay a high price: the war. To declare themselves Bosnians instead of Bosniaks, which he called the “false Bosniak dilemma”, was not just a reflection of their fear due to constant persecution but also an attempt to bring into question the existence of the Bosniak people, and also of the whole country (Filipović, 2013). Indeed, before the census of 2013, the terms *Bosniak* and *Bosnian*, which had historically been interchangeable, became a subject of ardent debates. According to the postwar Constitution and the official narratives,

the first term denotes one of the three constituent peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and thus pertains to the ethno-national domain; its members in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia initially were treated as a religious group, they could declare themselves as Croatian Muslims, Serbian Muslims, and even Yugoslavs. Only later were they recognized first as an ethnic group, in the 1960s, and then as a nation, called Muslim, in 1971 (Friedman, 1996: 143–175). The second term, *Bosnian*, is used either or both to indicate a territorial belonging, thus can be used with the ethno-national terms (for example, a Bosnian Serb or a Bosnian Croat, to differentiate them from those in the “outside motherlands”), or to denote a civic nation, regardless of ethnicity and religious denomination. However, this is not recognized by the Constitution and, furthermore, is negated by many, particularly by Bosniak intellectuals (Filipović, 2013).

In the Bosniak narrative, this dilemma is a result of constant oppression, which culminated in the last war, seen as aggression against the sovereign state of Bosnia and Herzegovina and a genocidal act against the Bosniak people (Moll, 2013: 914; Ljubojević et al., 2011: 75). This narrative is the most complex and contradictory due to its dual or ambiguous image: on the one hand, it is based on the historical continuity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in which the ABiH is depicted as the only military formation that fought for the multinational state (Hoare, 2014). On the other hand, religious ceremonies, the exclusion of the victims of other ethnicities and the involvement of the Islamic community in the memorialization process give the image of a separatist, exclusively Islamic/Bosniak discourse. Bosniak monuments, erected during or after the war usually in the form of memorial plaques with the names of the killed (in the Islamic tradition there are no shapes and images of bodies), also have this dual image, which can be interpreted from their symbols. The symbol of *fleur-de-lis* in the Bosniak narrative represents a historical, secular image of Bosnia and Herzegovina and has to validate the continuity of Bosnian statehood, while the Islamic religious symbols of the crescent moon and star and texts from Koran demonstrate the central role of religion for the Bosniak identity. This is especially the case with the monuments dedicated to the Bosniak military casualties, called *šehidi*, a term that dates back from the Ottoman period but which gained prominence during the war (Bougarel, 2007). According to the dictionary of Turkish loanwords in the Serbo-Croatian language, *šehid* means: “a Muslim who with heroic death dies in the fight for faith; someone innocently killed; a martyr” (Škaljić, 1996: 683).

According to Bougarel, the widespread use of this term “during the war does not constitute a mere ‘awakening’ of the tradition but one aspect of nation-building and reislamicization processes initiated by the SDA [Stranka Demokratske Akcije, a Bosniak political party] and the Islamska zajednica [the Islamic community]” (2007: 186). In the Bosniak memory discourse, important places of memory are

cemeteries for the killed soldiers of the ABiH, which nurture the story of heroic fighters who gave their lives in defense of the country; in Sarajevo, the central memory site is the graveyard Kovači, the old Ottoman graveyard from the fifteenth century (Čusto, 2013: 90–96). The tombstones for the soldiers killed in the last war were standardized in 1996 and their shape, based on the Ottoman tombstones *nišani* and the medieval *stećci* (Lovrenović, 2001: 69–78; Malcolm, 2011: 62–108) with *fleur-de-lis*, the Muslim religious symbols of the crescent and star, and texts from Koran, are an emblematic representation of the Bosniak postwar ideology (Čusto, 2013: 88). By using *fleur-de-lis* (ancient period), *stećak* (medieval period), and *nišan* (Ottoman period), the historical continuity of Bosnian statehood is emphasized, but religious elements stress that Bosnia and Herzegovina is a country of Muslim/Bosniak people, and according to Amra Čusto, tell that its defense was also a defense of Islam (2013: 90). Even though there were Catholic and Orthodox members of the ABiH, especially at the beginning of the war, today they are buried on different sites and commemorated on different days (on religious holidays). Muslim/Bosniak soldiers (*šehidi*) are commemorated on the second day of Eid al-Fitr (a Muslim holiday that marks the end of Ramadan), Catholics (*branitelji*, defenders) on 1 November (All Saints Day), and Orthodox (*poginuli borci*, killed soldiers) on 7 January (the Orthodox Christmas Day), regardless of whether or not they practiced religion (Čusto, 2013: 94).

The secular symbol of *fleur-de-lis* can also be seen as exclusively Bosniak since largely only this group identifies with it. As previously stated, this symbol was popularized during the war and Serbs and Croats generally view it negatively on the flag of the ABiH. According to the IPSOS opinion survey conducted in 2011, 75 per cent of Serbs identify the coat of arms with six lilies with the ABiH rather than with the medieval coat of arms of Bosnian rulers (IPSOS, 2011: 28). Sixty-three per cent of Bosnians (the survey under this term includes both Bosniaks and Bosnians) believe that lilies can represent the history of all the Bosnian people regardless of ethnicity, while only 12 per cent of Serbs and 27 per cent of Croats believe so (IPSOS, 2011: 27). The symbol of *fleur-de-lis* can be seen also on monuments and memorial plaques dedicated to civilian victims and those built by private initiatives (i.e., not state-sponsored). Standardized memorial plaques were erected in 1996 in Sarajevo marking the places with the largest number of atrocities (in the streets of Ferhadija and Dobrinja). They have the coat of arms with six lilies on the upper edge and the inscription: “In this place, Serb evil-doers (*date*) killed (*number*) of the citizens of Sarajevo. Let the dead rest in peace, recite Al-Fatiha and say a prayer, remember and admonish. The Citizens of Sarajevo.”

These memorial plaques depict the other component of the Bosniak narrative: the image of the enemy. Although on the one hand, the need to name the perpetrators is significant, the term *Serb evil-doers* or *criminals* (*zločinci*) gives room for the

generalization of the guilt as the collective guilt of one nation and causes discontent among Serbs, who see these symbols as another way to depict the Serb nation as the *evil one* (Bajić, 2011). The inscription on the memorial plaque at the entrance of the recently reconstructed Vijećnica, the National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina uses the same term, demonstrating that this practice has not been abandoned. The inscription in English reads: “On this place Serbian criminals in the night of 25/26 August 1992 set fire to the National and University Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina; over 2 million books, periodicals and documents vanished in the flames. Do not forget; remember and admonish!” The Vijećnica was reopened on 9 May, Victory over Fascism Day as well as the Day of Europe (Jukić, 2014), connecting the Bosniak narrative not only to the European one, but also to the antifascist struggle of the Second World War. This strategy has also been used in other Bosniak commemorations and memory initiatives, such as the Day of Sarajevo, 6 April, marking both the liberation of the city in 1945 and the beginning of the siege in 1992 (Čusto, 2013: 109). On that day government representatives visit monuments from both wars, lay flowers and even pray the El-Fatiha, shifting the re-islamization process not only to the memory of the last war but also to the Second World War. Speaking at the opening ceremony of the Vijećnica, the chair of the tripartite presidency, Bakir Izetbegović, said that the restoration symbolized how Sarajevo had survived the horrors of the war and that they were sending a message of peace from multiethnic, European Sarajevo (Jukić, 2014). Although represented as multiethnic and inclusive, the Bosniak nation-building project with its religious practices and symbols excludes other groups and gives the image of an exclusively Islamic/Bosniak narrative.

The Serb Liberation Wars

While Bosnians, according to the IPSOS survey, consider both their ethnic identity and their identity as citizens of the country important, 67 per cent of Serbs distinguish their ethnic identity as primary (IPSOS, 2011: 82). Fifty-two per cent of Serbs feel they have more in common with the members of the same ethnicity living outside the country (IPSOS, 2011: 88) and 78 per cent identify their national symbols to be the same as those of Serbia (IPSOS, 2011: 89). Although symbols, ethnicity and historical imagination are largely connected with Serbia, the geographical imagination and the recent past are more focused in the Republika Srpska. As Nicholas Moll writes,

neither Yugoslavia nor Serbia constitutes the major reference in current Bosnian Serb memory and identity constructions. Instead, this place is reserved for Republika Srpska – as part of the Serb nation, but essentially as a state of its own. The creation of Republika Srpska in 1992 is systematically presented as an absolutely

necessary step in protecting the Serb population and their interests in BiH (2013: 917).

This is also proved by the fact that according to the same survey more Serbs want the Republika Srpska to become independent rather than to become part of Serbia (IPSOS, 2011: 44). Thus, even if the narrative is the same as that of the “outside motherland” (Čolović, 2002), the nation-building project of the Republika Srpska is still a separate process; it is, according to Kolstø and Jelovica, a project “inside the other in *matroshka*-doll fashion... and the inner is doing its utmost to escape” (Kolstø and Jelovica, 2014: 242).

In the official discourse of the Republika Srpska, the last war is called the Defense-Patriotic War (*odbrambeno-otadžbinski rat*), a war for the survival of the Serb nation. Ana Ljubojević, Darko Gavrilović, and Vjekoslav Perica state that the first to adopt the Homeland Concept, whose main “designer” was the former president of Croatia Franjo Tuđman, were the Bosnian Serbs under the leadership of Radovan Karadžić and Ratko Mladić (Ljubojević et al., 2012: 74). Although this concept has been used by all the three warring sides, in the Serb narrative it goes beyond the 1990s, as exemplified by the Law on Monuments and Memorial Plaques of the Liberation Wars (*Zakon o spomenicima i spomen obilježjima oslobodilačkih ratova*). The law, aimed at the protection and preservation of important monuments for the Serb nation, includes monuments and memorial plaques dedicated to the Serb and Montenegrin armies up to 1918, to the members of the antifascist struggle in the Second World War and to the soldiers of the Defense-Patriotic War of the Republika Srpska. It controversially equalizes the three wars under the same term *liberation wars* and avoids mentioning the military formations in the Second World War, giving space to different interpretations. Within this narrative, the last war was a heroic defense of the Serb nation and the Republika Srpska by the VRS.

In a number of towns in the Republika Srpska there are central monuments dedicated to the VRS, designed by the prominent Serbian sculptor Miodrag Živković, known for Partisan war monuments built in Yugoslavia, such as the monument for the Battle of Sutjeska in Tjentište (see Živković’s official website). His post-war works in Bosnia and Herzegovina include: the Monument to the Serbian Defenders of Brčko (*Spomenik srpskim braniocima Brčkog*, 1997), the Monument to the Fighters of Bijeljina and Semberija in Bijeljina (*Spomenik borcima Bijeljine i Semberije*, 1998), the Monument for the Honorable Cross in Prijedor (*Spomenik za Krst časni*, 2000), the Monument to the Soldiers of the Fatherland War in Derвента (*Spomenik borcima Otadžbinskog rata*, 2002), the Monument to the Soldiers of the Fatherland in Mrkonjić Grad (*Spomenik borcima Otadžbine*, 2002), and the Monument to the Fighters for Freedom in Modriča (*Spomenik borcima za slobodu*, 2002). These four- to seven-meter-high monuments are usually erected in central

squares, making them easily accessible to the public and tell the official narrative of the Republika Srpska. They are usually in the shape of a cross, demonstrating the important role of religion and the Orthodox Church within the Serbian memory discourse and identity consolidation. Bodies of soldiers are often placed inside or on the cross, symbolizing martyrdom and sacrifice. Some carry the Serbian symbol with four Cyrillic letters “S” that is popularly interpreted as “Only Unity Saves the Serb” (*Samo sloga Srbina spašava*), with inscriptions in the Cyrillic script, which is also an important ethno-national element.

Živković’s biography speaks about the changes in memory politics in the area of former Yugoslavia, but also about the equalization of the antifascist struggle of the Second World War and the Serb Defense-Patriotic War. The first plays an important part in the Serb post-war narrative; the memory of the Serb suffering from the Second World War has been revived and monuments to the Serb victims of the Ustaša regime have been built. For example, a monument and a memorial chapel built in Stari Brod, near Višegrad, in the memory of 6,000 Serb victims from eastern Bosnia killed by the Ustaše in 1942, also depicts the “martyr” death of Milica Rakić, a three-year-old girl from Batajnica who died during the NATO bombing in 1999 (Kusmuk, 2012). Serb suffering in the Second World War is symbolized by the Donja Gradina Memorial Park, which is described as the “[...] largest killing site of Serbian people, which is a part of the Jasenovac concentration camp established by the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) during the Second World War” (Donja Gradina Memorial Park). Sometimes memorials to Serb victims of 1992–1995 are erected in the vicinity of Partisan monuments (Karačić, 2012: 57–58). In the village of Kravice, near Srebrenica, for example, a memorial complex is dedicated both to the victims of the Second World War and those of the war of the 1990s. This monument is also an example of counter-memorials or oppositional memorials to the narratives of the Bosniak side (Duijzings, 2007: 162–163). In Kravice annual commemorations are held on 12 July, the day after the commemoration of the victims in Srebrenica, which speaks about its oppositional nature not only to the Bosniak narrative but also to the narrative of the international community that had a crucial role in the establishment of the memorial center and in the recognition and commemoration of the genocide.

This “rebellious” attitude was also demonstrated in the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. In Sarajevo, the international community commemorated the event with a solemn, EU-sponsored concert by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra in the restored Vijećnica, while a performance of “A century of peace after the century of wars” was staged on the Latin bridge by the Bosnian film director Haris Pašović. In contrast, a day earlier officials in East Sarajevo unveiled a two-meter high bronze statue of Gavrilo Prin-

cip (Čerkez, 2014). In Višegrad, on the streets of Emir Kusturica's newly-opened theme park dedicated to the novelist Ivo Andrić, "Andrićgrad", a reconstruction of the assassination was staged, entitled *Pobunjeni anđeli (Rebel Angels)*. The members of Mlada Bosna, responsible for the assassination, were represented as angels, and the last act was dedicated to the Serb victims of the First World War (Scenski prikaz sarajevskog atentata "Pobunjeni anđeli"). During the ceremony of the 100th anniversary of the assassination, Serbian writer Matija Bećković stated that St. Vitus Day (28 June) "is a Serbian holiday for eternity, that day is everything that we celebrate, and that is that the Church is one roof, Vitus one day, Kosovo one field and the peony one flower" (Kusturica, 2014). According to Serbian myth, after the Battle of Kosovo on 28 June 1389, peonies started growing and became red from the blood of the fallen heroes, spreading all over Serbia. The importance of the Kosovo myth (Bieber, 2002) is present in the commemorations of the last war: the saint's day of the Republika Srpska's armed forces is the same as the commemoration of the Battle of Kosovo, linking the modern-day army to the historical resistance against the Turks.

The Croat Homeland War

The Croat practice regarding the memory of the Second World War and the Yugoslav period is different from that of the Bosniak and Serb ones: in several Bosnian towns with Croat majorities, Partisan monuments have been destroyed, a practice that has been common also in Croatia, due to the fact that the current narrative there portrays the Yugoslav period as Serbian hegemony and oppression against the Croatian people, but also due to the negative legacy of the Ustaša regime (Karačić, 2012: 26–29). According to Vjeran Pavlaković, the last war in this narrative is the fulfillment of the hundred-years-old dream for independence of the Croatian people (2014). However, for the Croats within the borders of Bosnia and Herzegovina, it has different connotations. With its specific elements, calls for a third entity and negative loyalty towards the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Kolstø and Jelovica, 2014: 242), there is a specific identity consolidation of Croats within the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which can take forms of a quasi-nation-building project. Croatia still has a strong influence over this process: in the census of 2013, the State Office for Croats Outside Croatia (*Državni ured za Hrvate izvan Hrvatske*) called Croats from Bosnia and Herzegovina who live in Croatia and outside to declare themselves as both Croats and Catholics who speak the Croatian language, in order to ensure the equal position of Croats within Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sjauš, 2013).

The present struggle of the Croat people for their rights within the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of the main elements of the Croat narrative.

The other is the concept of the Homeland War, with which Tuđman tried to justify the just and defensive character of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia (Ljubojević et al., 2007: 70). Although the war discourse and symbols associated with it are the same as the discourse in Croatia – according to the IPSOS survey 84 per cent of Croats see their symbols as those of their “outside motherland” (IPSOS, 2011: 89) – there are still elements that are essentially “Bosnian Croatian”. Dates that are celebrated in the Croat memory politics, which is part of the diverse and fragmented memory landscape in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, are 18 November, when in 1991 Bosnian Croats proclaimed the Croat Community of Herceg-Bosna, and 28 August, when in 1993 the Croat Republic of Herceg-Bosna was established (Moll, 2013: 920). Another element that is specific to Bosnian Croats is the revival of the history of the Bosnian medieval period and of historical personalities such as the medieval Bosnian Queen Katarina Kosača and Duke Stjepan Kosača. While in the Bosniak version the main element of the medieval period is focused on Bogomils, “ancestors of the Bosniaks”, in the Croat version it is mainly based on Catholicism and anti-Ottomanism. The Croat positive attitude towards the medieval past of Bosnia and Herzegovina can be seen from the IPSOS survey in which 67 per cent of Croats believe that *stećci* can represent the history of all the Bosnian people (IPSOS, 2011: 27), while 59 per cent of them stated that the coat of arms with six lilies reminds them of the Bosnian medieval rulers (King Tvrtko I Kotromanić and others) (IPSOS, 2011: 28).

However, this positive attitude is connected with an exclusivist approach to cultural heritage since 62 per cent declared that Muslims cannot identify with the medieval, pre-Ottoman, Christian past and symbols (IPSOS, 2011: 112). The “war on memory” is visible not only in the struggles for “ownership” of history and historical figures, but also over urban spaces. This conflict is most extreme in the divided city of Mostar, where architecture is visibly used for the imposition of ideologies and reinforcement of identities, an aspect that has been researched by Emily Gunzburger Makaš (2007). The statue of the Bosnian medieval Queen Katarina Kosača and of the Croatian poet Marko Marulić from Split are, indeed, placed on the Square of Great Croats (*Trg velikih Hrvata*), the former Rondo Square, in the Croatian part of Mostar, where the Duke Stjepan Kosača Croatian Center (*Dom Hercega Stjepana Kosače*), a former communist cultural center, is located (ibid.: 276–278). Queen Katarina Kosača, the poet Marko Marulić, and Duke Stjepan Kosača have anti-Ottoman symbolism, in contrast to the Old Bridge, which for many is a Muslim and Bosniak symbol, and not a symbol of multiethnic Mostar. The statues also symbolize the Croat cultural heritage that is connected to both Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The centuries-long presence of Croats in the area is represented by fourteen pillars (symbolizing fourteen centuries since Cro-

ats migrated to the Balkans) on the Monument to the Fallen Croat Defenders of the Homeland War (*Spomenik poginulim hrvatskim braniteljima domovinskog rata*), designed by a sculptor from Croatia, Slavomir Drinković, and unveiled just two days before the city was united in 2004. A cross, usually connected with suffering and resurrection, passes through the monument, while a picture of pieta represents a mother mourning over a dying son/soldier (Gunzburger Makaš, 2007: 276–278). Even though a number of Bosniaks were members of the HVO at the beginning of the war, religious symbols exclude them from the Croat collective memory.

The Croat struggle for memory spaces, a symbolic representation of their demands for a third entity, have been followed by numerous controversies. One is the Jubilee Cross, built by the Diocese of Mostar, which overlooks the city and which according to Croats is a message of peace, but according to Bosniaks is a provocation. Or the bell tower at the mission church of the Franciscan Community of Herzegovina, which was reconstructed higher than the prewar one. Heated disputes between Croats and Bosniaks over memory spaces culminated with the destruction of the war monument of ABiH by a bomb in January 2013. The monument dedicated to all ABiH soldiers who were killed in the city was placed in April 2012 in front of the new building of the Mostar City Council without the permission of the local authorities. This monument was built after a monument to eight HVO soldiers from Livno, who died there in 1993, was erected by the Croat veteran association *Zavjet*, replacing a cross that stood there previously (Zuvela, 2013). Numerous accusations and heated debates in the media followed both actions, deepening the already existing divisions.

The “Unconstituent” Narrative

The fourth narrative, which is very rare and marginal but is part of the multilayered memory landscape in the country, is the Bosnian civic or “unconstituent” narrative that does not commemorate the war in an ethno-national way. Here I refer to the Bosnian civic nation, which is highly discussed, mostly negated and, as stated previously, not recognized by the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is largely unacknowledged by the majority of the population: 79 per cent of Serbs and 59 per cent of Croats negate the existence of the Bosnian nation, while 72 per cent Bosnians confirm it (IPSOS, 2011: 83), although, most of them, 82 per cent, define their identity in ethno-national terms, declaring themselves Bosniaks (IPSOS, 2011: 15). However, it should be mentioned that the distinction between the two terms is not always clear; Bosniaks sometimes use the term Bosnian in the ethnic sense, thus distinguishing themselves from Serbs and Croats in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For Serbs and Croats, however, the term Bosnian almost always refers to Bosnian Muslims, since their members rarely define their identity in relation to the

state. However, there is a growing tendency especially among young people, who do not feel they belong to any of the constitutionally defined ethno-national groups, to refuse the prevailing ethno-national identities. This tendency was visible in the campaigns before the census 2013 which called on people to declare themselves “unconstitutionally”, in protest against the ethno-national divisions of the country. “Be a Citizen Above All Else: For a Bosnia and Herzegovina Without Discrimination” (*Budi građanin prije svega: Za Bosnu i Hercegovinu bez diskriminacije*) was a campaign of “Coalition Equality” (*Koalicija jednakost*), a coalition of seventeen civil society organizations from both entities whose goal was the changing of the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which only recognizes the three constituent groups (Terzić, 2013; *Koalicija Jednakost*). The coalition collected hundreds of photographs of people holding an inscription on which it was written *citizen above all* (*Građanin/ka prije svega*) and included well-known actors, film directors, journalists and professors, who voiced their disagreement with the discrimination against people not belonging to any the three categories (*Koalicija Jednakost*).

Refusing to accept one of the three ethno-national identities is also a form of protest against the ethno-national regimes and the leading political parties. These protests culminated in the social riots that spread in a number of cities in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in February 2014, during which many called on the government to end the ethno-national narratives and concentrate instead on improving economic conditions. However, until the publication of the final results of the 2013 census, the percentage of people who declared themselves in civic terms will remain unknown. The monuments connected to this concept can be described as “counter” monuments that refute the prevailing ethno-national narratives and give a more inclusive memory of the war. The Sarajevo Roses (*Sarajevske ruže*), shrapnel damage caused by mortar shells and later painted in red, can be seen as counter memorials because instead of interpreting a particular version of history, they are silent about the identity and ethnicity of both victims and perpetrators. Instead, they force passers-by to construct their own versions of the past (Ristić, 2013: 113–117; Junuzović, 2006). The Monument to the International Community (*Spomenik međunarodnoj zajednici*), on the other hand, uses humor as a form of memory; it is in the shape of the can of Ikar beef, which was delivered as part of the humanitarian assistance packages during the war (Krstanović, 2007), a memory shared by all regardless of ethnicity. Another example of the Bosnian civic or “unconstituent” narrative is the Slana Banja memorial complex in Tuzla where all the victims of the Kapija massacre of 25 May 1995 are buried. Radical nationalist politicians and religious leaders protested the common burial site of the seventy-one victims who were of different religious backgrounds. The only religious symbols on the graves are small silver medals under the photos of the deceased, which is a contrast to the

prominent religious symbols and shapes of the monuments of the prevailing narratives. This practice stresses civic nationalism rather than ethnic, which can also be seen on monuments to the Second World War (Armakolas, 2011). Indeed, the city of Tuzla dedicated a new memorial space nearby – the Alley of Heroes (*Aleja heroja*) with busts of Partisan and socialist heroes – symbolically refuting the neglect of the common communist past (Armakolas, 2011). Thus, also within the civic narrative, the memory and heritage of the antifascist struggle is appropriated and connected with the war of 1992–1995 for the strengthening of a more inclusive and less ethnically interpreted history.

Conclusion

In addition to providing knowledge about the past, public memorials should have a pedagogical function: to educate and stimulate dialogue so future generations can reinforce the culture of human rights and prevent the repetition of a traumatic past. However, in divided societies, memorials can be very dangerous, fortify divisions, and even provoke future conflicts. In fact, monuments in Bosnia and Herzegovina construct and reinforce mutually exclusive narratives that are part of the ethno-national identities, and as such are instruments of identity building. Memory initiatives are very rarely directed towards civic nation-building that would include all the ethno-national groups. Instead, identity consolidation is carried out on the level of the ethno-national groups, within which monuments only serve to strengthen divisions. Thus, aside from attempts by some civil society organizations which aim to strengthen the civic Bosnian identity over the ethno-national identities, it is difficult to speak about strategies of identity consolidation on the state level. Instead, identity-building takes place in the entities (the Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina), cantons, and local levels, where the crucial roles are played by ethno-national regimes and the elites of the three prevailing groups. Although the Bosniak identity-building is connected to the state, still it is an ethnically-conceived nationhood and excludes other groups. When it comes to the Serb and Croat identity consolidation, their connection with the state is almost non-existent, which is demonstrated by their negative loyalty scores to Bosnia and Herzegovina (Kolstø and Jelovica, 2014: 242). Their wartime aims, unification with Serbia or Croatia, have been shifted towards the independence of Republika Srpska, in the first case, and the creation of a third entity in the case of Bosnia's Croats, within which specific nation-building projects are carried out. As part of these projects, monuments serve as flags that mark territories, i.e., ethnically homogenous political spaces that can guarantee safety and “hence proper democratic majority citizenship of the population” (Dević, 2014: 53). They are also used to provoke and repel. Many monuments, especially those dedicated to heroes of one ethno-national

group, who are seen as perpetrators by the other group, are regarded as provocations and halt the process of return of refugees and of the restoration of the multiethnic character of Bosnia and Herzegovina, one of the main aims of the Dayton Peace Accords. With the explicit naming of perpetrators, many monuments built from the bottom up also support the dominant ethno-national narratives, which according to experts can lead to future conflicts and revenge seeking. Although the three narratives are mutually exclusive, the same strategies are employed in the construction of each one: the concept of the Homeland or Fatherland War, the exclusion of other groups, the cult of victimhood, religious symbols and ceremonies, and the connection to the Second World War atrocities and antifascist struggle. This last strategy is employed also in the civic narrative and identity-building, with the aim of emphasizing the common communist past, together with other memories shared by all the groups, such as the feeling of hunger during the war (The Monument to the International Community) and the current economic situation.

Dealing with the past is essential for Bosnia and Herzegovina and monuments play a very important role in this process. This is especially visible when it comes to the memory of the Second World War: suppressed memories from that period fueled hate and legalized the use of force at the beginning of the 1990s. One-sided interpretations of past events give distorted pictures about the conflict and the message is usually that of division and accusation. The current situation regarding war monuments in Bosnia and Herzegovina is very complex and is connected with the division that exists on all levels. A comprehensive legal framework is necessary for the regulation of the issue, but solutions that will satisfy all the sides are hard to reach. The question is, how to remember the war with three different versions of the past? Initiatives that do not commemorate victims in an ethno-national way can be a good step forward, but until now they have been very rare and marginal.

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Mailing Address: **Anida Sokol**, Sapienza University of Rome, Department of Political Science, Piazzale Aldo Moro 5, 00185 Roma T, Italy.

E-mail: anida.sokol@uniroma1.it