

## Land of Ghosts? Memories of War in the Balkans

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In September 1990, sitting in his Sarajevo apartment quaffing plum brandy, the future leader of the Bosnian Serbs Radovan Karadžić speculated with dark foreboding about the escalating tension in Yugoslavia. Addressing a western journalist, he depicted a people still haunted by the legacy of the murderous oppression they had experienced at the hands of the collaborationist Croatian Ustaša in the Second World War. 'Serbs here are ready for war. If someone forces them to live as a national minority, they are ready for war. This nation remembers well the genocide. The memory of those events is still a living memory, a terrible living memory. The terror has survived fifty years'.<sup>1</sup> There could be no more pellucid illustration of how participants in the conflicts in former Yugoslavia ubiquitously and insistently framed them with reference to historical rivalries, injustices and trauma. Numerous external commentators accepted the claims of nationalist demagogues at face value and consequently represented these wars as historically determined, almost natural phenomena in a region inhabited by exotic primitives in thrall to primordial hatreds and a cyclical history of vicious blood-letting.<sup>2</sup> Such caricatural views did not find much favour in scholarly work which instead devoted considerable effort not only to unravelling the 'Balkanist' western prejudices that underpinned them but also to elaborating more sophisticated interpretations of the origins and nature of the Yugoslav wars.<sup>3</sup> While rejecting determinism, and often struggling to gauge its precise significance as a variable, these alternative explanations nonetheless generally accepted that

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<sup>1</sup> Chuck Sudetic, *Blood and Vengeance: One Family's Story of the War in Bosnia* (New York, 1999), pp. 83-4.

<sup>2</sup> Most notoriously, Robert D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History* (New York, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> For a summary, see Jasna Dragović-Soso, 'Why Did Yugoslavia Disintegrate? An Overview of Contending Explanations', in Lenard J. Cohen and Jasna Dragović-Soso (eds), *State Collapse in South-Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on Yugoslavia's Disintegration* (West Lafayette, 2008), pp. 1-39.

‘memory mattered and exercised power’ in former Yugoslavia.<sup>4</sup> From this point of departure, the following essay offers a necessarily schematic discussion of some of the interconnections between memory, identity and war in the modern Balkans.<sup>5</sup>

The study of collective memory is a vibrant inter-disciplinary field, and the memory of the dislocating experience of war lies at its very heart.<sup>6</sup> A ceaselessly proliferating scholarship illuminates how memories of the Holocaust, two world wars and numerous ‘lesser’ conflicts have been negotiated through subsequent decades by governments, societies, sectional interest groups and individuals, and the intersection of that process with other political and cultural discourses. The intimate interconnection between war memory and national identity has emerged as a pre-eminent theme here. Modern warfare strains loyalties and brings issues of belonging into exquisite relief, not least when nation states face the existential danger of ‘the threat of extinction, a threat that resonates long past the cessation of hostilities.’<sup>7</sup> Post-war, political leaders and other agents with cultural authority accommodate the sacrifices made, hardships endured and even crimes committed within positive narratives of the national past, articulated through diverse media, and thus rationalise, justify and domesticate them. In victory or defeat, overtly or surreptitiously, such public

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<sup>4</sup> Quote from Jan-Werner Müller, ‘Introduction: The Power of Memory, the Memory of Power and the Power over Memory’, in Jan-Werner Müller (ed.), *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe: Studies in the Presence of the Past* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Treating ‘the Balkans’ as a coherent unified subject here is perhaps a somewhat ‘Balkanist’ move in so far as it elides significant differences in political culture, historical experience and collective mentality amongst the various countries of the region, but constraints of space dictate a somewhat generalised treatment.

<sup>6</sup> A whole essay could be taken up with a definition of ‘collective memory’. I use the term very broadly here, to denote narratives, symbols and images, embodied in a wide variety of cultural forms, that circulate within a collectivity and form a social frame of reference. This frame endows the collectivity with cohesion and helps its members to orientate themselves for action in the world. Official efforts to exert control over its content can be potent, but collective memory is always processual, unstable, contested and, perhaps somewhat ironically, by no means unified. It is also quintessentially performative: ‘In truth ... there is no such thing as memory; there is only the activity of remembering’ (Jeffrey K. Olick, *In the House of the Hangman: The Agonies of German Defeat, 1943-1949* (Chicago, 2005), p. 20).

<sup>7</sup> Quote from Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery* (London, 2003), p. 5.

collective remembering helps societies overcome wartime traumas and simultaneously reconstitutes the political and national community.<sup>8</sup> Cultural historians have documented the nuances of these developments in myriad national cases, and military and international historians have lately begun to recognise the potential pertinence of this work. Given their distinctive sub-disciplinary concerns, their specific interest is usually in how elite and popular understandings of the past and of the self condition perceptions, delimit policy options and shape responses in subsequent crises and conflicts.<sup>9</sup>

The formation of nation states in the Balkans in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was accompanied by the development of nationalist ideologies in which warfare figured prominently.<sup>10</sup> Mythological memories of past conflicts – especially against the Ottoman Turks - and heroic ancestors were among the key cultural resources deployed by elites attempting to create cohesive communities in which loyalty to the nation was the prime marker of identity. The Serbian rediscovery of the epic 1389 battle of Kosovo is most notorious here, but one could equally adduce the Romanian instrumentalisation of the sixteenth-century warrior prince Mihai Viteazul ('Michael the Brave').<sup>11</sup> These ideologies served to mobilise populations behind irredentist claims, and subsequent military campaigns to extend and secure the putative patrimony generated fresh antagonisms, unsettled scores and national martyrs. For example, the posthumous veneration of Pavlos Melas, a Greek patriot killed in Macedonia in 1904, inspired countless other Greeks to join the

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Richard Ned Lebow, Wulf Kansteiner and Claudio Fogu (eds), *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe* (Durham, NC, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Robert M. Citino, 'Military Histories Old and New: A Reintroduction', *American Historical Review*, 112/4 (2007): 1070-90; Robert D. Schulzinger, 'Memory and Understanding U.S. Foreign Relations', in Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson (eds), *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations* (Cambridge, 2004, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn), pp. 336-52.

<sup>10</sup> Victor Roudometof, *Nationalism, Globalization, and Orthodoxy: The Social Origins of Ethnic Conflict in the Balkans* (Westport, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Florian Bieber, 'Nationalist Mobilization and Stories of Serb Suffering: The Kosovo Myth from 600<sup>th</sup> Anniversary to the Present', *Rethinking History*, 6/1 (2002): 95-9; Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness* (Budapest, 2001), pp. 39-42.

armed struggle with Bulgaria and the Ottomans for control of that region.<sup>12</sup> It is important to recognise that such martial myths were far from untypical in the age of romantic nationalism: 'Across Europe – from Ireland to Poland – poetic visionaries dreamed of resurrection, sacrifice and blood spilled for the sake of the nation's future.' Moreover, 'the emergence of Balkan epics of bloodshed and national unity' was the product of the exigencies of nation-building in a specific set of political, social and economic circumstances rather than a genetic predisposition towards violent feuding.<sup>13</sup> Yet this said, it is hard to deny that contingencies in the Balkans did favour 'a particularly intensive reference to wars in the collective historical consciousness': 'the fact that almost all Balkan nation-states were the immediate product of wars' meant that 'the tradition of myth-building and the glorification of military violence' became 'a particularly attractive instrument for the strategy of nation-building'.<sup>14</sup>

With the demise of the Ottoman and Habsburg empires, the post-First World War peace settlements established a territorial configuration of nation states in the Balkans that endured in broad terms until the last decade of the twentieth century. The intensity of nation-building efforts scarcely abated, however, as modernising reformers grappled with the challenge of integrating new territories and diverse populations into expanded states. Simultaneously, old international rivalries persisted, in some instances sharpened by the revisionist aspirations of those vanquished in the First World War. Profound economic problems, struggles to stabilise constitutional forms and the machinations of the great powers in the region also contributed to a pervasive sense of insecurity. In these circumstances, it is perfectly explicable that war memory still played an important role as 'a tool for national identity management'. State-controlled education, for example, continued to 'show

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<sup>12</sup> Anastasia Karakasidou, 'Affections of a Greek Hero: Pavlos Melas and Heroic Representations in Greece', in Maria Todorova (ed.), *Balkan Identities: Nation and Memory* (London, 2004), pp. 197-232.

<sup>13</sup> Mark Mazower, *The Balkans* (London, 2000), p. 133.

<sup>14</sup> Wolfgang Hoepken, 'War, Memory, and Education in a Fragmented Society: The Case of Yugoslavia', *East European Politics and Societies*, 13/1 (1999): 191-2.

the legitimacy of war to fulfill national interests and to present wars as examples from the past of how to behave and how to defend those national interests.<sup>15</sup>

The memorialisation of the First World War was also closely bound up with such integrative projects. Thus in Romania the construction of over 3,500 statues and commemorative sites and the institution of Heroes' Day (on the Orthodox holiday of the Ascension) were important unifying and homogenising gestures.<sup>16</sup> In the very different context of Yugoslavia, on the other hand, memorialisation did little to overcome fissures in the body politic. Commemoration here focused overwhelmingly on ceremonies and cemeteries for Serbia's military dead: 'Croat and Slovene losses on the defeated Habsburg side were left unrecognized', fostering further resentment at Serbian domination of the new state.<sup>17</sup> Even if liberal reformers tended to be the most ardent centralisers in the inter-war years, the emergence of various extreme nationalist movements as the 1930s wore on also ensured continued visibility for martial tropes. So when the Greek dictator Ioannis Metaxas reached back into the classical past for symbolic antecedents for his Fourth of August Regime, he turned not to decadent and democratic Athens but to militaristic and autocratic Sparta.<sup>18</sup>

While acknowledging the prevalence of these violent memories, it remains important once more to contextualise them. The historical imaginaries of Balkan nations were not solely comprised of recollections of internecine conflicts; artistic and scientific achievements demonstrating civilisational superiority were also routinely lauded. Nor were national identities unitary: this was an age of intense ideological contestation and very different visions of the national essence were offered by agrarian radicals, communists, liberals and the authoritarian right. Such ideological

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>16</sup> Maria Bucur, 'Edifices of the Past: War Memorials and Heroes in Twentieth-Century Romania', in Todorova (ed.), *Balkan Identities*, pp. 163-71.

<sup>17</sup> John R. Lampe, *Balkans into Southeastern Europe: A Century of War and Transition* (Houndmills, 2006), p. 100.

<sup>18</sup> Philip Carabott, 'Monumental Visions: The Past in Metaxas' *Weltanschauung*', in Keith S. Brown and Yannis Hamilakis (eds), *The Usable Past: Greek Metahistories* (Lanham, 2003), pp. 29-31.

commitments could also entail transnational affiliations which cut across the primacy of the nation, even if – as the example of Balkan communism’s plans for radical territorial revision in the age of the Comintern demonstrates – these were not necessarily conducive to international harmony.<sup>19</sup> By the same token, elite endeavours to instrumentalise war memory in the service of identity construction were often resisted: witness the diverse critical responses of intellectuals and the wider populace to official Bulgarian attempts to promote a ‘supercharged militaristic patriotism’ through representation of the experience of the First World War.<sup>20</sup> It was also certainly not the case that Balkan states were simply helpless captives of the legacy of a violent past. Although Albanian nationalism had its own inspirational ‘immortal hero’ in the shape of the fifteenth-century warrior Skenderbeg, weakness and underdevelopment in the inter-war years dictated concentration on survival and the eschewing of any efforts at mass patriotic agitation or the pursuit of irredentism.<sup>21</sup> Greece and Turkey had been involved in the bitterest of armed conflicts between 1919 and 1923, but even this very recent antagonism with centuries-old resonances proved susceptible to amelioration (if not, admittedly, outright resolution) through prudent statecraft, with the signature of the reconciliatory 1930 Ankara accords.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, there were significant moves towards regional anti-revisionist cooperation in the 1930s as the rising Axis menace began to impinge upon the

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<sup>19</sup> For a classic case study in these complexities, see Evangelos Kofos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia* (Thessaloniki, 1964), pp. 57-94.

<sup>20</sup> Snezhana Dimitrova, ‘“My War is not Your War”: The Bulgarian Debate on the Great War’, *Rethinking History*, 6/1 (2002): 15-34, quote at 28.

<sup>21</sup> Quote from Kristo Frasherri, *The History of Albania (A Brief Survey)* (Tirana, 1964), p. 86; Robert C. Austin, ‘Greater Albania: The Albanian State and the Question of Kosovo, 1912-2001’, in John R. Lampe and Mark Mazower (eds), *Ideologies and National Identities: The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe* (Budapest, 2004), pp. 237-42.

<sup>22</sup> Bruce Clark, *Twice a Stranger: How Mass Expulsion Forged Modern Greece and Turkey* (London, 2007), pp. 201-22.

region.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, it should not be forgotten that the 'Balkan states wanted war neither in 1914 nor in 1939'; in both cases, it was imposed from outside.<sup>24</sup>

The Second World War plunged the Balkans into a maelstrom of violence. A complex three way struggle between Axis occupation forces, collaborationist regimes and resistance movements was overlaid and intertwined with a class-based civil war waged by communists against traditional elites and inter-ethnic blood-letting in which old antagonisms took on unprecedentedly ferocious, even genocidal, forms. Historical rationalisations and symbolism loomed large. The collaborationist Ustaša regime, for example, exploited years of pent up resentment at Serbian supremacy in the first Yugoslavia, symbolised by the martyr's death of nationalist leader Stjepan Radić at the hands of a Serb politician in 1928, and regarded itself as the culmination of the long Croatian struggle for independent statehood against a succession of domineering others.<sup>25</sup> The Serbian royalist and nationalist movement led by Draža Mihailović – which occupied a somewhat ambiguous position in the matrix of collaboration and resistance - conversely adopted the sobriquet 'Četniks', 'the traditional name of rural Serb bands resisting Ottoman forces.'<sup>26</sup> To be sure, power political motives mingled with historical grievances. The harshness of the Bulgarian occupation regime in Greek Macedonia and Thrace owed something to a sense of exultation at the final acquisition (or, 'recovery') of territories that had lain at the core of Bulgarian national aspirations since the abortive treaty of San Stefano in 1878.<sup>27</sup> Determination to retain these long coveted lands underpinned

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<sup>23</sup> Tom Gallagher, *Outcast Europe: The Balkans, 1789-1989* (London, 2001), pp. 103-26.

<sup>24</sup> Misha Glenny, *The Balkans, 1804-1999: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers* (London, 2000), p. 457.

<sup>25</sup> Sabrina P. Ramet, 'The NDH - An Introduction', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 7/4 (2006): 399-408.

<sup>26</sup> Lampe, *Balkans into Southeastern Europe*, p. 160.

<sup>27</sup> On the occupation and its legacy, see Xanthippi Kotzageorgi-Zymari and Tassos Hadjianastassiou, 'Memories of the Bulgarian Occupation of Eastern Macedonia: Three Generations', in Mark Mazower (ed.), *After the War Was Over: Reconstructing the Family, Nation, and State in Greece, 1943-1960* (Princeton, 2000), pp. 273-92. Bulgaria had previously seen its expansionist ambitions thwarted in the 1912-1913 Balkan Wars and the First World War.

Bulgaria's brutal policy of colonisation and the extirpation of Greek culture: 'for some Balkan states ... this war was not just about military victory but about permanent demographic engineering in new territories.'<sup>28</sup>

If the cruel savagery of the war in the Balkans is undeniable, however, it is important not to view it as 'the spontaneous eruption of primeval hatreds'.<sup>29</sup> Rather it was Nazi policy deliberately to exploit latent animosities in the region - so in Yugoslavia, 'All claims were accepted, all separatisms encouraged, all tensions exacerbated' - while also infusing them with a novel biological racism, in the context of the desperate straits of total war in which previous civilised norms became utterly moot.<sup>30</sup> Some elements of the conflict are, moreover, hardly explicable through the frame of memory. The struggle waged by Tito's communist partisans, for example, was future-oriented, in so far as its main goal was the establishment of a multi-ethnic socialist Yugoslavia (though, of course, all communists viewed the world through the historical prism of class struggle). Yet throughout the region, whatever the fine detail of motivation, the sanguinary experience of this war generated a fresh catalogue of historical traumas, unsettled scores and poisonous legacies which had to be negotiated during post-war reconstruction and beyond, and which would remain available for exploitation with baleful consequences in the future.

As across the rest of Europe, the development of collective memories of the Second World War in the Balkans was heavily conditioned by post-war political imperatives, especially those generated by the nascent Cold War. Given the slightly problematic democratic credentials of the newly-established communist regimes, the insistent construal of the war in ideological terms as a virtuous anti-fascist struggle was for them a crucial mechanism of legitimation. That said, as Balkan states over time developed their own variants of 'national communism', collective memory

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<sup>28</sup> Mazower, *The Balkans*, p. 111.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>30</sup> Quote from Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *A History of the Balkans, 1804-1945* (London, 1999), p. 311.



increasingly hybridised familiar nationalist and novel communist tropes. Bulgaria and Romania faced a particular dilemma here: as allies of Nazi Germany, they had gone to war in large part to secure traditional national territorial aspirations which the communist successor governments did not necessarily repudiate; yet simultaneously, the war ‘had to be remembered as the political adventure of a “native fascist bourgeoisie”, and each country’s defeat in the war had to be praised as the birth of a new political order.’<sup>31</sup> In Bulgaria, official remembrance policies prior to the later 1960s focused on ‘the memory of the Soviet soldiers, partisans and antifascists’ and the ‘socialist victory’ after the Second World War to the virtual exclusion of other actors and epochs. Subsequently, however, policy shifted and the traditional heroes of the national liberation struggle from the medieval period onwards began to be rediscovered and celebrated anew, as the past was re-interpreted ‘as coherent and contiguous with the socialist framework.’ Aligning nineteenth century freedom fighters with partisan resisters, the national past was ideologised just as the ideology’s vision was nationalised.<sup>32</sup>

The specificities of this process were somewhat different in Romania. Initial memorialisation policy focused on lauding the achievements of the victorious Red Army and of those Romanian soldiers who had fought alongside them after the country’s volte face in August 1944. The fate of Romanian soldiers who had fallen previously fighting for the Axis was entirely marginalised. (Jewish victims of the Holocaust on Romanian soil were also largely ignored, owing to murky issues of complicity, lingering anti-Semitism and the fact that ethnic difference was elided within the communist anti-fascist narrative.)<sup>33</sup> Once Romanian communism began to take an increasingly independent turn after the withdrawal of the Red Army in 1958, a rapprochement with more

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<sup>31</sup> Hoepken, ‘War, Memory, and Education’, 195.

<sup>32</sup> Nikolai Voukov, ‘Representing the Nation’s Past: National History Monuments in Socialist and Post-Socialist Bulgaria’, unpublished paper, [http://www.hks.harvard.edu/kokkalis/GSW7/Nikolai%20Voukov%20\\_paper\\_.pdf](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/kokkalis/GSW7/Nikolai%20Voukov%20_paper_.pdf) (accessed 27 June 2008), quotes at pp. 4-6. That Russia had long been a patron of Bulgarian national aspirations, just as Bulgarian communism remained solidly Russophile, assisted with the construction of this narrative. The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 was also a partial exception to the general initial neglect of pre-1940s history.

<sup>33</sup> Bucur, ‘Edifices of the Past’, pp. 171-7.

traditional nationalist rhetoric proved useful here too, but with a pointedly anti-Russian purpose. The 'vigorous revival of national ideology' proceeded apace under Nicolae Ceaușescu, who co-opted Romania's medieval national heroes such as Michael the Brave as the direct antecedents of the Romanian communist party in an ongoing struggle for independence: 'in the past Romanians had had to fight against the Ottomans; under Ceaușescu they had to oppose the Soviets'.<sup>34</sup> This nationalist turn also had an anti-Hungarian twist, and the regime began to invest considerable resources in documenting and commemorating atrocities purportedly committed by occupying Hungarian forces in northern Transylvania between 1940 and 1944 which had previously been rendered taboo by the dictates of socialist fraternity.<sup>35</sup>

The remembering of diverse conflicts – and its inevitable concomitant of strategic forgetting – also continued to be an integral part of the fabric of national identity in Greece. Though Greece remained outside the Soviet bloc, Cold War exigencies were still important because of the problematic legacy of the civil war in which royalists vanquished communists between 1946 and 1949. The communists had dominated the resistance to the Axis in the Second World War, but their subsequent defeat and the establishment of a profoundly conservative post-war political order meant that their cause was retrospectively discredited, stigmatised as unpatriotic: resistance fighters were imprisoned, collaborators and war criminals were rehabilitated and extensive commemoration was shunned.<sup>36</sup> 'Through the 1950s, the Greek state remained faithful to a Cold War vision of the

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<sup>34</sup> Dragoș Petrescu, 'Communist Legacies in the "New Europe": History, Ethnicity, and the Creation of a "Socialist" Nation in Romania, 1945-1989', in Konrad H. Jarausch and Thomas Lindenberger (eds), *Conflicted Memories: Europeanizing Contemporary Histories* (New York, 2007), pp. 37-54, quotes at pp. 39, 43.

<sup>35</sup> Maria Bucur, 'Treznea: Trauma, Nationalism and the Memory of World War II in Romania', *Rethinking History*, 6/1 (2002): 35-55.

<sup>36</sup> 28 October – the anniversary of Metaxas' famous 'no' to Mussolini in 1940 – was declared a national holiday in 1944 and was subsequently the main occasion for public Second World War remembrance. The goal of reinforcing conservative patriotic sentiment through commemoration was facilitated by thus focusing on the beginning of the war, highlighting a moment of defiant resistance to a foreign would-be occupying power and sidelining the schisms of the subsequent occupation. See Anastasia Karakasidou, 'Protocol and Pageantry: Celebrating the Nation in Northern Greece', in Mazower (ed.), *After the War Was Over*, pp. 221-46.

war, unwilling either to praise the resistance or to condemn collaborators. Silence and repression were the main elements of its policy.' Public pressure for a revision of official attitudes escalated through the 1960s, as former resisters queried whether an establishment subservient to the United States was entitled to claim the patriotic high ground, but then under the Colonels persecution of the left only intensified. The fall of the junta in 1974, however, demonstrated the bankruptcy of this agenda and 'opened the floodgates' for a more widespread engagement with the wartime past. Official recognition of the resistance as a national liberation struggle was duly accorded in 1982. That said, this reconciliatory nationalist vision was perhaps performative somewhat anodyne and depoliticising, as it 'smoothed away the memories of social division and skated over equally dark areas of ethnic complexity.'<sup>37</sup>

Different layers of war memory were also constantly interlaced in the Greek case. The claim that modern Hellenes were the rightful heirs of the legacy of ancient Greece was a foundational element in nationalist discourse. Consequently during the Cold War the right persistently mobilised classical antiquity as a resource in its efforts to re-educate dissidents and to reinstate them into the virtuous national community.<sup>38</sup> In at least one instance in the late 1960s this strategy was also deployed in connection with the commemoration of the Second World War. The junta sponsored the erection of a war memorial in the city of Komotini in Thrace, which deployed a monumental classical aesthetic and was festooned with images of Mycenaean armaments, including spears, shields and a huge bronze sword. This 'grandiose and severe structure' gestured towards 'monumental symmetry, timeless dignity and ethical austerity', and its abstract form enabled it to skirt the political contestation that still surrounded the war. It became the focus for official

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<sup>37</sup> Mark Mazower, 'The Cold War and the Appropriation of Memory: Greece after Liberation', in István Deák, Jan T. Gross, and Tony Judt (eds), *The Politics of Retribution in Europe: World War II and its Aftermath* (Princeton, 2000), pp. 212-32, quotes at pp. 221, 229; David Close, 'The Road to Reconciliation? The Greek Civil War and the Politics of Memory in the 1980s', in Philip Carabott and Thanasis D. Sfikas (eds), *The Greek Civil War: Essays on a Conflict of Exceptionalism and Silences* (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 257-78.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Yannis Hamilakis, "'The Other Parthenon': Antiquity and National Memory at Makronisos', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 20/2 (2002): 307-38.

commemorations of all Greece's past wars, thus vocalising a nationalist discourse that 'exploited all references to past glory and accentuated Greek eminence at all points in history'. 'The Sword', as it was dubbed, was therefore intended both to buttress the regime's legitimacy by locating it within a heroic narrative and to inculcate a martial nationalism in the public.<sup>39</sup> Its failure to achieve these ends demonstrates the general point that the efficacy of symbolic politics is not guaranteed: the puissance of any given intervention, however carefully crafted, will be heavily dependent upon the wider field of political and social forces within which it is located.

The most sustained official efforts to manage collective memory of the Second World War occurred in Yugoslavia, and these have been deemed especially portentous because of the link between nationalist myths and the outbreak of further violence in the 1990s. The conflict was extraordinarily visible in socialist Yugoslav culture: 'almost all symbolic forms of historical memory, such as memorials or official holidays, were dedicated to the memory of the war.' Moreover, the propagation of an authorised version of the war was absolutely central in manufacturing legitimacy for the communist regime and attempting to instil a common sense of identity amongst disparate peoples, arguably even more important than was the comparable myth of the Great Patriotic War in the Soviet Union. 'It was hoped that remembering the common fight and suffering during the war would help to create consensus in a society that was burdened not only by extreme ethnic, cultural, and religious fragmentation but also by the unfavorable experiences of living together in one state.'<sup>40</sup>

The master narrative of the war reduced its ambiguities and complexities to a Manichaean struggle between Tito's righteous communist partisans and all other participants, construed as the forces of fascist reaction and counter-revolution. The 'political, military, and moral superiority' of the multi-ethnic partisans, together with their overwhelming popularity across the constituent parts of

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<sup>39</sup> Iro Katsaridou and Anastasia Konogiorgi, 'Commemorating World War II in Northern Greece: Controversy and Reconsideration', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 44/2 (2008): 140-6, quotes at 143-4.

<sup>40</sup> Hoepken, 'War, Memory, and Education', 196-7.

Yugoslavia, was insistently affirmed, and any suggestion that they had committed excesses or even mistakes was prohibited. The 'war of national liberation' and class conflict templates deployed here meant sidelining the ethnic dimensions of the war entirely. Ethnic violence and war crimes were blamed on the bourgeoisie on all sides, but no nation was deemed especially guilty and in any case such events were marginal to the central plot. The incessant reinscription of this rendering in education, academic historiography and public memorialising obviously supported both the authority of the communist party and the official ideology of 'brotherhood and unity' between nations. That said, this myth-making was also fraught with tensions. In suppressing the complexities of the war and perpetuating certain outright falsehoods, it established a dissonance between private memory and official mantras and left significant blank spots which would make it vulnerable to assault if communism's 'monopoly on discourse and interpretation' was weakened.<sup>41</sup>

After Tito's death in 1980, mounting challenges to the regime's sanctioned readings did indeed accompany the fragmentation of political, economic and social order and the waning of communist legitimacy.<sup>42</sup> Up to a point, the logic here was simply destructive, as historians, novelists and film-makers broached taboos and questioned long standing shibboleths, tarnishing the pristine past which communism had grounded itself upon. Vladimir Dedijer's 1981 biography of Tito was symptomatic here, as it presented him as a 'lecher and schemer, dissembler and master of craftiness, bon vivant and tyrant', and also revealed details of secret negotiations between the partisans and the Nazis in 1943 which whiffed of collaboration.<sup>43</sup> Dedijer's 'disclosures made it impossible to defend the infallibility both of the revolution and its leader and gave rise to a full-scale

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 197-202, quotes at 197, 202.

<sup>42</sup> Dejan Djokić, 'The Second World War II: Discourses of Reconciliation in Serbia and Croatia in the Late 1980s and Early 1990s', *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, 4/2 (2002): 127-39. This conjuncture was hardly unique to Yugoslavia, of course: compare Robert W. Davies, *Soviet History in the Gorbachev Revolution* (London, 1989).

<sup>43</sup> Ivo Banac, 'Historiography of the Countries of Eastern Europe: Yugoslavia', *American Historical Review*, 97/4 (1992): 1093.

reinterpretation of the history of the Yugoslav communist movement in the interwar and wartime years.<sup>44</sup>

In relation to the war, this reappraisal highlighted the repressive brutality of Tito towards his opponents and posed unwonted questions about the ethnic aspects of the conflict. Serbian historians, for example, rehabilitated the Četniks as a genuine resistance force that had been the victim of communist machinations to acquire pre-eminence in the anti-fascist struggle (though a simultaneous, somewhat contradictory, claim held that Serbs had predominated in the partisan movement).<sup>45</sup> This rediscovery of the suppressed ethnic 'realities' of the war illustrated how the critique of official memory gradually shaded into a project of constructing alternative visions of the past that could ground nationalist identities and polities in the present.

Just as a common memory of the war had played a central role in legitimizing the common Yugoslav state, the separate and diverging memories were now used to support the policy of the country's dissolution. The memory of the last war thus contributed to preparing people for the new war that was to come.<sup>46</sup>

Memory did not, of course, cause the break up of Yugoslavia: this was a complex political process in which numerous and diverse long and short term factors were operative, the relative significance of which scholars still fiercely debate.<sup>47</sup> Yet Tito's problematic historical engineering in the name of

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<sup>44</sup> Jasna Dragović-Soso, *'Saviours of the Nation': Serbia's Intellectual Opposition and the Revival of Nationalism* (London, 2002), p. 78.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp. 100-103; Marko Attila Hoare, 'Whose is the Partisan Movement? Serbs, Croats and the Legacy of a Shared Resistance', *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 15/4 (2002): 32-3.

<sup>46</sup> Hoepken, 'War, Memory, and Education', 207.

<sup>47</sup> Dragović-Soso, 'Why Did Yugoslavia Disintegrate?', identifies five main approaches in the literature. Memory is generally rendered epiphenomenal in those focusing on the flawed nature of Yugoslavism as an ideology, the structural weakness of socialist Yugoslavia or the malign influence of external (that is, western) powers. It figures more prominently in interpretations premised upon 'ancient hatreds' and in those that seek to trace how the decisions and actions of political and intellectual agents transformed a systemic crisis into a violent dissolution. See, further, Cohen and Dragović-Soso (eds), *State Collapse in South-Eastern Europe* and Sabrina P. Ramet, *Thinking about Yugoslavia: Scholarly Debates about the Yugoslav Breakup and the Wars in Bosnia and Kosovo* (Cambridge, 2005).

integration facilitated the subsequent utilisation of memory in disintegrative nationalist mobilisation. The restriction of the parameters of discussion ensured that a diverse multi-ethnic society was never able to debate maturely how to handle the complex and divisive legacy from the past and to elaborate a truly unifying social memory. Simultaneously, the venerative character of war memory and its enshrinement as an authoritative lexicon for the articulation of political aspirations helped to naturalise violence and make further wars imaginable.<sup>48</sup>

In Serbia, politicians and intellectuals collaborated in scripting a national history of suffering, injustice and victimisation that proved particularly potent and destructive. At its heart lay a revived Kosovo myth, an epic tale of past glory and traumatic defeat which also offered the consolation of divine election and promise of vengeful resurrected grandeur.<sup>49</sup> The utility of such a myth for Slobodan Milošević's efforts first to enhance Serbian authority within Yugoslavia and then to carve out an expanded 'Greater Serbia' quickly became apparent. Complementing this core fable was a revisionist discourse on the history of Yugoslavia which argued that Serbs had been the victims of consistent discrimination: constitutional and administrative arrangements had denied the nation its historic borders and institutionalised its economic exploitation, while Serbs living in Kosovo, Croatia and Bosnia had been systematically persecuted.<sup>50</sup> The invocation of the trope of genocide transmuted fears of oppression into hysteria about possible physical annihilation. Here, the rewriting of the Second World War era was absolutely central. The wholesale slaughter of Serbs by the Croatian Ustaša which had been elided in the official communist narrative became the focus of intense publicity. Vastly inflated estimates of the numbers of Serbian victims were put into

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<sup>48</sup> Hoepken, 'War, Memory, and Education', 203-7.

<sup>49</sup> For a full discussion, see Branimir Anzulović, *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide* (London, 1999).

<sup>50</sup> David Bruce MacDonald, *Balkan Holocausts? Serbian and Croatian Victim-Centred Propaganda and the War in Yugoslavia* (Manchester, 2002), pp. 63-97, 183-219.

circulation and the Ustaša camp at Jasenovac, the Golgotha of the putative Serbian 'holocaust', became the supreme symbol of a continuous history of victimhood.<sup>51</sup>

It is important to note that the Milošević regime 'had other weapons in its ideological armoury' as well and that its deployment of nationalist rhetoric was not unremitting or unnuanced.<sup>52</sup> (Equally, despite his undoubted responsibility, it is an over-simplification to present Milošević as the sole active agent in Yugoslav disintegration, or his policy as consistently embodying a predetermined strategy to create an expanded Serbian state.<sup>53</sup>) Yet towards the end of the 1980s, a palpable nationalist frenzy nonetheless engulfed Serbian political and popular culture, and a whole gamut of symbolic references to the Second World War contributed significantly to it.<sup>54</sup> The excavation of the mass graves of victims of Ustaša atrocities and the reburial of the exhumed corpses with elaborate theatrical ceremony was the most startlingly literal illustration of this.<sup>55</sup> Extensive and lurid media coverage of these reinterments revelled in 'a pornography of victimhood'.<sup>56</sup> Fomenting 'a sense of existential crisis that could be harnessed for a more belligerent and uncompromising policy', the unrelenting promotion of the genocide thematic was especially ominous as the Milošević regime began to ratchet up its professed concern for the fate of Serbian minorities living beyond the bounds

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<sup>51</sup> Dragović-Soso, *Saviours of the Nation*, pp. 100-114. For more detail on Second World War revisionism, see MacDonald, *Balkan Holocausts?*, pp. 132-82.

<sup>52</sup> Bieber, 'Nationalist Mobilization', 103.

<sup>53</sup> Dragović-Soso, 'Why Did Yugoslavia Disintegrate?', pp. 14-18; Eric Gordy, 'Destruction of the Yugoslav Federation: Policy or Confluence of Tactics?', in Cohen and Dragović-Soso (eds), *State Collapse in South-Eastern Europe*, pp. 281-99.

<sup>54</sup> On the 'nationalisation' of Serbia, see Nebojša Popov (ed.), *The Road to War in Serbia: Trauma and Catharsis* (Budapest, 2000); cf. the revisionist arguments – stressing, inter alia, oppositional currents - of Janine Natalya Clark, *Serbia in the Shadow of Milošević: The Legacy of Conflict in the Balkans* (London, 2008).

<sup>55</sup> Bette Denich, 'Dismembering Yugoslavia: Nationalist Ideologies and the Symbolic Revival of Genocide', *American Ethnologist*, 21/2 (1994): 367-90.

<sup>56</sup> Michael Sells, 'Crosses of Blood: Sacred Space, Religion, and Violence in Bosnia-Herzegovina', *Sociology of Religion*, 64/3 (2003): 313. Sells underlines the religious dimension of the post-Tito nationalist movements.



of the republic proper.<sup>57</sup> It is sadly not uncommon for pernicious, exclusionary and aggressive nationalist projects thus to be founded upon sentimental rhetorics of self pity and self defence. They also typically entail the identification of demonised others, which in this case included not only the western powers that came to look askance at Serbian expansionism but also, and most importantly, the Croats who constituted its immediate object at the beginning of the wars of succession.

A nationalist upsurge in Croatia paralleled that in Serbia. Even though the Croatian leader Franjo Tuđman is often characterised as a more authentic nationalist than Milošević – the former a true believer, the latter essentially an opportunist – the emergence of Croatian nationalism is nonetheless often emplotted as a reaction to developments in Serbia.<sup>58</sup> There is some truth in this, though a distinctive Croatian historical consciousness of sorts had persisted through the Tito era; moreover, it is generally preferable to conceive of a dynamic interaction between these competing nationalisms in an escalating spiral of distrust. The claims of Serbian nationalists about wartime genocide could not but intimidate the Croats, and their response directly challenged extravagant contentions about total Serbian casualties, and those at Jasenovac in particular, thus tending to minimise rather than maximise Croatian historical guilt. Moreover, Croats also went on the offensive, raising the issue of Četnik and partisan atrocities against Croats in a deliberate strategy of historical off-setting. The massacre of several thousand opponents of the partisans at Bleiburg at the close of the war was the emblematic crime here, symbolising that Croats had also been ‘victims of wartime terror’ and sustaining their own counter-narrative of historical victimhood.<sup>59</sup>

The broader historical imaginary of Croatian nationalism synthesised several somewhat contradictory elements. On the one hand, Tuđman claimed title to the anti-fascist partisan heritage from the ‘national liberation struggle’ of 1941-1945, asserting in a mirror image of Serbian

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<sup>57</sup> Quote from Dragović-Soso, ‘Why Did Yugoslavia Disintegrate?’, p. 19.

<sup>58</sup> For example, Laura Silber and Allan Little, *The Death of Yugoslavia* (London, 1995), pp. 87-97.

<sup>59</sup> Hoepken, ‘War, Memory, and Education’, 212-15, quote at 215.

pretensions that Croats had been the dominant ethnic group within the movement and continuing to revere Tito, himself of course a Croat. This was obviously intended to defuse the allegation that all Croats had been Nazi collaborators, which was potentially damning given broader discursive norms about the 'good war'. On the other hand, the legacy of the 'independent' Ustaša state also had an undeniable utility for the construction of a positive foundation for contemporary Croatia. So although it was not officially rehabilitated by Tuđman, there was nonetheless a shift to a perniciously ambivalent treatment and 'the insertion of elements of the Ustasha heritage into Croatian public life.' This largely took symbolic form, with the renaming of streets after Ustaša-related figures and the adoption of national emblems that had formerly been tainted by association with that regime.<sup>60</sup> Tuđman declared that the Ustaša was 'not only a quisling organisation and a Fascist crime, but ... also an expression of the Croatian nation's historic desire for an independent homeland'. This 'peculiar phraseology' suggested that the regime 'was the malevolent manifestation of a benign impulse'.<sup>61</sup>

The tension within this Croatian project is partly explained by the diverse audiences that Tuđman was attempting to satisfy, from ultranationalists in the Croatian diaspora who provided substantial funds for his movement to western governments wary of any hint of neo-Nazi revisionism. Yet it also illustrated how in seeking to accumulate symbolic capital, the Croats mobilised all possible resources, positioning themselves simultaneously as victims of genocide, leaders of the anti-fascist resistance and inheritors of - yet also 'conscientious objectors' from - the Ustaša regime. The finesses entailed here discernibly contributed to the cycle of mutual recrimination and, ultimately, violence. Tuđman relativised Croatian support for the Ustaša, by claiming that where it existed it was in essence self-defensive, driven by fears of Serbian oppression rather than ideological sympathy for fascism. In the febrile atmosphere of the last years of

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<sup>60</sup> Hoare, 'Whose is the Partisan Movement?', 35-8, quote at 37.

<sup>61</sup> Marcus Tanner, *Croatia: A Nation Forged in War* (New Haven, 1997), p. 223.

Yugoslavia, any hint of resuscitation of that regime – when combined with concurrent, allegedly discriminatory, legislation against Croatia’s Serbian minority – was sufficient to exacerbate Serbian alarm about incipient renewed genocide.<sup>62</sup>

In these and myriad other ways, conflicting memories of war were prominent in the political controversies preceding the onset of armed struggle between Serbia and Croatia in 1991.<sup>63</sup> The same was true of the subsequent conflict in Bosnia between 1992 and 1995. Both Serbian and Croatian nationalists advanced historically grounded claims to Bosnian territory, and 1940s massacres - of Serbs by Croats and Bosnian Muslims, and of Croats and Bosnian Muslims by Četniks – were mobilised as frames for contemporary politics, thus further envenoming inter-communal relations.<sup>64</sup> Equally, the warring parties often labelled themselves or their antagonists with historically resonant appellations such as Četnik, Ustaša and Turk.<sup>65</sup> It has even been suggested that the ritualised form given to Serbian mass rapes of Bosnian Muslim women – a signal crime within an iniquitous war – requires ‘a culture-specific explanation ... as a projection that has its origins inside of the powerfully invested narratives of Serb cultural memory’, a storehouse that includes ‘the humiliating memory of rape by the Turk.’<sup>66</sup>

Once such atrocities began to be committed, of course, they might perpetuate and intensify the momentum of violence regardless of how they were externally represented. Yet in fact they were immediately embroiled in the symbolic battle between the participants, as past injustices were

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<sup>62</sup> MacDonald, *Balkan Holocausts?*, pp. 135-8, 177, quote at p. 177. On anti-Serb legislation, see Robert M. Hayden, ‘Constitutional Nationalism in the Formerly Yugoslav Republics’, *Slavic Review*, 51/4 (1992): 654-73.

<sup>63</sup> Other interesting treatments – from an anti-Serbian viewpoint – are contained in Stjepan G. Meštrović (ed.), *Genocide after Emotion: The Postemotional Balkan War* (London, 1996).

<sup>64</sup> For an account of the Bosnian war alive to historical parallels, see Marko Attila Hoare, *The History of Bosnia: From the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (London, 2007), pp. 338-402.

<sup>65</sup> Ben Lieberman, ‘Nationalist Narratives, Violence between Neighbours and Ethnic Cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina: A Case of Cognitive Dissonance?’, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8/3 (2006): 301-307.

<sup>66</sup> Lynda E. Boose, ‘Crossing the River Drina: Bosnian Rape Camps, Turkish Impalement, and Serb Cultural Memory’, *Signs*, 28/1 (2002): 71-96, quotes at 93.

rhetorically balanced against present and mastery over naming assumed paramount significance – especially as regards the applicability of the politically and ethically-charged term ‘genocide’.<sup>67</sup> The pervasiveness of this figurative mediation indicates the importance of not over-stating the raw determining power or unprompted innocence of memory. Just as propaganda and paramilitary violence were deployed to incite hatred, so elites were quite capable of cynically invoking alleged antique grievances and traumas to gain advantage: one exasperated American envoy clearly recognised this when he insisted the Bosnian Serbs should not obfuscate negotiations with ‘a lot of historical bullshit’. Thus Ger Duijzings has argued that while history undoubtedly weighed heavily in Bosnia and conditioned agency, it did not efface personal choice or responsibility.<sup>68</sup>

The issue of what precise work memory was doing here remains deeply contested. The initial dominant mode of framing these conflicts amongst western observers attributed them to an uncontrived upsurge of primal bloodlust, and this tended to ascribe very tangible agency to the memory of past conflicts whilst also encouraging a policy of non-intervention on the grounds that such deep-rooted antagonisms were intractable. From the mid-1990s, however, an alternative conceptualisation found favour with the adoption of what Lenard Cohen has dubbed ‘the paradise lost/loathsome leaders perspective.’ This stressed periods of peaceful coexistence rather than violence in Balkan history and the role of ‘self-aggrandizing nationalist leaders who have whipped up ethnic antagonisms in order to suit their political agendas’: on this view, hatreds were ‘instrumentally constructed or imagined by ambitious and unscrupulous’ elites, which diminished their objective significance. This paradigm rendered conflict in the Balkans potentially susceptible to resolution provided the international community took robust action against renegade leaders, and coincided with the emergence of just such a policy, directed principally against Milošević and the

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<sup>67</sup> Robert M. Hayden, ‘Mass Killings and Images of Genocide in Bosnia, 1941-5 and 1992-5’, in Dan Stone (ed.), *The Historiography of Genocide* (London, 2008), pp. 487-516.

<sup>68</sup> Ger Duijzings, ‘Appendix IV: History and Reminders in East Bosnia’, in Nederlands Instituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, *Srebrenica: A ‘Safe’ Area* (Amsterdam, 2003), <http://193.173.80.81/srebrenica/> (accessed 7 July 2008), quoting Richard Holbrooke.

Serbs in the closing stages of the Bosnian war and then in Kosovo in 1999. (The nature of the relationship between the changes in perception and in policy remains moot.)<sup>69</sup>

This involved the substitution of one extreme over-simplification for another, yet the issue of how to strike a balance between the undoubted facts of unplanned grassroots national mobilisation and elite construction of new forms of national identity, premised upon the manipulation of fears and memories, is intensely problematic. The fact that elite discourses became so prevalent and potent suggests that they must have resonated on some level with certain personal, family or local memories or cumulative resentments that had not formerly enjoyed official sanction.<sup>70</sup> That said, proper scepticism about the alleged liberation or return of repressed traumatic memory and awareness of 'the danger of attributing a straightforward causal role to recollections of past events' are essential.<sup>71</sup>

The issue of western perceptions is also germane for gauging how far Balkan actors were unique in filtering contemporary affairs through the prisms of remembered conflicts. For it is an irony that the United States, Great Britain and other external powers often appeared to be equally wholly encapsulated by violent memories and historical trauma. The initial acceptance on its own terms of demagogic rhetoric about ancient hatreds and the adoption of a policy of non-intervention were inextricably intertwined with a 'Vietnam syndrome' ('or its 1990s equivalent, Somalia syndrome'): with enmities so entrenched, amongst peoples with proud and brutal martial traditions, intervention would have led to heavy western casualties in a bloody quagmire.<sup>72</sup> Critics of this

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<sup>69</sup> Lenard J. Cohen, *Serpent in the Bosom: The Rise and Fall of Slobodan Milošević* (Boulder, 2002 rev. edn), pp. 451-64, quotes at p. 454.

<sup>70</sup> Dragović-Soso, 'Why Did Yugoslavia Disintegrate?', pp. 20-23.

<sup>71</sup> Stef Jansen, 'The Violence of Memories: Local Narratives of the Past after Ethnic Cleansing in Croatia', *Rethinking History*, 6/1 (2002): 77-93, quote at 77. Memory's power is perhaps over-stated in Ilana R. Bet-El, 'Unimagined Communities: The Power of Memory and the Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia', in Müller (ed.), *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe*, pp. 206-22.

<sup>72</sup> James J. Sadkovich, *The U.S. Media and Yugoslavia, 1991-1995* (Westport, 1998), pp. 146-8, quote at p. 146.

stance, rejecting the relativising 'civil war' frame and identifying Serbian aggression as the prime cause of the conflicts, conversely invoked the spectre of Munich: in cravenly standing by and permitting genocidal atrocity, the west was guilty of callous and shameful appeasement.<sup>73</sup> The slaughter at Srebrenica, coupled with the gradual emergence of a new norm of humanitarian intervention, sealed the ascendancy of this latter perspective and equivocation gave way to the 'Nazifying' of the Serbs. This reached its apogee during the Kosovo war in 1999 when Milošević was firmly branded a new Hitler and his treatment of the Kosovo Albanians a genocidal reprise.<sup>74</sup> Fuelled by the general boom in consciousness of the Second World War as the cycle of sixtieth anniversary commemorations geared up, and with public debate and political rhetoric replete with references to Hitler, appeasement and the Holocaust, it often seemed as if that conflict was being replayed wholesale in the south-eastern corner of Europe. That said, this rendering did not entirely marginalise other martial analogies, including multiple different readings of the lessons of Vietnam and of 1914 when the Balkans had served as the powderkeg of Europe.<sup>75</sup>

Following the end of outright hostilities, negotiating memories of multiple wars is now integral to political transition, peace-building and reconciliation. Post-conflict stabilisation is, of course, an enormously complex transaction that encompasses many factors, including the creation of viable and legitimate political institutions, economic development, reintegration of displaced persons, security sector reform, social reconstruction and the promotion of human and minority

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<sup>73</sup> Brendan Simms, *Unfinest Hour: Britain and the Destruction of Bosnia* (London, 2002, rev. edn), p. 332 and passim.

<sup>74</sup> Mick Hume, 'Nazifying the Serbs, from Bosnia to Kosovo', in Philip Hammond and Edward S. Herman (eds), *Degraded Capability: The Media and the Kosovo Crisis* (London, 2000), pp. 70-8. Hume had his own, rather dubious agenda, here: see Marko Attila Hoare, 'Genocide in the Former Yugoslavia: A Critique of Left Revisionism's Denial', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 5/4 (2003): 543-63.

<sup>75</sup> George C. Herring, 'Analogies at War: The United States, the Conflict in Kosovo, and the Uses of History', in Albrecht Schnabel and Ramesh Thakur (eds), *Kosovo and the Challenge of Humanitarian Intervention: Selective Indignation, Collective Action, and International Citizenship* (Tokyo, 2000), pp. 347-59; Roland Paris, 'Kosovo and the Metaphor War', *Political Science Quarterly*, 117/3 (2002): 423-50

rights.<sup>76</sup> The international community has been very heavily engaged in peace-building efforts in the region – especially under the auspices of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe – and early recognised that managing violent memories must also constitute part of the agenda: thus, mindful of the role the media had previously played in disseminating inflammatory propaganda, in 1997 North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) peacekeepers seized Bosnian Serb television transmitters to prevent the broadcast of egregiously nationalist representations of the past war.<sup>77</sup> The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) is perhaps the pre-eminent single international instrument designed to manage memory. It aims to deliver justice to victims, to punish and remove from the scene the most flagrant perpetrators of war crimes, to establish an authoritative and impartial historical record and to deter future crimes, all in the name of promoting reconciliation and sustainable peace.<sup>78</sup> The ICTY's efficacy in achieving these ends, and indeed its very legitimacy, is much contested.<sup>79</sup> Yet while it is no panacea, it has made a palpable contribution to societal reconciliation. Moreover, the insistence of the European Union (EU) that full co-operation with the ICTY is an essential pre-requisite for accession negotiations demonstrates the international community's belief in the intimate interconnections between war memory, justice and peace.<sup>80</sup>

The normative mnemonic demands of the drive towards integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions are one key factor promoting a frank coming to terms with the recent past. Yet

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<sup>76</sup> Brad K. Blitz (ed.), *War and Change in the Balkans: Nationalism, Conflict and Cooperation* (Cambridge, 2006).

<sup>77</sup> Monroe E. Price, 'Memory, the Media and NATO: Information Intervention in Bosnia-Herzegovina', in Müller (ed.), *Memory and Power in Post-War Europe*, pp. 137-54. NATO forces also objected to being branded as Nazis by the Bosnian Serb broadcasts.

<sup>78</sup> Janine Natalya Clark, 'The 3 "Rs": Retributive Justice, Restorative Justice, and Reconciliation', *Contemporary Justice Review*, forthcoming.

<sup>79</sup> For one positive argument, see James Gow, 'The ICTY, War Crimes Enforcement and Dayton: The Ghost in the Machine', in Marc Weller and Stefan Wolff (eds), *International State-Building after Violent Conflict: Bosnia Ten Years after Dayton* (London, 2008), pp. 47-63; for a full-blooded critique, see John Laughland, *Travesty: The Trial of Slobodan Milošević and the Corruption of International Justice* (London, 2007).

<sup>80</sup> Rachel Kerr, 'Peace through Justice? The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia', *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 7/3 (2007): 373-85.

important domestic political and social forces are driving in the same direction, especially since the sidelining following death, ICTY indictment or electoral defeat of many key nationalist leaders. For example, when elections in Croatia in 2000, after Tuđman's death, brought to power a liberal government committed to European integration and co-operation with the ICTY it seemed to mark a sea change after the nationalist rigidities of the 1990s.<sup>81</sup> Subsequent governments have broadly maintained this trajectory, though progress on the war criminals issue has proved slightly rocky and recidivist nationalism and a measure of Ustaša nostalgia persist.<sup>82</sup>

In Serbia the ousting of Milošević in 2000 opened up space for a more pluralist politics, but the issue of whether the country should turn its back on heavenly myths and embrace 'Europe' continues to be fiercely contested, embittered by the status of Kosovo. Some commentators stress the increasing strength of liberal reformist attitudes, whether manifested in the healthy civil society activism of peace-building non-governmental organisations or the moderate and restrained tone of the commemorations held in 2004 to mark the bicentenary of the first Serbian uprising against Ottoman rule.<sup>83</sup> Others discern a xenophobic nation still in denial about its historical wrongdoings and wallowing in a lingering sense of victimhood.<sup>84</sup> The extent to which it will be possible to secure political stability and prosperity on the basis of an honest accounting with intertwined pasts is therefore open to question. Disturbing nationalist views on the memory of the wars of the 1990s

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<sup>81</sup> Rose Lindsey, 'Remembering Vukovar, Forgetting Vukovar: Constructing National Identity through the Memory of Catastrophe in Croatia', in Peter Gray and Kendrick Oliver (eds), *The Memory of Catastrophe* (Manchester, 2004), pp. 190-204.

<sup>82</sup> Kerr, 'Peace through Justice?', 381-2; Nicholas Wood, 'Fascist Overtones from Blithely Oblivious Rock Fans', *New York Times*, 2 July 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/02/world/europe/02croatia.html> (accessed 9 July 2007).

<sup>83</sup> See, respectively, Clark, 'The 3 "Rs"', and Dejan Djokić, 'Coming to Terms with the Past: Yugoslavia', *History Today*, 54/6 (2004): 19.

<sup>84</sup> Sabrina P. Ramet, 'The Denial Syndrome and its Consequences: Serbian Political Culture since 2000', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 40/1 (2007): 41-58.



and of the Second World War— patriotically denying war crimes and defending fascist collaborators as true patriots – are still very apparent in popular culture and education.<sup>85</sup>

In the fractured polity of Bosnia, competitive victimhood over past atrocities continues to be an irritant to political progress. For Bosnian Muslims the genocide at Srebrenica remains a festering sore, but Bosnian Serbs in riposte invoke the memory of their own dead in numerous conflicts, for instance by erecting gory new memorials to victims of Ustaša cruelties.<sup>86</sup> Nevertheless, even if external pressure from the international community is at present more potent than bottom-up sentiment for reconciliation, there is some cause for optimism that in due course older animosities may be transcended. One hopeful milestone was passed in 2004 when the government of the Bosnian Serb Republic offered an official apology for Srebrenica.<sup>87</sup>

Large swathes of the Balkans were, of course, not directly touched by the Yugoslav wars, but here too memories of conflict were still profoundly implicated in domestic and international politics. The long-running dispute between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia over the latter's sobriquet and status encompassed an intense controversy over symbols, and territorial claims ostensibly rooted in the mists of antiquity; but the Greeks were at bottom determined to defend a territorial settlement that was a highly contingent outcome of a series of conflicts beginning in the nineteenth century anti-Ottoman liberation struggle, and the memory of numerous heroic participants in these, such as Pavlos Melas, was explicitly mobilised in the cause.<sup>88</sup> The transitions to democracy in Bulgaria and Romania had an important mnemonic dimension, as

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<sup>85</sup> Nicole Münnich, 'Conference Report: Revisionism in Serbia', *H-Soz-u-Kult*, 5 December 2007, <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/tagungsberichte/id=1794&count=160&recno=15&sort=datum&order=down&geschichte=69> (accessed 6 July 2008).

<sup>86</sup> Paul B. Miller, 'Contested Memories: The Bosnian Genocide in Serb and Muslim Minds', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8/3 (2006): 311-24.

<sup>87</sup> Hoare, *History of Bosnia*, pp. 402-411.

<sup>88</sup> For an overview, see Victor Roudometof, *Collective Memory, National Identity, and Ethnic Conflict: Greece, Bulgaria, and the Macedonian Question* (Westport, 2002).

existing narratives of the national past had to be revised in the process of historicising the experience of communism. Rejection of the communist heritage could sometimes take dramatic symbolic form, as with the demolition of the mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov in Sofia, but also entailed a somewhat problematic rehabilitation of pre-communist nationalist leaders tainted by association with fascism.<sup>89</sup> In Romania argument swirled around history education in the 1990s, as the EU exerted pressure for a revision of rather chauvinist textbooks that were clearly intended to inculcate a patriotic identity. Less ethnocentric versions –with a reduced emphasis on national heroes and the emergence of the nation through warfare - were introduced in 1999, but proved controversial.<sup>90</sup> Romania, in common with numerous other post-communist countries, has also experienced some difficulties in coming to terms with its own complicity in the Holocaust, yet this too has begun to be addressed by responsible politicians and historians.<sup>91</sup> In both Romania and Bulgaria, the prescriptive discipline of integration with ‘Europe’ has had a salutary influence in tempering nationalist excesses and conducing towards more candid visions of past conflict.

This highly selective survey has sought to demonstrate that, as a consequence of the serial historical contingencies of nation-building, identity politics and international relations, memories of war have been a crucial component of political culture in the modern Balkans. Yet acknowledging this need not entail succumbing to exoticising ‘Balkanist’ fallacies about a ‘land of the living past’.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Maria Todorova, ‘The Mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov as *Lieu de Mémoire*’, *Journal of Modern History*, 78/2 (2006): 377-411.

<sup>90</sup> Razvan Paraiianu, ‘The History Textbooks Controversy in Romania’, *Eurozine*, 11 November 2005, <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2005-11-11-paraiianu-en.html> (accessed 15 June 2008).

<sup>91</sup> Radu Ioanid, ‘Revisionism in Post-Communist Romanian Political Culture: The Attempts to Rehabilitate the Perpetrators of the Holocaust’, in John K. Roth and Elisabeth Maxwell (eds), *Remembering for the Future: The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide. Volume 1: History* (Houndmills, 2001), pp. 813-31; Cristina Petrescu and Dragoş Petrescu, ‘Mastering vs. Coming to Terms with the Past: A Critical Analysis of Post-Communist Romanian Historiography’, in Sorin Antohi, Balázs Trencsényi and Péter Apor (eds), *Narratives Unbound: Historical Studies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe* (Budapest, 2007), pp. 311-408.

<sup>92</sup> Pavlos Hatzopoulos, ‘“All that is, is Nationalist”: Western Imaginings of the Balkans since the Yugoslav Wars’, *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, 5/1 (2003): 37.

On the one hand, the very decision to focus a discussion on the problematic of memory perhaps risks over-stating its importance since many other variables have constantly been in play by its side, constructing identity and determining the course of foreign policy. Moreover, although successful symbolic politics must reckon with what counts as a persuasive discourse on the past within wider society, the extent to which memories of war only emerge as a feature on the landscape of politics when invoked by manipulative elites, exploiting conditions of uncertainty and insecurity, should not be understated. On the other hand, the singularity of the Balkan condition here should not be too readily assumed. The violent play of memory in the region can in large part be explained simply as a function of the local strength of nationalism, with its inherent othering and glorification of state-making warfare; yet nationalism of course remains a potent political currency across the globe.<sup>93</sup> By the same token, thinking in time, deploying martial analogies and negotiating the problematic legacies of past conflicts are also ubiquitous elements in political discourse per se. Whilst not denying the historical and cultural specificities of the Balkans, controversies over memory here thus need to be approached as political problems like any other, susceptible to rational solutions. This is the sense in which Maria Todorova has called for the trivialisation, banalisation and thus normalisation of the Balkans.<sup>94</sup> Such an approach might help us to grasp more clearly that the so-called pathologies of the Balkans are not so very different from our own.

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<sup>93</sup> For a broad illustration, see R. J. B. Bosworth, *Nationalism* (Harlow, 2007); for a compelling and instructive case study linking memory, national identity and war that undercuts any notion of the Balkans as unique or uniquely violent, see Walter Hixson, *The Myth of American Diplomacy: National Identity and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven, 2008).

<sup>94</sup> Maria Todorova, 'Introduction: Learning Memory, Remembering Identity', in Todorova (ed.), *Balkan Identities*, p. 17.