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Research article

"The socialist period was a fairy tale": Yugo-nostalgia and anti-nationalism in Bosnia-Herzegovina

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Abstract

The collective memories of distinct ethnic groups may shed light on omitted parts of official histories of nation-states. Sometimes, a clash among different memories and narratives might be observed within societies. However, distinct groups may also remember the past by referring to similar concepts, and this reveals some collective characteristics. In some cases, the remembrance of former periods may reach the level of collective nostalgia in different forms. In this article, I analyze the remembrance of socialist Yugoslavia in Bosnia-Herzegovina among its constitutionally recognized ethnic groups, Bosniaks, Bosnian Serbs, and Bosnian Croats, who experienced socialist Yugoslavia. Although it was dissolved because of the nationalist dissolution wars (1991–95), anti-nationalism or supra-ethnicity was generally palpable in the regime. I aim to trace collective patterns through Bosnians' memories on Yugoslavia to understand its social relations and to see whether Yugo-nostalgia exists in the form of anti-nationalism despite collective war traumas.

KEYWORDS: socialist Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, ethnic groups, collective memory, nostalgia, anti-nationalism

Introduction

Nationalistic feelings of distinct ethnic groups vary according to their collective experiences and narrations; therefore, collectively traumatic memory has also a function of demarcating the physical and mental borders between us (the ethnic self) and them (the

persecutor others) (Bakalian, 1993; Rusu, 2020). The collective memory of ethnic groups living under the flag of the same nation or in the same region may also differ because of distinct interpretations and effects of wars, conflicts, specific laws, or periods on their lives (Božić, 2017).

For example, remembrance of Jasenovac, extermination camp in the years of the World War II in Croatia by the *Ustaša* regime, causes a binary in collective memory since Croatian nationalists argue that Serbs exaggerate the numbers of victims and that the atrocities in Jasenovac cannot be recognized as part of Holocaust (Odak & Benčić, 2016). However, the collective memory of witness generations, who have experienced Jasenovac first hand, and their testimonies highlight the past and show how Jasenovac was one of the centers of genocide in the Balkans in WWII (Byford, 2014).

While memory might be both personal and collective, the histories of nations, especially official narratives, "exceed the boundaries of one individual's life span" and one individual's experiences (Assmann, 2008, pp. 50-52). Therefore, official narratives of groups' histories do not have a purpose of reflecting each individual's ideas and experiences. In the words of Nora, "memory crystallizes and secretes itself," and especially disadvantaged groups' memory and experiences cannot find room in the history books to be mentioned (1989, p. 7). In other words, while the authors of history books narrate events and cases from a dominant (and probably national) perspective, "feeling of reality" might be embedded in memory, and the detection steps of realities might be achieved through accumulation of memoirs on a certain incident (Halbawachs, 1992, p. 172). Therefore, remembrance of past can differ among distinct agencies, and memory provides to trace hidden "perceptions," "experiences," "isolations," and "denials" (pp. 163-221).

The issue of the recognition of war crimes and atrocities in particular constitutes a distinction between or within societies and between official histories and memories. For example, the remembrance and recognition of Srebrenica in Bosnia (Božić, 2017) or the Armenian genocide in Turkey (Üngör, 2014) constitute a dichotomy, especially between nationalist (or perpetuator) camps and victims. Furthermore, certain periods of states might also be remembered in various forms among different social groups. The experience of communism and socialism is one of the examples of different remembrance of the past among witness generations who lived in a communist or socialist state (Todorova & Gille, 2012; Angé & Berliner, 2015).

In this article, I aim to show the remembrance of socialist Yugoslavia in Bosnia-Herzegovina among members of its constitutionally recognized three ethnic groups, Bosniaks,

Bosnian Serbs, and Bosnian Croats, who witnessed both the socialist regime and the Bosnian war years (1992–95).[1] Therefore, this research aims to display the remnants of socialist Yugoslavia in collective memory. I employ the method of in-depth interview with witness generations from three ethnic groups who have first-hand experiences. Through a focus on Bosnia-Herzegovina, I aim to answer the question: Why does the collective memory of some people within distinct ethnic groups not demonstrate nationalistic sentiments, despite their traumatic experiences? I argue that the answer might be embedded in their *Yugo-nostalgia*, yearning for socialist Yugoslavia and the supra-ethnic formulation of the Yugoslav state, and further, Yugo-nostalgia might exist in the form of anti-nationalism. In light of the responses of my interviewees from the witness generations, I demonstrate how a collective nostalgia for supra-ethnic identity suppresses nationalistic sentiments of some people within distinct ethnic groups.

A brief historical background

Many studies show that the era of socialist Yugoslavia (1943–1991) is remembered differently by former Yugoslavs either by condemning its suppressive characteristics (Vuckovic Juros, 2018) or by yearning for its inclusionary policies (Maksimović, 2017) among the former six republics (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Slovenia, and Montenegro) and two autonomous regions (Kosovo and Vojvodina). During World War II, the national liberation front had a diverse social and political structure with members from several political and religious backgrounds and under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito. Then, the state was founded by the Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) in 1943 with the name of Democratic Federal Yugoslavia (named as "socialist" Yugoslavia/SFRY in 1963). The official recognition of Yugoslav nations in censuses and constitutions was the story of consecutive constitutional changes. Although there was a state of co-existence during the period of socialist Yugoslavia, ethnical divisions were visible before the 1990s. National questions were also traceable in Yugoslavia since national conflicts emerged among political leaders of federal republics in the 1960s due to the introduction of market socialism (Ramet, 2016). With this introduction, the gap between the developed and the underdeveloped republics significantly widened because market relations were already disadvantageous to the agricultural producers, even before the market socialism. The problem of unequal development among regions accelerated and took the form of a conflict between federal republics, politically presented by their respective bureaucrats as a national conflict.

[1] This article was derived from the author's PhD thesis.

However, these conflicts did not emerge in the form of atrocities and violent polarization until the 1990s.

Under the shadow of Tito's death in 1980, consecutive liberalization steps and economic depressions, the nationalist leaders sealed the future of Yugoslavia. Gagnon argues that "by the mid-1980s reformist forces in the ruling League of Communists of Yugoslavia were dominant," and those forces formed a mindset for "fundamental changes in the structures of political and economic power" (2010, p. 23). The phrase "reformist forces" refer to policymakers or their supporters for economic stabilization programs in mid-1980s. These programs aimed to consolidate the federation and to keep capitalist processes under control; they also caused disintegrative results and the rise of nationalism (Suvin, 2018, p. 170). It is necessary to indicate that there were also some "reformist forces" who attempted to save socialism and federation, and others mainly targeted restoration of capitalism who did not aim to dissolve the federation either (at least a part of them).

Then, irredentist policies came to the surface during the internalization of those fundamental changes in the 1990s, especially through the Croatian and Serbian political leaderships' project to divide Bosnia-Herzegovina (Bieber, 2002; Zaccaria, 2018). The wars in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992–95) caused bloody polarizations, many atrocities, war crimes, and genocide, and today Bosnian people, especially Bosniaks who were the main victims of the wars, continue to struggle with their collective trauma.

Before the section on nation and memory, I aim to briefly highlight the very complex histories of ethnic and religious communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Sells (1996) argues that some Serbian clergymen and their rhetoric accelerated polarization of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 1990s; these Serbian clergymen referred to "Christoslavism," and signified Bosniak Muslims as the enemies of Serbness and traitors to inflame nationalism (pp. 86-92). Furthermore, both nationalist state elites and clergymen of Serbia appealed to primordial nationalism in order to mobilize Serbs. For example, remembrance of the Battle of Kosovo of 1389 turned into a discursively repeated national incident among Serbs to display Bosniaks as members of "Christ-killer" ethnic affiliation because, according to their narratives, Muslim Turks, today's Muslim Bosnians and Bosniaks, killed Prince Lazar in the Battle of Kosovo; hence "Turkness" or "Bosniakness" indicates historical enmity (Sells, 1996, p. 82).

In addition, conversion to Islam started in the lands of today's Bosnia-Herzegovina after the Ottomans' invasion in 1463, and Serbs narrated this religion-based differentiation among South Slavs as a story of betrayal (Levin, 1992) although some folks of Bosnia

were able to protect their confessions. For example, the Franciscans, founding fathers of Catholic Christianity in Bosnia, conserved their religion according to *ahidname*, a legal documentation of certain privileges given by the Ottomans to certain groups or communities, between Andeo Zvivdovic, a Catholic friar, and Mehmed II in 1464 (Antal, 2013).

Yet another reason given for the dissolution wars is the Serbo-Croat conflict by nationalist actors referring to the historical competition between Serbs and Croats to rule the region (Sekulic 1997). Did numerous generations' collective memory indeed carry these ancient hatreds for the centuries?

All these religious issues were remembered and discursively repeated to inflame the conflict, especially within the Serbian side during the 1990s. Schuman and Corning (2016) argue that historical incidents cannot be remembered perfectly among members of next generations and those memories might be easily manipulated through the prism of modern politics. Hence, primordial nationalism that also has religious patterns and narratives was used to sharpen ethnic identities during the dissolution wars by masquerading the constructivist essence of ethnicity through nationalist figures. Furthermore, memory was manipulated to polarize the society for a purpose of collective amnesia to forget co-habitation practices of recent past or socialist Yugoslavia (Ricoeur, 2004).

Nation and memory

The significance of memory, especially collective memory, has been repeatedly discussed in the nationalism studies. Anderson (1983, p. 200) clearly emphasizes the role of memory in the process of drawing borders of nations and ethnic groups, and gives the example of "la Saint-Berthélemy" and its familiarity among the French people. He also argues that there is no need to explain what la Saint-Berthélemy was and means because almost all French people know from memory that it was a massacre in the mid-16th century in the borders of the French Kingdom); therefore, memory can be defined as a legacy that is transferable from one generation to another either via written sources or oral ways.

To Abrams (2010), oral history studies demonstrate how the subject of an investigation is crucial to understand structural changes and their effects on them in everyday lives and practices. Portelli (1991) further argues that "oral history has made us uncomfortably aware of elusive quality of historical truth" (pp. viii–xi). This is crucial in memory studies to understand the main narration(s) through testimonies of witness generations who

have first-hand experiences on certain cases or periods. In addition, written or official histories might demonstrate perceptions and manifestos of dominant political camps, and attempt to prevent the publication of counter-narrations that contrasts with it. That is why in this research I applied the method of oral history because I would like to display omitted details (omitted by the political actors) and less focused zones of the recent history of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The construction of memory on national incidents might also be a challenge for nation-building elites, especially for national narrations, because "memory can be both a basis of cultural reproduction and a source of resistance" (Özyürek, 2007, p. 3). How there might be different memoirs and narrations of a certain case or a period for some groups under the flag of the same nation is a puzzling question, and looking into ethnic differentiation is an effective way to address this.

Ethnic groups have also their own practices and both mental and physical borders against their "Others" to conserve their artificial boundaries (Barth, 1969; Brubaker, 2002); therefore, they have their own values, memories, and narrations. Although the constructivists (Anderson, 1983; Gellner, 1983; Chandra, 2009; Mylonas & Tudor, 2021) argue that ethnic borders and affiliations are products of social interactions and political traditions of societies, the primordialist school (Horowitz ,1985; Van Evera, 2001) accepts nations or ethnic groups as accumulation of mythical references and rigid forms in the nationalism and ethnicity literature. In line with the constructivists' central argument, memories of distinct ethnic groups may differ from their ethnic others and even their ethnic peers due to the varied effects of the cases and interactions on their lives under the flag of a nation. For example, the discursive wars of memory on the existence of the Armenian genocide between Turks and Armenians (Üngör, 2014), different narrations on the Bosnian wars (1992–1995) among Bosniaks, Bosnian Serbs, and Bosnian Croats (Božić, 2017), or recognition of the exclusionary acts of the Vichy Regime against the Jews in France (Confino, 1997) demonstrate differentiated memories and narrations about certain cases and periods among different ethnic or ethno-religious groups.

Nora's inspirational book, *Les Lieux de Mémorie* (1984), aims to analyze possible interactions between memory and history to understand the reconstruction of past in national narrations; Nora argues that borders of (official) histories are drawn according to *some* remnants of memory no matter how they have affected different groups in different ways. Although memory is traced (either by sticking to facts or by manipulating facts) for constituting official histories, a "clash between societies and within societies" (Üngör, 2014, p. 149) takes place over recognition of official state memories. Such clashes might

be also conserved via "communicative memory" for many years, and quotidian communication paves the way for the protection of vivid and distinct memories among different ethnic groups (Assmann, 1995, p. 126). Further, "communicative memory" may help later generations feel a sense of victory or pain about witness generations' experiences due to impressive, narrated stories. In other words, "communicative memory" aids in the demonstration of everyday history and its pivotal cases through testimonies of generations, and it also constitutes a counter hegemony against cultural memory which "is characterized by its distance from the everyday" (Assmann, 1995, p. 129).

In contrast, Schuman and Corning (2016) argue that there are generally missing points in some narrated stories when later generations memorialize or commemorate the past. This, most probably, has to do with the fact that rather than witnessing the events firsthand, they know the main features of certain periods through several written or oral sources (pp. 10–13). Furthermore, Vuckovic Juros (2018) argues that even age may matter in shaping remembrance of past among witness generations, and she distinctly categorizes witness generations according to their ages and capacity to remember the past. Resentment of the past also differs among witness generations and second generations. Immler (2012, p 275) demonstrates that second generations might be "the anger generation" because they are under the influence of pain and traumas of their family members and attempt to maintain/conserve their memoirs in a more activist manner. However, their anger does not mean that they clearly know a certain period their family members experienced. The intriguing question here is how memory is constructed outside the purely personal. For example, in the context of former Yugoslavia, anti-communist discourses of nationalist parties and even religious organizations shaped former Yugoslavs' perceptions, especially in the war zones (Majstorovic, 1997). Therefore, elite manipulation influenced the constitution of ethnicised collective memory in the case of Bosnia.

In light of this, I also argue that witness generations' happiness, traumas, pains or mourning on an event or a period are more reliable for depicting the conditions of that period and for understanding people's belongings to a nation or another identity. While tracing the memories of witness generations, similar narrations demonstrate collectivistic character of memory; therefore, the emergence of a pattern through memories of people opens a window of opportunity to see and analyze collective memories of societies or ethnic groups (Hirst & Echterhoff, 2008). In this article, I refer to the possibility of nostalgia among witness generations of Bosnia, witnessed both the socialist period and the war years. While I centralize the concept of nostalgia, I directly refer to testimonies of the participants. In other words, I did not look at the concept of nostalgia at

the level of media and material artifacts because I attempted to avoid politicized ideas and images through the pressure of dominant political figures.

Nostalgia for the past: Yugo-nostalgia

Although remembrance of (collective) traumas can be clearly traced among groups as a way to draw their mental borders against "the persecutor others" (Bakalian, 1993; Rusu, 2020), members of nations, ethnic groups, or distinct social groups may *collectively* remember their past with positive references and romantic narratives due to pleasant memories and conditions of that period (Ekman and Linda, 2005; Lindstrom, 2005; Todorova & Gille, 2012). Therefore, drawing the borders between one's national or ethnic self and others does not always lead to resentment and polarizing narratives. Moreover, in some cases, nostalgic memory might affect the reimagination of a "polyethnic society," with shared social ontology, under the flag of a nation by making ethnic lines blurry (Doubt & Tufekčić, 2019).

Etymologically, *nostalgia* derives from *nostos* (return to home in Greek) and *algos* (pain in Greek), and it can be interpreted as perpetual pain or fantasia due to longing for a certain period. Mihelj (2016) argues that nostalgia might emerge among ordinary citizens because of their former political and economic rights or former prestige of their states during everyday remembrance rituals. Legg (2004) claims that nostalgia is also a way to criticize changes of the conceptualization of the nation-state through globalization. In other words, new regulations, especially adaptation of neoliberal policies, influence people's perceptions and push them to compare their present with pleasant past. According to Jankélévitch, when people nostalgize a certain period, they may also react "against the irreversibility" (1983, p. 299); therefore, nostalgic agencies might aim to bring past conditions due to pressure of present. To Berlan (2012), the culture of nostalgia aims to highlight to what extent social degradation is traceable within societies.

Boym's (2001) two-pronged typology also reveals different varieties of nostalgia, arguing that nostalgia might be about either commemoration of the past with its all dimensions (reflexive) or a desire to live in the past due to its conditions (restorative): in the former, nostalgic agencies postpone imaging reconstruction of their home, but the latter directly centralizes this possibility of reconstruction (p. 20). Although Boym's concept of restorative nostalgia is mainly associated with nationalist desires to reconstruct the lost historical home or homeland, she also relates restorative nostalgia to post-communist memories and their everyday remembrance (p. 22). Her main argument underlines that previous cultural habits and practices might be today's secret and suppressed motiva-

tions; therefore, a lack of past norms and exercises influences ordinary members of society to remember recent past in detail and with its both popular and lovely images (p. 78). According to Nadkarni (2003), the restoration of communist figures' monuments and their popularization among ordinary citizens signify restorative nostalgia since there is a bottom-up effort to revitalize and to remember the actors of a period during the visits (pp. 193–207). Boym (2001) also underlines that 'displacement is cured by a return home, preferably a collective one'; therefore, nostalgic agencies prefer to believe in an opportunity to return their previous home to feel better from different perspectives (p. 46). Further, in the words of Hillman (2011), restorative nostalgia has an obvious essence: 'we do not have to long for the past; instead, we can rebuild it (p. 33).

Prusik and Lewicka (2016) focus on restorative nostalgia in Eastern Europe, and they have determined that witness generations miss their "happy youth" of the communist period, especially in comparison with the conditions of the present (p. 678). Although Rowland and Jones (2016) claim that Eastern Europe under communism demonstrates the communist rule and practices as reflections of "evil ideology" (p. 427), collective memories of witness generations challenge this argument through their restorative nostalgic culture on the communist past (or the Soviet nostalgia) (Ekman & Linde, 2005; Prusik & Lewicka, 2016). Remembrance of socialist Yugoslav regime is also a disputable topic. First, former Yugoslavs voluntarily gave their socialist identity up through referendums, so how might they be nostalgic, even in a restorative manner, now? Second, several studies show that the existence of Yugo-nostalgia is not detectable among the collective memory of all Yugoslavs due to its certain characteristics (Volčič, 2007; Vuckovic Juros, 2018). Furthermore, the complex dimension of Yugo-nostalgia I attempt to detect is whether it carries anti-nationalist connotations among witness generations due to its successful co-habitation norm.

Lindstrom defines Yugo-nostalgia "as nostalgia for the fantasies associated with a country, socialist Yugoslavia, which existed from 1945 to 1991" (2005, p. 228). Doubt and Tufekčić underline that there is a historical tradition of co-existence among different ethnic groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and this tradition has been also consolidated by the socialist regime, and the Yugoslav civil religion aimed to protect historical fictive kinships in the region (2019, p. 7). Therefore, a nostalgia for the Yugoslav times might be traced among witness generations of Yugoslavia due to the regime's contribution to tradition of co-existence among the peoples in contrast with today's polarized atmosphere. Further, the Yugoslav state "was seen as a model for the world" because of "its self-management economy where workers managed their own factories" (Ramet, 2006, p. 1).

According to Teofil Pančić, writer for the Serbian weekly *Vreme*, Yugoslavia established a welfare state in terms of social relations and economic advantages for Yugoslavs (cited in Lindstrom, 2005, p. 235). These points might also influence the visibility of Yugo-nostalgia.

In contrast, Volčič (2007, p. 80) reveals that some ex-Yugoslavs interpret and remember the dissolution of Yugoslavia through positive connotations; she centralizes her "Slovenian informants" and argues that the emergence of national belonging to a new identity, Slovenianness, paves the way for consolidation of chauvinistic ties and anti-Yugoslav sentiments. Furthermore, the remembrance of the supra-ethnic/national identity, the socialist identity, is started to be associated with a rupture from this new and essential identity (Volčič, 2007). Hence, chauvinist and nationalistic agencies embrace the post-socialist conditions by discrediting the socialist state. Similarly, Vuckovic Juros reveals how the issue of religion is framed to discredit socialist Yugoslavia through her interviews with the Croats, and showing that "church marriages" and "baptism" were done in secret because people would have lost their jobs had they publicly done that (2018, p. 7). Therefore, the narratives and experiences of these people challenge the inclusive motto of socialist Yugoslavia: Brotherhood and Unity.

Furthermore, people, especially witness generations, might also be nostalgic, but their nostalgia may directly refer to the "irreversibility of time" (Angé & Berliner, 2015, p. 2). In other words, they may miss their past, but they do not prefer to turn back to it. Vuckovic Juros' (2018) research demonstrates not only how the suppressive characteristics of socialist Yugoslavia had been placed in the collective memory of the people (especially of Croats, her sample group) but also presents positive attitudes towards the regime among her participants. According to Vuckovic Juros's findings, the members of the second generation of Croatians whose parents experienced the practices of socialist Yugoslavia also think that "things were good during Tito's times," "everything was very nice, very funny, very amusing," and "everybody was doing something together" (p. 8). However, they do not refer to an imaginary option to turn back to their socialist past or reconstruct their ideologically built homeland since they might be more satisfied under current conditions.

Maksimovic focuses on physical rituals as possible evidences of Yugo-nostalgia and refers to thousands who "gather a couple of times per year at anniversaries of Tito's birthday, his death, or famous partisan battles" (2017, p. 4). Bošković gives another example of Yugo-nostalgia and discusses the importance of the "Lexicon of Yu Mythology" (2013, p. 55-56), meaning the representation of the Yugoslav popular culture in the for-

mat of a lexicon. The project for writing this lexicon started just before the dissolution wars but was interrupted due to the conflicts. After the dissolution wars, the lexicon was published, and it turned into "a political statement by ex-Yugoslavs who did not wish their social and cultural history to be erased from public memory" (Bošković, 2017, p. 56). Furthermore, Breznik and Močnik argue that post-socialist nostalgia "may lead towards the construction of a new political subjectivity" in the case of socialist Yugoslavia without prioritizing its either positive or negative connotations (2021, p. 11). Thus, these studies might push the researchers to focus more on whether Yugo-nostalgia exists.

Some previous studies also address if Yugo-nostalgia exists or not in detail and with empirical evidence, and their main argument displays how Yugo-nostalgia is traceable among ex-Yugoslavs. Jansen claims that Yugo-nostalgia means a quest for *home* which reminds ex-Yugoslavs of "normal life" before the war, and this nostalgic tone resonates with restorative nostalgia (2005, p. 223-250). Velikonja argues that Yugo-nostalgia is also a mobilization among ex-Yugoslavs to recall their recent past; for example, they join clubs "with the name Josip Broz Tito, or they aim to initiate similar political movements, such as in Macedonia they even have a political party – The Alliance of Left-Wing Tito's Forces" for the sake of reimagination of their former homeland (2017, p. 536-537). Petrović (2007) states that Yugo-nostalgia is clearly detectable among former Yugoslavs because they compare the borders of their current nation-states with the geographic borders of socialist Yugoslavia and its glorious influence in the world politics. Petrović also underlines that this space-based nostalgia does not carry nationalistic connotation because former Yugoslav citizens miss their supra-national identity and free movement within and outside the borders of the socialist regime (2007). Furthermore, Pohrib highlights that post-socialist nostalgia is very expected among witness generations of socialist regimes because post-socialist nostalgia emerges as a feeling in the form of mourning for "a failed utopian project or the collective romanticizing of the past due to a failure to catch up" (2019, p. 171). Hence, scholars on Yugo-nostalgia generally presents collective mourning and romanticization by referring to people's behaviors, ideas, perceptions, acts or materials from the period to talk about its existence.

In this article, I argue that Yugo-nostalgia is not just a form of longing for some material artifacts that were produced by the socialist regime, or for Yugo-music, or for Yugoslav cinema. Although ethnic identities remained visible in Yugoslavia, the regime's motto was unity of disunity, and many former Yugoslav citizens benefitted from this overarching feature of their socialist identity which theoretically dissolved ethnic identities and nationalistic ideologies. Therefore, Yugo-nostalgia might also be traced in the form of

anti-nationalist mindset among narratives of ex-Yugoslavs. Across former republics and autonomous regions of former Yugoslavia, Bosnia-Herzegovina was the epicentre of the dissolution wars due to its quickly polarized polyethnic structure; even today the adverse effects gender and minority rights, economic status, human rights, corruption, and enormous inequality can be observed in Bosnia (Onsoy, 2011; Swimelar, 2013; Volčič & Erjavec, 2015). Other former Yugoslav states also experience the above-mentioned problems, but the sharpened polarization within the Bosnian society makes it a more interesting case to understand the possibility of Yugo-nostalgia, even the restorative one, in the form of anti-nationalism.

To complement these studies on (Yugo) nostalgia, I argue that strong nationalistic sentiments might not be clearly traceable among some members of the witness generation(s) because of the supra-ethnic characteristics and everyday practices of socialist Yugoslavia. Further, detection of restorative Yugo-nostalgia might inflame anti-nationalistic feelings of members of this generation. In other words, when the people nostalgize the socialist past, they might also yearn for its malleable ethnic identifications and anti-nationalist atmosphere, and then they might unconsciously prefer to live in the past through an imaginary option of restoration of their homeland where ethnic identities were not superior (Angé & Berliner, 2015, p. 2). In-depth interviews with the purposive sample (groups) (i.e., the witness generation of the Yugoslav period from different ethnic affiliations) is one of the most reliable methods to be able to analyze their collective memory.

Methodology

I selected the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina and its constitutionally recognized ethnic groups for this research because Bosnian people are generally accepted as the main victims of the dissolution wars due to the destructive effects of the conflicts on their lives and the experience of the Bosniak genocide after many years of co-existence in the multi-ethnic region (Zilic, 1998; Alić & Gusheh, 1999; Palmberger, 2005; Bikmen, 2013). Therefore, their remembrance of the Yugoslav period might demonstrate differentiated narratives and reveal collective patterns, providing clues for answering the question: Why does the collective memory of some people within distinct ethnic groups not demonstrate nationalistic sentiments despite their traumatic experiences?

In search for answers to this question, I conducted 37 in-depth interviews with Bosnians who live in different parts of Bosnia (13 of them were refugees during the war years, then they returned to their country) and analyzed the collective memory of the partici-

pants from three ethnic groups (Bosniaks, Bosnian Serbs, and Bosnian Croats) on the Yugoslav regime and its practices to see if Yugo-nostalgia exists, and if so, whether it carries anti-nationalist connotations for the participants.

I did not refer to gender and educational background when sampling my purposive groups because this research centralizes members of middle class regardless of gender and literacy in order to present narratives of the main social group of socialist Yugoslavia (Lazic & Cvejic, 2011). Therefore, gender and education and their analysis through participants' testimonies and experiences are the limits of this research. Although they are important prisms to understand societal changes and their impacts, especially considering changing gender roles after 1991 in Bosnia-Herzegovina, I did not conceptualize them since, as Mao and Feldman argue, "middle-class individuals tend to offer fact-oriented summaries" without referring to their other identities when they reply to a bunch of questions on their everyday practices (2019, p. 131). Furthermore, "middle-class individuals see themselves as having more control over social threats and opportunities," then they might have an awareness on artificial polarization, and they may refer to socially constructed reasons (of wars or conflicts) in their narratives (2019, p. 131). My participants are generally white- and blue-collar workers or retired from state services. All participants are urban inhabitants.

I also maintained Vuckovic Juros's (2018) dichotomy of direct witness generations and transitional witness generations (age-based distinction) in this article. The participants' ages range between from 33 to 62, and when I use the term "witness generation," it refers to those who can reply the questions based on their own experiences. However, members of the "transitional generation" are also part of witness generations and remember the past, but they have blurred memories due to their age, because they generally experienced the Yugoslav period as children, and they mainly refer to their families' experiences. Hence, narrations of the members of transitional generation are also example of "communicative memory" that displays the everyday history of previous generations. Despite the age-based distinction between witness and transitional generation, I did not trace a sharp difference in the interviewees' main narration. In other words, six participants are aged 60+, ten participants are aged 50 to 60, five participants are aged 40 to 50, and sixteen participants are aged 33 to 40, and their main references, perceptions, ideas, and narratives have not been differentiated according to their ages.

Thirty-two participants demonstrated positive feelings and attitudes toward the socialist period while remembering; their ideas, perceptions, and testimonies indicate that Yugo-nostalgia exists, and it derives from anti-nationalist and overarching features of the

regime. The remaining five participants mainly referred to suppressive characteristics of Yugoslavia despite their mixed feelings: both (partial) yearning for the regime and being critical of the regime.

The interviews were conducted either in English or Bosnian-Serbo-Croatian (BSC), according to participant preferences, and I translated the BSC answers into English after coding the responses. Each participant was a direct witness to the socialist period in Bosnia-Herzegovina. They were recruited by snowball sampling and their age and habitation (urban/rural) was asked if they could participate in the interviews.

At first, I had planned to ask the participants' socio-economic class during the socialist regime before the interviews, but I then realized that each participant had a tendency to classify themselves as a member of middle class in the socialist regime during the interviews, so I thought that I could eliminate the members of other socio-economic classes after their responses. However, all of them identified themselves similarly. Therefore, purposive groups were sampled according to above-mentioned conditions, and I posted the conditions and scope of the interviews (with all details) on several groups' pages via social media (i.e., *Odliv Mozgova*, *Sarajevo Nekad i Sad*, and *Sarajevo Young Expats* in Facebook) and the portals of several local universities, including the University of Sarajevo, University of Banja Luka, and University of Mostar.

I designed the interviews as semi-structured interviews because structured questions could result in passing over crucial points during the interviews (Kumbetoglu, 2019). Wengraf argues that participants may "produce a narrative of some sort regarding all or part of their own life-experience" with the method of semi-structured interviews (2001, p. 5). I also asked the structured questions for each participant, such as their commemorative rituals, education life, especially in the socialist period, residential address, and similar. The accumulation of individual narrations with this method, especially with unstructured and spontaneous questions according to the rhythm of the interviews, may show collective memory on certain cases or a period. The method of thematic analysis was also applied during the analysis and interpretations of the answers to trace "adjacent spaces" being remembered sequentially during the interviews (Wengraf, 2001, p. 41).

A totalitarian regime or an inclusive state?

Flere and Klanjšek's research highlights suppressive features of the regime, and they argue that although both suppressiveness and totalitarianism are frequently referred to in "public speeches" among ex-Yugoslav nations, official documents and "competent authorities," such as members of political parties, do not frame Yugoslavia as totalitarian (2014, p. 237). According to Flere and Klanjšek, suppressiveness and totalitarianism are separated from each other as distinct concepts, and their research lists certainly suppressive characteristics of the regime: "repression toward religious institutions" and "a general control of the intelligentsia" (2014, p. 243). In fact, they argue that despite some suppressive features, Yugoslavia l was not a totalitarian state for most part of its post-WWII existence. I also traced several experiences and narratives on suppressiveness of the socialist regime that may prevent the possibility of the emergence of Yugo-nostalgia in the in-depth interviews. For example, when I asked a Bosniak Muslim about his experience of conducting religious rituals in Yugoslavia, and he gave the following answer:

> I had to hide when I went to the mosque for religion lectures, and I think it was a systemic attack on my identity. But, this does not mean that I do not miss Yugoslav times. Yes, religious people were not able to speak publicly for their freedoms, but everybody was respectful each other. My (Christian) Orthodox friend knew that I was going to the mosque when I saw him in front of his souvenir shop. Yes, the regime did not prefer to conserve religious affairs, and consciously suppressed our religious identities, but we were still happy. (Bosniak, witness generation, aged 60)

The participant's experience verifies how some citizens of the regime might think that socialist Yugoslavia had suppressive characteristics when it comes to the freedom of religion. This explains the weak possibility of Yugo-nostalgia, especially restorative one, among the religious ex-Yugoslavs; however, the participant clearly states how he misses the socialist past due to certain characteristics. At this point, it is also necessary to indicate the changes in current Bosnian politics. Today, freedom of religion is protected by international bodies and documents in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Alibašić & Begović, 2017), but there was no reference to that protection and its importance for freedoms and rights in the testimonies. Therefore, the lack of that referring to international actors and present-day conditions shows that Bosnians might not be satisfied during the post-war period despite their reinforced statuses. One can argue that this dissatisfaction might cause more palpable nostalgic sentiments among the members of the witness generation. Furthermore, the participant did not refer to any primordially nationalist argument

when he mentioned members of other ethnic groups even though ethnic and religious polarizations are visible in post-war Bosnia. I also asked the same question about conducting religious rituals to Bosnian Croats. Two of them explained the discriminatory position of the Yugoslav state as follows but also their Yugo-nostalgia without referring to today's reinforced human rights:

> My experiences about discrimination were from elementary school years. We were ridiculed sometimes. When I say "we," actually it means a bunch of people who went to religious education in the church. I didn't understand that; then, I did later during the war. The Yugoslav state elites did not prove divisions among identities, but we were Catholics for centuries, and we did not want to cover our identities. On the other hand, the regime in itself provided many things for me and my family. For example, we never paid rent for our house because my mom and father were workers for the state, so the state was gentle for my family. Today, it is impossible. I think that the issue of religion was the just one problem of former Yugoslavia. Unfortunately, this issue (freedom of religion) sharpened people's ethnic identities too in the 1990s. I wish that we had not lived the 1990s. Despite everything, I always remember the regime nostalgically and with my lovely memories, with my friendships and welfare. (Bosnian Croat, witness generation, aged 47)

The narration of this participant shows that religion-based suppression and discrimination were not directed only toward the Muslims, and negative sentiments against the regime due to suppression of religious identities did not prevent constitution of nostalgic attitude of this participant. Furthermore, the participant's remembrance manner of the regime reminds us of Todorova and Gille's reference to "economic recategorization" in nostalgia construction since citizens of present-day Bosnia cannot live in prosperity as much as in Yugoslavia (according to the testimony) (2012, p. 7). The other participant also described the general atmosphere through his perspective:

> I was born in that order, I did not know about others until I grew up and went to a world that saw the importance of freedom and democracy. Then, I saw that the socialist regime had certain problems, but we were happy, and we were never discriminated in any segment of the society by individuals. The state never banned religious institutions, but we knew that it was always suspicious of these institutions. However, people from distinct religious communities were always inclusive. The regime was problematic in some aspects, but we did not deserve this end. I will never forget my Muslim neighbors' names. I have no idea where

> they are now, or if they live or not. But, we were living in peace in the same quarter, and I had to say that this was the success of the regime although the religious people felt themselves excluded from the state offices. (Bosnian Croat, witness generation, aged 62)

This participant remembered the regime with positive references despite his negative conclusions on several features of Yugoslavia. Although the issue of freedom of expression is also problematic in socialist Yugoslavia, these interviews' main critiques of the regime is about freedom of religion. It might be interpreted through everyday politics which is polarizing in line with ethnic and religious identities and its impact. As Marijan's research in post-war Bosnia highlights that members of distinct ethnic or religious groups do not still feel safe in the quarters of "Others" (2017, pp. 67-68). At the same time, the co-existence practices of the people from distinct groups were also associated with regime; therefore, Doubt and Tufekčić's definition of a polyethnic society (shared social ontology) is detected in this answer as an example of longing. This is also important to quest pillars of Yugo-nostalgia, and to what extent anti-nationalism might one of its components.

On the other side, many studies display that socialist Yugoslavia was totally inclusionary, egalitarian, and highly popular among its citizens because of its economic and social advantages (Estrin, 1983; Bakić-Hayden & Hayden, 1992; Alić and Gusheh, 1999). Estrin states that "economic decisions" were taken by "democratic processes" and channels in Yugoslavia (1983, p. 1-12), and the motto of "Brotherhood and Unity" provided a multicultural existence, especially in ethnically mixed Bosnia-Herzegovina (Alić & Gusheh, 1999, p. 12). Moreover, their welfare was relatively higher than other communist parts of the world (Bakić-Hayden & Hayden, 1992). Luthar and Pušnik argue that socialist Yugoslavia "enabled prosperity and consumer culture unlike any other Eastern European country" for its citizens (2010, p. 10). Hence, its suppressiveness might be blurred in the collective memory of ex-Yugoslavs (Bosnians in this article) because of all those positive references. Collective memory of the participants from distinct ethnic groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina verifies this inclusiveness and egalitarianism of the state, within nations and between nations, when I asked them their general ideas about the Yugoslav regime:

> My mom and the older generation respect Tito. During his life, everything was kept in control. Even before his death, thanks to his political colleagues (such as Džemal Bjedić) and all pro-Bosnian communists, the regime allowed Bosnia to get more political power within the Yugoslavian state and to be strong and equal among all republics. Actually, this is not unique for Bosnia, for example, Kosovo

> obtained the right to be an autonomous region during former Yugoslavia. But it is especially important for Bosniaks, because we were nationless children of these lands due to our religious identity, but thanks to egalitarian principle of Tito's Yugoslavia, we became more independent, and we found our home which was constitutionally recognized. (Bosniak, transitional generation, aged 36)

As this quote demonstrates, *home* was found during the Yugoslav regime and under its control, so the milestone component of restorative nostalgia, referring to home for a period, is crucial in this narrative. Further, although this interviewee was a member of transitional generation, and was a child during the socialist regime; his argument underlines a sense of belonging to the regime even he could not experience it in detail. This also displays the influence of "communicative memory" for the next generations during the formation of their memory (Assmann, 1995, p. 126). Thus, a romantic tie to socialist Yugoslavia might be visible among my other participants. Upon his answer, I asked which political period might have formed or consolidated tradition of co-existence within his society:

> We live here for centuries. We co-existed for centuries. However, we know our modern history, such as the WWII. Fascist rule of the Ustaša polarised our society, and there is still ongoing investigation to find out new mass graves from the WWII. Despite this trauma, we again started to co-exist in the region, under the umbrella of socialist Yugoslavia. I cannot choose the correct words, but socialist Yugoslavia was like a father who unified its family members, and this father was so egalitarian among his all children. May be former periods also influenced our people to live together, but I do not think that former regimes, kingdoms, or the empires were like the socialist rule. The Yugoslav regime was the most egalitarian one. (Bosniak, transitional generation, aged 36)

This participant shows positive sentiments for the political situation in socialist Yugoslavia. Reference to a previous catastrophe, the Ustaša as if the participant was a member of witness generation of Jasenovac also again displays the importance of "communicative memory" and its capacity of transfer of the facts. Further, although he is a Bosniak and from the transitional generation, he does not demonstrate the main features of the "anger generation" (Immler, 2012, p. 275) by associating the conflicts and their destructive results for Bosniaks with possible faults and suppressiveness of the Yugoslav state. Then, I asked a specific question on his possible Yugo-nostalgia to detect restorative connotations: "Which period you select to live, today or the time of socialist regime?"

> I cannot perfectly remember each detail of the regime, but I can say that we lost our fatherland with the wars. If I had an opportunity, I would like to construct the essence of the socialist regime which is egalitarianism and its feature of co-existence in today's Bosnia. Today, I feel like a nationless person although I have a new national passport. But, if I have an imaginary chance to turn back, my answer is obvious. (Bosniak, transitional generation, aged 36)

As this quote demonstrates that Boym's restorative nostalgia (2001) is observable in the answers of the participant, and it is significant to understand how the participant fiercely miss the socialist times, thus they would like to restore it. Therefore, the regime's main characteristics, such as anti-nationalism, are also expected to be traced among the answers since anti-nationalism is the main catalyzer of the "the feature of co-existence" of the socialist regime.

I also asked Bosnian Croats from my sample about their general ideas and remembrance on the socialist period, and the following answer displays their main attitude toward that period:

> Under socialism, the father worked alone and fed a family of five, built a cottage and bought seven new cars! Today my wife and I work, we have one child, and we barely bought a ten years old car. (Bosnian Croat, transitional generation, aged 41)

In the construction of nostalgia on a certain period, Todorova and Gille also refer to the possibility of "social exhaustion" because of the conditions of present (2012). This is also palpable in the answer although this participant is a member of transitional generation. In addition, Korac argues that "a sense of insecurity" influenced post-Yugoslav space because citizens of former Yugoslavia faced the problem of "scarcer paid labour" during the transition from socialism to neo-liberal market (1998, pp. 158-159). Hence, corrupted economic conditions and atmosphere pushed members of both transitional and witness generations to idealize and miss the past. While I aimed to detect nostalgic references among these narrations, I went one step further, and I also quested in which form Yugo-nostalgia is existed. In the interview, I also asked whether there was a richer segment of the society:

> I never observed a richer class within the Bosnian context or any part of Yugoslavia, may be some bureaucrats, but really I don't know. Almost all were the members of the middle class, but this middle-class membership was different from today's Bosnia and its opportunities. We knew that we were equal in each

> part of the life without concerning our ethnic identities. We could spend our money however we wanted. This is impossible in Bosnia today. I miss living style in the socialist period. Today, we cannot mention powerful trade unions, however I know that trade unions were game changer during the Yugoslav period. Today we cannot find an authority to ask, "Why we are poor although we work too much?," but there were always people who supported our rights in the socialist regime. How do not I miss Yugoslavia? (Bosnian Croat, transitional generation, aged 41)

As demonstrated in this quote, economic features of the Yugoslav state also remain vivid in the memory of this participant from transitional generation and probably because of the accumulation of experiences and their transfer from witness generation to the participant. Štiks explains that a new class emerged in the post-Yugoslav space through "privatization campaigns" and "oligarchs" (2015, p. 135), so even though this testimony belongs to a member of transitional generation, there is a traceable awareness on societal changes without referring to cliches or textbook information. Moreover, the participant indicates how "ethnic identities" were not prioritized in the regime. That also consolidates the possibility Yugo-nostalgia in the form of anti-nationalism. When I also asked Bosnian Serbs their remembrance on the socialist period, I traced restorative nostalgia for social relations that centralizes anti-nationalism:

> Before 1991, I remember, we were living a happy and comfortable life. My parents, both with university degrees and well-paid jobs, had a wide network of friends from all walks of life, and they went out in the evenings, and we often join family trips. Both my younger brother and I played sports, and we were members of many clubs (literary club, dance school, etc.). We were all equal and happy children. I never heard hate or resentment among my Serbian relatives or others. We were just happy and appreciated the regime. But I remember, after Tito, something started to change, but my family and I never thought there would be bloody polarizations within our society. How could I think of killing my neighbor? That was crazy. I wish that there was a magical touch, and the 1990s must be forgotten. Then, after this impossible amnesia, maybe we would continue to live like in socialism as I really miss my home which is Yugoslavia, and I am so desperate to bring it back. (Bosnian Serb, witness generation, aged 43)

This quote displays how the narration of this participant is an example of restorative Yugo-nostalgia: lost home and a desire to rebuild it. Despite their current distinct ethnic

belongings, resentment had no place in the memory of my Bosnian participants, like this Serbian interviewee, while remembering the socialist regime through restorative nostalgic connotations which also aim to reformation or continuation of anti-nationalist ideas. Moreover, despite ethnically traumatic war experience, Štiks (2015, p. 138) mainly signifies the problem of unemployment and a total dissatisfaction in the post-war Bosnia because today's economic conditions overshadowed ethnic politics in Bosnia. Hence, one can argue that exclusionary ethnic politics is not embedded problem in Bosnian society. Furthermore, economic welfare and almost flawless social life are repeated patterns in their answers about the socialist period as demonstrated in the following answer:

> When I think of the socialist times, I remember free education and healthcare, no social discrimination, affordable food, clothing, entertainment etc. without any reference to our ethnicities. All were great benefits that today we can only dream of having. (Bosnian Serb, witness generation, aged 43)

Religious suppression and possible traumas of the war period are remembered by people within certain groups (e.g., the religious people). However, an emphasis on the positive aspects of social and welfare state cuts across all ethnic and religious groups. As such it is embedded more deeply in their collective memory, and their narrations generally centralize a longing for "co-existence" that comes from anti-nationalism of the regime. This gives us an opportunity to answer the question of whether Yugo-nostalgia, which is mainly restorative, exists in the form of anti-nationalism or not.

Restorative nostalgia and nationalism among the Bosnians

As I traced several examples above, Boym's concept of restorative nostalgia "proposes to rebuild the lost home" (2014, p. 41); therefore, a fantasy or a preference to live in the past (or in the extension of the past) is the essence of this type of nostalgia. Furthermore, I employ the concept of restorative nostalgia as a way of demonstration of how some generations might really restore to their former homes, but I also underline their (the participants') awareness of its impossibility (in some testimonies). Although Boym (2001) argues that generally nationalist and chauvinist individuals aim to "rebuild their lost home" while they nostalgize a period, post-socialist nostalgists may also want "to rebuild the lost home" for the purpose of restoration and revitalization of their homeland that was ideologically constituted and because of its conditions and atmosphere (p. 42–3). Thus, finding evidence for the existence of restorative Yugo-nostalgia among the witness generations of Bosnia-Herzegovina might also demonstrate anti-nationalistic sentiments of former Yugoslavs, and thus they nostalgize the regime. When I asked

what they missed most about the socialist regime, I generally traced anti-nationalist formulation of the Yugoslav state as a pattern:

> The socialist period was a fairy tale that would not be repeated, but I really want to re-live in my lovely state. Ethnic identities were irrelevant because we could have been born in the other side of the world, and our regime was completely different in a more unifying sense, not nationalistic. Today if you go to the Serb-dominated parts of Bosnia, as a Croat, you will be discriminated against. I remember that we were playing football with my friends, and we never knew or asked or tried to understand people's ethnicities. I think all these ethnic distinctions and their appearance processes are ridiculous. If the writers of our history books in the socialist regime saw what we experience today, they could not believe their eyes. We thought that anti-fascism and anti-nationalism would live for centuries. (Bosnian Croat, witness generation, aged 41)

This participant remembers a supra-ethnic period, which dissolved their ethnic identities, with positive connotations and without referring to primordially narrated nationalism stories. Arsenijević argues that today's politics in BiH is mainly about 'the everyday terror of ethnic privatized slavery' (2014, p. 45), so the prism of current politics might also inflame nostalgic sentiments. Furthermore, while remembering the socialist period, nationalism or the importance of ethnic affiliations were not generally discussed, and this example is also in line with the existence of restorative Yugo-nostalgia in relation to anti-nationalist essence of the socialist regime:

> The socialist era is for me like a period of prosperity, brotherhood and unity, love, collegiality, solidarity, patriotism. This is opposite to today's reality. I cannot deny the guilt of my ethnic friends, but I did not choose this identity. I started to know and classify myself as a Serb with the war. During the socialist regime, we were just partners of the regime like all other folks. We were enjoying similarly around a wedding table without thinking of people's ethnicities. My wife and I are ready to return to these days, and we are ready to do anything, but politics will never allow us, and we will continue to miss our socialist motherland where we were all equal. (Bosnian Serb, witness generation, aged 47)

The participant was touched by his memories on the socialist period that he remembered during the interview. This was not something particular to Bosnian Serbs. I also traced a similar reaction by a Bosniak. However, before the next interviewee's narrative, I would like to underline that in this quote the construction of nostalgia on a certain pe-

riod is visible due to a painful longing, further a preference to live in a certain period because of its conditions:

> Yugoslavia means all of us, without a division, and it was a real unity. I wish that the war did not happen, especially for all the young Bosnia-Herzegovinian men that went to defend the country honestly and naively. God knows how many people died or lost their relatives. For what? Because a group of nationalist politicians did not want to see our co-existence. Because they cannot exploit our society if all we insist of our Yugoslav identity. They had to divide us, and they were successful during the war years. Today you can also see nationalist people, but I never consider myself as a nationalist. I still miss the taste of my Croat friend's cakes. We did not deserve to see the end of Yugoslavia. We lost our home and my family, and I think that we can reach the same prosperity under the name of socialism in the future, but firstly this discursive ethno-nationalist warfare must be ended. (Bosniak, witness generation, aged 44)

Hromadžić's ethnographic research in BiH underlines that "us" vs. "them" dichotomy mainly refers to "politicians" vs. "ordinary people" in everyday discourse of the folks of Bosnia (2017, pp. 67-68). This testimony also demarcates the borders between "nationalist politicians" and "Bosnians"; thus one can argue that polarized ethnic identities are not the main concern of the identity politics in Bosnia among ordinary Bosnians. Furthermore, despite the collective trauma of the war period, this Bosniak participant mourns on behalf of all Bosnia-Herzegovinians without ethno-nationalistic references. Furthermore, the "unity" and "co-existence" (ritual) of Yugoslavia remain vivid in her memories. This participant also hopes for a socialist future due to benefits and conditions of the socialist regime. Therefore, the purpose to rebuild the lost home or the idea of restoration is also traceable, and especially in the form of a quest for anti-nationalist atmosphere. I also asked some questions as to whether they think of the Yugoslav state as being artificial and top-down. I thought that they might have cited the Yugoslav state and its practices as one of the reasons of the war. To my surprise, the participants directly expressed their criticism of nationalism and ethnic belonging and went against the argument of Yugoslavia's artificialness.

> Yugoslavia was unfortunately short term but the era that we need. I do not consider ethnic identity a priority, i.e., a precondition for a happy life. I prioritize equality, happiness, and satisfaction for everybody. Ethnic polarizations caused crimes that the normal mind cannot comprehend. If you ask war perpetrators what they did during the war, they cannot believe what they did. They killed our

> home which is the real one. Maybe we cannot forget what happened in the 1990s, but we can also remember what happened in the socialist regime, and what our origin is. I really want to see the revitalization of the spirit of Yugoslavia, and I can voluntarily work to do that, as a citizen, but I have no hope. (Bosnian Croat, transitional generation, aged 35)

As demonstrated in this quote, Yugoslavia is seen as home by this Bosnian Croat participant who is a member of transitional generation. Although this participant demonstrates restorative Yugo-nostalgic sentiments, also has an awareness of its irreversibility. As another example on the main narratives of the interviewees:

> Well, I personally place a lot higher value on socialist ideas and ideals than on ethnic identity, which, of course, should be valued and preserved, just rid of chauvinism. So, from my point of view, Yugoslavia was never an artificial state or nation. (Bosnian Serb, transitional generation, aged 43)

This participant makes a comparison between socialism and ethno-nationalism, and again, ethnicity or ethnic belonging is seen as problematic. Therefore, one could argue that Yugoslav identity is seen as much more valuable than ethnic identification in this micro case study in contrast with Volčič's (2007) argument on the essentialization of ethnicity in the post-Yugoslav sphere (2007).

These answers show how nationalism was looked down upon in socialist Yugoslavia by some. Hemon describes the Chetniks, the nickname for Serbo-nationalist militias, "by a kind of default that comes with being rich and arrogant" (2019, p. 4); therefore, the naming of the Chetnik-either during the World War II or the dissolution wars-demonstrates how they do not represent the entire society. In contrast to the political leaders and the nationalists, who cooperated on the emergence of ethnic lines in the Yugoslav state for their own interests that overlapped with nationalist claims (Denitch, 1996; Bieber, 2002); my participants demonstrate anti-nationalist feelings which is embedded in their (mainly) restorative Yugo-nostalgia despite their collective traumas regarding the war period and regardless of their ethnic affiliations.

Conclusion: Rethinking nationalism in Bosnia-Herzegovina

In this article, I aimed to answer my research question: Why does the collective memory of some people within distinct ethnic groups not demonstrate nationalistic sentiments despite their traumatic experiences? I selected the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and its constitutionally recognized ethnic groups: Bosniaks, Bosnian Serbs, and Bosnians

Croats. In light of my findings, firstly, I detected traceable nostalgia construction in the testimonies of my participants from three ethnic groups through idealized images of socialist Yugoslavia. Especially I detected Boym's (2001) concept of restorative nostalgia in different testimonies: a quest to be able to live under the conditions of the past. When I critically analyzed the existence of (restorative) Yugo-nostalgia, I also found out that coexistence, irrelevant ethnic identities, and unity are most repeated concepts when the participants of this in-depth interview-based research narrate their experiences. In other words, a borderless society in terms of social relations is missed most among my participants, especially by discrediting current ethnic identity politics. Therefore, nostalgic longing carries anti-polarizing connotations among my interviewees' answers, and then I can conclude that a collective restorative nostalgia for a supra-ethnic identity period suppresses nationalistic sentiments of some people within distinct ethnic groups among my participants in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Furthermore, in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, collective memory is mainly studied to highlight nationalist ideas and sentiments of members of different ethnic groups to understand the dissolution wars and post-war period. However, as my interviews demonstrate, anti-nationalist remnants on the Yugoslav regime still survive among some people within those different ethnic groups. Therefore, this article contributes to the literature by looking at Bosnia's witness generations (direct or transitional witness) of the socialist period and the dissolution war years who have first-hand experiences to demonstrate the existence of anti-nationalism which is embedded in Yugo-nostalgia.

I can also conclude that (collective) memory demonstrates omitted or less focused parts and details of official histories, and how individuals have to stand with grief when societal changes occur without individuals' consent. Further, communicative memory might turn into a tool that preserves societal realities through accumulation and transfer of experiences from one generation to the next. Therefore, agreeable past is nostalgized in the light of unbearable present like in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina and its distinct three ethnic groups.

Bosnia-Herzegovina has a polyethnic structure for many centuries and in the period of socialist Yugoslavia, and the previous studies also discuss the idealized image of the socialist period and anti-ethnocentric positions (Velikonja, 2003; Vuckovic Juros, 2018). This article aims to go one step further and inquire, through in-depth interviews, whether my participants have anti-nationalist sentiments, ideas, and perspective, and if so, why they feel that way. My participants from distinct ethnic groups displayed similar anti-nationalist sentiments and referred to similar nostalgic points in terms of overar-

ching identity, and I targeted to display how members from certain groups demonstrate the constructed essence of nationalism even in a fragile and ethnically divided society through a restorative nostalgia.

Among research findings, it is noteworthy that, in the overall idealized image of the socialist past, interviewers (regardless of their ethnic and religious background) pointed out the alleged violation of the freedom of religion only. Why did they not speak of the freedom of expression, for instance, much discussed in the 1980s? From the legal perspective, there was no ban on religious practices in socialist Yugoslavia. Retrospective grievances seem more an indication of the present than an evaluation of the past. This may be an important symptom that connects the present with the past and is worthy of further analysis. Although this study has aimed to highlight the collective memory of Bosnians to discuss whether supra-ethnicity and anti-nationalism survive in a post-trauma society through nostalgic sentiments, future studies could also look at other ethnically traumatized post-communist, post-socialist societies to see whether they can also spot the existence of anti-nationalism in those societies.

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Povzetek

Kolektivni spomini različnih etničnih skupin lahko osvetlijo izpuščene dele uradne zgodovine nacionalnih držav. Včasih je v družbah mogoče opaziti spopad med različnimi spomini in pripovedmi, vendar pa se lahko različne skupine spominjajo preteklosti tudi s sklicevanjem na podobne pojme, kar razkriva nekatere skupne značilnosti. V nekaterih primerih lahko spominjanje na prejšnja obdobja v različnih oblikah doseže stopnjo kolektivne nostalgije. V članku analiziram spomin na socialistično Jugoslavijo v BiH med njenimi ustavno priznanimi etničnimi skupinami, Bošnjaki, bosanskimi Srbi in bosanskimi Hrvati, ki so izkusili socialistično Jugoslavijo. Čeprav je bil antinacionalizem razgrajen zaradi nacionalističnih vojn (1991–95), sat bila antinacionalizem in nadetničnost v režimu na splošno otipljiva. Skozi spomine Bošnjakov na Jugoslavijo želim slediti kolektivnim vzorcem, da bi razumel takratne družbene odnose in ugotovil, ali jugonostalgija še obstaja v obliki antinacionalizma kljub kolektivnim vojnim travmam.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: socialistična Jugoslavija, Bosna in Hercegovina, etnične skupine, kolektivni spomin, nostalgija, antinacionalizem

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