Geography, memory and ethical values: aspects of Yugoslav history of the 1990s

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Our memories of experiences are inseparable from our actions in space (cf. Butler 1989, 2-3). What we remember is in some way or another linked with what has happened in a given place or context. Recollections of actions in a given context, in turn, are vehicles of maintaining, transmitting and changing customs, prejudices, attitudes and ethical and other values. (See Fentress & Wickham 1992; Halbwachs 1992.) To take an example, most Europeans view the names of Auschwitz, Chornobyl (Chernobyl) or Srebrenica with feelings of horror, because they evoke a series of memories of what happened in those places and, hopefully, the ethical rallying call: never again! (see Mojzes 1995, 1-9; Sorabji 1995, 85).

In the following sections I will deal with a few aspects of the recent history of a place called the Balkans or, more precisely, I will discuss a variety of ways of imagining and mentally constructing the place called 'the Balkans' (cf. Todorova 1997). Consequently, the article is divided into three sections entitled 'geography', 'memory' and 'ethical values'. The construction process I will pay special attention to the history of relations of Bošnjaci or Muslim Slavs[1] of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Serbs in the 1990s.

The three concepts I use form an abstract system, in which each term both implies the existence of the other two terms and is a constituency them. Starting with the presupposition that concepts are about, and refer to, social relations, I define them as follows. 'Geography' includes the physical milieu and social environment and culturally learned dispositions to view these in a certain way; that is, 'geography' in my parlance is the human relation to space, which changes over time. 'Memory', in turn, means socially internalised habits of acting and thinking, that is, traditions or, more abstractly, the framework within which the present cre-

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[1] In socialist Yugoslavia, 'Bošnjaci', in Serbo-Croatian 'Bosanci', was used to denote 'inhabitants of Bosnia' disregarding their ethnic or religious affiliations (Sorabji 1995, 89). Today the word is more or less a synonym for Slavs living in Bosnia-Herzegovina and confessing the Islamic faith.

ates the past. 'Ethical values' (or morality), finally, is a catch-word to define ways of making decisions and legitimating acting and thinking, disregarding whether these justifications are rational and conscious or emotional and at least partly un-conscious. More generally, 'ethical values' refers to ways of making choices inside different 'geographies' or 'memories', because by doing so we select, establish a border between 'this' and 'that' and, ultimately, between 'good' or 'right' and 'evil' or 'wrong'.

Geography

From the Great Power viewpoint the Balkans are on the periphery, not only in a pure geographical term but also in a derived cultural sense of the word, that is, as a civilisation. The Balkans are a space where 'civilised' norms and rules are no longer valid or, worse, are superceded by 'savage' and 'barbarian' ways of life. This is clear, for example, from the west European and American way of attributing wars in the Balkans to 'aggressive nationalism' or 'ancient hatreds' that, somehow, is part of the (inhuman) nature of the Balkan peoples (see Sorabji 1995, 80).

Moreover, the Balkans were seen, or constructed, as a border area, an in-termediate 'grey' space between European and Asian (or Oriental) civilisations. This resulted in sparse knowledge of the Balkans outside the area. One prominent Englishman could claim about Bulgaria in 1876, that 'many [English] people use the word "Bulgaria" to mean any country between the Adriatic and the Euxine' (quoted in Anderson 1968, 16) and this holds in general for common knowledge of outsiders about the Balkans. It must be added that, in the nineteenth century, in Vienna, Paris, Berlin or London there was some, and in cases rather detailed, information about the Balkans to be found. But it either was confined to small cir-cles of experts or was filtered through pre-established stereotypes which had been formulated in the course of the 'invention' of eastern Europe (see Wolff 1994) or adopted from scholarly and popular orientalism (see Said 1985). Thus, despite the fact that the Balkans were neither a part of eastern Europe proper nor the Orient, the area was nonetheless categorised as 'backward', 'superstitious', 'savage', 'uncivilised', 'wild', 'exotic' or 'erotic' (see Todorova 1997, Ch. 4). Moreover, these concepts were regarded not only as ways of describing the Balkans but somehow its qualities; that is, the Balkans did not only appear 'backward'; truly they were backward.

This, of course, was a problem of the nineteenth century western Europe not only with respect to the Balkans but the outside world in general. Had the problem

vanished in the twentieth century we would have no reason to tackle the matter. Unfortunately, such categorisation is still alive today. For example, in 1993 the US Carnegie Endowment republished the Report of the International Commission to inquire into the causes and conduct of the Balkan Wars (of 1912-1913), which had originally appeared in 1914. The Introduction to the reprint was written by the US ambassador to the Soviet Union and, later, Yugoslavia, George Kennan. He said that, in the Balkans, nothing had changed since the early twentieth century; the same 'aggressive nationalism' that had been the cause of the 1912-1913 wars had been the spark igniting the Yugoslavian wars of disintegration since 1991. A dozen years later Kennan's opinion is perhaps no longer the prevailing view, but neither has it been abandoned; 'aggressive nationalism' is something typical of the Balkans, but not of Europe or the United States (cf. Gow 1997). The Balkans, that is, are not only geographically but also mentally different, the other.

If Kennan and others sharing his opinion (see examples in Bakić-Hayden 1995, 918-19, cf. also Oberschall 2000, 989) had thought in more detail, that is, if they had been able to reflect how they were categorising the other, they would have perceived that 'aggressive nationalism' was a characteristic of their interpretation of the Balkans, not a quintessence of the place itself (cf. Okamura 1981, 457-8), and that armed conflicts (or 'aggressions') are universal, not a uniquely Balkan phenomenon (see Hudis 1996, 336-7).[2] On deeper reflection, Kennan had also realised that what was common to the conflicts in the 1910s and 1990s was different (local and governmental, grassroots and above all, ethno-religious and secular) ways of addressing the question of borders, both in terms of geography and political and economic interests as well as personal and group identity. The Balkan history allows almost any kind of interpretation of 'natural' territorial and social borders between different nations or ethnic groups, and nearly all peoples of the Balkans could with some justification claim several parts of the Balkans as solely their 'own', in fact, they have tended to do just that (see Bax 2000).

Thus, although drawing borders for a state or an 'ethnic' territory is always haphazard, it is doubly so in the Balkans. Does, for example, Bosnia-Herzegovina belong to Serbs or Croats, because their forefathers had lived there for hundreds

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[2] The concept 'aggressive nationalism' also runs against common wisdom which says that the highest form of (traditionally understood) nationalism is dying for the fatherland (in a fight against an aggressor) (see Hedetoft 1993, 281). But perhaps, from Kennan's functional viewpoint, there really was no difference between 'aggressive nationalism' of the early 1900s, the post-Second World War 'totalising' socialism and the 'nationalist' ideology that followed Titoism in the disintegration of Yugoslavia in the late 1900s (cf. Hayden 1994, 168).

of years and had embraced Christianity before part of them accepted Islam? Or, does it belong to Muslims, whose pre-Muslim forebears were relatives to the Serbs and Croats? (See Bakić-Hayden 1995, 927-8; Cohen 1997, 491-2.) When trying to solve the Balkan puzzle, one has to avoid the stereotype (still perpetuated in the 1990s by several plans of dividing Bosnia-Herzegovina into ethically homogene-ous 'cantons') that a particular piece of land belongs somehow 'naturally' to this or that ethically or otherwise heterogeneous group. Instead, we have to persuade the inhabitants to see that one place may belong to many cultures, or that multi-nationalism (in the form of mutual tolerance and a sort of 'division of labour' between different groups) is in reality more faithful to the Balkan history than 'ethnic cleansing'.

This is easy to say but hard to put into practice. Balkan geography, that is, the division of the space, is inseparably bound to interpretative power: whose claims to a given place are 'justified' and whose are 'false'. On the run-up and during the Bosnian War, nationalist Serbs would say that 'in reality' Bošnjaci[3] are either traitors to their tribe (i.e., the Orthodox people who had embraced Islam, and thus 'betrayed' their 'true' ethnicity) or 'fanatics' (that is, the 'ethnically foreign aggressors') originating from Ottoman Turks who, according to the Serbs, had for centuries oppressed the Balkan Orthodox Christians, particularly, of course, the Serbs. Whatever the truth, both 'traitors' and latter day 'oppressors' were con-sidered as being unfit to live in the present Balkans. Ethnic categorising had thus geographical implications; ethnically 'wrong' peoples should not be tolerated in a particular area.

Worse still, ethnic categorisation 'justified' geographical purification, not only of peoples but also of 'wrong' historical monuments, such as mosques, Ottoman-built bridges and bazaars (see, for example, Balić 1994). Razing impor-tant buildings to the ground was an attempt to quite literally destroy all memories of the other; or, perhaps more precisely, to prevent the others from preserving what they wanted to remember (stories, values, feelings) in a certain place (cf. Halbwachs 1992, 193-235).

According to one calculation, in the Bosnian War more than 1,100 mosques, some 300 Catholic and 36 Orthodox churches as well as over 1,000 other his-torically or culturally important buildings were demolished or damaged (Herscher 1998). These were not merely places of worship or monuments of the past, they

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[3] The Serbian and Croatian expression is 'poturice' or those who have abandoned their ('true') ethnicity and became Turks (Mojzes 1995, 32).

were above all shared places, in most cases familiar and well-known to all or almost all of the inhabitants of a town or village. Laying to these buildings waste meant erasing part of one's home and, together with it, recollections that could unite different groups. This was one typical feature of the Bosnian War: violence took place inside one's home or at one's front door and, thus, turned domestic places into sites filled with memories of fear and horror which usually did not belong there (cf. Sorabji 1995, 91-93).

A particularly disgusting such attack was rape. Women are commonly bearers and transmitters of tradition and thus their rape meant both defiling human beings and destruction of memories; for, according to Bosnian cultural values, raped women, most, but not all of whose were Muslims (cf. Mojzes 1995, 168-9), were no longer acceptable as marriage partners to their menfolk. Thus rape meant the disruption of the chain of transmitting tradition and memories associated with multiculturalism and Muslim presence in Bosnia.

Memory

Memories and history of what has been done, what has happened or how things used to be in the 'good old days' are important factors in individual and social identity-building. Thus these who dominate the formation of memories and history also dictate personal and group identity, at least at the official or public level. The crucial question here is: what kinds of memories and events are selected for remembering and writing history and why and by whom. Another important aspect is: what purpose or goal do remembering and history-writing serve, and what opportunities do they produce for forgetting; for although memories may have cathartic effects, forgetting of certain (traumatic) occasions is at least as important as their rememberance (see Butler 1989, 16-17).

Here I think it is necessary to digress for a while to ponder the term 'memory'. It can refer, for example, to personal recollections, passing of traditions in written or oral forms, periodic commemoration of certain events and the ability to remember. In a postmodern sense, 'memory' can also be a product, something of local or global manufacturing and consumption. What I have in mind here is a disposition to use stories about 'our history' as a means of guiding our acting and thinking. Thus, I see 'memory' neither as an individual ability or a collective, consciously performed ritual (for example, as the commemoration of Independence Day is in my opinion), nor a part of disconnected 'impressions' about the past as commercialised by today's 'market', but as a culturally internalised proclivity to

see things in a certain way (rather than another) and to conduct oneself accordingly. Hence, 'memory' refers to behaviour that we consider 'normal' or 'ordinary' (but which in fact is both contradictory and a continually changing) way of speaking, thinking, feeling and doing in our everyday life, to all that is so 'banal', as Billig (1995) would say, that we normally do not pay attention to it unless someone actively challenges it or tried to suppress it; then we defend our memories and, ultimately, our tradition and culture, by inventing histories to explain their inconsistencies and to justify our conduct or views (Butler 1989, 12-13, 18-19; Okamura 1981, 455-6).

When Kennan claimed that an (unspecified) 'Balkan' identity was built on 'aggressive (Serbian) nationalism' which, in his opinion, was 'the same' in 1913 and 1991 or 1992, he was wrong in many respects. Historically, the Balkans of 1913 was totally different from the Balkans of the early 1990s. If we consider the Serbs, in 1913 they were creating their identity relative to the Ottoman time, which was the 'other' from which they wanted to dissociate themselves. In the early 1990s, the other was Tito in general or this or that of his comrades' political decisions, which were blamed for everything. In other words, in both the early and late 1900s national identity was built on premises and grievances resulting from a particular situation, not from any 'perennial' Serbian nationalism. However, Kennan was right in insisting that identity and the building of the enemy-image followed in both cases the same logic: the culprit responsible for our problems had to be found 'out there', not among ourselves.

Tito's Yugoslavia[4] was for forty years dominated by 'partisan mythology', which tended to sweep all historical conflicts between various nations, nationalities and ethnic groups under the carpet and emphasised national unity by referring to the common fight against the fascist enemy in the Second World War and to the building of socialist Yugoslavia after that, a state in which all national questions were (officially) solved (hence the Titoist slogan 'Brotherhood and unity'). This mythology had Janus-faces. On the one hand, it provided different nations with a common language and, correspondingly, with at least an illusion that different persons and groups had something in common. On the other hand, although the partisan myth at first roughly corresponded to the experience of a great many people (see Roksandic 1994, 110-12), they soon grew weary of it. So, as time went by historical details about pre-socialist Yugoslavia (which were officially presented

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[4] How far we may identify Yugoslavia (from 1945 to 1980) as Tito's (personal) project is, of course, a question open to debate (see Roksandic 1994, 104).

in a highly selective manner, see Roksandic 1994, 113-16) surfaced, as did memories of the likewise officially suppressed civil war (between monarchist Serbs and partisans and between Croats and Serbs in the so-called Independent Croatia of the wartime) in the Second World War. This resulted in conflict between public and private views and official and individual recollections. In addition, in places there were continuous local conflicts between different religious groups after the Second World War, for example in parts of Herzegovina there were frequent disputes between Muslims and Croats (Bax 2000, 18-19, 22).

Officially, 'dissident' ways of remembering the relations between the different nations were declared taboos (see Roksandic 1994), but, I would say, that everyone of Tito's generation knew of many unofficial memoirs about conflicts and disputes, which in most cases were orally transmitted or published abroad by émigré circles (see Hayden 1994, 167-8, 173-5). Nevertheless, to remain in power, the party elite pretended that relations between different nations could be solved by harmonising relations between the political parties in the republics (Roksandic 1994, 120). This backfired after Tito's death in 1980, which was followed by rapid and extensive political and economic changes and the corresponding re-assessment of relations between the different peoples and memories about their past. Individuals, ethnic groups and even the entire nations had to redefine their identities, because the old identities based on narratives of socialist unity, tolerance and the allegedly fair distribution of economic resources and products had lost their basis and meaning. However, new identities were forged in relation to 'old' myths,[5] for example, by disclosing secrets from the Tito-era, such as the exact nature of conditions in those prison camps where Tito sent his political opponents after his break with Stalin in 1948 (see Hayden 1994, 168-9; Roksandic 1994, 123-4).

The fate of old narratives was particularly sad in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where they had been mixed with pre-socialist (and, in fact, pre-Yugoslav) tales of mutual tolerance. These tales, particularly in the cities such as Sarajevo, had resulted in a strong sense of 'Yugoslavism', and an identity emphasising mutual respect and

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[5] Ramet (1996, 72-3) suggests that 'Titoist programme' was typical of the city; hence its opposite was the dominance of rural, national values. There probably is some truth in that. However, I would say that "rural values' (by which Ramet (pp. 78-9) means patriarchal rule, respect of Serbian Orthodox Church, xenophobia and 'nostalgic orientation to past glories and sufferings, to the point of mythologizing the past') were not the cause of ethnic cleansing' and 'aggressive nationalism'. Rather, these values existed in urban Serbian culture, too, and in the new situation after Tito's death some of them were selected to cope with the change. Thus the new Serbian national identity was not an opposite but rather a reconstruction of the earlier identity.

downplaying of national and religious differences. After Tito's death, such ideas and identities based on these ideas were disregarded. Particularly many Serbs and Croats tended to claim that all of their problems had arisen directly from such (in their opinion, fictitious) thinking. These ideas and identities were substituted by tales of conflicts and cultural and historical differences. The logic was simple: if unity has destroyed our society and its economic backbone, separation and, ultimately, annihilation of the other, must be the path to 'our' recovery. Concomitantly, nationalistic Serbs and Croats tended to build their identities on fragmented narratives about past conflicts and factors that distinguished 'us' from 'them', such as customs, religion or language. If these were too close to each other, differences in history and culture were invented, as in the case of the Serbo-Croatian language, which was broken down into separate 'languages', Bosnian, Croat and Serbian. Even those who were unwilling to emphasise their Serb, Muslim or Croat identity had to do so, otherwise their more identity-conscious neighbours would have evicted from 'our' society (cf. Sorabji 1995: 84-5).

When this shift from unity to diversity and historical non-continuity in identity-building took place, it also had repercussions in the power structure. Already under Tito's rule, several changes in Yugoslavia's constitution had occurred. The 1974 constitution identified six semi-independent Yugoslavian republics, which were 'united' mainly by the federal communist party, the army and mutual economic dependence. After Tito's death, separatist tendencies started to strengthen and non-official memories (and identities built upon them) began to rapidly emerge. In Serbia, particularly foreign observers labelled this new identity as 'nationalism' or 'Greater-Serbianism'. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the wake of Khomeini's revolution, the Serbs tended to dub the new Slav Muslim consciousness as 'Islamic fundamentalism'.

While I agree that memories are inseparable from political, economic and social aims, I also argue that identity has something to do with individual and group self-consciousness that cannot be reduced simply to immediate material gains. Hence, when Serbs in Serbia started to speak about the persecution of their compatriots in areas outside Serbia proper (that is, in Croatian Krajina, in Kosovo and in areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina where the Serbs were in a minority), they were not only preparing the ground for an armed expansion of their territories; they were also creating a new identity. Moreover, they were using a certain space, Krajina or Kosovo, to locate attributes of their new identity, such as 'defending Europe from Islam' (as had the border-ranger in Habsburg vojna krajina or military frontier

zone) or 'being persecuted by Muslims' and 'loosing the (control of the) "cradle of Serbia" to them' in concrete frames (see Mojzes 1995, 19-20).[6] These places were obviously used, because, as Oberschall points out (2000, 990), Serbs in both regions, particularly in Kosovo, were a minority and thus the public in Serbia proper could be convinced by propaganda that they life and, in fact, the very existence, or their compatriots was threatened. So, the fear and the hatred that followed fear, made stories about 'persecution' and 'defence' of Europe plausible.

For many, this reinvention of 'Serbdom' was nothing new, it was a return to the old, 'genuine' or 'authentic' Serbian identity. And it was this belief, namely that the Serbs were rediscovering themselves in a way similar to that of the nineteenth century construction of the Serbian national state, that lead many observers (and perhaps many Serbs themselves) to think that 'aggressive nationalism' was somehow 'back', while, in fact, old clichés were employed to invoke proper memories and to establish an identity suitable for the new, post-Titoist, situation. This kind of non-socialist nationalism and the associated memories had been banned under Tito (see Roksandic 1994), it suited well for overthrowing the mythology he had invented.

The same may be said of Bošnjaci and 'Islamic fundamentalism'. Already Tito had occasionally accused Bosnian Muslims of that; in fact, it was a convenient label for all kinds of separatism, which those in power in Yugoslavia wanted to eradicate from predominantly Muslim areas. The Serbs who wanted to increase their political power, merely intensified that propaganda about 'Islamists'. It served the Serbs in two ways: by pointing out the other (and thus making 'our' identity more visible) and by increasing 'our' unity in face of an 'outside' threat (which minimised the disruptive power of conflicts among 'us'). Thus, 'Islamic fundamentalism' in Bosnia-Herzegovina was above all something created in a particular situation and for a particular purpose (cf. Sartre's view [Sartre 1965, 101-5] on Jews, who are

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[6] Hayden (1994, 170-1) points out that from a Serbian perspective, after the inauguration of the constitution of 1974, the tale of losing Kosovo made some sense. He notices that the constitution decentralised Yugoslavia 'to the point of confederation. Where the other republics received almost complete powers, including the exclusive power to execute federal (italics original) powers in their respective territories, Serbia was handicapped by the strengthening of the two "autonomous provinces" within its borders. These provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina, were virtually independent of Serbia and could pass legislation without review by the Serbian parliament. Serbia, on the other hand, could pass its own legislation only with the consent of both provinces. Furthermore, the provinces each had their own independent representations in federal executive and legislative bodies – representations that, combined, were greater than that of Serbia.'

Jews because the milieu they live constructs them as Jews and Okamura's review [1981] of 'situational ethnicity' in social anthropology). However, Bosnian Muslims, too, made use of 'Islamic fundamentalism'; it suited those of them who wanted to declare in the most radical way: that they need have nothing to do with either Tito's socialism or the 'new' Serbian way of thinking. In other words, it was a way of redefining the Muslim Slav identity, also for the part them who did not want it (see Oberschall [2000, 995-7] for Serbian and Croatian examples). And the more the Serbs (or even some outside the Balkans) considered Muslim Slavs as 'fundamentalists' the more they themselves were likely to reconsider their relation to Islam.

The fact did not matter for Serbs that Alija Izetbegović, who in the early 1980s was prosecuted and imprisoned for several years for having written, in 1970, the Islamic declaration, a text that encouraged Muslims to live true to the principles of their faith was far from 'fanatic' interpreter of Islam. Neither did another fact, namely, that relatively few Muslim Slavs were followers of even moderate Islam. (Cf. Cohen 1997, 486-8.) What mattered was that (some) Muslim Slavs even dared to attempt an identity-building that would separate them from the Serbs or Serb-lead Yugoslavia. The 'crime ' of Muslim Slavs in Bosnia was not their 'fundamentalism'. The crime was that they ventured to remember things differently, not along the lines of those in power at the federal level. Briefly, their recollections were 'wrong'; and so were those of others who protested against the 'new' Serbian (or, later, Croatian) interpretations.

Thus we return to the point that remembering is inseparable from power politics and rhetoric, which, in turn, are an essential part in constructing and reconstructing social relations and principles of what a given group considers right or wrong. In fact, and in addition to what I said earlier, remembering is a part of establishing social relations and the expectations we attach to them. When mapping out social networks – who is whose friend or relative, colleague, co-religionist, member of the same ethnic group, etc. – we are using memories and narratives such as 'he will do this because he is my friend or relative' or, 'we cannot trust him because he is of "foreign" religion or ethnicity'. In other words, we use categories and stereotypes to show the nature of a given person or group (cf. Birnbaum 1971; Sartre 1965, 61-70).

In the Bosnian War, the 'foreigner' was all to often a neighbour, friend or colleague. It may be, as Sorabji suggests (1995, 91) that local people were used as torturers for practical reasons; there was no time and possibilities to draft outside

forces to carry out the 'work'. On the other hand, Sorabji perhaps overestimates the amount of such violence and underestimates the atrocities inflicted by the militias against civilians (see Oberschall 2000, 982-3, but cf. ibid., 984-6 and Mojzes 1995, 116-17). Nevertheless, in my opinion, the use of violence and the way it occurred in familiar territory was a vehement act of demolishing old recollections without establishing new ones. Not only did the 'trust on neighbourliness', as Sorabji (1995, 89-91) put it, collapse, so did also normal human relations, even 'normal' ways of building enemy-images, because the end-result of destruction and looting was also destruction of practically every aspect of establishing relations between different groups or nations. Thus, it follows that an essential part of both modern Balkan history and solution to local problems consists of rethinking national and personal memories, or narratives of past experiences and social relations.

Since the past is always created by present needs and goals of a society or person by selecting appropriate memories and clustering them around themes that are considered to suit best for the present situation (see Wood 1994). If, as has happened in recent years in the western Balkans, economic, political and social problems began to escalate, these need to be explained and the evil they have caused has to be made somehow comprehensible. However, because rational reasoning seldom ends with emotionally satisfying answers, such explanation and interpretation is often augmented by invoking emotions and memories of the past. Hence, for example there was a revival of Serbian accusations about the Croat crimes in the Second World War in the late 1980s and the early 1990s and, in the case of Bošnjaci, horror stories about recent 'Islamic fundamentalism' linked with claims about (by implication unreliable) Muslims as 'traitors' of their alleged 'Serbian' past.

In the Bosnian War, this reinterpretation of memories took place in a tense situation with a heightened level of intolerance. Hence, the purpose of the 'new' (fabricated) memories was primarily to create, for a moment at least, an atmosphere which would support and justify intolerance, aggression and separation from the other. All of the memories which could have reduced the tensions were ignored, forgotten or pushed aside. Thus, if we wish to avoid such situations or solve the conflict which they had created we have to try and revive memories that reinforce mutual co-operation and peaceful coexistence. This can be accomplished in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and in general, I think, by supporting the rebuilding of a society requiring joint work of different peoples and allowing them all enjoy a sufficiently secure political and economical position. To establish such a society is a

moral or ethical question, and so is mutual co-operation and peaceful coexistence. This all requires a contextually-bound solidarity and identity that is understood more in terms of situation and rationality than the biologically or religiously determined human 'essence' (cf. Hudis 1996, 343).

Morality

Understanding memories as social constructions means that morality, or ethical values, too, can be interpreted in terms of recollecting persons or groups. Thus, the question: whose memories are the 'right' ones or worth remembering? is also an ethical question: who is right and who is wrong? In most cases, it is the ruling elite, party or group; but it may also be the power of custom, law or idea that has dominated a given culture for a long time (as in the case of, say, the tradition of blood fraud in western Balkans). However, the nature of the source of power notwithstanding, the result is always an one-sided morality, even in the case of the so-called democracies. Whether or not they want it, those in power will dominate the public sphere: they will decree what will be published, what kind of information is spread by media, what will be taught in schools and universities.

This kind of distortion of memories and, hence, ethics, is unavoidable. In multiculturalism, such as the ideal of Sarajevo (see Sucic 1996), this probably is not such a major problem, because it allows the coexistence of a variety of distorted memories (and ethics) without one single dominating 'corrective' structure. But during the Bosnian War, outside events (such as the Serb and Croat propaganda and aggression) so-to-speak isolate this kind of distortion; memoirs and ethics no longer exist together or in relation to but in opposition to each other. Memories of 'ethnic cleansing', destruction of architectural and cultural monuments or the rape of women cannot be shared by all; they can only create more conflicts.

While memories of one war or conflict, and hence ethical judgements of the case by the involved parties, may be clearly black and white, in the long run both memories and morality are a much more complicated matter. Perpetrators of one crime are often descendants of offers those who had committed earlier crimes (cf. Hayden 1994, 172-9). This was skilfully used by Serbs; e.g. Jasenovac, the most notorious Croatian concentration camp during the Second World War, become one of the dominant symbols in Serbian agitation against the Croats; and the number of persons killed there was hotly debated.[7] 'Islamic fundamentalism', linked with

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[7] The number varied from Serbian claims of hundreds of thousands dead to new Croatian admissions of 'only' some tens of thousands (Hayden 1994, 177).

the myth of the Battle of Kosovo Polje in 1389 claimed as the act that saved Europe from Muslim 'hordes', played a similar role against the Bosnian Muslims.[8] Briefly, memoirs from one injustice were used to justify another iniquity. Or, from the viewpoint of morality or ethics, crimes committed against 'us' could neither be forgotten nor forgiven. Somehow they were beyond morality, whereas, in my opinion, morality presupposes that crimes, including memories of these crimes, are debated, put aside and pardoned.

This is easier said than done. For example, can a mass-raped Muslim woman forget or forgive, or a mother whose husband and children have been killed before her very eyes? Or, more generally, can persons who have been forced to the edge of horror, panic and fear, forgive the people to which their torturers belonged? Can a Bosnian Muslim forgive the Serbs in general, although she or he cannot forgive the individual Serb who did attack her or him? I seriously doubt that. However, at a general level, the opportunity for forgivingness exist, precisely because not all Serbs took part in killing and destruction, and several of them, particularly in Bosnia, sided with the Muslims and actively helped their Muslim neighbours, even protected them from other Serbs.

War crimes are not the only moral question in Bosnia-Herzegovina; also the federation's post-war development has created serious moral problems, which are linked with geography and memories. One such problem is the return of refugees to their native areas. In the course of war, the Serbs took a large part of Muslim territory in eastern Herzegovina. On the other hand, the Serbs had to evacuate many Muslim-dominated places in Bosnia, including Sarajevo, where only a handful of Serbs stayed on. With respect to the Croats, the present capital of Herzegovina, Mostar, was divided between them and Muslims, while in the pre-war times it was a 'cosmopolitan' or 'mixed' urban centre. The moral part of the problem is: who has the right to decide where a refugee may be re-settled. Is it morally or otherwise right to displace people from their homes and then re-settle them in a new place?

One could retort that migrations have 'always' been the norm in the Balkan history (see Migrations 1989). Perhaps so, but this does not morally justify a person's or a group's involuntary dislocation. The fact that such things happen does not warrant the matter in any ethical sense of the word. To grasp a moral point

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[8] Before the massacre in Srebrenica in 1995, Foča, the medieval capital of Herzegovina where monarchist Serbs, četniks, executed hundreds of Muslims in 1942 and which the Serb extremists attacked in 1992, could be a similar 'dominant symbol' for Bošnjaci.

we have to consider, not only what happened, but how it affected the local people. In the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the international acceptance of displacements in Dayton in late 1995 dealt a moral blow to the tradition of multiculturalism. Another blow was inflicted in July 1995 in Srebrenica, where Dutch peace-keepers stood aside and allowed the mass murder of more than 7,000 local men and adolescents by Serbian forces.

Examination of what happened in Srebrenica has also confirmed that there was more truth in Serbian claims about 'Islamic fundamentalism' in the Bosnian War than has commonly been admitted. Already during the war, as a reaction to the rise of religious (that is, Catholic and Orthodox) propaganda around them, the Bosnian Muslim Army adopted Islamic teaching and practices, such as daily prayer (Cohen 1997, 494). The Dutch study of events in Srebrenica, published in 2002, confirmed that the United States armed Bosnian Muslims by smuggling weapons through Croatia – a fact that both Serbs and Croats obviously knew well (see Bax 2000, 27) – and this was done in co-operation with Turkey, Iran and various radical Islamist groups with links, for example, to Afghanistan and Iran (Aldrich 2002). What the Serbs, however, 'forget' to say was that Ukraine, Greece and Israel armed the Serbian side in Bosnian war (Aldrich 2002). Thus war crimes were committed not only by those involved in the actual fighting but also the international community.

When speaking of morality we have to consider what morality or ethics is about. For example, I have argued that multiculturalism is morally preferable to ethnic homogeneity and that open politics is better than double-dealing. Moreover, I think that multiculturalism and open politics should not be treated as separate ethical issues; for, all too often moral questions are tackled independently, each as a separate question. Yet, in my opinion, morality is inseparable from social relations, which means that moral issues are also social issues and each individual act has several, and partly unintended, repercussions. What the Dutch soldiers or Serbs did in Srebrenica is not an isolated 'wrong' deed but an expression of moral tendencies dominating not only those who committed the violence or stood by but also the international or local communities behind them. Morality, thus, is a combination of what we do and of tendencies which dominate our ways of doing, thinking, feeling and evaluating. When we consider an event we similarly consider the intentions and ways of categorising events, customs and the values that lurk behind them. While I am afraid we have no 'objective' way of proving that, for

example, not killing is preferable to killing my neighbour, I believe that peaceful competition and co-operation is socially more productive than armed struggles.

A concrete example, although not from Bosnia-Herzegovina but from Kosovo, is the reconstruction of the bridge of Mitrovica, the notoriously divided town in northern Kosovo. It was destroyed during the fighting and bombing in 1998 and 1999 and rebuilt in 2001. The project was carried out by thirty Serbs and thirty Albanians. The year-long collaboration obviously did not resolve ethnic or other tensions between Serbs and Albanians of the town, but, according to Payton (2002, 38), 'it certainly turned down the temperature'.

Moreover, in my opinion, helping others is an integral part of human morality. What we do, as well as what, and how we remember, are two sides of the one moral act. In practice, in the Balkans this means open discussion of recent conflicts and necessary punitive measures against those found guilty. In other words, though I by no means belittle the Hague tribunal, I think that it is essential that matters must be settled in the Balkans and between the Balkan people as well.

On the other hand, the international community should not simply adopt the role of a prosecutor. Open discussion and recognition of faults committed is a prerequisite to a credible involvement in and rebuilding of the Balkans. In my opinion, what else is needed is a humanistic vision of the future of the area, that is, a debate between the Balkan peoples and outside powers of what would be the most profitable and suitable way to help and to develop the area and the peoples. For it seems to me that during the last fifty years or so both local and foreign initiatives to create viable Balkan states or communities have in most cases lead up a blind alley.

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