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# Balkan PERSPECTIVES

## *A magazine on Dealing with the Past*

# WHERE DO WE BELONG?

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# FROM PARALLEL WORLDS TO MUTUAL VALUES

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# My nation. Your nation. Our nation?

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# EDIT- ORIAL

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Pristina, November 2016

Dear Readers,

**T**he Balkans is a region where borders throughout the history have changed multiple times. They were imposed by foreign powers, broken down, redrawn, displaced and disputed over the years. With a rise of the nation-state concept and against the backdrop of great instability in the region, nationalism has spread across the region throughout the last century with significant relevance today.

With the sixth issue of *Balkan Perspectives* we aim to shed light at how nationalism relates to the processes of dealing with the past; how it spreads; and the opportunities and risks nationalism carries.

While most of the authors understand nationalism as something negative that prevents open and inclusive dialogues and views on history, the section “Vox Populi” illustrates that not everyone understands nationalism as something negative, but as a form of love for one's own country. Many however equate nationalism to racism.

The articles also point out that there are many different ways to approach the topic of nationalism. Some of the authors take personal stance on the topic and describe how and where they have encountered nationalism. Lejla Mahmut for example describes growing up in her hometown in Skopje, where she encountered mistrusts and exclusionary reactions based on her family's last name. Nora Hasani shares strong and disturbing memories from her past, ending her statement with an appeal to remember the past in order to prevent cruelties in the future.

Additional authors also explore various experiences of nationalism. For instance, Zlatan Delić describes the use of nationalist ideas and symbols in the turbo folk music, shedding light on the role of female singers during the 1990s. Slobodan Georgiev writes about the Serbian

hooligan scene and its strong connection with Serbian nationalism, strongly criticizing that the state structures in Serbia do not seriously combat hooligan networks and denounces the “traditional Serbian values”. Eldin Buljubašić argues for a future supranational Balkans that takes Europe as an example that should be pursued by the Balkan countries instead of walking down the path of nationalism. Skender Asani analyzes the influence of past nationalist narratives on the present day politics in Macedonia, warning about a stagnation of the development of the Macedonian society. Mira Kostic writes a powerful appeal to her fellow citizens in Macedonia against nationalistic positions. Finally, Nicolas Moll in our interview, explains the potential role of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) of the Western Balkans to promote peace and reconciliation and counter nationalism in the region. As a member of the Moderation Team, he shares his hope and aspirations towards this new organisation.

Our goal as in the past issues has been to offer different yet sometimes controversial point of views. We invite diverse views to enter the debate, and to critically engage in these difficult conversations in order for the public discourse to be inclusive and progress in a peaceful way. You are welcome to enter this discussion directly with us through email and Facebook.

2016 has been a turbulent year with many developments in the Western Balkans, but also on an international level. Some of these developments show that there is still a need to counter nationalist movements and that it is important to keep calling for human compassion and mutual respect.

I look forward to continue working towards these values in 2017 with you!

Season's greetings!  
*Maike Dafeld/ Editor in Chief*

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**WHERE  
and  
HOW HAVE  
you  
EXPERIENCED  
NATIONALISM**

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## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

I experience nationalism on a daily basis. I live in an ethnically divided community and city where it is normal to be a nationalist, and love only your own ethnic and religious group. Anything else is not desirable nor acceptable. Any expression of diversity is not accepted; and individuals who are different are in a very difficult position. It is sometimes very exhausting to be constantly surrounded by nationalism.

**Adnan G., 30**

Nationalism is closely related to life in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I experience and live with it on a daily basis. Nationalism is on the streets, media, and people's attitudes. It has become the most defining factor in people's identity in my country. Nationalism unfortunately is the order of the day.

**Zorana D., 30**

When my friends judged me for hanging out with an "ustaša" as a fifth grader in elementary school.

**Ismet G., 19**

## SERBIA

"Since I grew up in a cosmopolitan environment, my encounter with nationalism has not been direct. At some point, I started noticing a development of a 'siege mentality' in some school and later with my university friends; a mentality because of which they felt constantly threatened and under pressure. I saw how this mentality hindered their personal and professional development. Although some of my friends were able to see the preposterous nature of nationalism and left their old thinking behind, many of them unfortunately went on to immerse themselves into this dangerous ideology."

**Srđan L., 38**

"Besides insidious daily politics, I experienced nationalism in small ways, such as when people made nationalist comments in public transportation, extended family gatherings, and teachers' lectures. Popular music also became nationalist; the lyrics and melodies have changed to fit the dominant narrative of the group."

**Dorđe Đ., 32**

"The customs officer thought I was beautiful until he saw my passport at the Vienna Airport!"

**Anja M., 31**

## KOSOVO

"For example, I notice nationalism when football matches are played; when Kosovo and Albanians take part in European and international games."

**Meti H., 36**

"I usually experience this feeling as I travel around the world, and I like to point out that I am a Kosovar."

**Kujtim K., 28**

"During my life, I have experienced opposite feelings about nationalism: nationalism was an obligatory emotional state of every good citizen; a feeling of superiority of values, traditions, even looks, over the Others. Later, it was embarrassing to say "I am a nationalist" because it equated you with a back-warded and uncool individual within a society seeking to find its place among the Western world. Now, I experience nationalism as that necessary ingredient that comes of love for one's own country, people, culture and identity, which can encourage us to channel the energies of each "different" group towards a better world for all."

**Lindita B., 40**

## MACEDONIA

I have experienced nationalism several times. One time was during a meeting organized by an international organization when I worked for a youth program. A fellow participant at the event said she personally does not want to make partnerships with any Balkan countries, because it is a region of wars.

**Valentina J., 41**

I understand the word nationalism as a mental illness and a very complex issue. Nationalism in my country is present in every sphere of life: in music, sports, and culture. I'm constantly getting irritated now when people use sports to spread nationalism.

**Eliza G., 15**

Nationalism equates to cancer; it is not a part of your natural system. But if you don't live a healthy and normal life, it can appear on any of your organs and spread rapidly all over your body. The odds of fatality are the same.

**Svetlana S., 28**

# WHERE DO WE BELONG?

My father's name is Avnoj. It is not a proper name, but rather an abbreviation of a very important organization connected to the Second World War and the partisan past of the former Yugoslavia. When I am asked about his name, and when I say it, people immediately guess my family's political background. Growing up in the discourse of brotherhood and unity, my family did not discuss any topics related to ethno-nationalism. Nurturing hatred towards the "other" was simply not an option, and it was actually considered backward and primitive. Yet there were still some issues, such as mixed-marriages between practitioners of different religions, which were not wholeheartedly welcome, and sometimes even opposed. There was a certain level of threshold where my family was cosmopolitan and progressive.

I spent most of my childhood and adolescent life in Skopje being asked who I am, and what kind of name I have, always alluding to my ethnic and religious background. These questions made me feel that I did not belong in the city where my family lived for generations. Although my name was no longer peculiar sounding when I moved to Sarajevo, many people still assumed that they knew where I "belonged" and I was then being asked, "are you ours?"

Nationalism strives to categorize individuals into a single group according to their ethnicity. It plays on individuals' identities and their strong desire for national belonging, which serves to mobilize and protect one's country or territory. Nationalism relies on the existence of the "other" and the desire to dominate it. Cunning nationalists have made people belonging to a larger group with strong national or religious identity feel comfortable and safe and on the other hand, individuals who do not belong in such groups feel alone and suffer from isolation. This is the reason behind my own efforts to blend in, and be accepted as their own in the biggest ethnic group. This is a period in my life when I had emotions towards the country's flag, or anthem. These feelings eventually faded away after moving

to Sarajevo, where I could have easily become a member of the larger group, and feel the safety and warmth of belonging. But that was no longer my reality nor my desire. I understood the danger behind blindly belonging to a large ethnic group, and especially for women. Nationalism assigns gender roles to individuals, denying gender identities outside the traditional binary category of male or female. Such binary thinking and nationalistic sentiments nurture violence against women, which culminates during war times. Women and men both constitute a nation, but the impact of war on women is radically different because of women's role as bearers of the nation.

Ultimately, nationalism brings benefits to dominant men who either make profit from war, or political gain during peace time. Even women who fit the gender roles prescribed by nationalism are symbolically always considered as "the other". The sacrifice of women in war time for the wellbeing of the nation is undisputable. They are identified first as the nation, and then as women. And manipulation with women continues even after suffering grave atrocities during the war. They are continuously seen as members of their respective ethnic groups. Even when support and care is given to them, when research is done about the suffering they were inflicted and when decisions are being made about their future, they are mainly identified through their belonging to a certain group and not as individuals. Women continue to represent the nation, even though it is a role which the nation prescribed them and the reason why they suffered such violence.

I no longer strive to blend in the dominant ethnic group regardless of how lonely or frightened I feel. The best shot women have against nationalism is to oppose the prescribed gender roles. Our best shot is not to belong anywhere else but to the world.

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**Lejla Mamut** is the current Conflict Related Sexual Violence Coordinator at UN Women Country Office in BiH. She holds a master's degree in Human Rights and Democracy from the Universities Sarajevo and Bologna, while her master's thesis on genocide was evaluated as one of the best in the generation. She has over seven years of experience working on the consequences of war

and rights of victims of international crimes and extensive knowledge of the country contexts with regards to war crimes, especially conflict related sexual violence. She holds a certificate from Medica Zenica for education in the area of communication, psychological trauma, coping with traumatic experiences and crisis intervention.

# “RYCO can become a tool against the development of nationalism”

*As a member of the Moderation Team which is facilitating the process of establishing the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) of the Western Balkans, Nicolas Moll describes the potential of the new organisation to counter nationalism and promote peace and reconciliation in the region. At the same time he warns us not to overload RYCO with excessive expectations.*



## You have a Franco-German background. How has the double-citizenship and the relation to both countries influenced your life?

Growing up in both France and Germany has very probably contributed to my interests in international and intercultural cooperation. I became interested in questions such as: What are challenges in the relationship between two countries? How can persons who have grown up in different societies work together? How can they deal constructively with political, social and cultural differences?

## What is your experience with the Franco-German Youth Office (FGYO)? Why was, is and will it be valuable for Germany and France?

I worked in the FGYO from 2001 and 2007, and since then, I have continued to work with the organization by participating in various exchange projects. When the FGYO was created in 1963, it was 18 years after the Second World War, and

six months after the signature of the Franco-German friendship Treaty. The idea of both governments was that, in order to achieve reconciliation, only political and economic cooperation were not enough. It was necessary to build a popular basis to this reconciliation process by giving the opportunity to young people of both countries to meet and know each other, build links, and develop shared activities. More than 50 years later today, the main aim of the FGYO is not anymore to promote reconciliation between both countries. We are not in a post-war-period anymore and our countries can be considered as being reconciled today, even if there are still sensitive questions linked to the history of both countries. But not being in a post-war-period anymore does not mean that the relations of both countries have become “natural”: The Franco-German cooperation cannot be taken for granted; each new generation has to learn again how to deal with challenges of intercultural and international cooperation. Also, the

present Franco-German cooperation at the political level is not excellent – that makes it even more important that young people from both countries continue to debate about this relation (and other questions) and on possibilities for improvements.

## Is the Franco-German experience applicable in the countries of Western Balkans and how?

Yes and no. No, if you think that you can copy-paste the Franco-German experience to the Western Balkans. You can never copy-paste an experience from one context and apply it as such to another context, because each experience is unique. But yes, the Franco-German experience - and also other experiences - can be useful for other regions, if you are aware of the existing differences, and if you look at it as a possible inspiration for what you want to do in your own societies. The FGYO has inspired the creation of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) of the Western Balkans

– RYCO certainly has similarities with the FGYO as well as its own specificities. RYCO is for example a multilateral institution, and not a bilateral.

### What are the biggest dangers for today's societies in the Balkans after the violent years of the 90s? How can the RYCO counter these dangers?

Among different dangers, the strong persistence of nationalist discourses and attitudes is certainly one. In this context, neighboring countries are often not seen as potential partners, but still as threatening enemies and scapegoats for internal problems. The political and also personal divisions within the region remain high, between and within the countries. RYCO will not be able to solve all the problems of the Balkans, but I hope it can contribute to deal with some of them. RYCO is meant to encourage more young people of the Western Balkans to meet other young people from neighboring countries, and to travel and discover the neighboring countries, providing tools to tackle existing divisions.

### This issue of *Balkan.Perspectives* explores the topic of nationalism and how it is spread in today's societies of the Balkans. Is the RYCO an initiative that could prevent a strong prevalence of nationalist discourses and beliefs?

In the official Agreement signed in July 2016, establishing the RYCO, the aim is stated as to "support activities that promote reconciliation, mobility, diversity, democratic values, participation, active citizenship and intercultural learning". So yes, RYCO can become a tool against the development of nationalism. Projects supported by RYCO, meetings and common activities of young people from different countries in the Western Balkans will create opportunities to discuss problems like nationalism, and at the same time, be spaces to tackle existing prejudices against other national and social groups. But it is not just because people meet

that they will overcome prejudices: Past experiences have shown that if a meeting between persons from different countries is poorly organized, it can even contribute to strengthening existing prejudices. That's why it is so important to ensure the pedagogical quality of the encounters which will take place, and to have qualified and trained persons who are organizing these encounters. In general, RYCO alone will not be enough to tackle nationalist discourses, but it can help to do this.

### What is RYCO? Can you briefly explain this Initiative?

RYCO is de facto a new international organisation created by the governments of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, whose aim is to support – financially, logically, pedagogically – youth exchange programs within the

within this group. For example, all proposals elaborated by the Working Group for the future RYCO have been decided through consensus by all participants, not by majority-votes. There were only two politically sensitive questions which the Working Group by itself could not agree on, and which needed a decision directly on the level of the governments. The first one was the question of the siege: Where will the headquarters of RYCO be situated? There were different options, but finally all six governments agreed on Tirana, what I think was a smart move: Albania was not part of Yugoslavia, and therefore has a specific position in comparison to the five other countries. The second difficult question was: With how much money should the governments contribute to RYCO? There had been some ideas that the money should



Western Balkans. This means that youth organisations, schools, and individuals who want to organize activities with young people from two, three or more countries from the region can apply for funds in order to organize such projects. Of course, youth encounters within the region have existed before 2016, but with RYCO a framework is created which will help much more young people to organize and participate in youth exchange projects.

### What were the main challenges during the negotiations for the RYCO?

The six governments in 2015 created a Working Group with Representatives of Youth Ministries and youth organisations in the six countries to develop concrete proposals on how the future RYCO would look like. There has been a very good cooperation

mainly come from external donors. Luckily, the six governments agreed that their contributions will constitute together 50%, 1M Euro from the total annual budget of the 2M Euro which is a clear sign of commitment. The ownership of RYCO lies in the region and not outside. Not a challenge, but an important question which was discussed was how to find a balance between the influence of the governments and civil society. The decision has been taken that the Governing Board, the highest decision body of RYCO, will consist equally by representatives of Youth Ministries and of youth organisations from the six countries. This is one illustration that civil society will really have an important role to play within RYCO.

## **Why are Croatia and Slovenia not members of the RYCO?**

They are not members of RYCO because the governments of Croatia and Slovenia decided not to join. They had the possibility to be founding members, but they decided not to. Perhaps because they are already part of the EU, they estimated that they do not need to participate in such a regional enterprise. This is a pity, because if one of RYCO's aim is to support regional reconciliation and cooperation, it is essential that Croatia particularly gets involved. Even if Croatia and Slovenia are currently not members of RYCO, the Statute adopted by the six governments foresees the possibility to develop exchange programs also with other countries as for example Croatia and Slovenia. This means that young people from these two countries will also be able to participate in exchanges supported by RYCO. The official RYCO-Agreement also states that RYCO is open to new memberships. This means that if one day the governments of Slovenia and/or Croatia want to join, the door is open.

## **What are the plans of RYCO for future activities?**

Until the beginning of 2017, different administrative and logistical steps need to be carried out, so that the new institution can become operational. For example, the steps will include nominating the members of the Governing Board, choosing the General Secretary, hiring the staff and opening the headquarters in Tirana and the local branches in the five other countries. In the first half of 2017, the first call of application for projects would be launched, so that interested organisations and individuals can apply for grants, and projects implemented. It will be very important to make RYCO much more known in the next few months through different outreach and informational activities so that a maximum of young people in the region will learn ways to participate and contribute to this new initiative.

## **How is RYCO going to influence the lives of young people in Balkans?**

RYCO is meant to create more opportunities for young people to meet, exchange and develop activities with other young people, mainly from neighboring countries. For some people, such encounters may have a very small influence, and for others a big one. These programs can contribute to changing perspectives on a topic or another country, to develop new relations, to get new ideas. This can positively influence young people's life. Let's take my example: it was through a study trip to Macedonia and Kosovo organized in December 2001 by the FGYO that I travelled to the Western Balkans for the first time. Now I am living in the region, since nearly ten years, and the Western Balkans have become the main topic of my professional activities, as a researcher and a practitioner. All of this started with a one-week-travel. And I know many other persons for whom participation in an international encounter program also had an important and positive impact on their life.

## **What would be the biggest challenges in the beginning of the work of this initiative?**

One of the biggest challenges will be to see how much RYCO will be able to contribute not only to individual lives, but also at the societal and regional levels. One of the main differences between the FGYO and RYCO is that the former was created on the basis of the Franco-German friendship treaty, embedded clearly with a strong political will to change the relations between both countries. RYCO however has been created without a more general political agreement between the involved countries; therefore it stays a bit isolated. But we should not overload the RYCO with too many expectations. RYCO can be one contribution for positive changes in the region. And if it contributes to changes in the lives of individuals, it can perhaps contribute to larger

positive changes in the region. Much will depend on how RYCO, its Governing Board and General Secretary, and its numerous partners at the grassroots level position themselves in the public space. Will they see themselves just as an administrative mechanism for youth exchange, or can they also become a constructive voice in the public debate? Will it be a voice which openly says no to nationalism, and yes to diversity, democratic values, complexity and differences as essential elements for our societies? The role of the civil society will be essential. Civil society actors will have an important role in the decision structures of RYCO, and I hope they will use the opportunity to help make RYCO an actor for positive change in the Balkans and in Europe.

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# IS NATIONALISM OUR (european) FUTURE?



Brexit has shaken the process of European integration and set Europa thinking. Re-examining the role, idea and vision of the European Union is again a priority on the old continent. From our Balkan perspective, there are ambiguities regarding Europe and the European community. The long process of Europeanisation of the Balkans has become questionable as a result of the new trend, the balkanisation of Europe itself. The balkanisation of Europe is an allusion to a process of fragmentation into smaller elements (regions or states) within the European Union.

The wish for the so-called balkanisation of Europe is an idea that has been present for a much longer period than the events occurring at the end of the past century. The examples of Catalonia and the Basque Country in Spain, the relations between the Flemish and the Walloons in Belgium and the recent referendum in Scotland show that the national and/or ethnic identity is not an obsolete category. The globalisation and an accelerated process of creation of supranational organisations are leaving a deep mark on nationality. International organisations such as the World Trade Organisation, the International

Monetary Fund and World Bank have had a great impact on the political actions of countries, influencing the very independence or sovereignty of countries in the implementation of political activities and achievement of national interests. Europe has gone a step further, by trying to reconcile the interest of individual Member States with the common interest through the European Commission, European Central Bank and other bodies. Attempts are being made to regulate the relationship between Member States through legal acts, yet there are also attempts to regulate the situation within the Member States themselves. Strong supranational institutions and bodies of the EU have emerged even before the completion of the process of creation of new national states on European soil.

The extremes between supranational structures and the return to more local levels of decisions that Europe is currently facing are taking on the shape of being “disunited in diversity”. The sharp transition to the supranational identity has created a certain amount of dissatisfaction in the case of still undefined ethnic groups and nations. The impossibility to consume and fully enjoy the national and ethnic identity is creating frustrations in case of some groups. The process that would have resulted in the European identity has returned to the beginning. Preventing certain groups from enjoying their national peculiarities, in the hope that they will overcome the feeling of such uniqueness eventually and move towards a single European identity, challenges the idea of a united Europe. The intense supranational movement in Europe resulted in strong currents opposing such a movement, while pointing out the fear of a possible loss of national identity and uniqueness. A lesson for Europe may be drawn from the social relations in Yugoslavia and relations between the national and supranational identity. Here we may specifically focus on the relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina. During the meeting of the Antifascist Council of the National Defence of Yugoslavia during WWII, it was decided that Bosnia and Herzegovina was a union of peoples, i.e. Serbs, Croats and muslims with a lower-case letter ‘m’. Bosnia and Herzegovina was given the status of a republic, while the alternative was the idea of annexation to Serbia; although it did not happen, it constituted an alarming warning. The suppression of the problems of national claims that have not stopped even today resulted in a quasi-solution in which Bosnia and Herzegovina became one of the six republics where there were Serbs, Croats and those who did not declare themselves as belonging to a nation or being muslims. According to the Constitution of Yugoslavia of that period, the state consisted of six republics: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia and Macedonia. The coat of arms of Yugoslavia on the other hand contained five torches or symbols of constituent

peoples: Montenegrins, Croats, Slovenians, Serbs and Macedonians. The term Bosnian, which denotes a citizen of Bosnia and Herzegovina was not used officially. Even though the term Bosniak was prohibited since the Austro-Hungarian period in 1906, the word Bosnian and/or Bosniak denoted one of the nationalities of the country and was widely used in colloquial speech. As a result of the 1971 Constitution, the sixth torch was added as an attempt to appease the situation; muslims became Muslims, which made the situation even more complicated. The term Bosniak or Bosnian was still not being used. The expectation that Muslims would give up their attempts to enjoy their uniqueness that they had been denied for almost a century, and slowly accepting the spirit of being Yugoslavians was a rough oversight. People whose national identity was guaranteed made attempts to preserve their uniqueness and also rejected the idea of a new nation.

The idea of creating a Yugoslav nation can best relate to the current idea of building a European identity. The success of an idea advocating to give up national uniqueness and for people in Yugoslavia becoming Yugoslavs, is the essence of Marx's idea of communism. It is best illustrated by the 1991 national census, where only 3% of the population declared themselves as Yugoslavs.

We see a similar scenario in the EU, where the feeling of fear of loss of national identity and its replacement by supranational identity results in opposition towards creating a common European identity. There are also cases within states themselves, where certain groups are unable to fully exercise their rights, such as the case of Albanians in Yugoslavia, or more specifically, in Kosovo. Usually the dissatisfaction of a certain minority leads to an even more repressive response from the majority population in the form of nationalism. Internal relations within the states themselves are reflected in the relations between the Member States. This was visible from the fact that the referendum in Great Britain on leaving the EU followed after the referendum in Scotland. Scotland has not gained independence, but the referendum initiated changes regarding the position of Scotland within the United Kingdom. The exit of Great Britain from the European Union calls in question the purpose of successful integrations achieved so far.

Based on the mentioned experiences and examples, we see several directions emerging in national and supranational relations in Europe. The first direction is related to population, which stresses the national identity as primary in European relations. There are protests within the EU accession process out of fear that national states will become less important and lose independence to act, and therefore also their separate identities. Secondly, as a result of globalisation and sudden linkages between

the societies in Europe, the creation of supranational institutions resulted in an intense overcoming of national uniqueness and putting emphasis on the common European identity. And finally, the last direction that has not been sufficiently considered and that has a potential lies between the two above, i.e. reconciliation. The process of reconciliation between the national and supranational is certainly important for resolving the current situation. A lack of communication and transparency of work of supranational institutions on the one hand and putting emphasis on national uniqueness on the other is the main stumbling stone in the current relations in Europe. Just as we have seen in the case of Yugoslavia, the artificial creation of a new identity on the one hand, and denial of a national identity on the other has resulted in the current situation in Europe. The lack of creativity and dialogue may compromise the whole process of integration.

Putting aside the clash of contradictory identities within Europe cannot be part of the solution anymore. The process of reconciliation of the national and supranational is of crucial importance for the further process of European integration. Providing national groups with such rights that they do not feel threatened may constitute a strong basis in the process of reconciliation. That may also be the foundation for changes of relations in the Balkans. The continuation of the process of reconciliation would lie in open and transparent communication emphasizing the importance of creating links and identifying similarities among different groups and finding ways to overcome the differences.

Although the relations in the Balkans are more complicated due to ethnic and national relations, the discussions have started being based on respect and observance of mutual rights. Resolving problems through a constructive dialogue instead of putting them aside will pave the road for future linkages. There is no alternative to being dependent on each other. Differences need to be cultivated, since they constitute values we exchange among ourselves and provide enriching experiences. We are thus able to face the challenges of a common European future. The national and supranational do not automatically rule each other out. A creative approach will combine both the national and supranational.

**Eldin Buljubašić** is a Board member of the Young European Federalists of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He is currently in his second year of master studies at the University of Sarajevo, Faculty of Political Sciences,

Department of International Relations and Diplomacy. At the same time, he is a first-year student of a master study at the University of Marmara in Istanbul, Faculty of Business Administration.

# Guardians of Nationalism

During the latest debate in the Serbian parliament about the programme of the new government, Serbian Prime minister Aleksandar Vucic stressed several times that he does not have “the solution” for the hooliganism that affects Serbian sports and society. “I admit” he said “I cannot solve this, I’m sorry but this is the truth”.

Twenty-five years after the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia had started, some problems today look pretty much the same when we are talking about violence in sports arenas and football stadiums. Those who were recognized as true and unique supporters in the times when FC Reda Star won the Champions league in 1991, they have since become a major problem of Serbian society and guardians of Serbian nationalism.

The list of “atrocities” committed by Serbian hooligans raised in the last 15 years after the removal of Slobodan Milosevic regime in October 2000 even though the public believed that this was not going to happen in “newborn” democratic Serbia.

Recognized in the nineties as a place for recruitment of paramilitary groups, Serbian hooligans transformed into gangs connected to organized crime in the new millennium.

The values remain the same though: Serbia is seen among them as a victim of western powers, the love for Russia prevails, and they support all kinds of “traditional national values” and are ready to use violence. These are the foundations of organized hooligan groups in Serbia who seem to believe that they are continuing the fight for Serbia.

When the groups were formed back in mid-eighties after the death of Tito, they had the spirit of urban life and attitudes. The first groups of Red Star and Partizan football fans had their role model in the similar groups in England, where hooliganism flourished in the late seventies.

But, the movement in England was rooted in the fight between different social classes and hooligans came from lower classes.

In Serbia, like in other parts of former Yugoslavia, the first members of organized football fan groups were youngsters from the upper to middle class and to be a part of such a group was a fancy thing.

The scene was radicalized when nationalists took power in Serbia, led by Slobodan Milosevic, and politics became a regular topic in football stadiums and other sport arenas. By the beginning of the war in Yugoslavia in 1991 the “opinion” of football fans became relevant in the political arena – those who control the masses in the stadiums can rely on significant support in the streets or during the political campaigns.

“Nobody wants to hear a chant on the stadium against him”, Ivica Dacic, Deputy Prime minister of the Serbian government, stated several times, presenting the feeling of Serbian politicians.

If the hooliganism in England served for their government as an excuse to implement a new economic paradigm in which the working class didn’t have power to raise its voice in the streets, in Serbia, hooliganism served as a support for nationalistic policies during the war in former Yugoslavia and as a source for recruitment of young criminals after that.

Hooligans and governmental security agencies had benefited from that “strange relationship”: the leaders of extreme football fan groups had support in their criminal activities in Serbia, and security agencies had control over their activities and it was possible to use them for different political activities.

The involvement of members of extreme football fan groups in the wars in former Yugoslavia is analyzed and confirmed as well as their postwar criminal activities.

Furthermore, during the work on this very article, two leaders of hooligan groups were killed in Belgrade suburbs and, on the other hand, one of the leaders of the biggest groups that supports Partizan football club had been promoted among Serbian police forces.

State administration declared several times in the last 15 years a war against those who use sports as a cover for their criminal activities. At the same time, hooligans are being used when their support was necessary: when the embassies were set on fire in February 2008 in Belgrade, after Kosovo declared independence, or when the Pride Parade was organized in Belgrade in 2010.

Formally, the government is ready to implement the law, but when the lights are off, it strengthens the connections with those who are able to mobilize thousands of young men within a short period of time. Today, they will fill the stadium of Red Star for an important game, but tomorrow they can support activities of a political party or be part of a state organized group that protests on the Serbia-Kosovo border, or stage counter protests during the Pride Parade.

This “game” between extreme football fans and state administration has been boosted since Aleksandar Vucic came into power in 2012 because he proudly says that he was “one of them” back in the 1990’s as a Red Star supporter. Now it looks as if he has to punish those whose values and ways of life dramatically determined his own life and views.

The insincerity of the Serbian administration regarding the question of hooligans and their criminal activities becomes transparent when journalists or researchers try to disclose the true nature of that connection between villains and those who should protect public interest and safety of all citizens.

The state does not have proper statistics and it does not have proper answers when it comes to these questions. It is not possible to publish the minutes from the meeting which the Prime minister held with leaders of some hooligan groups and he doesn’t want to speak about that in public. The police data about all criminal activities of members of hooligan groups or court data is not publicly disclosed, and we never had an answer about the nature of connections between policemen and hooligans. Why is that, and why does the public not get proper answers?

According to my previous work as an investigative journalist, we do not have answers because dealing with hooligans means to deal with nationalism and its influence of Serbian policy. The hooligans took the position of the guardians of traditional Serbian values and they are very popular among Serbia’s youth. They use the feeling of pure support to Red Star or Partizan to recruit new members and use them in different activities: racketeering, securing night clubs, trafficking drugs and street assaults and killings. When they recruit they do not discuss those topics. If you want to be a part of the group you should show your love for the club, for the nation and Serbia, respect the Serbian Orthodox Church, and be a fan of Serbian war heroes – from midlevel Marko Kraljevic to Ratko Mladic and Radovan Karadzic. The point is that if you seriously want to deal with hooliganism you have to deal with Serbian nationalism and to detach crime from something that lies in the very foundations of every single nation in the world.

The paradigm of “Serbian values” has been kidnapped from scientists, from academia and schools and was left to those who use it as a hook for new soldiers. It doesn’t matter where the front is, in Bosnia, Kosovo or in Belgrade suburbs. The principals are the same. If the Serbian government decides to reset the “Serbian values” we are going to be sure that the last days of hooliganism in Serbia will be coming to an end. Until then, every statement from the police or other government agency is just one more proof that nothing serious is happening.

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# REMEMBERING THE PAST TO BUILD A BETTER FUTURE



The ethnic conflicts and wars we've witnessed in the Balkans were driven by the regime of an evil opportunist, who fed the ethnic nationalism of his people through a hegemonic and populist approach. With his irrational ambitions he fueled animosity in order to create a greater Serbia through repression, apartheid, and later through ethnic-cleansing.

Because of Slobodan Milosevic's regime thousands of people in Kosovo have been killed and displaced; girls and women have been raped; many families have lost everything, including hope; and over one thousand people are still missing. The uncertainty is haunting the family members they left behind. Their absence is a deep wound, that won't heal.

The damage caused by the repression of the Serbian regime and the following war seems to be irreparable. All of those who've experienced the 1990s wars carry wounds and scars

with them. Most of these "scars" aren't noticeable, since they're manifested in traumas and unprocessed memories.

When you're a child you perceive all occurring events differently than an adult. Your experiences are fragments of complex developments. Developments, which you can't understand from your point of view. The one thing quickly learned though - even as a child- is that things happened, because "we" were different from "them".

*I remember* that my parents were forced to leave their jobs, like so many others during the mass expulsions of Kosovo Albanians. My mom signed her resignation letter at gunpoint. So my parents came back from work and stayed home. This was the first time, when they tried to explain what was happening to Albanians in Kosovo, how people lost their jobs. I was only four years old.



*I remember* how Serbian police officers arrested our primary school director. It happened right in front of our eyes after our school program. It was disturbing to witness such cruelty as a first-grader. It was even harder to understand why it happened.

*I remember* a different kind of protest against the repression, where I was allowed to participate. In the early evenings we would take pans and pots close to our open windows and drum lightly with sticks and spoons. I still remember that overwhelming clanking sound of keys being shaken and of metal being knocked on. That sound clashed like a wave through the city.

*I remember* my mother having a home-birth because it was too dangerous and risky to deliver a baby at the hospital, since all Kosovo Albanian health workers had been fired.

*I remember* listening to my parents talk about mass poisoning of Albanian pupils at public schools. They feared something similar could happen to me in kindergarten, so I didn't attend.

*I remember* heavily armed officers pulling our Kikirez (Fiat 126) over and pointing at us with their Kalashnikovs. I couldn't understand why these uniformed man enjoyed frightening my mother, who travelled alone with us (my sister was four and my brother only several months old). We've been pulled over so many times, and for no reasons at all. So we learnt to keep quiet - which is very challenging for a child, a toddler and a baby. If my father was in the car, they always tried to provoke him, so they would have a reason to beat him up. I remember one time when they left us for hours in our small car in the sizzling summer heat.

*I remember* the day we had to leave home. I was seven years old. Like so many others before and after us, we left everything and everyone behind. Everything we owned, everything my parents ever worked for. Precious items we were attached to like toys, photographs and our favorite books. Dear grandparents, relatives and close friends.

*I remember* my uncle crying like a baby when we said goodbye. Back then I couldn't understand his deep sadness, nor the doubts and fears my parents had when we started our journey towards the West. Belonging to another nation meant that you're not safe and not welcome to live in your own country, because anything could happen to you.

The worst memory is the one of my family and I stuck in the back of a freezer truck with 30-40 strangers. We were crossing the border illegally. The smugglers locked us up from outside, so no one would suspect, that there were human beings in the truck. Eventually, we didn't have enough oxygen. I still remember people screaming in panic, babies crying. The gut-wrenching pleas to stop the truck. The restless attempts to break the heavy walls. They held us children up so we could get air. We couldn't breathe and almost

died that day. And then suddenly the truck stopped. There was a problem so we had to get out and stay in the forest over night. I remember the freezing cold. But we didn't die. This was all that mattered. We were lucky to have escaped the war before it began, and not have lost relatives and friends. So many other people didn't have our luck.

Nowadays people hardly talk about the 1990s or the war. It feels like the majority chose silence to overcome unpleasant memories. Although remembering the past might be painful, we have to talk about our experiences, we have to remember why certain events occurred, how and why the war started. It is important to deal with the past, not only in one's own community, but also to talk to Serbians, to talk to each other even about childhood memories, which are linked to unpleasant developments. There needs to be an exchange between young Albanians and young Serbians living in Kosovo, so that they begin to understand and get to know each other better. A lot of harm can be caused, if there is no contact and no dialogue between the average Albanians and Serbians, and if both sides remain isolated from each other and feed the young and future generations on ethnic truths and nationalistic myths.

We should remember the past together, not in order to feed and strengthen our own nationalistic feelings or to seek revenge for what happened, but to remember in order to understand and never forget the dangers and risks, which can be caused if an ethnic nationalist fire is lit and starts to take its toll.

# THE PAST IS SUFFOCATING THE FUTURE OF MACEDONIA

*Macedonia's lack of inclusive politics and the ethnic tensions in the country put the Euro-Atlantic integration of the state at risk.*

Throughout the history, and still to this day, the Balkan Peninsula, apart from being a hotbed of conflicts has been an important geopolitical and strategic region where various political, diplomatic and economic interests have intertwined. In the past, the Balkans was a place of clashes, conflicts, and cooperation and cultural cohesion. The Balkans has been a region for numerous civilizations; each has left a mark on the national identities of the Balkan peoples. The trend of political clashes between the countries in the region continues though, and the ethnic and historical conflicts and frustrations still exist. Macedonia is nowadays an example for these clashes and discontents since it also started to be torn between different powers within and around the country.

Clashes between nation states in Europe and the creation of a new map of Europe at the end of the 19th century also influenced emerging great Serbian and Greek nationalist projects. The intellectual and political Serbian and Greek elites of the 19th century began their projects with a direct aim at including territories

of smaller peoples, such as the Albanians and Macedonians. Serbian and Greeks were faced with the challenge of creating their own identities while dealing with the opposition of non-Serbian and non-Greek people.

It is not a coincidence that the current Macedonian politics is following in their footsteps; their nationalist state-building efforts contradict their historical right over these lands. The political elite has chosen to shake the foundations of the state building by creating a biased history without any scientific or historical grounds. These kind of politics were widespread in the 19th century. Today, they go against the new modern concepts that promote the globalization on an economic, political and security level.

Can such politics founded on the past rather than the future not be harmful?

Until 2006, Macedonia was a leader of the European integration processes in the Western Balkans. Macedonia is now straying away from these processes due

to the anti-Western policies: By realizing this imported political project of the “Macedonian Renaissance”, the government is unmasking state institutions for misusing history. It appears that they are working in line with a strategy that is well-coordinated with other Slavic states, including Serbia, Russia and Greece. Meanwhile, the integration of the Macedonian state into the Euro-Western structures would support the Albanian cause. This might be the reason for numerous interethnic and interreligious conflicts on a political level in Macedonia and the anti-Western politics of the government. The Euro-Atlantic integration of Macedonia should have been a state interest and not only a priority for Albanian representatives. It is a way to stand up to Serbo-Russian politics and the only way for its stability and continued existence.

Macedonia today faces ethnic, linguistic and cultural identity crises from continued disputes with the Greeks, Bulgarians, and Serbs, and also brewing tensions with the Albanian community inside Macedonia. As a result of unprincipled Serbo-Russian intervention, the country today holds a weak position in the international arena. Its collaboration with its neighbours Kosovo and Albania is poor. Belgrade as its main priority in the regional relations, Macedonia's integration into the EU and NATO remain at a stalemate.

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# From parallel worlds to mutual values

I am wondering whether we in Macedonia live in a parallel world that is ignoring the reality and promotes norms that are spread by some powerful and wrongfully promoted as universal. Moreover, a world, in which the needs and interest of the individual are ignored and put behind those of the collective. Despite the risk of being criticized and misunderstood I anyhow come to the conclusion that, yes, we are living in that kind of world.

We are being divided on the basis of political parties, nationalities, religion, and who knows on what other basis. For many it is still more important that a flag of a particular nationality is raised, whether their language will be spoken in institutions than the living standard, or whether the citizens are equal before the Constitution and laws. In the Balkans, a melting pot of different nations and cultures, ideas of strong states and nations still thrive, and national romantic frustration is the main reason that led to the bloody and cruel separation in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Instead of learning from the past, politicians nowadays are feeding and fueling these nationalist feelings due to their inability to offer solutions to pressing existential problems of their citizen. Their one and only goal seems to be to stay in power. In order to keep the power, they are playing with the fire. And when the fire seems to get out of hand, they act as firefighters and extinguish it although they fueled it by themselves.

This way of (not) dealing properly with political issues has led to a fragmentation of the Macedonian society since the dissolution of Yugoslavia: On the side of the Albanian community, people generally distanced themselves from the process of independence, believing that they are unfairly treated and that their collective rights are impinged. Some radical groups even declared the Republic of Illyrida. Macedonians on the other hand with the historic chance to finally obtain an independent state, have marginalized the reality and tried to sweep the problems under the rug that led to the 2001 Ohrid Framework Agreement. Macedonia was no longer the same country: formally united, but internally divided. Macedonians felt deprived from their sovereignty and they thought it had been violated. Albanians, on the other hand, felt that other communities should be grateful for the benefits earned by them.

Due to this division and frustration on both sides, nowadays both sides keep on focusing on their nationalist positions that put their own community in the center of their politics. Instead of creating more jobs, investing in education structures and support the youth regardless of their ethnicity, they use all budgets and put all their efforts into the building of new patriotic monuments that exclude the respective “other side” and make other decisions that are solely based on their ethnic belonging.

This division causes injustice and discontent in our everyday lives: The school textbooks teach our children at an age in which they are incapable of critical thinking that it is normal for Stojan to go to university, and Nazmi to be a shepherd, or that it is very important which politician is the head of a municipal government.

In order to satisfy the principle of equitable representation, hundreds of people are officially employed in the state institutions along party line. But they stay at home just because there aren't enough chairs in the offices- while still receiving their salaries.

Young people are leaving in search of a better future beyond national borders, unloaded from political blackmail and pressures. They go with Macedonian passports, as citizens of Macedonia and nobody asks about their ethnicity. All they care about is if they can find work abroad.

Should this be our country's future? A parallel world in which basic human rights and cultural values are neglected? Macedonians, Albanians, Turks, Serbs or Romani, they all have similar everyday problems. The inability to pay bills, the endangerment of one's property, the inability to access justice or the need to corrupt someone to access the health service, these problems are encountered by all of us.

Is someone any more or less a man because he is a member of some nationality? Was nationality important when Artim Shaqiri scored the winning goal which was celebrated all over Macedonia? Was Abdurahman Aliti as an Ambassador in Bulgaria less Albanian when he defended the interests of Macedonia? Were Macedonians traitors when they voted for the presidential candidate Imer Selmani?

I personally had the chance to grow and develop in an environment of various nationalities. It helped me to closely meet their culture, language, way of life, and traditional values. Besides the Beatles, my idols were Ramiz Sadiku and Bora Vukmirovic. For those of you who do not know, those were two friends who were freedom fighters at the height of World War II, waited to be shot to death in each other's arms. I think that the demolition of parallel universes should start with the children, because they are not burdened with prejudices and animosities. Adults are the real problem here. They do not learn from the lessons of life and do not learn to respond to the question whether they will continue to live in parallel universes or build a value system in which discrimination - even the positive - is offensive and unacceptable.

The question now becomes: How do we build shared values? How do we find the common points that unite us? Let's leave history to historians instead of misusing it for political purposes. Let's gather the courage to apologize for the injustices that we have caused to others in the past. Let's start to respect each other, learn to listen, not to do things to others that you would not like them to do to you. Let's detect the interests and problems that affect us every day as people and not as Albanians or Macedonians. Let's insist on genuine equality of citizens before the law.

If these things are going to become our priorities, issues that are dividing us will become smaller and more marginal. We are encouraged by the fact that civic consciousness has begun to awaken, first through high school protests, social welfare, people who are treated badly and excluded from the central heating, up to so called "Colorful revolution", but there is still much work.

I am dreaming of a system in which we will not allow ourselves to be manipulated at the expense of the fundamental human rights and its duties. As for me, I am all in. How about you?

# INVESTING SYMBOLIC CAPITAL IN POPULAR CULTURE: TURBO-FOLK MUSIC AND THE FEMALE NATIONAL SUBJECT



*Like many theoreticians, I also do not consider a nation to be a political subject, but rather a state of mind, “an imaginary community”. [...] The members of such a community do not determine their belonging to it based on some real distinctive features, such as a common language, history or cultural heritage [although in many cases such distinctive features can be – and are – important], but rather based on the fact that they think they belong to it. [...] In this respect, a nation functions as a myth.*

*-Andrew B. Wachtel, Making a Nation – Breaking a Nation*

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After the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, ethno-nationalist discourses, wars, rapes, forced or voluntary emigrations and ethnic cleansings became part of the daily relations between the former Yugoslav republics and its peoples. Due to such a collective nationalist paranoia, creation of national camps, plundering, division of capital and public goods, sharpening of ethno-nationalist discourses, presenting hatred and killing of the Other as normal. Popular culture has played a crucial role in presenting war as the only possible and most normal choice. As exclusion is a pre-requisite for constituting a nation, it is also among other things based on the exclusion of women. “Women are seen as property,

especially in a property-owning sense, as a territory and boundaries that need to be “defended” or conquered, depending on the perspective. Their body, also figuratively, constitutes a territory and boundaries” (Iveković, 2000). A national project is always a male project, and women are only assistants. “A nation is, of course, a fiction, but a functioning fiction. It is a patriarchal community that can only exclude women, since the basis of a nation, just as in case of any patriarchal structure, is the exclusion of women: all women are subordinated to all men” (Blagojević, 2002). Female and male turbo-folk singers at the beginning of 1990s built their show business narratives within the ethno-nationalist discourse and such postulates were at no times disturbing the social values. The baseline attitude of the turbo-folk culture and its performers towards the war and crimes was that of distancing themselves from politics.

Female singers were actually functioning as a representation of hyper-sexualised women. Sexualised female subjects, whose appearance and representation was bordering with pornography, was a fertile ground for creating female stars within ethnically clean spaces and an occasion for easy money. It was also to build an enviable career in the music industry of the whole South-Slavic territory. Female turbo-folk stars were needed and adequate during the war in former Yugoslavia, since they encouraged war fighters both implicitly and explicitly, inviting them to sexual intercourse. Sometimes such an invitation was literal, sometimes implicit, depending on the self-presentation of the female performer herself. There were so many female stars at that time, who were articulating their position through sexualized songs, video clips and personal appearance and presentation. Such a presentation of female turbo-folk performers constituted a new type of “female empowerment” and ideals one should strive at.

As early as in the 1980s and the time of Lepa Brena, female turbo-folk performers created clearly defined positions within the national order. The song of Lepa Brena “Yugoslav” was a national commercial for Yugoslavia, presenting the female subject and sending the message that everything would be fine with Yugoslavia and that its differences and unity of its peoples would be preserved. The construction of the female subject in her song texts and video clips was reflecting a fake picture (as time would reveal) of Yugoslavian unity and equality of all of its peoples. In one scene of this video clip, Lepa Brena, with her standard, sexy appearance (shorts, long legs, “provocative” position), is sitting on the deck of a ship, holding onto the flag of SFRY, which is indirectly referring to the position of the female subject in that Yugoslav national and political fairy tale as the “female holder” of the nation. A characteristic of any national community, in this context of Yugoslav nation, is the common interest that brings them together, and in order for an interest to even be common, it has to be shared by all members of the community. “Although these are

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patriarchal and male collectives and meta-narratives, women and/or the female body are frequently used as material for sending a message about such a national project, and women are thus understood as holders of the nation or symbols of the nation. While men are representatives and PRs of the nation, reflecting the common interests of peoples, women are symbols of the nation” (Yuval-Davis, 2003). A sexy and eroticised female body holding onto the Yugoslav flag is defining and determining the position of women or position of female subjects within the national order. Such a position is set as an imperative of a beautiful, sexy, healthy and powerful Yugoslav women made to satisfy the male voyeuristic look, which becomes the key characteristic of the female subjectivity in the national meta-narrative of Brena’s video clip. Brena was functioning as a representative of the idea of Yugoslav identity for the masses in such national, political and ideological frames.

Ceca Ražnatović and many other female performers from the 1990s represented the Serb nation. After her wedding with Arkan in the 1990s, she imposes herself and functions as the Serb style icon, which she also tried to show in her texts and video materials. Ceca openly presented herself in her songs and video spots as rich and lavish, but also devoted Serb and Orthodox woman. She is actually sacrificing herself for a man, giving him self-confidence, is afraid of nothing and able to bear and survive anything. She is always positioned as the keeper of his identity and masculine power. A woman is presented as guarding the male integrity; she tailors the man and gives him her wings. Since women within patriarchal structures and power structures cannot achieve success, they tailor their men based on postulates like power, money, image, respect, direct national importance or importance in the home country. Sometimes such men are husbands, sometimes sons, fathers or brothers. “The political element in case of Ceca is the consent to all possible bodily transformations and the consent to all globalised and modernised processes of female body transformation/shaping. She sent Serbs the message about the world beyond the borders of their homeland by continuously transforming and by being the only one who had enough money to follow

fashion. So for example, during the isolation and sanctions during the Milošević regime, the citizens of Serbia were really given the possibility to partially follow global cultural processes exclusively through a great transformer – Ceca” (Papić, 2001).

During the first years of independent life outside SFRY, during the peak of nationalist paranoia and religious zealotry, Severina won its audience in Croatia with the song “Dalmatian”, including a video clip in which she sings dressed in a white wedding gown. This song directly created the desired form of a young girl, positioned within religion and as Virgin Mary, faithful to a man, avoiding his look and not having sexual intercourse, since a girl keeps her “chastity and innocence” just for one man, the right one. Within such descriptive practices, the female subject is being imposed as a desirable/imperative ideal of a girl. According to this ideal, a girl should, first of all, be a believer (Catholic), under no circumstances promiscuous, and, of course, be devoted and have sexual intercourse with only one man, who will, eventually, be her lawfully wedded husband. This kind of self-presentation was not maintained for a long time in Severinā’s texts, but it is certainly symptomatic of her strategy of drawing attention to herself. The image she created of herself was influenced by and influenced as well the social context, which was deeply impregnated with ethno-nationalist hatred, xenophobic rhetoric and political and ideological project of creating ethnically clean areas in the former SFRY.

Female turbo-folk performers in the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia were apt for sending messages needed in the media. In addition to their practice of being unconcerned with and ignoring the war events, they presented themselves as inviting the masses to celebrate. Just as the media played a crucial role in presenting the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina or Croatia as normal, male and female turbo-folk performers to a certain extent presented the war machinery and nationalist ideology as normal. “In such presentations, women represented the bloodline, family, nation, race, religion, and, in any case the community, and they had the role to ensure a symbolic social capital. Such a capital, of course, never belonged to women themselves” (Iveković, 2000). Within the nationalist gender framework, they functioned as the dominant and desirable image, so that all other forms of feminism or femininity were not representative and unnecessary in the media.

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# news & updates

## next issue

The 7th issue of *Balkan.Perspectives* explores the connections between dealing with the past and religion. Questions reflect on how religion can contribute to a peaceful society, and what religious elements could help in the processes of dealing with the past. The issue also examines what roles religion has played in the past, and how it has been misused to fuel conflicts.

## corrections

Besnik Leka and Vojkan Arsic - interviewed for the articles "A man for gender equality" and "Behave like a man!" in issue no.5 - are a part of a regional program, "Boys and Men as Allies in Violence Prevention and Gender Transformation in the Western Balkans" or Young Men Initiative (YMI) project. The program builds on CARE International in the Balkans' comprehensive and programmatic effort to fight interpersonal and gender-based violence (GBV) while improving gender equality. The YMI project has been implemented in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Serbia. It targets young men and women to lead healthy lifestyles; build thoughtful understanding and attitudes towards gender equality; and to decrease the level of gender-based violence.

## Opening of the War Childhood Museum, December 15, 2016

The opening of the War Childhood Museum is tentatively scheduled for December 15th. This unique museum dealing with the past through the experiences of young people during the war will open in Sarajevo on Logavina Street. However, its activities will not be only limited to the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The War Childhood Museum aspires to be active throughout the world, and the rest of the country and region. It recently expanded its research activities throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina by hiring researchers in Cazin, Banja Luka, Lukavac and Mostar. The exposition and workshop tour will also continue in other parts of the country.

The mission of the War Childhood Museum is to continuously document and digitize war childhood-related materials in compliance with the highest standard and present them through various media outlets. The Museum aspires to raise the awareness of this experience among the broadest audience possible.

The vision of the War Childhood Museum at a personal level is to assist the overcoming of trauma and preventing the traumatisation of others. At the collective level, the goal of the Museum is to achieve mutual understanding in order to support both the personal and social growth.

The establishment of the museum was inspired by the book 'War Childhood' by the author and editor Jasminko Halilović. The main part of the book is a mosaic of short memories gathered from more than 1,000 people who were all children during the war. In addition to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the book was published in Austria, Japan and in over a dozen countries. It is precisely the work of the book that inspired the establishment of the War Childhood Museum. The gathering of the collection of the future museum started in 2015. In addition to the personal items, stories and documents, the collection also includes video statements by individuals who were children during the war.

To support the War Childhood Museum, you can purchase a lifelong membership at: [www.indiegogo.com/at/warchildhoodmuseum](http://www.indiegogo.com/at/warchildhoodmuseum).

You can follow the activities of the museum on the website [www.warchildhood.org](http://www.warchildhood.org), and Facebook page [www.facebook.com/warchildhoodmuseum/](http://www.facebook.com/warchildhoodmuseum/).

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