

Historical Memories and Attitudes Towards the Other: A Cross-Generational Study in Croatia

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What were the causes of the ethno-national group divisions and how are the Yugoslav conflicts remembered? What is the role of the interpretation of history in constructing enemy images and shaping ethno-national attitudes? In what way(s) are historical knowledge and enemy images transferred? These are some of the questions this study tries to answer. More specifically, the first aim of this study is to explore the relationships between historical memories and group attitudes to determine whether the positive or negative ways of remembering an event and the groups involved in it will have an influence on positive and negative attitude development toward such groups. This study was conducted in Croatia by dividing the country into conflict affected and conflict averted zones. By conducting a simple random sample of the two zones, three counties were selected from each zone. Of the 303 survey instruments distributed in both conflict and non conflict zones, 210 or 69.3 percent were returned. Out of the 210 survey participants, 48.6 percent (N=102) came from the non-war affected areas and 51.4 percent (N=108) from conflict affected areas. About 82.4 (N=159) respondents came from an urban area. The rural area was represented by 34 respondents or 17.6 percent. Finally, this study postulates that the more negative memories individuals have about an event, the more negative their attitudes will be toward the groups involved in such incidents. Hence, the way we collectively remember a group can dictate the way we will behave towards them.

There are three main concepts comprising this study. The first one is the notion of historical resurrection, or historical events deeply ingrained in individuals' memories that are brought back to life by the current political structures. Oftentimes, these historical events tend to be altered or embellished in order to support a group's specific cause (Kaufman, 2001). For example, in the former Yugoslavia, historical events were manipulated along ethnic lines for the purposes of inciting ethno-national group violence. Hence, the aim of this study was to explore historical memories and determine the way such memories shaped individuals' attitudes. The second aim of this study was to explore the perception Croatian citizens have of the intergroup dynamics within the former Yugoslavia. While deadly ethno-national clashes in the former Yugoslavia have been the focus of the media and researchers for more than a decade, to this day, studies have failed to adequately explain the way processes such as the revival of contending ethno-national histories, identity politicization and the construction of mono-ethnic symbolic communities influenced attitude formation.

CASE STUDY

Ethno-national relations in the former-Yugoslavia

Born out of the ashes of WWII, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's (SFRY) foundation was established during the second Anti-Fascist Council of the National Liberation of Yugoslavia (AVNOJ) in Jajce, Bosnia and Herzegovina on November 29th 1943. Presupposing the Communist victory, the Yugoslav federation would consist of six units including Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia. The aforementioned federal divisions were drafted by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) with the ultimate goal of creating an equitable balance of ethno-historical groupings (Bennett, 1995). As a result, all of the Yugoslav federal units except for Slovenia had a population of mixed nationalities and religions. The creation of ethnically pure federal units was inconceivable given that the ethnic origin, religious adherence, language spoken and the territories where these groups lived were highly heterogeneous (Stanovic, 1988). Interestingly, the CPY believed that crafting such federal divisions will prevent future territorial quarrels (Bennett, 1995).

The Yugoslav supranational identity could be regarded as all encompassing of the six seemingly homogenous identities otherwise known as the "ethno-national" identities. In the Yugoslav case, the artificiality of an overarching Yugoslav identity was clearly imposed by the doctrine of brotherhood and unity in order to tame the post-WWII nationalistic orientations. With such artificiality came the strategic revision of the WWII history (Bennett, 1995) in which the actions of the Croat Ustasa led by Ante Pavelic and the Serb Cetniks were severely reprehended while the Partisan army and their triumphs were continuously lauded. Yugoslavism in Tito's view encompassed both distinct national identities which subsequently co-existed with the supranational identity but in which national identities could never take precedence over the Yugoslav identity.

In order to develop a strong sense of communitarian identity among the divided ethno-national groups and to diminish the Serb and Croat animosities created during WWII, Tito sought to shape the Yugoslav collective identity by adhering to the principle of brotherhood and unity. Tito emphasized the "diversity and distinction of the [ethno-national] groups but taught people through patriotic education and rituals that unity means freedom, pride and prosperity as opposed to ethnic strife which brings all groups back into poverty and humiliation" (Perica, 2002, p. 100). Brotherhood and unity was not just a simple policy of interethnic relations; it was rather a way of life that prescribed the equality of ethno-national groups and their peaceful co-existence. Hence the strength of Yugoslavia rests on these foundations or preconditions for Yugoslav prosperity and survival.

Despite all of the indoctrination efforts aimed at creating a cohesive and diverse union, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia along with Tito were unable to generate enough support from the Yugoslav people. In Shoup's view (1968) such difficulties

were not surprising given the temperamental nature of the Yugoslav people who did not view Yugoslavia as a suitable arrangement for accommodating diverse ethno-national groups' interests. Unfortunately, the brotherhood and unity doctrine proved to be a failure as the conflicts between ethno-national groups in Yugoslavia ferociously unfolded throughout the 1990's.

After Tito's death the Yugoslav federal units including the two autonomous regions progressed toward a formation of six quasi states, although all of the elements of the communist regime were still present.

Operations Oluja and Bljesak

By 1995, the Croats in Eastern Slavonia under the direction of their leadership took up arms and started a counter attack on the Serbian forces as part of the Operations Storm (Oluja) and Flash (Bljesak). Nevertheless, there were many UN resolutions that required Croatia to retreat to previous positions indicating that it must restrain from military operations. President Tudjman was not worried about respecting these resolutions partly because he was aware that the United States was behind him.

Operation Flash - On May 1st, the Croatian Army forces and special police units began their advance into the occupied territories. Over 7,200 soldiers and policemen participated in the operation. By May 2nd all rebel forces were evacuated and the Croatian Army had achieved all of its initial aims. One large group of rebel soldiers and civilians failed to evacuate and had to surrender near Pakrac (Tanner, 2002). The operation produced a total of around 1,500 Serb prisoners of war, the largest capturing of an enemy force to date in the war. As retaliation, Serb forces attacked Zagreb with rockets, killing seven and wounding over 175 civilians. The operation Flash served as a precursor to the Operation Storm.

Operation Storm was the code name given to a large-scale military operation carried out by Croatian Armed Forces, in conjunction with the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to retake the Krajina region, which had been controlled by separatist Serbs since early 1991 (Human Rights Watch, 1996).

The operation was described as the largest European land offensive since World War II (Sisk, 1995). A statement released at 5 a.m. on August 4, 1995 by President Franjo Tudjman publically authorized the attack. In this statement Tudjman invited the Serb army to lay down their weapons and surrender and to the Serbian people to remain in their homes and trust that their properties and rights would be guaranteed. Tudjman could be defined as a power-hungry person, a person who valued money, obedience, and importance. He thought Operation Storm would bring him acclaim and respect from the Western leaders. Stating that Serbs should have no fear was a big masking of what was just around the corner.

As a result of the Operation Storm, thousands of homes have been burned and destroyed and approximately 200,000 to 250,000 Croat Serbs (Amnesty International, 2005) fled to the Serb-held parts of Bosnia and Serbia. Tudjman's promise to keep Serbs safe seemed like a planned intention to kill as many of them as possible. Operation Oluja ended in the reclaiming of the territory on August 8th 1995 when Chief of the Croatian General Staff Zvonimir Cervenko announced: "The territory of the Republic of Croatia occupied by so-called Republic of Serb Krajina has been completely liberated. There are only two areas where there are still encircled formations of the former army and the population who have fled these territories" (Tanner, 2002, p. 289).

As a result of Operation Storm, approximately 300,000 Croatian Serbs were displaced during the entire war, only a third of which (or about 117,000) are officially registered as having returned as of 2005. According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, more than 200,000 Croatian refugees, mostly Croatian Serbs, are still displaced in neighboring countries and elsewhere. Moreover, many Croatian Serbs could not return to their homes because they have lost their tenancy rights and may be under constant threats of intimidation. Additionally, Croatian Serbs were victims of discrimination in access to employment and with regard to other economic and social rights. Some cases of violence and harassment against Croatian Serbs were reported (Amnesty International 2005).

As a result of being involved in the Operation Storm, General Commander of the Croatian Army, at the time of writing, Ante Gotovina is currently on trial in The Hague. Foreign journalists such as the BBC reported the once heavily Serb-populated city of Knin was almost completely abandoned. It was also discovered that some Croatian army forces were burning down abandoned Serb property and those Serbs who remained in the territory reported looting by Croatian armed forces. The nature of this exodus is still disputed among Serbs and Croats: the former tend to claim the ethnic cleansing was planned by the Croatian government, while the latter pinpoint Tudjman's promise not to attack civilians and attribute the cases of killing of the Serb civilians that remained to revenge by those groups and individuals outside of the Croatian Army's control. A few months later, the war ended with the negotiation of the Dayton Agreement in Dayton, Ohio. This was later signed in Paris in December 1995.

Theoretical Framework: Memory and Identity

In Halbwachs (1950) view collective memories are shaped by individuals' interaction with others partly because of the fact that "collective memories are associated, in particular, with membership in different social groups and/or generations" (Olick, 1998, 15). Group membership provides the materials for memory and individuals' recollection of certain events and forgetting of others. Although collective memory does seem to take on a life of its own, Halbwachs reminds us that it is only the individuals who remember, even if they do much of this remembering together (Olick, 1998).

Halbwachs also stressed how strongly social processes influence not only people's personal memories of their own lifetimes, but also a community's shared memories of the past (Shils, 1981, 50). In his seminal study, *The Collective Memory* (1980), Halbwachs contrasted memory and history as two contradictory ways of dealing with the past. In Halbwachs's view, history starts when social memory and continuous tradition stop operating and dissolve. Furthermore, history is scholarship and as such only for very few, while the collective memory of the past is shared by the whole community. Collective memory thus is the "living" past, the history that is still alive; the history that shapes each individual's identity.

Bartlett (1932, p. 255) suggested a connection between group membership and remembering, an idea that has recently begun to attract theoretical attention. One interesting subset of memory is the notion of flashbulb memories—a mix of personal circumstance and historical events (Pennebaker, Paez and Rime, 1997). Flashbulb memories are not established at the moment of the event, we consider them as such only after the significance of the event within a given society has been recognized. These memories have a vivid, long lasting effect because they allow individuals to "place themselves in the historical context and by relying their personal experiences to others they are able to put themselves in the event" (Pennebaker, Paez and Rime, 1997, p. 5).

A very important factor that influences individuals' personal experiences when interacting with others in a given group setting is one's social identity. Social identity is characterized as "the part of the individuals' self concept that derives from their knowledge of their membership in a social group (or groups) with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1981, p. 255). From the individual point of view, social identity might be seen as a set of shared rules of behavior and shared attitudes towards various experiences differentiating one member of the society from another (Turner, 1975). Social identity is referred to as a group phenomenon. Turner (1982) defines a group as two or more individuals who are in some ways socially or psychologically interdependent. The interdependence allows for the individuals' satisfaction of needs, attainment of goals or consensual validation of attitudes and values.

There are two models that explain group formation, namely, the social cohesion model and the social identification model. The social cohesion model tends to assert that group belongingness has an affective bias, namely individuals are bound together by their cohesiveness. However, groups can also form as long as they develop mutual and positive emotional bonds; what matters for group belongingness is how individuals feel about each other, and, in particular, whether they like each other (Lott and Lott, 1965). Conversely, the social identification model assumes that psychological group membership has primarily a perceptual or cognitive bias. This model considers that individuals structure their perception of themselves and others by means of abstract social categories that they internalize as their aspects of self concept. Also, the social cognitive processes relating to these forms of self conception produce group behavior. Moreover, social identification can

refer to a process of locating oneself or another person within a system of social categorizations.

As Tajfel (1981) explains, social identification is a necessary but not sufficient factor for the development of group identity. The meaning of the group cannot be understood merely as a face-to-face relation between individuals; it is also a cognitive entity meaningful to the individual at a particular point in time. In order to form a collective identity, members of a group join the collectivity they find most aligned with the characteristics they possess, a process also known as social categorization. According to Tajfel (1959, 1972), social categorization is the process of bringing together social objects or events in groups with regard to individuals' actions, intentions and system of values and beliefs. Social categorization, thus, represents a system of orientation that helps to create and define the individual's place in society.

Once a group acquires a given social category, and members of the group identify with the same category, those members of the group are further classified as the ingroup, while all of the individuals who do not identify with the same categories are classified as the outgroup. For example, due to the different cultural influences among its populace, Yugoslavia implemented three official languages, namely, Serbo-Croatian, Slovenian, and Macedonian. Serbo-Croatian was a twofold language. The Croats adopted the Latin alphabet and their pronunciation of words involved the use of such syllabi as *ije*, *je*; a linguistic style called "ijekavica".

On the other hand, the Serbs embraced the Cyrillic alphabet, and the linguistic style called "ekavica". The Ekavica style emphasized the syllabi 'e' instead of the 'ije' and 'je' of the Ijekavica style. For example, the verb "to understand" would be translated in Croatian as *razumijeti* and in Serbia as *razumeti*, two words that have the same meaning and almost the same pronunciation. Although these differences may seem insignificant, they indeed dictate different socio-linguistic styles which differentiate people into social categories: ingroup (those who speak Ekavica (Serbs)) and outgroup (those who speak Ijekavica (Croats)) or vice versa. Moreover, these linguistic differences would have been less pronounced in the case where the same were not linked to a religious or an ethnic category. For example, to speak Ekavica means to be a Serb and an Orthodox Christian. Conversely, to speak Ijekavica means to be a Croat and a Catholic.

In the times of ethnic strife, the pronunciation of a word in the "enemy" language was met by severe rapprochement or expulsion from ones ingroup. When these identity differences become so distinct, everything related to the outgroup becomes evil, censured or destroyed. In the aforementioned cases identities became problematic because major incompatibilities within identity groupings occurred. In such circumstances, actors attempting to politicize group identities engender social polarization based on loyalty toward the dominant group. Identity politics involves the prioritization of one particular facet of identity over others in a manner that

influences political choices and potentially provides a bias for political action (Jeong, 1999).

After the groups become polarized, a phenomenon known as social comparison is often employed as a means of evaluation between the ingroups and outgroups. Social comparison is a process in which individuals or groups learn about and assess themselves by comparison with other people. According to Festinger (1954) people tend to move into groups of similar opinions and abilities, and they move out of groups that fail to satisfy their drive for self-evaluation. When group membership becomes salient, perceived intragroup similarities and liking tends to be enhanced; self and others are evaluated favorably in terms of common group membership (Hensley and Duval, 1976, Turner, 1978).

The main empirical finding of social identity theory refers to ingroup biases. This observed pattern refers to the tendency to favor the in-group subject over the outgroup subject in evaluating behavior of others. The mere perception of being a member of two distinct groups (social categorization) is sufficient to generate the discrimination. Status relations are determined mainly by the consistency of the reference group boundaries and by the relative position of the groups in terms of stability and legitimacy (Tajfel and Turner, 1979). The perceived compatibilities between the ethno-national groups in the former Yugoslavia could be attributed to Tito's prohibition of openly voicing grievances that could potentially disharmonize intergroup relations.

It is safe to say that if individuals in a group consider the outgroup as part of their moral community, they will be more likely to form amicable relations with them. Hence it is also necessary that we consider a moral component to intergroup engagement.

The first factor of intergroup engagement is related to the moral considerations that guide group behavior. According to Deutsch (2000) individuals and groups who are outside the boundary in which considerations of fairness apply may be treated in ways that would be considered immoral if people within the boundary were so treated. For example, consider the situation in Bosnia. Prior to the breakup of Yugoslavia, Serbs, Muslims, and Croats were more or less part of one moral community and treated one another with some degree of civility. After the start of civil strife, vilification of other ethnic groups became a political tool, and it led to excluding others from one's moral community. As a consequence, the various ethnic groups committed the most barbaric atrocities against one another (Deutsch, 2000).

Add to this, the process of moral exclusion also took place and exacerbated the intergroup relations. Moral exclusion deems altruistic, co-operative intergroup behavior as irrelevant and views those excluded groups as outside their normative community and therefore as expendable, undeserving and eligible targets of exploitation, aggression and violence. In its most virulent and widespread form,

moral exclusion justifies institutionalizing such actions as torture and genocide (Deutsch and Coleman, 2000).

Various studies have shown that people are more likely to remember events that concern their group affiliation. However, human memory can be influenced by a variety of different factors, and the past can thus be altered to support a groups' specific cause. Volkan (1997) considered historical "chosen traumas" being the key ingredient that makes up the nations' collective memories. In one of Dennis Sandole's accounts, he remembers the remarks of Richard Holbrooke (who was at that time appointed by the Clinton administration to be the US intermediary in Cyprus) as basically being infuriated because "these people cannot forget the history, the Greek Cypriots and Turk Cypriots say that is who they are, they are what their history is, and they are that" (Sandole, 2005). For them, identity and history lay at the core of their existence.

The manner in which individuals remember past events might play a role in social categorization by placing groups in converse position in which the enemy perception of the other could be created based on past events. This process may also shape the formation of out-group prejudice where the outgroups are considered evil and harm can be a cause for celebrations instead of grief. Excluding somebody from ones moral universe, coupled up by negative group evaluation and a zero sum aimed competition have had harmful effects on intergroup relations during the 1990's conflicts.

This study will examine what effects, if any, remembering specific historical events have had on attitudes toward the military actions of Oluja and Bljesak and Croatian perceptions of their neighbors. The study will also examine the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: A high degree of nationalistic attitudes and a strong perception indicating that Serbian entities were the aggressors in Croatia will positively correlate with support for the military actions of Oluja and Bljesak.

Hypothesis 2: The younger generations will display more support for Pavelic and the Independent State of Croatia.

Hypothesis 3: High support for Pavelic and the Independent State of Croatia will negatively correlate with the individuals support for the Partisans and Brotherhood and Unity.

METHOD

Design

The study design encapsulated several key components. First, for cross-comparative purposes this study required a multi-regional sample. Such sample was derived for

the purposes of evaluating the responses across the conflict affected and non-conflict affected zones. A conflict affected zone is defined as an area where combat forces operated during the 1990's or an area with more than 200 casualties. Conversely, the non-conflict zone is an area where combat did not take place. Since this study's aim was to discover the underlying historical memories and attitudes of Croatian citizens toward their neighbors, the study was conducted solely in the conflict affected and non-conflict zones in Croatia.

In order to come up the study areas I used the current regional breakdown of Croatia by counties. Out of the 20 Croatian counties, 12 of them were affected by the conflict. Only eight counties were not directly affected. The conflict affected counties randomly selected for this study included: Splitsko-dalmatinska, Osijekobaranjska, Vukovarsko-srijemska, and Bijelovarsko-bilogorska. For the non-conflict zones, the following counties were selected: Istarska, Primorsko-goranska and Zagrebacka. A total number of questionnaires distributed to the respondents across these areas equaled 300. Out of the 300 questionnaires distributed, 90 of the questionnaires returned were blank or incomplete. The remaining 210 questionnaires were entered in excel and then transferred to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The response rate of 70.0 percent was acceptable for the purpose of this study. The cross-generational component evaluated the responses from the three age defined groups: below 35, 35-49, and 50 and above. The three generational groups included the following:

- (a) Individuals born after 1973 who learned about the war mostly through education, however they were too young to understand the ethno-national dynamics in Yugoslavia;
- (b) Individuals born between 1973 and 1959 who lived during the war and understand the ethno-national dynamics in Yugoslavia;
- (c) Individuals born before 1959 who experienced the war and have lived most of their adult life in Yugoslavia.

Procedures of the Study

All of the 210 participants were over the age of 18 with an equal distribution of males and females, and a varied distribution across educational and cultural backgrounds. Written instructions stated that the questionnaire involved the assessment of attitudes toward current events regarding the participants' country. The participants were told that the survey was not a test and that there was not a right or a wrong answer to the questions posed in the questionnaire. They were advised to answer all the questions as honestly as possible, however if they did not wish to answer a specific question they were not obligated to do so.

They were also informed that their participation in this study is voluntary and their anonymity will be protected. As part of this study the participants were asked to

respond to statements about themselves, the world, society, social groups and the future. The respondents were recruited through various clubs and organizations as well as through a snowballing procedure. In order to successfully and expeditiously recruit respondents, approximately ten research assistants were hired. Their main tasks were to recruit, administer and return the completed questionnaire to the Principal Investigator (PI). The questionnaire was originally developed in the English language. The same questionnaire was translated into Croatian and back translated into English by the Principal Investigator.

Instrument

All of the questions included in the questionnaire had a strictly structured format. Approximately 90.0 percent of the question followed a Likert type response pattern of: *Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree and Strongly Agree*.

The first set of questions developed by the Principal Investigator involved the use of various true and false statements about the military operations of Oluja (Storm) and Bljesak (Flash). These set of questions were used to test attitudes towards the two major operations carried by the Croatian Army. These questions examined whether participants envisioned these military actions as having a liberational or occupational character. There were ten statements in this section ranging from a five point Likert scale of Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The eleventh question assessed the way participants learned about these events. Examples of questions in this section included: "Operations Oluja and Bljesak resulted in the displacement of many Croat Serbs" and "Operations Oluja and Bljesak were legitimate and necessary." The second set of questions developed by the Principal Investigator regarded respondents' attitudes about the conflicts in the 1990's.

These questions assessed participants' attitudes towards the: institutions that helped exacerbate the conflict such as the Croatian Army, the Orthodox Church, the Croatian and Serb Paramilitary Units etc. (8 statements); support for the war in specific circumstances such as revenge, economic gain, territorial expansion, etc. (5 statements); justifications for killing the "other", such as fear, anger, opportunism etc. (6 statements). The Conflict Impact Scale, developed by Susnjic et al (2007) was composed of four statements assessing the damage of conflict through personal violence, violence against one's immediate family, or through destruction of property and relocation. Statements ranged from 'I was not impacted by the conflict in any way' to 'I was impacted as a direct victim of violence committed against me personally'. All of the statements in this section of the questionnaire were rated on a five point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

Additional questions were also developed to examine respondents' knowledge of the World War II and Yugoslavia in general. Developed by the Principal Investigator, a total of eight statements tested the participants' knowledge about the events and figures from WWII and Yugoslav history. The statements were rated on a five point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Sample questions

included “I highly regard Ante Pavelic and the Independent State of Croatia” and “The crimes in Bleiberg are much worse than the ones committed in Jasenovac.” Two subsequent questions in this section were asked with the purpose of naming the aggressors in Croatia, Bosnia and Serbia and to identify the groups thought to have started the conflicts in Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia.

The final section of the questionnaire included the Demographic information. The demographic information included the standard questions regarding participants’ gender, age, marital status, religious affiliation, media used for obtaining information about current events, ethnic group and their preferred political party.

RESULTS

Demographic Information

Of the 303 survey instruments distributed in both conflict and non-conflict zones 210 or 69.3 percent were returned. Out of the 210 survey participants, 48.6 percent (N=102) came from the non-conflict affected areas and 51.4 percent (N=108) from conflict affected areas. About 82.4 (N=159) of respondents came from an urban area and 17.6 percent (N=34) came from a rural area. The gender and age division of the sample showed that the distribution was almost identical between males and females and the three age groups. The majority, or one in two of the respondents were married (N=100). One out of three respondents identified as single and roughly one in 10 respondents reported they were divorced. Only, one in 20 respondents identified themselves as being widowed. The majority of the respondents identified as Croats (N=160) and Roman Catholic (N=146).

There were 4 respondents who identified themselves as Orthodox and 3 who identified themselves as Muslim. Approximately 1 in 7 respondents identify themselves as atheists. Approximately five percent of the respondents identified themselves as ‘mixed’ or identified with more than one nationality. Overall, the sample falls in the margins of a group with a moderate degree of religiosity. The majority of respondents or 51.3 percent have high school as the highest educational attainment. There were an identical number of respondents that completed a Bachelor’s degree or attended but they have not completed college. One in 20 respondents completed a Masters degree. A very small fraction of the sample completed the Doctorate degree which equates to roughly 2.0 percent and a similar percentage of respondents completed only Elementary school.

When respondents were asked whether they were impacted by the conflict via violence that was committed against their immediate family or friends, 25.8 percent of the respondents *Completely Agreed* and 23.2 percent *Agreed* with this statement. This indicates that almost 50.0 percent of the respondents’ families and friends were impacted by the conflict. For the statement: “I was impacted due to relocation, loss of home and livelihood”, one notes that 54.0 percent of respondents disagreed. Conversely, 32.5 percent of the respondents agreed with this statement indicating

that they have to a certain degree experienced the aforementioned conditions due to the conflict. Approximately 20.6 percent of respondents *Agreed* with the statement: "I was impacted as a direct victim of violence committed against me personally," demonstrating that about two out of 10 respondents were directly affected by the conflict. On the other hand, 64.4 percent were not personally affected by the conflict while the rest of the respondents were neutral.

The most frequent media through which the respondents learn about events at home and abroad is television. The second most common source of information came from newspapers. Friends and family do not seem to be very influential in terms of respondents' learning new information from them. However, when asked whether they do learn from family and friends, approximately 65.0 and 78.0 percent of respondents stated that they *Sometime* learn from them. Approximately two in 10 respondents learn from their family and friends as compared to seven out of 10 respondents who learn from watching television.

Descriptive Statistics

In order to assess their approval of Croatian Independence, the respondents were asked the following question: If you could go back in time knowing what you know now and witness the breakup of Yugoslavia would you still vote for your country's independence? The majority of the respondents or eight out of 10 would support Croatia's Independence again. Roughly two out of 10 respondents were against it. Respondents were also asked "What was the percentage of the population who supported the war in Croatia?" The average percentage cited was 49.0 and the mode was 50.0 percent. About 92.1 percent of respondents believed Serbs started the war in Croatia and Bosnia. When asked about actors who are believed to have started the conflicts in Serbia, the majority of the respondents stated that there was no armed conflict in Serbia as they failed to remember that Serbia did experience NATO air strikes in 1999.

The respondents' were asked to rate the level of truth of the media reports from both Serb and Croat sources during the 1990's. The Croats thought that their national media reports about Serbia were relatively true, yet they failed to question the accuracy of the information they received. On the other hand, when they were asked what kind of a picture of Croatia were the outgroups media portraying during the 1990's, their response seemed to indicate that the picture was untrue, hence Serb governmental media was manipulating the Serb perceptions of Croatia. These two examples indicate the distortion that might happen in people's perception of the other. It is not surprising then, that certain individuals have a picture of Serbs as enemies ingrained in their minds. Moreover, a majority of the Croats thought that Serbs did pose significant threat to Croatian security during the 1990's.

However, they also thought that the Croats themselves did not pose any threat to the Serbian security during the same period. While this fact might be true for Serbia proper, when looking at the Krajina region one might beg to differ.

Additionally, Croats agreed that the Serbs politics during the 1990's was not defensive. This fact coincides with the view of Serbs being regarded as aggressors. Conversely, when asked whether the Croatian politics during the 1990's was predominantly defensive, a significant agreement was present in their responses. As previously mentioned, everything related to the outgroups was evaluated more negatively than the matters relative to one's ingroups.

It is important to mention that these dynamics are even more pronounced in the war zones where about 30.0 percent more people than in the non-war zones thought that the picture of Croatia in the Serbian media was not truthfully portrayed during the 1990's. About 20.0 percent more people in the war zone *Disagreed* that Serbian policy during the 1990 was mainly defensive. Finally, approximately 50.0 percent of people in the war zone *Disagreed* that Serb citizens posed no threat to Croatia during the 1990's painting an even more pronounced picture of the ethnic divisions between these two groups. One question posed in this study regards the role of media in information sharing.

Multiple Regression Analysis

Hypothesis 1: A high degree of nationalistic attitudes and a strong perception indicating that Serbian entities were the aggressors in Croatia will positively correlate with support for the military actions of Oluja and Bljesak.

Table 1. Support for Oluja and Bljesak

	B	t	p
Nationalistic Attitudes	0.445	6.006	0.000
War Serbia	0.173	2.336	0.020
Serbs threat to Croatia	0.135	1.915	0.050
Conformity	-0.393	-3.490	0.000
Opportunism	0.369	3.249	0.000

The following is a regression model that determines what variables were positively correlated with the Support for the Croatian military operations of Bljesak and Oluja. Nationalistic Attitudes, Opportunism and Conformity were significant at $p < 0.01$. Perceptions that Serbs were a threat to Croatia and nationalistic attitudes were positively correlated with the support for the Operations Oluja and Bljesak.

Table 2. Support for Pavelic and the Independent State of Croatia

	B	t	p
Brotherhood and Unity	-0.278	-3.061	0.000
Age	-0.251	-3.181	0.000
War Croatia	-0.216	-2.304	0.020
Gain of territory	0.256	3.460	0.000
Partisans Positive	-0.220	-2.416	0.010

Hypothesis 2: The younger generations will display more support for Pavelic and the Independent State of Croatia.

Hypothesis 3: High support for Pavelic and the Independent State of Croatia will negatively correlate with the individuals support for the Partisans and Brotherhood and Unity.

Table 2 represents the regression model where the dependent variable is Support for Ante Pavelic and the Independent State of Croatia. Five variables presented in this model were statistically significant. Age was negatively correlated with the support for Ante Pavelic, confirming Hypothesis 2. Additionally, Partisans and Brotherhood and Unity were negatively correlated with Support for Pavelic and Independent State of Croatia.

DISCUSSION

One of the objectives of this study was to explain the relationship between historical remembering of events and the respondents' attitudes. More specifically, by looking at the respondents' beliefs towards specific historical events (negative or positive) one might get an indication of the respondents' attitudes towards different groups of people. In this context if the operations Oluja and Bljesak are remembered as being 'liberational,' individuals will more likely support the notion that the territory at the time was occupied by the Serbs hence the crimes committed against them were necessary in order to liberate the occupied territory. Conversely, if the predominant belief states that Oluja and Bljesak were operations aimed to ethnically cleanse the Serb populated territories, individuals will tend to be more inclined to disprove the two military operations carried out by the Croatian Army and supported by the Croatian government. These two dichotomous beliefs had an impact on the way respondents' perceived the Serbs, more negatively in the former, and more positively in the latter case.

As mentioned before in the multiple regression analysis it is evident that there are key factors framing one's support for these two operations. For example, from the regression we note that an increase in nationalistic attitudes also indicates an increase in support for these two military operations. Indicative of rather negative attitudes towards the Serbs by Croats scoring high on nationalistic sentiments is the

notion of blaming the Serb entities for exacerbating the conflicts. In other words, the greater the degree of blame for the exacerbation of the conflict is placed upon the Serbian government and military, the more one is likely to support Oluja and Bljesak.

As far as the two conflict zones are concerned, the war zone sample seemed to rate the Serb-affiliated structures as culprits for the conflict by approximately 30.0 percent more than in the non-war zones. This may be due to their loss of property, relocation and other deteriorating life factors caused directly by the war. In regards to age groups, the younger the respondents' age group was, the more support they showed for the military operations of Oluja and Bljesak. This might be partly due to their exposure to the Croat media, parental upbringing and limited or complete lack of interaction with Serbs. Overall, Serbs were thought to be the aggressors in the conflicts in both Croatia and Bosnia. However participants failed to remember the NATO air-strikes on Serbia during the 1990's.

Perhaps the air-strikes were remembered as a NATO offensive towards the "aggressors" hence punishing the "enemies" for their actions. This notion also fails to recognize the suffering that Serb civilians have endured due to these air-strikes, further confirm that the outgroup miseries are not well remembered. Attitudes towards Ante Pavelic and the Independent State of Croatia provide us with an additional guide towards understanding the respondents' stance towards the Serbs. Insofar as there is support and admiration for Pavelic we can expect that the attitudes towards the Serbs will be more negative than if there was a lack of support. In this regard, the war zone sample seems to display around 50.0 more support for the Independent State of Croatia and Ante Pavelic than people in the non-war zones.

Furthermore, the knowledge the respondents have of the historical events that happened during World War II could be considered average. It is surprising that half of the respondents did not remember Jasenovac as a camp where Serbs and other minorities were exterminated. This may be due to the fact that they did not see Jasenovac's existence at that time as problematic or just because of a lack of general knowledge of the events that happened in Jasenovac. It is important to note that the genocide in Jasenovac is a controversial issue that the Croatian government is still contesting. Approximately one-quarter of the respondents seem to think that the crimes committed in Bleiburg were worse than the crimes committed in Jasenovac. This is another example of group bias where the extermination of one's enemy is perceived less relevant than the murder of one's ingroups no matter how long ago the events took place. When assessing the support for Pavelic in the regression model one notes that the more one supports the gain of territory as a legitimate factor for starting a war, the more support the same will show for Pavelic and the Independent State of Croatia.

As stated before, the younger respondents to the survey seem to have a more positive view of Ante Pavelic. This can have a variety of explanations. The support might be due to the controversy surrounding this event or the indecisiveness of the Croatian

government to take a stand and openly discuss their views of Pavelic as either a negative or positive historical figure in Croatian history. In terms of the Partisans and the brotherhood and unity doctrine, roughly half of the respondents view them as positive. Hence the negative correlation between supporting Ante Pavelic and the Partisans makes sense given that they were in the opposite spectrums during the World War II. "One's enemy is another one's freedom fighter" is the best way to illustrate this set of dynamics within the way Croatians remember both Pavelic and the Partisans. However, it should be indicated that the same people who show support for Pavelic are also showing support for the military operations of Oluja and Bljesak.

CONCLUSION

A brief look at Croatian attitudes toward the Serbs provided us with more controversial materials which further support the intergroup identity dynamics explored in the theoretical section of this article. It is evident from the data presented that the notion of social differentiation takes place between groups in conflicts. The belief that one's ingroup is innocent while the outgroup is to blame for whatever mishaps the ingroup is experiencing is also evident in this study's results.

From the demographic questions one notes that the most prevalent form of media used among the survey respondents to inform themselves of the current events happening in their country and the rest of the world was through television and newspapers. Given that the Croatian television and newspapers were relatively controlled by the State for the most part of the 1990's, it is not surprising that the significant part of the sample has strong views about the war. In the non-conflict zones the prevalence of both Croatian and Italian TV stations perhaps enabled the respondents' to be informed from more than one source, hence giving them a more informed picture of the situation in the 1990's.

Finally, the purpose of this article was to explore the historical remembering of events and current attitudes people have toward the "Others" as a result of the conflicts that occurred during the 1990's. This study identified respondents' beliefs about historical events such as their regard for Ante Pavelic. The study's final purpose was conducting a comprehensive analysis of the ethno-national dynamics and relations among groups in the former Yugoslav state of Croatia. While the results of this study are very relevant in informing the reader of the state of interethnic relations in Croatia, it is also evident that similar comprehensive studies should be conducted in the neighboring countries of Bosnia and Serbia.

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