THE QUESTION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY OF
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

A Micro Study of Non-Muslim Soldiers in the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Municipality of Kakanj

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Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my parents, the people who have always been supportive of my educational choices. For that and for so many other things, I thank you.

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Introduction

In the late 1980's and at the beginning of the 1990's, on the eve of Yugoslavia's dissolution, all six former Yugoslav republics were entering a new political phase – the era of national projects. Once internal parts of the common country of southern Slavs were faced with a loss of collective identity and the idea of Tito's 'brotherhood and unity' vanished very quickly. Whereas other republics were nationally aware, their steps forward in defining their new nation-states and national ideology/identity were clear, the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina was much more complex.

For Bosnia and Herzegovina, the beginning of the 1990's meant a period of nationalistic projects within the country. Three sides were created, and the relevance of ethno-religious origin was high as never before - strong attachments to ethnic and religious identities. Croats aligned with the Croat Defense Council (HVO), Serbs with the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) and Muslims with the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ArBiH). As fully grasped by Campbell "[t]he basis of the drive for partition was a picture of Bosnia as neatly ethnically-ordered world of Croats, Muslims and Serbs, in which other conceptions of identity had little political import and group relations could not be other than mutually exclusive and conflictual"[1].

However, there were exceptions / resistance discourses to the general trend of division along ethno-national lines. It is exactly this exception I found worth investigating. Tempted by the appealing controversial quality of a research on those exceptions, and in hope to bring me closer to elements of a hypothetical, 'all encompassing' national identity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, I decided to pursue a study of non-Muslim soldiers in the Army of BiH. "[I]n spite

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[1] David Campbell "Apartheid Cartography. Identity, Territory and Co-Existence in Bosnia", The Corner House, January, 2001. p. 2

of the fact that they constitute about two-thirds of the adult male population in this country, war veterans are rarely taken into account as a new and specific social group produced by the war."[2]

Due to the exceptional attribute of those soldiers - joining the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina and not other military troops during a strongly ethno-nationally charged socio-political situation in the country, they embody a rich data source for studying an identity development. Therefore, the hypothesis of the study is:

Non-Muslim soldiers in the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period 1992 – 1996 can be seen as an indicator of a common, 'all encompassing' national identity of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Since the idea of challenging the hypothesis through a large scale study on the entire territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina is not feasible, I decided to focus on a small scale study. The study location – Kakanj, an industrial town in Central Bosnia.

Therefore, this work is not going to be focused on discovering a new national identity, or constructing one, but its focus is rather to follow certain traits among a small, and yet very significant group of people in Kakanj. Based on the findings, I will elaborate on shifts in the perception of the soldiers' identities during the war, and attempt to conclude whether one can speak of the supreme, all inclusive, an 'umbrella' sort of identity covering all citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Since the study deals with the time period of the Bosnian war and the fall of Yugoslavia, a sub-hypothesis is created to test the assumption that people who declared themselves as

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[2] Bougarel, Xavier. "Death and the Nationalist: Martyrdom, War Memory and Veteran Identity among Bosnian Muslims", in: "The New Bosnian Mosaic. Identities, Memories and Moral Claims in a Post-War Society", (Eds.) Bougarel, Helms, and Duijzings, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007. p. 167

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Yugoslav in the 1991 census (5.54 % of the population in Bosnia-Herzegovina declared themselves as Yugoslav) are to be found among non-Muslim soldiers in the Army of BiH.

Chapter 1 deals with certain theories streams dealing with identity creation and elements of national identity, theoretical approaches to studies on identities, and impact of symbols on the identification process. Since setting is a very influential element in identity creation, Chapter 2 gives an insight into the study location – the town of Kakanj. Chapter 3 deals with the methodology development, and Chapters 4 and 5 are the data analysis, interpretation, and findings.

Chapter 1 – (National) Identity and Its Features

It seems to me that undertaking a study dealing with issues of identity is one of *the* top interests in the field of social sciences during the past couple of decades. There appears to be a 'sea of scholarship' discussing various identiterian topics; each and every author within the field offers different definitions of identities (be it social, ethnic, national, communal...) and numerous approaches to studying the mentioned phenomena. The vast literature is often a frustrating fact, but at the same time it offers a wide range of options, which proves the thesis that identity studies are very interdisciplinary, since all spheres of our lives are affected by various processes of identification.

Defining terms such as 'identity', 'nation', and 'loyalty' is a task complex enough. Measuring the attachment of an individual and/or a group to something rather abstract such as 'nation' and 'nation-state' is an even more challenging undertaking, especially when the nation in question is Bosnia and Herzegovina, the nation where a very significant part of citizens question its very existence. Talking about identity and other terms alike with such potency presupposes that it does exist, that everyone has it, i.e. sooner or later becomes aware of it. Nevertheless, many scholars write about the ambiguity of the existence of identity taken for granted, and yet the amount of scholarly works dealing with identity doesn't seem to change its publishing pace. It seems that the time has come to go beyond that debate and find precise alternative approaches, or at least appropriate / clear ways of explaining social phenomena, such as nationalism, nationhood, nation per se, and national ideology and identity. However, "[j]ust as one can analyze "nation-talk" and nationalist politics without positing the existence of "nations", or "race-talk" and "race"

oriented politics without positing the existence of "races", so one can analyze "identity-talk" and identity politics without, as analysts, positing the existence of "identities.""[3] In the study of nationalism, identity and attachment to the 'important something' a person identifies with is of utter importance. According to Druckman, nationalism "…becomes a social-psychological phenomenon to the extent that individuals develop attitudes about their own and other nations. Such attitudes reflect the feelings that persons have toward these objects and their sense of loyalty to them. These feelings of attachment are at the heart of nationalism."[4]

Identity – a product of social action

In their work *Beyond "Identity",* Brubaker and Cooper offer a wide range of uses of the term 'identity', and the one that seems to be the most common link with other authors defines the term as a product of social action and it is used to underscore the development of "collective self-understanding, solidarity, or "groupness" that can make collective action possible."[5] In his book *Symbols, Conflict, and Identity – Essays in Political Anthropology* Mach Zdzislaw argues that "[i]dentity is formed in action, or rather in interaction, in the process of exchange of messages which we send, receive, and interpret until a general, relatively coherent image is achieved. In all such interactions both the identity of one's self and one's group, and of a partner are formed, defined, and expressed." and concludes that "Identity is thus a dynamic, processual, and contextual phenomenon."[6]

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[3] Rogers Brubaker and Cooper, Frederick. "Beyond "Identity"", *Theory and Society,* Vol.29, 2000. p. 10
[4] Daniel Druckman. "Nationalism, Patriotism, and Group Loyalty: A Social Psychological Perspective", p.44
[5] Ibid. 15
[6] Zdzislaw Mach. "Symbols, Conflict, and Identity – Essays in Political Anthropology". State University of New York Press, New York, 1993. p.5

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Hence, by accepting the concept that identities are formed in action, Korunić offers a kind of 'universal' approach to studying identities by arguing that "[a]ll identities (social, ethnic and national) should be observed as a process (an identity is constantly developing), as an interaction (reciprocity of many identities) and as reciprocity of identities and the setting."[7] He stresses the relevance of understanding identity as a process in the very early stage of his work, and states that the problem of studying the ancestry, structure and development of ethnic and national identities "is even more complex if we start from the point of view that the national consciousness and the nation as a collectivity and various forms of nationalisms and national identities are permanent and unchangeable historical events, created once and for all. In that case we are in the field of ideology, myth, stereotypes, and theories from the 19th century, and not in the field of scientific research about the construction of a nation, modern nations and national identities."[8] Anthony D. Smith, whose work "National Identity" is somewhat a cornerstone of my argumentation line, elaborates on the notion of identity being a process, a result of an action, and argues that "[a]s the individual's situation changes, so will the group identification; or at least, the many identities and discourses to which the individual adheres will vary in importance for that individual in successive periods and different situations."[9]

A Way to National Identity

If any identity formation is a result of an action or of a process of communication, and if we were to accept social identity, according to Tajfel, defined as "that part of an individual's self-

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[7] Petar Korunić. "Nacija i nacionalni identitet", *Zgodovinski casopis* 57, Ljubljana, 2003. p. 7
[8] Ibid. p.4
[9] Anthony D. Smith. "National Identity". University of Nevada Press, Reno, Nevada, 1991. p. 20

concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership"[10,] *the* feature of identification with a nation appears to be the notion of 'self-understanding', 'self-location' and the sentiment of 'belonging' to a collectivity.

However, as argued by Finlayson:

> Identification with nation involves more than simple acquiescence to an abstract collectivity. Belonging to a nation entails belonging to a particular kind of nation with certain characteristics, certain cultural traits, values and ways of being... The national subject is always-already caught in a network of social meanings and psychological investments that make subjectivity possible and which contribute to the continuation of that into which they invest. This places nations and nationalism at the heart of contemporary forms of identification, intimately related to the nature of the modern state and the sire of production for a range of social and political values.[11]

Since national identity is a conglomerate of various attributes, it shows many dimensions and it is rare to come across an all encompassing 'norm' for it. Gellner in his work *Nations and Nationalism* states that there are many elements necessary for maintenance of a nation, and those are "will, voluntary adherence and identification, loyalty, and solidarity…"[12] Smith follows the same line of thought and at the beginning of his National Identity warns the readers that "a national identity is fundamentally multi-dimensional; it can never be reduced to a single element, even by particular factions of nationalists, nor can it be easily or swiftly induced in a population by artificial means."[13] It appears that people identify with a nation since doing so satisfies a level of social needs. "To identify with the nation is to identify with more than cause or a collectivity. It

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[10] Cited in Bar-Tal, Daniel. 'Group Beliefs as an Expression of Social Idenity'. In: S. Worchel, J.F. Morales, D. Paez, J.C. Deschamps (Eds.): Social Identity. SAGE Publications, London, 1998. p.93
[11] Alan Finlayson. 'Psychology, psychoanalysis and theories of nationalism'. *Nations and Nationalism* 4 (2), 1998, p.159
[12] Ernest Gellner. "Nations and Nationalism". Blackwell, Oxford, 1983. p. 53
[13] Anthony D. Smith. "National Identity", p.14

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is to be offered personal renewal and dignity in and through national regeneration."[14] Smith

advances so far in his argumentation, that he actually outlines a list of fundamental features of the

national identity, those being:

- an historic territory, or homeland
- common myth and historical memories
- a common, mass public culture
- common legal rights and duties for all members
- a common economy with territorial mobility for members.[15]

While he stresses importance of all the five groups of elements, the first two seem to be the

essential features of national identification and beyond. The impact of the two attributes are often

connected, and usually the most 'explosive' one. "Myths of national identity typically refer to

territory and ancestry (or both) as the basis of political community, and these differences furnish

important, if often neglected, sources of instability and conflict in many parts of the world. It is

no accident that many of the most bitter and protracted 'inter-national' conflicts derive from

competing claims and conceptions of national identity."[16]

By considering various traits of identification with a nation, it is hard to say what traits are

the dominant ones in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The socio-political situation of the

country is so complex, that speaking of nationality requires an elaboration before proceeding with

an inquiry, since nationality and/or national identity mean many things on the local level.

Nationality is often equated with ethnicity, and ethnic groups associated with being carriers of the

respective nationalities. Therefore, seeking traits of a universal, supreme, all inclusive identity of

Bosnia and Herzegovina requires a clearly defined approach to studying people's attachments to

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[14] Ibid. p.161
[15] Ibid. p.14
[16] Ibid. viii

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the nation. However, how is it possible to study / observe something if we are not aware of what elements to follow? Dealing with sentiments as the guiding features is very challenging since each and every person has different ways of expressing feelings, attachment to something if the person is even aware of it. Nevertheless, I am strongly influenced by the authors who claim the notion of self-understanding and self-identification is crucial in studying / analyzing / observing identification of a person / group to a collectivity, be it an ethnic community, region, or a nation.

Nation and Symbols

To identify with something so abstract and hard to define - the nation – simply implies that there is a purpose to it. One the one hand it could be the feeling of membership, the pleasure of belonging to a group. However, the case with national identity is much stronger, since this form of membership and belonging triggers emotions of such strength and relevance, that people are ready to die for it. Therefore, identification with a nation means and implies much more than just being a part of a given community. It is a social / cultural phenomenon that goes beyond everyday categorization; it surmounts categories of gender, class, and religion. It is an all inclusive collective network of belonging and being a vital part of that something that, ordinary people – individuals far from the decision-making levels, members of the nation, strive, work, fight and die for. National identity is identification with an 'imagined community' of a given social setting and historical time, and thus, the importance of the nation to its members is often the primary identification target.

One of the most obvious, and at times the most banal, forms of national identification is found among acceptance or rejection of, i.e. identification or dis-identification with symbols,

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which are supposed to represent the nation. Even Smith emphasizes the relevance of symbols for the national community.

> The nation is also called upon to provide a social bond between individuals and classes by providing repertoires of shared values, symbols and traditions. By the use of symbols – flags, coinage, anthems, uniforms, monuments and ceremonies – members are reminded of their common heritage and cultural kinship and feel strengthened and exalted by their sense of common identity and belonging. The nation becomes a 'faith-achievement' group, able to surmount obstacles and hardships.[17]

One of possible reasons of symbols representing nations – national symbols – being such strong social objects in communicating the notion of belonging is the fact that we are, to borrow the phrase of Lewis Austin's, *sight-oriented creature*s, and much of our subtle thought and feeling rely on the symbols of the visual world. Interestingly enough, this line of argumentation may lead to a controversial angle, simply due the fact that symbols can be manipulated. According to Mach, "they are selected and combined to achieve a desired state of people's minds; to appeal to values, to refer to ideas, to *stir emotions* and *stimulate action*."[18] (emphasis added) However, as Finlayson justly concludes "this is the significance, and utility, of moving from a concept of identity to one of identification – identity is conceived not as a given but as a continual process of identifications with symbolic structures which are themselves subject to historical variability, political contestation and dis-identification."[19]

It is precisely this notion of historical variability and dis-identification I would like to dwell upon for a while. While the symbolic communication between an individual and the groups he/she is a member of is very complex, the 'transfer' of meanings from a symbol to the individual

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[17] Ibid. p.16-17
[18] Zdzislaw Mach. "Symbols, Conflict, and Identity – Essays in Political Anthropology". p..37
[19] Alan Finlayson. 'Psychology, psychoanalysis and theories of nationalism'. p.158

is somewhat different, for it is the individual who chooses the way of interpreting the symbolic message. "Symbols communicate complex ideas in a synthetic, short way, appealing directly to the emotions and semiconscious associations, and avoid intellectual elaboration."[20] Most importantly, identification with a symbol (be it a flag, coat-of-arms, anthem...) can be measured and dis-identification with it can result with various phenomena within a given society.

The Bosnian flag

The case of the Bosnian flag controversy is a good one, for it offers a wide range of proved theories about symbols and identification, it indicates a clear line of the top-down process of national identification and its refusal at the grass-root level, it shows the relevance of symbols within war and post-war societies, and most importantly it proves the relevance of acceptance of national symbols for the maintenance of the nation.

As already tackled upon, at the beginning of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the country faced one of the most complex social / historical events – making a nation. Since the country was no longer part of the Yugoslav federation, it needed to establish a new set of values and attributes that would appeal to its citizens in the age of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian independence. Faced with the social reality of having three 'clear cut' sides within the region, creating a flag to represent the nation was an enormous challenge. As seen so many times in history, in times of highly unstable situations, complex historical events and social crisis, nations refer to its glorious past to seek elements of possible pride and unification.

After the country gained international recognition and independence, the medieval coat of

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[20] Zdzislaw Mach. "Symbols, Conflict, and Identity – Essays in Political Anthropology". p..35

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arms from the Kotromanić dynasty (ruled the Kingdom of Bosnia from the 13th century till the invasion of the Ottoman Empire) was taken as the blueprint for the national flag.
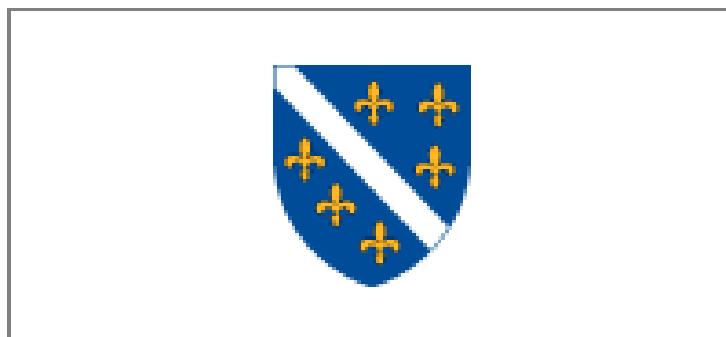

Image 1. The Official Flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina 1992-1998
Source: http://www.internet.ba/hidex/zastave-bih.html

The central symbol of the flag is the coat of arms. It contains 6 golden lilies referring to the flower native for the region of Bosnia and Herzegovina '*Lilium Bosniacum*'. The blue colour is often associated with peace - therefore the lilies as unique parts of the region placed against the blue background may represent a symbol of harmonious and peaceful co-existence of different peoples in the country. The white colour represents neutrality and purity – thus the relationship between the central coat of arms and the white background may represent the message of a co-existence in a neutral region.

However, the Croats and Serbs refused to accept the flag as the symbol representing all of the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Not only did they have their own flags (hoping to represent the members of their ethnic groups) but they despised the official flag for a reason that the official coat-of-arms of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina included the flag's coat-of-arms. Interestingly enough, the Medal of Honor in the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina was a 'golden lily'. In this clash of symbols within the Bosnian-Herzegovinan society, it is possible to trace all the changes / attributes affiliated with the flag. As Sherry Ortner argues while discussing different

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angles of undertaking visual analysis of symbols within a given society:

> [t]he shape and content of any particular symbolic complex may be said to be a product of two distinct factors and it is thus in terms of these factors that it must be analyzed and understood. These are, first, the actual social, historical, natural and psychological realities operating in the society of that time, and, second, (the conscious or unconscious) strategic (what some would call 'ideological') orientations encoded in the ways in which the symbols select and interpret those realities.[21]

The flag eventually became the symbol of Bosnian Muslims, and any place displaying it implied the support to the Bosniacs and alliance with that ethnic group. Finally, in 1998, an independent multi-ethnic work group established by the High Representative of the Implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement, created a new flag, and it became the official national flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1998.

Image 2. The Official Flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina 1998 -
Source: http://www.internet.ba/hidex/zastave-bih.html

The central feature of the flag is the yellow triangle. The triangle, being the most balanced 2-D object, represents the number of sub-national groups within the country as well as the shape of the territory. The white stars represent the European characteristics of the country as well as the geographical location of the region. The blue background symbolizes eternity and peace. When

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[21] Sherry B. Ortner. "Sherpas Through Their Rituals". Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978. p.7

looking at the structure of the flag, the striking colour difference and the resemblance of the country shape make it have a very effective cognitive impact upon the viewer. An interesting thing about the flag is that it was imposed by an outside force resulted with a refusal of the majority of citizens to identify themselves with the former Bosnian-Herzegovinian flag. However, it was an attempt of the international community within the country to create a gambit towards the unification of the three ethnic groups ('sub-nations'). The attempt remained just an attempt, and it is supported by the information that all attempts to create the national anthem (lyrics) ended with fierce disagreements.

Hence, with the case of the flags of Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1992 and 1998, it is possible to distinguish four different forms of a change in the context of symbols and acquisition of new meanings: eradication, creation, innovation and profanation.[22]

Eradication means the separation of a symbol from the range of existential experience to which the symbol traditionally applies – it looses its relevance. This form can be seen in the 1992 flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Its original meaning, the original aim and relevance for the entire population of the country is lost.

Creation consists in relating a range of existential experiences to a symbol which is either newly-created or adopted from an alien tradition. This change is seen in the newly-created official flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The colours used in the new flag are alien to the previous symbolic tradition of the country, and that could be one of the reasons for the failure of its 'interactive' qualities. The idea to present the unity through the yellow triangle was too premature.

Innovation implies changing the range of experience to which the symbol applies. The symbol becomes infused with new content that pertains to a range of experience previously not

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[22] See: Deshen, Shlomo."On Religious Change: the Situational Analysis of Symbolic Action". *Comparative Studies of Society and History*. Vol:12. Pp.260-274.

expressed by the symbol. This change can be seen in the Bosnian flag from 1992, since the symbol previously expressing traces of the Bosnian Kingdom in the middle ages, acquired a new meaning – representation of Bosnian Muslims. And finally, profanation includes the general category, where the newly symbolized range of experiences has not been previously expressed by the symbol. This change encompasses all the presented flags. Indeed, "[s]ymbols present new ideas and values and combine them within new contexts, fill them with emotions and produce the symbolic reality, their interpretation of the world which, when accepted, becomes part of the world and thus the basis of perception and action."[23]

The 'Identity – Setting' model

Any student doing a research on identity at some point realizes the number of approaches to analyzing identification. Nevertheless, there is always that one piece of writing one finds the most relevant and helping. In my case, it is the paper by Petar Korunić *Nacija i nacionalni identitet* published in 2003. The author refers some of his arguments to the case of Croatia, but I believe they are more than applicable and relevant to other study cases as well. When commenting the current level of the social scientific research of identities, he states:

> No, we still have not established that sort of research. We still have no answers to basic questions regarding the issues of origin, structure and development of ethnic and national identities. We still have not researched those phenomena on the level of the contemporary science. In spite all the works/papers dealing with the mentioned issues, today we are still at the beginning of the scientific research.[24]

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[23]   Peter L. Berger,. and Thomas Luckman. "The Social Construction of Reality", 1967. Cited in: Mach, Zdzislaw. "Symbols, Conflict, and Identity – Essays in Political Anthropology" pp. 49
[24] Petar Korunić. "Nacija i nacionalni identitet". p. 3

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He goes even further being critical of some angles to identification studies, that he denotes them as "research roaming"[25]. In spite of fact that Korunić deals with various terms in relation to the identity and European history of the late eighteenth century, the main ones being: modern nations, modern ethnic and national identities, modern ethnic and national collectivities, and collective identities, he takes a brave step ahead by narrowing down two main approaches of studying identity phenomena.

– studying human subjective elements, and

– studying historical events and structures in reality.

The first way, in which human subjective elements are studied, focuses on human consciousness and special sentiments, myths, ideologies and symbols connected with the nation, people and nationalism.

The second approach does not really take subjectivity into account. Even though the emotional factors are not neglected, it is believed that they are very hard, if possible at all, to be studied in distant histories. Therefore, the second angle focuses on the research of historical events and structures which we come across in reality, outside the boundaries of human consciousness and the world of subjectivity, which had influenced and still do the process of constituting, reproduction and transformation of ethnic/human communities: the field of

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[25] Ibid. p.3

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language, culture, economy, political systems, education, social relations, interactions etc.[26]

As already mentioned in previous pages, Korunić takes a stance that an identity should be observed as a process. However, he also recognizes the utter importance of the setting for identity formation. It is not hard to conclude that he was influenced by Smith, since even Smith stresses the relevance of the setting but in a rather more cautious manner, since he states that "[t]his process of self-definition and location is in many ways the key to national identity, but it is also the element that has attracted most doubt and skepticism... The quest for the national self and the individual's relationship to it remains the most baffling element in the nationalist project."[27] That is why Korunić argues that it is essential to follow "the process of self-identification of people with the communities they live and work in, and/or their consciousness about those communities and their sentiments towards those communities and the communities of "others", i.e. to follow the "first" identity (or identification with "our" ethnie) and identity of the "other" (identity of the other ethnie, other people) etc."[28]

He advances his arguments to such extent that he acknowledges that a process of identification and identity construction is a very complex one, but he offers the reader an intriguing explanation. According to him, it is a process in which ethnic and national identities are created as the result of a social occurrence he refers to as a "passage of entity". The passage of an entity, an ethnic community, ethnie or a nation through a system of differences, discrepancies and oppositions, through the system of identity of the "other" or through the system of identity and setting. Without the setting (other identities, values and systems) we can

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[26] Ibid. p.4
[27] Anthony D. Smith. "National Identity". p. 17
[28] Petar Korunić. "Nacija i nacionalni identitet", p. 5

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not understand identity of the "first" one.[29] He goes on by concluding that "[h]ence, the social identity in general, ethnic and national identity in particular, which are constantly changing and transforming, can be understood through three identity models in their interdependence and interacting: first, by using the model of identity of identities and differences, second, by the model of the identity of the "other" and third, as a synthesis of the former and the latter, by using the identity – setting model."[30] All these definitions and approaches are very complex notions and methods, yet, Korunić is very convinced of the power of the "identity-setting model" and elaborates on it.

> It is necessary to observe / study identity (on the level of origin and identity development, as well as on the level of process of self-identification or consciousness) according to the Identity ↔ Its setting (i.e. the identity/setting model), since its setting – which is as if according to a rule far more complex than the identity of the 'first' one, since it is a conglomerate of 'other' identities and values – gives full content and meaning to the existence and development of the identity of the 'first' one.[31]

The reason of placing such potency to the notion of the setting is at times very confusing and misleading, but on the other hand, as he argues and makes a very strong case, certain settings result with certain identities.

According to his model, on the level of ethnic and/or national sentiments, certain settings (social settings) results with:

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[29] Ibid. p. 8
[30] Ibid. p. 8
[31] Ibid. p. 9

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1. Individual identities – ethnic and national identities, where individuals voluntary identify with a certain ethnic group or ethnic community or a nation, within which they live, accept its values, its legal and political order, and express loyalty to it.

2. Group identities – ethnic and/or national identity which an ethnic group or elite voluntary identifies with an ethnie or a nation, within which lives and accepts its values, traditions, rules, organization etc.

3. Collective identities – ethnic and/or national identities which a certain collectivity (a group of people, elite, ethnie or a nation as a whole) voluntary identifies with a certain ethnic community or a nation, within which it lives and wants to live and thus accepts its fundamental values and the organization as the whole.

4. Identity of the collectivity – on this level, when more or less the entire population identifies with a certain ethnic community or nation, the ethnic collectivity (ethnic communities) or national collectivity (nations) are being constructed.[32]

Korunić analyses the role of subjectivity and states that "[o]n the basis of the ethnic and national sentiments, the following is being constructed and developed: 1. all forms of ethnic and national consciousness, 2. all forms of patriotisms and nationalisms, 3. different ideas about the nation and national community. In that case the nation is experienced and visualized on the level of the idea of a nation, consciousness, ethnic and national sentiments."[33]

On the other hand, in accordance to the "identity-setting" model, on the level of reality, within a national community, its political community or national state, in which that nation is a

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[32] Ibid. p.9-10
[33] Ibid. p.10

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dominant ethnie, these identities are constructed:

1. Social identities – on many fields within the national community in their mutual interdependence: lingual, cultural, political, state, religious, class, national, regional, party, individual, collective etc.

2. Ethnic identities – on two levels: first, identity of a specific ethnie or ethnic community as a collectivity, and, second, ethnic identity with which a person or an ethnic group identifies with that specific ethnic and/or human community.

3. National identities – on two levels: first, identity of the nation as a community (as a national collectivity) and, second, national identity with which a person, an ethnic group or a people identifies with that nation. [34]

In this categorization, as the author argues, we are dealing with specific communities of people and a national community, sub-ethnies within a political community, which throughout a long period of time in reality are being constructed as collectivities on a territory and within a given value system. "Therefore, we are based on the belief and the cognition that a modern nation, as an entity and specific national community of a people as the whole, or an enthie, is constructed in and is a result of the reality as a human community, and not solely on the level of the national idea, national sentiments, ethnic and national consciousness."[35]

The above discussed theory clearly purports the line of thought that studying identity is not an easy task. Assessing the world of subjectivity among a certain group of people

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[34] Ibid. p.10
[35] Ibid. p. 13

appears to be a 'not-so-feasible' undertaking. Yet, some theories and models, such as the "identity-setting" model, acknowledge the significance of sentiments and offer alternative ways to approaching it. Analyzing, comparing and assessing numerous theories is an essential step before one goes deeper into the field of identiterian research activities. Identities that are produced on the level of ethnic and /or national sentiments indicate a clear line of identification progress and contain attributes that must be followed in the search for an identity of the national kind. As Hobsbawm puts it in his work in 1990 "[t]he view from below, i.e. the nation as seen not by governments… but by the ordinary persons who are the objects of their action and propaganda, is exceedingly difficult to discover."[36] In the hope of the theoretical preparation being a useful side, I am going to study exactly that, the difficult to uncover and to define, subjective feelings of affiliation with a country on the grass-root level.

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[36] Eric J. Hobsbawm. "Nations and nationalism since 1789: programme, myth, reality". Cambridge University Press, 1990 p.11

Chapter 2 – Kakanj

I feel it necessary to write a few words about the research location and the residing town of the interviewed war veterans, the men who shared their life stories with me. First associations that come to mind when describing the down are: the coal mine, the cement factory, the power plant. Kakanj, an industrial town in Central Bosnia, established by the Austro-Hungarians in 1900 is also known for its cultural heritage of great national significance: *Kraljeva Sutjeska* – a place nearby Kakanj of historical importance for Bosnia, especially the Franciscan monastery and its library, Mehmed El Fatih

Picture 1: Kakanj
Source: http://www.kakanj.co.ba

mosque – built in the fifteenth century, considered one of the oldest mosques in the country, *Bobovac* – the last residence of the Royal Family of Kotromanići in the medieval Bosnian Kingdom before changing the location due to the Ottoman invasion.

What is also worth mentioning about the town of Kakanj is the fact that one of the most valuable

Picture 2: Zgoščanski Stećak
Source: http://www.turistickivodic-rcbih.com

medieval tombstones was found in the region – *Zgoščanski Stećak* - and it is known for its beauty and ornamental value.

Stećak, a medieval tombstone with ornaments, is one *the* national symbols of Bosnia and Herzegovina as it represents traces of the medieval culture of the Bosnian Kingdom and Bosnian man. It is pride of each and every region in possession of a stećak since that implies the region was significant in the past and someone important was buried on exactly that location. The significance of Stećak for Bosnia and Herzegovina is best expressed by a Croatian poet Miroslav Krleža:

> *"May Mrs. Europe forgive us, for she has no monuments of culture. Tribes of Incas in America have monuments; Egypt has real monuments of culture. May Mrs. Europe forgive us, for it is only Bosnia that has monuments. Stećke.*
> *What is a stećak?*
> *It is the embodiment of a Bosnian highlander!*
> *How is a Bosnian depicted on a stećak?*
> *He is standing upright. Raised his head, raised his hand!*
> *But nowhere, anywhere, never ever, has someone found a stećak where a Bosnian is kneeling and begging.*
> *The one where he is depicted as a captive."*[37]

The *Radmilja stećak* found in Stolac – a town in Herzegovina – depicts a Bosnian man as a strong highlander with a raised hand. This artifact is a good example of a country relating to its glorious past, since the military greeting in the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina was adapted to exactly that, the raised arm.

As industry in Kakanj started developing and its capacities expanding, the population rate of the town increased and its diversity intensified. Locals were giving up on agriculture and started working in the coal mines. The developing industry was a reason for many people outside

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[37] Miroslav Krleža. "Neka oprosti Gospodja Evropa", in "Krleza – Poetry Collection", Zagreb, 1997. pp.23

the boundaries of the town to come to Kakanj and settle down. It was no exception to find workers from other former Yugoslav republics either. At the moment, there are around 160 Slovenian families residing in the town.[38]

Kakanj started developing the urban area around the coal mine, and has developed into a town with well structured and developed institutions. In the very early stage of the town's development, the first Catholic Church was built in 1920, whereas the first Orthodox Church was built in 1927. In the same period, first schools were being built, and in the period after World War II the urban part experienced a rapid expansion. Yet, since the town is surrounded by hills, most of the inhabitants of Kakanj municipality live in rural areas, and in this manner it represents a typical Central Bosnian region.

The rough pre-war demographic statistical estimate is as follows: 56.000 inhabitants, 10.500 town dwellers. The reason the exact data is not available is due to the fact that the last census was undertaken in 1991, during the official Republican census project. The national composition of Kakanj, according to the 1991 census data was as follows[39]:

- Muslims 54%

- Serbs 9%

- Croats 30%

- Yugoslavs and Other 7%.

Since it is fairly easy to conclude that Kakanj is a workers' town, it is important to mention two dates I believe have a strong impact on the regional identity of Kakanj inhabitants' and

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[38] Raif Cehajic. "100 godina Kaknja", Minex, 2001.
[39] Source: Ante Markotic, Ejub Sijencic and Asim Abdurahmanovic. Bosnia-Herzegovina: Altermedia and NUB, 1991.

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beyond. The local coal mine experienced two catastrophes; the first one in 1934 – 124 men were killed, and the second one in 1965 – 128 men killed. The local tragedies intensified the connectedness between the workers; the town itself gained a new kind of identity, monuments were built in tribute for deceased coalminers, and *the* feature of the municipality became the 'feeling of solidarity between workers'. It is exactly this notion I shall return to in pages to follow.

As it was the case with every municipality in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the beginning of the 1990's meant drastic changes in the demographic structure. In the early 1992, most of the Serb population left the municipality, followed by a third of Croats that left the town in the summer of 1993, as the result of conflicts and street clashes between the HVO (the Croatian Defense Council) and the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Since then on, Kakanj was under control of Army of BiH, and the population of the urban zone became predominantly Muslim, which was not the case before the war. Despite these facts, many non-Muslims remained in the town, and some of them joined the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina. That is why I believe the study's sample group is very significant on many levels, despite its small size.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

As it is often mentioned throughout the paper, the process of construction of identity is vital to be understood. However, what I had in mind when preparing the study was to explore a specific, variable dependent group, and seek traits that could indicate attributes of *a* national identity. The target group included individuals which had three elements in common:

- A member of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period 1992 – 1996
- Non-Muslim
- Residence before, during and after the war: Kakanj.

How to approach the data generation in cases where the investigator has an objective of seeking traits of something deeply personal and subjective? That is, I believe, a very common dilemma among researchers. Since the objective was to look for elements of national identity among the individuals, I chose the method of interviewing. However, since traits of that kind are found in many spheres of an identifier's life, the best approach to the interviewing process was the angle of the "life story" method (developed by Rosenthal). "The "biological turn in social science" (Chamberlayne et al. 2000) or the "narrative turn" in qualitative inquiry (Bochner 2001) honors people's stories as data that can stand on their own as pure description of experience, worthy as narrative documentary of experience (the core of phenomenology) or analyzed for connections between the psychological, sociological, cultural, political, and dramatic dimensions of human experience."[40]

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[40] Michael Quinn Patton. "Qualitative research and evaluation methods", Sage Publications, 2002. p.115-116

By asking an interviewee to share his / her life story with me, the story being told is 'individualized', set apart from dominant (public) discourses, away from the "collective canonical narrative".[41] One of the essential preconditions of generating data this way is securing a 'safe place', a setting where the interviewee feels comfortable and safe to tell his/her stories and share his/her views. According to Bar-On, "the construction of a safe space includes technical aspects – such as securing a quite place, providing adequate time, and arranging high quality audio-taping – as well as emotional aspects – acting curious, being emotionally attentive but also spontaneous, giving interviewees the feeling that their narrative is unique and important."[42]

In spite all possible preparations for the 'field-work', the most important factor, as I have experienced, is the element of trust. Without the feeling of trust, an interview can not result with relevant data we are aiming at. As the matter of fact, when a particular interviewee is approached, the interviewer should provide a rationale for showing interest in exactly that person. That part is very often the *key* part to the interviewing process, since if one invents a reason, and the real objective comes to the surface during an interview, there are only two possible outcomes: 1. a fierce refusal to co-operate, and 2. the interviewee trying to provide 'correct' answers fitting the interests of the interviewer.

In a doubt people would be willing to share their life stories with me if approached with the rationale of exploring reasons behind their decision to stay in Kakanj and take up arms for the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, I decided to settle for the line of exploring life stories of citizens who experienced the change of different regimes and socio/political systems (very influential settings for identity construction/deconstruction/reconstruction) in the municipality of Kakanj. That kind of formulation helped me approach people of a specific age group, mainly

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[41] Dan Bar-On. "Tell your life story: creating dialogue among Jews and Germans, Israelis and Palestinians". Central European University Press, Budapest, 2006. p. 27
[42] Ibid. p.29

people who served the military service in the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) before 1980 – while Tito was still in power.

Since I spent a relatively short period of time in the research location, (yet it is important to note that I know the town very well) I started the sampling procedure with the *criterion sampling* method - where the variables are set a priori – and ended up with just a few names of possible people to be interviewed. However, later on, those people referred me to other people meeting the 'criteria' and that brings in the second sampling method – the *snowball sampling*. With a combination of those two purposeful sampling methods, 14 persons were approached, out of which 9 accepted to be interviewed. Thus, the acceptance rate was slightly higher than 64 %. Interestingly enough, and in a direct opposition to Bar-On's definition of the 'safe space', four out of the nine war veterans disapproved of the interviews being audio recorded. Hence, the analyses of those four interviews are based on the notes taken during the interviews. While the acceptance rate was not a big surprise, a higher number of subjects was expected. However, "[t]he validity, meaningfulness, and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than with sample size."[43]

While elaborating my intentions to the interviewees, it was necessary to stress that the data to be obtained would be used for educational purposes only. Due to the specificity of the research, I was advised and asked to respect the individuals' privacy, and thus only initials will be used throughout the analysis of the acquired data.

Concerning the social space creation, all the interviewees invited me to their homes, and thus their stories were told in the confines of their homes – the 'ideal safe setting'. In that way, the

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[43] Michael Quinn Patton. "Qualitative research and evaluation methods". p.245

public sphere was both physically and figuratively left behind, and by being invited to their homes, I was welcomed to a very private, personal sphere of their lives.

Being aware of the fact that exploring people's sentiments and attachments through listening to their life stories is a good method of acquiring personal data, there is always a problem of the content value. Since the *tell me your life story* approach leaves a great deal of freedom to the person being interviewed, the narrative discourse may develop into a very 'irrelevant' direction. In that case, the investigator is faced with generated data, which he / she has to categorize as 'good' or 'bad' stories. In order to avoid that problem, I have created a list of possible questions that might guide the narrative to a more specific, experience narrowed details about the interviewee's particular stage of life. "While the interviewer sets the stage (widening of narrowing the topic, using or avoiding leading questions, and establishing the place and the length of the interview), the process is still an inter-subjective activity and both parties are active participants in it."[44]

The prepared questions included a wide range of question types, including: Background / Demographic questions, Experience and Behavior questions, Opinion and Values questions, Feeling questions, Knowledge questions, Sensory questions etc. In order to trigger an emotional reaction to some aspects of a particular issue, some questions involved me as a 'provocateur' via role-playing. All of these questions were used as conversational probes, i.e. an interviewing technique by which it is possible to go further into the answer by asking 'when', 'who', 'what', 'where' sorts of questions.

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[44] Dan Bar-On. "Tell your life story: creating dialogue among Jews and Germans, Israelis and Palestinians". p. 29

The 'why' questions were tried to be avoided as much as possible. However, some narratives required a drastic shift, and the 'why' questions were used, but mainly at the finishing stage of an interview.

Upon finalizing the interviews, the next stage of the study was the transcription process. Since I believe the language used during an interview is the data content of a specific value, I have transcribed the conducted sessions 'word-by-word'. In that way I tried to keep the 'interview setting' as durable as possible. However, once the transcription and the notes were revised, the ambiguities of the 'life story' method were appearing. How to deal with someone's life story and yet try to analyze it through a different set of experiences? Most importantly, how to manage to distance yourself once you have been deeply involved with your interviewee's life story? Those questions remained in the further analysis of the generated data, and they will be discussed in the pages to follow.

Chapter 4 - Data analysis and interpretation

Due to the complexity of the dilemma whether the stories should be considered as the raw data, or the person analyzing the stories should look for something 'hidden', located 'beyond' the narrative framed in a specific way, the data analysis is combined with the process of interpretation, since that kind of methodological approach enables me to seek the traits and at the same time enables me to present findings in a clear way. However, the 'life story' method of interviewing process is a great data generator. That implies that once the interviews are done, the researcher ends up with people's narratives of various lengths and his/her job is to analyze the collected information. Yet, that is a very difficult process since the researcher gets involved with people's lives and their experiences. As Bar – On argues when distinguishing the role of the interviewer and the interpreter of the data "[a]s an analyst, one has to look at the interview from a distance, to be able to disassociate oneself from the emotions expressed and also think critically about what has been said and how."[45] In the case of this study, the researcher is also the analyst.

As already elaborated upon, the acquired data does represent the material which includes emotions of the interviewees on many levels. That is why the data is analyzed through the method of thematic analysis. By considering all stories as important and good, the narratives were divided into different parts dealing with specific topics. In order to do the interpretation, i.e. to provide a rationale for certain interpretations, I shall provide bits and pieces of the conducted interviews. This is essential in order to familiarize the reader with the analytical approaches of the researcher/analyst.

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[45] Dan Bar-On. "Tell your life story: creating dialogue among Jews and Germans, Israelis and Palestinians". p. 32

Demographic / background information

In spite the fact that gender was not a sampling precondition, all nine interviewees are male. The age range varied from 44 to 67. All the interviewees had the same level of education – high-school of a vocational type, except KM who went to the Police Academy. Eight out of nine were born in Kakanj, but they all lived in Kakanj at least 10 years before the war started. Seven out of nine are employed; the two remaining interviewees are retired. Seven interviewees are Catholic, two are Orthodox.

The interviewees' family background is very significant. Only three interviewees had a parent born in Kakanj. All other families came from elsewhere (surrounding towns or other republics) which left an impact on the town's identity. Two interviewee's parents (NB and VI) came from Slovenia to Kakanj. Other interviewees' parents also came from either neighboring regions, or as in the case of DT, from Serbia. The reason of coming to Kakanj was job opportunities. They all came a generation ago to work in the coal mines. Hence, the town had the identity of the workers' place of a truly multi-national or Yugoslav environment. It is interesting to point out that both Slovenes from the study sample are now considered Croats, simply due to the fact they are Catholic.

Six out of nine interviewees are married. However, only two out of four are married to a person of the same religion. Meaning, there are four intermarriage cases in the sample group. This information is relevant, since many studies dealing with the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina deal with the intermarriage notion. For this study, it is necessary to point out intermarriages are significant since they left an impact on some individual's identity, as well as that it probably influenced interviewees' decision to stay in Kakanj.

AO: I was married to Jasmina (a typical Muslim female name). It was intermarriage. She is Muslim I am Orthodox. Everything worked fine until after the war, when her father died, and he was a Muslim priest. The only reason for the failure of my marriage is the fact that my name is A and her name is Jasmina!

KM: When Tito was in power, I lived in a well ordered system. It was nice, it was amazing. When he died, nationalists gradually gained power. The nationalist parties simply did not have a place in my life. I even had problems in my marriage due to those stupidities.

During the interviewing process, they were asked whether they were raised as a religious child, i.e. whether their parents were/are religious. Three replied saying there were not raised religiously, where as other defined their religiosity in their own ways.

- *Were you raised as a religious child?*

NJ: We were as religious as we are now. Not devotedly religious though. It was always possible to go to church, just like it is possible now. I didn't attend a mass every day. I go once a week. We don't exaggerate. Religion was never the priority in my life. I am more about material things.

AO: my parents were communists in the time when it wasn't allowed to talk about communism. I was raised as a communist kid. I am not ashamed of that and I am not afraid to say that. Communism still lives in my heart, even today. And its legacy lies in the fact that I am a member of SDP. I am not afraid to say that out loud, since that was the direction chosen by my parents and that is my parents' heritage. That's the only thing I have left from them. And I wouldn't want to lose that, ever! That would be the most tragic thing in my life.

The next question was whether they knew if their grand-parents / parents fought during the World War II and on which side, six answers were 'I do not know', almost being afraid to give an answer. Three people replied their grand-parents / parents fought on the side of Partisans

(Tito's multinational force), and NJ's mother's cousins were war heroes (a school in Sarajevo was named after the relative).

1991 census

Even though the question of '1991 census' was asked at the very last stage of interviews, I would like to present it at the beginning of the analysis stage, since it provides intriguing elaborations on the declaration, without being asked to do so. Six said they declared themselves as Yugoslav, two as Croat, where as FL claimed he could not recall his decision.

– *How did you declare yourself in the 1991 census?*

> NJ: as Croat. That is what it says in my birth certificate. I can not erase that! I can not erase my religion or name! That cannot be changed and why would it? Croats and Croats and Bosniacs are Bosniacs. That's nothing new and cannot be erased. You carry that with you. Even though I would love it if we were all the same, but today that's not possible because of the nationalist parties. We fought against each other for someone else's interests.

> These religions can be peaceful only over there (showing to the local cemetery). Everyone's harmonious there. One next to the other. What a harmony.

> KM: Yugoslav. My wife too. But, I will never do that again. Now I am a Bosnian Croat.

> DL: Croat, what else would I indicate!

When realizing the potency to the '1991 census' question, I asked a few interviewees how would they declare themselves on a census in 2011. This questioned aimed at the fact that there

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was no census undertaken in 2001, and thus the 'real' representation of people's self-declared identities is unknown.

> AO: as Bosnian! Bosnia is my country! I have no spare country. Who ever says they have Serbia or Croatia as a spare country, they are deluded. Not a single Muhamed has Turkey as a spare country! I was not born in Serbia or Croatia, I was born here. Thus, it cannot be Russia or Serbia. I don't understand why some people are afraid or ashamed to call themselves Bosnians. Perhaps they are afraid of someone... I really don't understand.

The real rationale for asking the 1991 question was to test the sub-hypothesis that non-Muslim soldiers in the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina are the 1991 Yugoslavs. 7 / 9 are exactly those people, and it can be said that being a Yugoslav had an impact on their decision to stay in Kakanj.

Views of the socio-political changes 1980 – 1990

In order to make the interviews as relaxed as possible and yet keep the data generation running, I asked some open-ended questions. In that way the subjects were fully engaged into framing their own narratives. One of the open-ended questions was:

- *In your opinion and views, what socio-political changes occurred in the period of 1980 – 1990 in the country, as well as in the federation of Yugoslavia, and what was the impact of changes in Kakanj?*

The answers were approached from different angles, and yet they had some elements in common.

> NB: When Tito died, drastic changes happened. Criminals screwed the country. Tito died, and he was taken here and there... And then, when his deputies came to power, they earned money, screwed the country, and got themselves rich. According to me, that is called being a thief. 90 % of them were thieves. And it is exactly the same today!
>
> *And those changes in Kakanj?*

NB: it was inflation. Very typical among us, the working class had the lowest status. In the coal mines, we produced 2 million tones of coal, and yet we had the lowest wages...

So the coal mine production at that time was...

NB: it was cheated! People were cheated, the entire system was cheated! The state system was cheated!

In the case of NB, he identified the death of Tito, ruining Yugoslavia and its system as the key changes. This could imply traces of lost Yugoslav identity.

NJ: before the elections and the win of the nationalist parties, attention was not paid to someone's nationality. There were people from JNA, friends from Kakanj and school. Who is what was never relevant. That was not part of talks. Only older people were religious.

In this case, the answer was given in the timeline outside the defined framework (1980-1990) and yet it is clear from the answer the biggest change according to NJ is the rise of nationalism.

AO: In Kakanj nationalism was felt shortly before the victory of the nationalist parties.

You said you were actively taking part in 'working actions' throughout Yugoslavia. What was the change noticed elsewhere, if any?

AO: It was felt among the people. One time, while I attended the last working action, I was a commander of my group. There were always 12 commanders having beer at one place. One time, a person from Split (Croatia) approached me and asked for my name and nationality. I told him I am AO, Orthodox, from Kakanj. He told me I was lying since there are no Orthodox in Bosnia. There are all Muslims according to him. That's how the break of the Yugoslav continuity was felt, and the blockage of some communication. Labeling started as well! The other time in Belgrade, I was the only representative from Kakanj, and they told me they expected someone else. I told them I was Yugoslav, and they replied by saying 'Oh another communist'.

In the case of AO, it is clear to see that he started his analysis starting with the nationalism coming to Kakanj, and then he moved from the local level to the Yugoslav, and as an active participant in 'work actions' throughout Yugoslavia, shared an interesting story, which indicates a year of starting the 'labeling process' and him being denied the Yugoslav identity and the 'Orthodox from Bosnia' identity.

Almost all answers dealt with the issue of nationalism gaining power. Each interviewee provided his view and it was noticed it was a good idea to use an open – ended question at the early stage of interviews, since in that way the subjects can sense the freedom they have in their narration and the showed interest of the researcher for their case.

The division of people

Asking questions which require specific dates and periods can be very unrewarding. However, when interviewees were asked the following question, personal stories / views were shared.

- *According to your perception, can you point out a specific year or date, when situation in Yugoslavia, and in Bosnia and Herzegovina became unstable, in the sense what year was the beginning of the obvious division of people along any lines?You can focus on Kakanj as well.*

   NB: 1980! It started in Kosovo. The Serbs did it all. They screwed up the whole thing. It began in Kosovo, and it will finish in Kosovo.

   Regarding the social situation in Kakanj, what year was the beginning of the division of people along ethno-national lines?

   NB: from 1990's onwards. At the beginning, there was TO (territorial defense troops – local troops). Nationality played no role. Then the nationalistic parties came to power and disrupted the social and neighborhood situation and traditions. The fact is that the parties (the nationalist parties) created a destruction of the Army's (the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina) function.   1991 – 1992 was the key period for the division in Kakanj as well as in Bosnia. The main cause for

the war is exactly the nationalist parties. SDA, HDZ, SDS (the three nationalist parties in BiH) caused an international conflict.

As it is clear from the case of NB, the main issue was the issue of Kosovo. His understanding of the division is quiet precise. Also, while referring to the local level, he places an emphasis on the nationalist parties as *the* factor of the division. Most importantly, he realizes the damage done to the neighborhood and social networks while reflecting upon the current social situation.

> NJ: a bit after the nationalist parties came to power. While communists were in power, it was different. I voted for nationalist parties, because I thought something needed to be changed. Communists were not enemies. They were thieves.

In this case, there is an answer to the question that was not asked. NJ voted for nationalists, and it is them who started the division, and NJ provides an explanation and/or regret for having voted for them.

> AO: it was felt when the nationalist parties came to power. All of them propagated nationalism not patriotism. In 1991 it was felt there would be trouble. Minorities were the torn in the eyes. Minorities were the bothersome ones according to the nationalist parties. Regardless of the location. It all came down to territory possession and the war was inevitable. As soon as Nedeljko (a typical Serb name), Mirso (a typical Muslim name) and Anto (a typical Croat name) were not willing to sit together, it was clear.

By providing this kind of answer, AO shows he is aware of the problem of minorities, and probably has experienced it himself. Nationalist parties destroyed social networks among former colleagues. That aspect influences an identity development.

> MP: I didn't even notice any difference before the nationalist parties came to power. I've always had a circle of friends of different nationalities, but perhaps they hid it from me. Then the war started and some things were clear.

Where as this answer also confirms people's awareness of the impact of the nationalist parties (possibly it is a continuous process by comparing themselves to other non-Muslims, clearly voting for nationalist parties), it also shows an interesting angle to the narrative, i.e.MP being surprised by the change of attitudes of her friends during the War.

What is interesting about this section is that most of the answers included the year of the victory of the nationalist parties as the year. Some even speculate earlier instance, such as Kosovo, or labeling process before the war. They clearly differentiated the local level (which was elaborated upon with emotions) and the broader, Yugoslav level.

Being different

The following sections might as well be called 'Ask and you will be told' part. After listening to a narrative at its developing stage, there is a time when the story needs to be guided. The provided answers are possibly the closest one can approach a trait of someone's identity.

> - *Did you feel different than others during the war, meaning were you perceived as being different? Were you treated differently?*

> KM: well, I was one of rare people in the police troops with the police academy diploma, and yet I was moved to work in a village, that implies I was treated differently. And I felt different. I thought I was perceived differently. They moved me to a village so I wouldn't see what's happening downtown. There were only 2 more Croats in

that village patrol, all the rest was Muslim. Some of them were showing me the SDA (the pro-Muslim nationalist party) membership card, and some were threatening me.

This case of KM shows injustice caused to a person based on the fact that he was not Muslim. At the same time, it shows the person's perception of being perceived different. Most importantly, it indicates many levels of opposing one self to the other – a process of identity creation *par excellence.*

> AO: I never felt any mistreatment in the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina. I never experienced any resistance from my soldiers to go the battle with me. As the matter of fact, when there were religious holidays, I was let go for a few days in Kakanj. I never felt any difference. People saw me as a part of their community. Interestingly, they never called me by my name or nick names. They called me the Serb. That is when I realized they were proud of me, since it was my own decision to join the Army. I am not ashamed of that decision.

The intriguing case of AO reveals that the labeling process in a different light, i.e. it provides a good social bond by implying something positive, something to be proud of. He felt 'at home' among his fellow soldiers, and him being the only Serb among them, created the feeling of uniqueness and importance for AO.

> NJ: no one has ever called me Ustaša or Croat. I didn't experience any weird feelings directed at me. There were all civilized people. However, volunteers are something else. A story for itself. They had no jobs and they were uneducated. People in my team, they were all people from the town. If there were any extreme people, I would survive the line. Everyone was hoping the war wouldn't last long, but...

As sharply juxtaposed by NJ, volunteers in the war coming from elsewhere and the locals from the town were two 'different spheres' among soldiers. People from the town are civilized, his

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people, whereas others who came from elsewhere (foreign countries), are something different and they are not really taken into consideration when describing emotions about an experience. The local level is elevated.

> NB: When it comes to the Police troops, it was OK. But my personal opinion is that some people in the higher levels of the Police kept us (Catholics and Orthodox) in the troops for the sake of international monitoring. That was our purpose in the Police. To be a decoration.
>
> *That means the Police was predominantly Muslim?*
>
> NB: Oh of course! But not 100% due to us. I still think we were there only because of the international monitoring troops.
>
> *Tell me, did you feel different in the Police troops during the war? Different because you were not Muslim. Did other members consider you being different?*
>
> NB: I did not feel good.
>
> *In what sense?*
>
> NB: In the sense of feeling that someone would want to waste me, or my family,
>
> *Someone from the internal structure of the Police?*
>
> NB: Nobody gave me any guarantee. It didn't matter that I was a member.

The case with NB indicates how one sees himself being different, and that 'quality' is used by the others. Since NB felt different, was perceived as being different, that caused the feeling of insecurity, and possibly any interaction with others was much harder to be established.

> VI: I was called Ustaša a couple of times, but I found it funny, since my parents are from Slovenia.

This part of the narrative shows how labeling process went beyond some boundaries, very often the boundaries of logic, as it is the case with Slovenes being referred to as Croats, simply because they are Catholic. In this example, it can be seen VI re-framed the narrative of a particular experience in the way of avoiding talking about painful memories, but made it funny instead.

This section of 'being different' indicated the role of the setting in the process of development of an identity. Throughout the given examples, there are traces of individual identity, and identification with a group. To feel different, a person is usually treated in a different way or the person perceives it that way.

Most importantly, local vs. outside membership lurks at some instances and thus, a trace of regional identity comes into question.

Reasons for remaining in Kakanj

It is valuable to follow the way a narrative is constructed, especially if the interviewee is given adequate time and freedom of expressing himself. That is why I decided to 'inject' the interviews with 'Can you explain your decision of...' types of questions.

- *While many non-Muslims left the town, you decided to stay in Kakanj. Can you explain your decision?*

    MP: I had a job, an apartment, I thought I was safe here. I don't know.
    I made a mistake I think.

    KM: I stayed here due to love to this region. My father is from
    Kraljeva Sutjeska (a place of historical importance for Bosnia), I have

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a bond with this place. Second, my wife is from Doboj (a suburb of Kakanj – predominantly Muslim), she finished her school there, and I am so happy she did it with my dear Muslims. That Muslim population respects my wife a lot! My pride is in the fact that my kids were born in Kakanj. This is mine, it keeps me here. There is nothing bigger than something that is mine. I planned to settle here, I worked here, got an apartment here, created family here. Of course I stayed here! Where else would I go? That the reason. Plus, I have so many friend that are a part of my life here in Kakanj, they are Muslims, Catholics... They are people I can rely on, and that's what is necessary in life.

With the two examples provided, it can be sensed the uncertainty of his decision to stay in Kakanj, while in the case of KM, the elaboration is lengthy, and it indicates that the decision was discussed many times among him and people close to him. There are traces of fatherland, references to historical times, pride in poly-ethnic friendship network, and the sense of belonging. The riskier the questions the better the answers. Traces of identity found.

AO: as I said, I cannot go against my parents. That would the hardest thing in life. My mother died in 1992. That was the year of heavy shootings, and yet she was buried under a red star, and music, next to my dad. That was the reason for staying. I did have problems, but not from the side of the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina but from HDZ (the Croat nationalist party) and HVO, and SDS (The Serb nationalist party) and Serbian military troops. They were black mailing me via phone, and when I realized it was time to leave the town and fight for someone else's ideals, which are not clear to me even today, I decided to stay in Kakanj, take up arms and defend my things. And they were my home, my kids and my marriage. That was the only thing I had left.

The case of AO indicates a form of 'decision-making' discourse. Yet, traces of belonging and fighting for his valuables (family, the marriage) are present. A refusal to align to an ideology foreign to him results with a feeling of patriotism and duty – a developed sense of belonging.

NJ: personally, I thought the war would never come to Kakanj. People were helping out each other before the war. Including Ustaše and

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cetnici! People fought together. Lived together. There were no murders in Kakanj. That was the attitude back then. But when armed conflicts were happing in Kakanj, I was contemplating leaving the town. Even though there was no real war (in comparison to other surrounding towns) in Kakanj, a lot of people left the town. The smart ones left the town! They stayed alive and returned. Now they have a life and family. And here (in Kakanj) a lot of people lost someone, a lot of people died.

The above example may indicate a surprise of the individual when the setting of his 'social-self' drastically changed. NJ was sure the war would not affect Kakanj basing his assumption on the historical friendship and tolerance found in the municipality. The dilemma indicated in the part is 'To leave and survive, or stay and risk being killed or losing someone dear to me'. A hard decision to make, yet even harder to elaborate the step.

NB: I am Catholic, but I am not a nationalist! Not a complete one. I won't go! I won't fight for Tudjman. I won't give up on the things I worked hard for. If someone wants it, he will have to be armed. I am not an extremist. I am really not. If I went elsewhere, I would be living in a fridge next to some river (referring to refugee's living conditions around Bosnia – living in metal containers).

In this part of NB's narrative, self-understanding of not being a nationalist is clear. Also, the decision to stay seems to be dependent on the refusal to affiliate with the Croat side, the side NB does not support. Staying implies protecting the property and your personality of a non-nationalist. It is a refused manipulation, a self-aware decision. It is a trace of another resistance to ethno-national discourse.

Reconstructing the narrative seems to be very helpful. Parts of lengthy answers lead to particular spheres of identification through the 'unconscious' set of opposing oneself to attributes of others'.

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Reasons for joining the Army / Army Police troops of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Another set of similar questions with the same rationale as the previous one. Some examples already explained and analyzed partly gave an answer to the question:

- *While many non-Muslims and Muslims left the town or the country due to the fear of being directly involved in the war activities, and many non-Muslims went to other regions and joined other military troops, you decided to join the Army / Army Police troops of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Can you explain your decision?*

> NB: on 25 September of 1991, I was drafted. In 1991, when it started in Slovenia, no one believed what was happening, since we were all for the army (the Yugoslav People's Army) since it was our pride. Then in 1992 we realized what the Army was. It all started from Slovenia. The Slovenes did it (seceded) in a civilized manner. When it came to Croatia, Bosnia did not even grasp the magnitude of the situation. When I was drafted in 1991, I was wearing the military uniform and a gun. People were laughing, thinking it was ridiculous of us to be armed. And then... When it started, people were selling cows to buy guns! And now they ask for money to return the guns. That's why it is impossible to find the guns. That will remain a problem for the next hundred years.

What NB did through his narration was a retrospective discourse analysis of the situation in the former Yugoslavia. By his examples, he implies he was aware of the magnitude of the reality, and that might be a possible reason. An element of shock to the war coming to 'his door' is present. In comparing himself with other, non-armed civilians, he leaves elements of a different kind of experience. However, NB was drafted to the troops.

> FL: I had to go to the Army. To Vozuca. I had to, I was drafted. It was either go to the front line and come back to your job, or leave the town.

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A very similar answer was given to me by NJ.

> NJ: I was here throughout the whole war. I was employed on a place where I couldn't be drafted. No one was mistreating me, and then the things changed. They started firing some people, thinking it would scare us away (from the town). I was replaced by a refugee from J. and I was sent home, and then to the war. He was sent to the front line soon after me. There were a lot of people who would never go to the front line if not forced. Some packed their bags and left, I stayed in Kakanj.

While NJ explains why he joined the army, meaning he had no other choice, but either go to the front line or go away from the municipality, it is interesting that he stresses that he was not mistreated with. His answer provides the explanation of how the drafting procedure worked, i.e.being replaced by an outsider. That was an attempt to impose the regional affiliation change, but it did not work with some, like in the case of NJ.

> AO: Komšić (the current Croat member of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian presidency) was the first non-Muslim person to voluntary join the Army of BiH. I was the second one. The only exception was Divjak, but he was a military person in JNA. We are civilians... On no basis can someone claim the Army of BiH was a homogeneous Muslim army! There were non-Muslim soldiers as well!
>
> *What front lines did they send you to?*
>
> AO: to all possible places, from Kakanj, Igman (the mountain nearby Sarajevo), Sanski Most, Bihac... I was wounded four times. I still have some pieces of metal left in me.
>
> *By whose bomb?*
>
> AO: the Serbian military groups.

AO, the only exception in the sample group, since he joined the Army on the voluntary basis, provides us with the strongest trait of identity by now – the pride of being non-Muslim voluntary soldiers in the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, together with people who now have an

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influential role in the country (Komšić). Due to people like him, there is a claim that Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina was not a homogeneous group. He made a difference. By stating what side is responsible for his body deformation, he distances him self from that group. It is essential to note that AO is Orthodox.

Asked reasons for staying in Kakanj and 'joining' the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina were quite different from each other, as those two decisions possibly reflect (and implicate) two different things: the sense of belonging and the sense of defending.

Commonalities

While a lot of questions were devoted to seeking differences among the sample group and their co-soldiers and citizens of Kakanj, some questions aimed at seeking commonalities – elements that bring them all together and make them a community.

- *Was there something in common among you and other soldiers? What was, if there was any, the common function of the Army / Army Police Troops of Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina?*

> MP: hunger, poverty. People were socializing and intermingling more
> than they do now. The commonality was to stay alive. To survive.
> Now, it is completely different.

A simple yet strong answer. The common feature among soldiers was being human, i.e. being afraid. If they wanted to survive, they had to rely on each other. An element of a community of trust. However, as stated my MP, it is different now. That means the purpose of that kind of community is lost, and some attributes of connectedness are no longer present.

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DT: we had a common bed, the trench. (laughing)

Even this short answer proves the previously elaborated connection between human needs and community creation.

> AO: My only aim was to establish freedom, that my child can freely choose where he wants to go, that he can move around and decide for himself. And there were no other aims in the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, except those that came from sides, such as *mujahadins*. They wanted it their way, and it did not work out.

According to AO, the common aim of the Army was to establish freedom, and any other propagated aims were astray. By saying that he represents not only himself but also the soldiers who went to battles with him, for he makes a clear distinguishing line between locals (Bosnians and Herzegovinians) and outsiders. It is exactly this notion of belief of the common aim / function that keeps a community together.

> NJ: to defend the territory. The fight was not for the people! That was clear at the end!

This short answer provides a critical approach to the issue of the Bosnian war per se. It could be considered as a reply with a grain of bitterness, for as AO stated during the interviewed AO: when the war was over, peace came to soldiers. Not to people.

The case with NB is interesting, for he has provided the answer two times at two different stages of the interview.

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NB: To protect the continuity of the municipality! It doesn't matter what someone's name is, where he lives, who does what... We tried to protect the continuity of a person. That's what we did when I was stationed in the town.

And at the later stage of the interview:

NB: We did fight for a common cause. But at the beginning of the war!

And how about 1993 onwards?

NB: Creation of small groups started taking place.

Based on what?

NB: on the will to screw you up!

Creation of groups on the basis of ethno-national lines?

NB: On the basis of money!

This kind of attitude change during the narrative represents the full development of the story, since the narrator gets emotionally attached to the timeline of the narration. The answer provides the analyst with the conclusion that as of 1993, some things changed in the Army, in the concept assigned to the war being fought etc.

The analysis of the commonalities lets one discover the traits of linking an 'imagined community'. One of the most obvious ones is the commonality of the setting. However, resisting a movement or a complex historical event – the war - as a community brings in more elements of commonalities than one is even aware of. Some of those traits are: a common language (the war-oriented language), shared experiences etc.

Language – the a-ha moment

While doing the interview with KM, I noticed something that made him an exceptional case. After an initial hesitation, I decided to ask.

> *I noticed a couple of times that you use words such as <u>tisuća</u> (the Croatian way of saying a thousand) and <u>točno</u> (The Croatian way of saying correct). Did you use those words before the war?*
>
> KM: No, I did not use them before. I use them now. Why? When Bosniacs can impose their things, so can I. When they enter bars they say '*selam alejkum*'. So, I can use Croatian words. I am not afraid of anyone.

The frank answer of KM's is a valuable content, since it reflects a way of identifying oneself with the clearly defined group. Language is often the key element of distinguishing members of outside groups. However, in the specific case of KM, who claims to identify with Bosnia...

> KM: Goran, my identity is as it is. My identity is: first I am Bosnian, then I am Catholic. I can't get rid of my Catholicism. I love Bosnia, it's my country. All of my five brothers fought in the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that I am especially proud of! Why wouldn't I like Bosnia? She's mine. I'm a Bosnian, and then Catholic.

... the case is different. He does not identify with Croats in Croatia, but instead he opposes the strong, public, ethnically charged pro-Bosniac discourse (especially noticeable in the language) by empowering his vocabulary with Croatian words. This is a good example of a banal, symbolic conflict of identities in the public sphere, for which sake the private sphere of individuals are as strongly affected.

Chapter 5 - Findings

"In Bosnia there are two words for peace:
            before the war and after the war."

-    *a Bosnian joke*

During the process of interviewing noticed, and during the process of transcription confirmed, the key word of the narratives was – nationalistic parties. The most common chronological break in interviewees' stories was the event of the nationalistic parties coming to power. It seems that personal events are surpassed by this socio-political change, so central in people's lives, even today. The event represents a turning point on a wider social level, beyond the private sphere, where individuals and groups were affected by it.

Often referred to as the consequence of the nationalistic parties gaining power, the rupture of neighborhood networks was another common topic talked about. This 'melt down' of previous social bonds left a huge impact on the identity / communal identity change. Having good relations with neighbors used to be / and still is a very important aspect of the Bosnian culture. As noted by Bringa, Bosnia and Herzegovina was "[a]n environment where cultural pluralism was intrinsic to the social order. Dealing with cultural differences was part of people's most immediate experience of social life outside the confines of their home, and it was therefore an essential part of their identity."[46]

A significant rate of intermarriage practice among the subjects leads to the conformation of the Bosnian pre-war multicultural identity. On the local level, the multicultural feature was

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[46] Tone Bringa. "Being Muslim the Bosnian Way: Identity and Community in a Central Bosnian Village". Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1995 pp. 83

intensified by various backgrounds of the inhabitants, since the age generation of interviewees'
parents came to Kakanj from surrounding regions and republics (Slovenia, Serbia...) to look for
job opportunities in the coal mines. Thus, the town's identity was the one of tolerance, since the
municipality was a workers community at its earliest stage of development. While legacy of
communism was found at several occasion, either expressing a wish for Tito's rule or simply by
comparing the current social climate with the one 'before the war', I believe the common identity
traits found among the interviewees are not so much a legacy of 'brotherhood and unity' but rather
of the workers solidarity.

The '1991 census' question caused different reactions; some acted defensive, some
elaborated their choices, some used the decision to reflect upon previous affiliations. It is found
that seven out of nine interviewees declared themselves as Yugoslav, which supports the sub-
hypothesis that the '1991 Yugoslavs' are found in the sample group – the last carriers of that
legacy, which possibly had a significant influence on the decision to stay in Kakanj, to be loyal to
the country. Nevertheless, when talked about the reasons of being in the troops of Army of
Bosnia and Herzegovina, it was found that only one person, AO, joined the Army on the
voluntary basis. The remaining eight were drafted. This significantly 'dries out' the relevance of
the aspect of 'patriotisms' and 'strong attachments to the country'. Yet, once the interviewees were
drafted, they did not leave the town, but faced the reality together with their Muslim co-soldiers,
and did their duties. This indicates an element of great potency on the identity formation, in spite
the fact they were drafted to the Army.

This overseen variable when setting the sampling criteria has actually led me realize the
magnitude interviewees were putting on the local level stories. When talked about the 'frontline'
experiences, there were strong traces of 'us vs. them' division, where the 'us' category included
soldiers from the town: people from 'outside' (other Bosnian-Herzegovinian towns) taking over

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'our' jobs; Kakanj soldiers' perceptions vs. foreign soldiers' perceptions. These elements are strong indicators of a developed communal attachments, and traces of an all inclusive communal / regional identity.

Necessary clarifications about this aspect of regional identity were made while analyzing the reasons of staying in Kakanj, and not leaving the town / country like many non-Muslim and Muslim inhabitants of Kakanj. Reasons varied from one group of elaborations: having a job, an apartment, children attending schools, to the second, more identity content valuable: I am married to a Muslim from Kakanj, I love this country, this is mine. There was even a mention of the term 'fatherland', one of the key elements of national / territorial identity. As Smith states: "[a]ttachments to certain territories and some places and locations, have a 'mythical and subjective quality'."[47]

The analysis of the 'Did you feel different? Were you perceived / treated in a different way?' part of the interviews showed the people felt injustice on the individual level, since them being different caused unequal treatment. They compared themselves to other individuals, rather than to groups while reflecting upon being / feeling different. In one case, AO was called 'the Serb' by his soldiers, but that 'labeling process' had a positive implication, since he was accepted as equal by his Army troop members, based on the fact they all decided to fight for the country on the voluntary basis.

While discussing the differences, questions about commonalities were asked. What was found is a set of elements / perceptions shared by all members of the local community: the social setting (the war, the hunger, the fight for survival). Due to the same social setting, the members shared the same level of language – the 'war oriented' language, and most importantly they shared

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[47] Anthony D. Smith. "National Identity". pp. 23

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the experiences. This purports Korunić's argument that entities and special national communities are in reality constructed not solely on the level of emotions, but as a human community.[48]

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[48] Petar Korunić. "Nacija i nacionalni identitet". pp. 10

Conclusion

While I was doing the 'field work', NB's wife asked me about the aim of my study. Upon hearing the objectives, she said "Oh, so you are doing an experiment?". This made me think about how abstract the idea might sound to one. To test the hypothesis that non-Muslims soldiers in the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period 1992 – 1996 can be seen as an indicator of a unitary, 'all encompassing' national identity of Bosnia and Herzegovina required a specific aspect of approaching the study. I decided to follow, as Korunić says, one of the main two ways of analyzing the phenomena: studying human subjective elements. To seek elements of national identity among a chosen group required setting the criteria of the sample group members. By focusing on the local level (the town of Kakanj), subjects had to satisfy three criteria: a non-Muslim with the residence (before, during, and after the war) in Kakanj who was a member of the Army / Army Police troops of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period of 1992 – 1996. Since I was led by the theories that emphasized the notion of self-location and self-understanding in the process of identity formation, it was clear that the data would be generated by the interviewing process.

Due to the complexity of the topic and the needed subjectivity of the data content, interviews were conducted by the 'life story' method. Interviewees had the freedom of framing their life narratives any way they wanted to. Even though the data acquired during the interviews provided me with essential elements in order to proceed with my hypothesis testing, another level of the interviews was taken into consideration - the way stories were told. When dealing with subjective stories of experiences as the raw data, observing and noting elements of emotion, trust, and interest expressed during the interviewing process were vital for the process of interpretation of the data.

The rationale behind approaching the subjects for participation in the study was an analysis of life stories of citizens who experienced the change of different regimes and socio/political systems in the municipality of Kakanj. In that way, the war was not mentioned while approaching the subjects, and yet it was the main focus during the interviews. The acceptance rate was 64 % and the sample group involved 9 persons.

The analyzed and interpreted data showed various elements and traits of different forms of identity. The sub-hypothesis that the '1991 Yugoslavs' are to be found among the subjects, heading toward the assumption of their loyalty and patriotism being based on the legacy of Tito's multiculturalism, was proved to be correct. Seven out of nine interviewees declared themselves as Yugoslav. However, according to the data, my presumption linked to the '1991 Yugoslavs' was wrong. While establishing the sampling criteria, I oversaw one element, and that was the element of voluntary joining the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Eight out nine interviewees were drafted. Nevertheless, the fact that they remained in the town still implied an element of loyalty to the region and the community.

As indicated in the findings, elements of identity construction / reconstruction / deconstruction found among the interviewees' life stories lead to the conclusion that the most dramatic events and their consequences were linked to the local level – Kakanj. The destruction of social bonds, neighborhood networks, and the multicultural, workers' solidarity atmosphere in the town of Kakanj caused a big change in the interviewees' perceptions of and their identification with the community.

In the search for commonalities among the interviewed war veterans and other solders, it was found that the biggest commonality was the setting. All of them were 'trapped' in a new, social environment – the war. By being in the Army / Army Police troops in the town of Kakanj, they shared the same experiences. Most importantly, they all stayed in Kakanj. Starting from the

conception that identities are formed through social action, it is possible to lean to the conclusion that the identity formed among non-Muslim and Muslim soldiers in the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina was a regional one. There is an element of voluntary adherence, but not to the Army but to the region. Attachments to the region are based on what it represents: certain values, customs, a specific way of life. I believe the same would be confirmed if the study included non-Croat soldiers in HVO (Croat military forces) in a predominantly Croat municipality under the condition the soldiers lived there before, during, and after the war.

The 'nationalistic parties' victory' being the key word in the narratives (also being *the* causing event of identity changes found among the interviewees) along with elements of 'wish for unity' and the glorification of the 'before the war' period of life, imply traces of a lost collective identity. Perhaps, non-Muslim soldiers in the Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina could be seen as an indicator of the national identity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, but only in the period 1992 – 1993. According to NB, the involvement of SDA (the pro-Muslim nationalistic party) in the Army changed its function. "SDA tried to take over the role previously played by the League of Communists and to turn Islam into the new ideological criterion for the selection of political and military elites. These policies were not only pursued in war-time circumstances, but rested on a deliberate attempt to islamicize the meaning of war. "[49]

The missing factor is the identity of the collectivity, the one where "more or less the entire population identifies with a certain ethnic community or nation"[50]. What was found among the interviewed war veterans is the identity of a community whose members identify with a particular community in a particular region. Regionalism won the battle. Hence, the hypothesis that non-Muslim soldiers in the Army / Army Police Troops of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period 1992

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[49] Xavier Bougarel. "Death and the Nationalist: Martyrdom, War Memory and Veteran Identity among Bosnian Muslims". p 170
[50] Petar Korunić. "Nacija i nacionalni identitet". p. 10

– 1996 can be seen as the indicator of the national identity of Bosnia and Herzegovina is confirmed to be incorrect.

Nevertheless, as Campbell elaborates when discussing claims of co-existence in Bosnia "[t]hese micronarratives of the participant-interpreters are as nationalist as those of their opponents: they project back into history – back "hundreds of years" if not "a thousand years" – an imperative drawn from the present to justify the form of the nation they believe should exist."[51] That is an example of exactly what Anderson meant by "Supposing 'antiquity' were, at a certain historical juncture, the *necessary consequence* of 'novelty'?"[52]

As the closing words of the work, I feel obliged to share my impression of the current identity of the interviewed soldiers. They are either *nationalists* – they chose the ethno-national side after all, or *communists* – indicating a need for a transformation in the contemporary political climate in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Veritas amara est*.

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[51] Campbell, David. "National deconstruction: violence, identity, and justice in Bosnia", The University of Minnesota Press, 1998. p. 94

[52] Benedict Anderson. "Imagined Communities", Verso, London, 1991, xiv.

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