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Congratulation!

Edmond

Hajrizi, Rector of UBT and Chair of IC – BTI 2023

Content

CYBER THREATS RISK ANALYSIS IN
STATE POLICIES IN GUARANTEEING NATIONAL SECURITY

Bahri Gashi[1], Bashkim Smakaj[2], Ngadhnjim Brovina[3], Arian Kadriu[4]

Abstract

Cyber threats, generally including hybrid warfare, are among the greatest challenges that states and organizations are facing in modern times. This is due to the significant evolution of technology in recent years, which has made a vast amount of information available to individuals and organizations. Such threats can cause serious damage to critical infrastructure, such as transportation, energy, and water resources, as well as communication and financial systems. They can also impact a country's national security and political stability.To address this threat, states have implemented various policies and measures to ensure national security against the backdrop of cyber security measures. These measures often involve establishing the foundation for national strategies, legal regulations, and specialized agencies responsible for protection against cyber threats.

These agencies collaborate with both public and private organizations to detect, prevent, and respond to cyber-attacks. States have also taken steps to increase public and business awareness regarding cyber threats and to assist in the prevention of cyber threats and the protection of national assets.

This study will provide insights into the policies and measures that states needed to take in order to ensure national security. Overall, states require proactive policies and detailed strategies aimed at preventing cyber threats and safeguarding critical infrastructure from potential attacks.

Keywords: analysis, risk, cyber threats, state policies, national security

Introduction

Cyber threats are becoming increasingly complex, continuously targeting state systems through hacking and cyberattacks, seriously endangering critical infrastructure through external cybercrime assaults.

On the other hand, it is the undeniable duty and necessity of the State to provide a secure cyberspace, ensuring that all measures are in place to protect vital state and private assets in: National security systems; Personal data systems; Public services systems; Educational system; Border control system; Emergency system; Banking services system; Personal accounts system; Hotel system; Tourism system; Road traffic services system; Air traffic system; Healthcare operating system; Energy and supply system; Construction industry system; Automotive industry system; Transportation systems, etc.

Currently, National Security, primarily state institutions and sectoral policies within the framework of state security infrastructure must intricately encompass the technological and human resource aspects for a comprehensive response against threats and chaotic cyberattacks. Cyber Defense will always be at the forefront as, in the era we are living in, cyber (in)security is a new trend of hybrid warfare with various unconventional characteristics.

Cyber threats and the role of governments in their prevention

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For more than two decades, the internet has played a significant role in global communication and has become increasingly integrated into people's lives worldwide. Innovations and low costs in this field have significantly increased the availability, usage, and performance of the internet, so that today it has around 3 billion users worldwide (Li & Liu, 2021).

The analysis of the risk of cyber threats in the context of national security encompasses several key elements of a comprehensive national cybersecurity strategy. The five elements of successful national cybersecurity strategies are as follows (Fadia, Nayfeh & Noble, 2020):

A dedicated national agency for cybersecurity (NCA)

A National Program for the Protection of Critical Infrastructure

A national incident response and recovery plan

Well-defined laws addressing all cybercrimes

A thriving cybersecurity ecosystem.

Countries around the world have become heavily reliant on cyberspace for communication and control of the physical world, to the extent that it is undoubtedly inseparable. Therefore, the responsibilities and functions of the national security of each country are increasingly influenced by cyberspace (Li & Liu, 2021).

In contemporary concepts, cybersecurity is an integral part of research and development across all government agencies. As threats evolve, making it crucial to stay ahead of potential risks, innovations are continually being developed, thereby creating challenges to stay ahead of the curve (Scopus, 2023).

Governments are now striving to enhance their preparations to combat these cyber-attacks. Governments must establish dynamic means to counter these threats due to the pace and nature of technology (Mishra et.al., 2022).

State leaders are in the best position to understand critical infrastructure risks within their own state and to develop programs to aid in mitigating and effectively responding to the wide array of cyber threats they may face. However, for success, states will need to cultivate the abilities, culture, and mindset for public-private collaboration in critical infrastructure defense programs that effectively cover cybersecurity (Deloitte, 2017).

Throughout the research, we find several crucial elements on our topic, observing how the analysis of critical infrastructure and AI is conceptualized, even from the perspective of the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity, characterizing the 5 priorities that governments and EU member states should have in mind, and naturally, other countries on their path to membership, including Kosovo in this case.

The following table provides accurate guidelines regarding the way forward that states should implement.

Table 1 – Top 5 research needs for AI and cybersecurity

1	2	3	4	5
Test beds to study and optimise the performance of ML-based tools and technologies used for cybersecurity	Incentivise the development of penetration testing tools based on AI and ML to find and exploit security vulnerabilities to assess attacker behaviours	Development of standardised frameworks assessing the preservation of privacy and the confidentiality of information flows as well as of the designed systems	Development of training in AI for practitioners using real-world scenarios	Establishing an observatory for AI and cybersecurity threats

Source: (European Union Agency for Cybersecurity [ENISA], 2023)

Analysis of the cyberattack threat risks and the role of states in this context

Analysis of the Threat of Cyber Attack Threats is now evident, systematic, and relentless against states, primarily targeting critical infrastructure. For these reasons, defensive policies need to be carefully conceived at two main levels: 1. the policy

development of strategies compatible with the current needs, and 2. the technical and technological aspect of professional readiness preparation.

Most importantly, a threat is distinct from a risk. Risk is the probability and consequences or impact of a specific threat, if and when it materializes. National security strategy should be formulated around a clear understanding of risks, not threats. Understanding and assessing risks should be done dynamically, adapting to real-world events (Center for Strategic and International Studies [CSIS], 2021).

How can the government improve its approach to better identify threats and prioritize national security risks? Here's a highly useful example that states should implement, regardless of the specifics they face: The process can begin with a "data call" for the top threats from the Intelligence Community potentially linked to a classified version of the Worldwide Threat Assessment by the DNI. Data can also be solicited from U.S. allies and close partners through their existing sophisticated threat assessment and risk management processes, such as the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and Singapore (Center for Strategic and International Studies [CSIS], 2021).

From this perspective, it's rightfully acknowledged that risk analysis is highly complex and demands ever-increasing attention. Besides the United States and developed states, even the Balkans and Kosovo must follow the path of strategies compatible with Western nations, as security challenges are shared. While the world is in this spotlight, President Biden has made it clear that all Americans deserve the benefits and full potential of our digital future. The recently published National Cybersecurity Strategy by the Biden-Harris Administration calls for two fundamental shifts in how the United States approaches roles, responsibilities, and resources in the cyber realm: Ensuring that the largest, most capable, and positioned entities – both in the public and private sectors – take a greater share of the burden for cyber risk mitigation, and Increasing incentives to encourage long-term investments in cybersecurity (The White House, 2023). From this perspective, as a result of the critical need, more than 100 governments have developed national cybersecurity defense strategies to combat the cybersecurity threats faced by their citizens, businesses, and critical infrastructure (Fadia, Nayfeh & Noble, 2020): One of the important regulatory aspects also involves online communication platforms. To meet government requirements, private companies, especially social media giants like Facebook, Google, and Twitter, have developed terms of service and codes of conduct to regulate expected content on these social media platforms, effectively creating norms on the internet. However, these terms of service and codes of conduct differ across different platforms, creating legal ambiguity and uncertainty about what content is prohibited on which platform (DCAF, 2019).

State-sponsored attacks

Beyond hackers seeking profit through the theft of individual and corporate data, entire nations are now utilizing their cyber capabilities to infiltrate other governments and conduct attacks on critical infrastructure. Cybercrime today is a significant threat not only to the private sector and individuals, but also to the government and the nation as a whole (Moore, n.d.).

The rise of state-sponsored cyberattacks poses an escalating and substantial threat to private businesses. These attacks are increasingly targeting sectors within the business landscape that offer viable opportunities for addressing geopolitical disputes (Moore, n.d.).

In democracies with consolidated institutions, specialized entities such as the Department of Homeland Security and its components play a leading role in enhancing cyber security resilience nationwide, investigating malicious cyber activity, and advancing cyber security while upholding democratic values and principles (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2023).

Similarly, there is the utilization of threat intelligence for threat prevention. Threat intelligence is organized, pre-analyzed information about potential attacks that may jeopardize an organization. Threat intelligence helps organizations understand possible or ongoing cyber threats. The more the information security staff knows about threat actors, their capabilities, infrastructure, and motivations, the better they can safeguard their organization (Cassetto, 2023).

Usually, in the topic analysis the meaning of "What is a cyber threat?" in the text titled: "Hostile Nation States," stating that state-sponsored cyber warfare programs present evolving cyber threats ranging from propaganda, internet page defacement, espionage, and disruption of critical infrastructure to loss of life. Government-sponsored programs are becoming increasingly sophisticated and pose advanced threats compared to other threat actors. Their evolving capabilities can lead to widespread and long-term damage to the national security of many countries, including the United States (Tunggal, 2022).

While hostile nation-states can conduct cyberattacks against local companies and institutions, aiming to interfere with communications, cause disruptions, and inflict damage, there are also Terrorist Organizations that can carry out cyberattacks with the intention of destroying or abusing critical infrastructure, threatening national security, and disrupting economies. Additionally, Criminal Groups and organized hacker groups strive to infiltrate computer systems for economic gains. These groups employ phishing, spam, spyware, and malware for theft, private information breaches, and online scams (Imperva, n.d.).

The context of cybersecurity, with all the complexity of Cyber Security Threats, in the case of Kosovo, overshadows the issues that the country has faced on its way forward and at the same time present a serious challenge to the governmental institutions in Kosovo.

Critical infrastructure – Cybersecurity and the case of Kosovo

According to the Security Strategy of Kosovo, point 2.1 states: The primary security threat to the Republic of Kosovo is Serbia's territorial claim, the undermining of sovereignty by illegal structures supported by the Serbian state, and the active and ongoing efforts of the Serbian state to hinder Kosovo's progress and integration into Euro-Atlantic structures and other international organizations and mechanisms (Government of Kosovo, 2022, p. 7).

In this perspective, this document indicates that the Republic of Kosovo is exposed to hybrid threats, which include unconventional, asymmetric elements, influence projection operations, and cyberattacks aimed at weakening the country's sovereignty, undermining its integrity, and damaging its international image (Government of Kosovo, 2022, p. 8).

In this context, the State of Kosovo has also taken concrete steps towards creating the Draft Strategy for Cybersecurity of Kosovo 2023-2027. This strategy aims to address the complexity of national cybersecurity challenges in the Republic of Kosovo through a plan of directions and approaches approved by the Government of Kosovo, with the goal of enhancing the security and resilience of national infrastructure and services (Government of Kosovo, 2023).

As a result of the implementation, Law No. 08/L-173 FOR CYBERSECURITY has been approved. Article 3 Definitions, 1.26. CSRA - stands for the Cybersecurity Agency, which operates under the Ministry responsible for Internal Affairs. This establishment will regulate this challenging field in our era (Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, 2023).

In this aspect, it should be emphasized that the first policy related to cybersecurity in Kosovo – the Policy of the Electronics and Communication Sector – the Digital Agenda for Kosovo 2013-2020 – was formulated in March 2013 by the former Ministry of Economy (Ministry of Economy and Environment, Ministry of Economic Development, Republic of Kosovo, 2013).

Over time, in the face of these challenges regarding Cybersecurity Threats, significant steps were taken toward the creation of the State Strategy for Cybersecurity and the Action Plan (2016-2019), as well as the Cybersecurity Strategy in MFA/MoD (2017-2020). These have expired three and two years ago, respectively, and for this reason, they are no longer applicable. However, the new Cybersecurity Strategy (2022-2026) has been drafted, although it has not yet been approved by the Government of Kosovo. Furthermore, the Draft Strategy of Kosovo (2021-2030) (Government of Kosovo, 2020).

Furthermore, the Law on Critical Infrastructure, approved by the Assembly of Kosovo on March 30, 2018, provides legal provisions for regulating critical infrastructure in Kosovo. It identifies the relevant sectors, offers guidelines on how they are managed and defines penalties for non-compliance (Peci & Ukshini, 2022).

Based on the review of state documentation regarding the Risk Analysis in ensuring National Security against cyber threats, as well as other asymmetries of hybrid warfare, significant legal measures and implementation aspects have been undertaken, positioning Kosovo as a serious and consolidated state in terms of fulfilling legal infrastructure. However, it is still not adequately prepared in other essential resources, such as human resources, technological equipment aspects, and other important determinants in this process.

Conclusions

In the era of technology, strengthening cyber security capacities and protection against cyber threats will remain an essential step to ensure that all critical systems and infrastructure operate securely, guaranteeing all levels of national security.

Reassessment is not merely a guide for further improvements; it should be a proactive way to better understand strengths and weaknesses comparatively and correlate them with the challenges of the times.

It can be concluded that Kosovo has taken critical steps in cyber security, fulfilling Cyber Security capacities and overall moving toward completion of the National Security architecture, as a necessity for Euro-Atlantic processes.

Preparing for technological transformation, facing challenges in cyberspace, reassessing legal and technological aspects, human resources, and continuous education as an implementation phase should remain the main focus of managing these national security challenges.

All regional states, including Kosovo, have implemented policies to address this critical threat to ensure national security. These measures should include comprehensive capacities by establishing specialized and responsible agencies to reassess risk analysis and protection against cyber threats.

For the state of Kosovo, critical security aspects remain at a high risk, as long as proper security architecture is not adequately implemented, including budget allocations, human resource capacity building, interactive technological devices, military technological capacity enhancement, alignment of strategic documents with the security environment, laws, and their revisions in line with critical security situation assessment.

The Republic of Kosovo, specifically its security encryption institutions, must also be supplemented with four new laws, resulting in the establishment of four vital institutions for National Security in the fight against Crime and Corruption; Verification and Classification; Counter-Intelligence; Cyber Space Defense (Hybrid Warfare), respectively, creating legal aspects for law enforcement and defense against cyber warfare, cyberattacks, cybercrime, cyber espionage, cyber extortion, cyber terrorism, as precursors to conflicts in hybrid warfare arising from Cyber Threats.

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Constrictive Memory: A new tool for socio-political instability in protracted conflicts

Angelica Vascotto[1], Damir Kapidžić[2]

Introduction

Conflict resolution is often intended as a tool to solve clashes on an immediate level. Depending on the complexity of the situation and the intentions of the parties involved, literature and empirical cases present many strategies that could be adopted in such cases: from diplomatic mediations to the deployment of peacekeeping forces; from military escalation to contention. Once a certain degree of security is reached, the re-establishment of a secure environment is to be accordingly designed. But what happens after conflictual situations that were based on features of personal identity and resulted in the perpetration of atrocious crimes against civilians? Is the lack of armed confrontations the most functioning way to convey a sense of security to a population subjected to ethno-religious disparities? Can memories possibly lead to a renewed rise of tensions?

The last decade has seen a flowering interest in the topic of memory which started to be studied from the most varied perspectives. In fact, apart from being a mere aspect of everyone's daily life experiences, the concept itself lends to being treated from the most diverse set of disciplines. This is why scholars from numerous areas of study decided to focus on the topic and to make new important observations in relation to this extremely ample-angled subject. From sociology to global studies and from psychology to political science, the concept of memory has increasingly become a central theme in the literature. Not only became important to understand the dynamics leading to the formation of this set of ideas and emotions but also the impact these have on the societies we live in.

This is why it is extremely necessary to draw attention to the topic of memory and its reverberations in post-conflict societies where violent events were carried out on the basis of ethno-religious differences. When violence directly targets part of one's identity, the pain of loss, forced displacement or torture suffered, will make room for a heavy human baggage that will

continue to persist for a lifetime despite the weapons having been laid down. Apart from the importance of citizens' well-being, a more structural issue might arise, namely that of socio- political instability. In fact, it is easy to agree that no society can endure a foundation of insecurity, resentment, hostility, and suspicion. This certainly can be a proxy for a higher risk in countries that have experienced an ethnic conflict. It is here where the concept of collective memory becomes fundamental: how cogent are war memories for the stability of a country living in a camouflaged protracted conflict? This is the main question this research intends to focus on. Starting from the literature on memory, trauma, political instability, and peacebuilding practices, the designed framework will branch out into three fundamental aspects: the creation of a new theoretical aspect called "constrictive memory", an attempt to measure the impact of the element analised and the presentation of the data collected in the field. In fact, to provide more answers and produce a comparison with real and current situations, we decided to develop the study of Vukovar as a case study to investigate the current situation in Croatia.The originality of this research is based precisely on all these aspects that definitely make it unique in its typology. Constrictive memory, that is the combination of memorialisation and proximity to war-related traumatic events, together with socio-political instability will be operationalised and measured according to strict and clear values. Research items will be explained and measured with the final aim of understanding the impact they are having in the selected locations and the potential relationship they have between themselves.

The article is structured in five sections. The first one provides a theoretical excursus on the literature related to memory and instability. The second one instead will introduce the methodological structure and the approach to fieldwork. All the variables corresponding to each research item will be presented along with the specific terms of measurement for each entry. For what concerns the section about fieldwork, we exposed all the information related to the interviews with locals and the ethical procedures adopted to pursue this project.

Methodology

The foundations of our empirical research are based on the selection of a case study. This is being evaluated on two levels:

Macro = State

Micro = Units (municipalities)

The choice involves the study of Vukovar, a municipality situated in Eastern Croatia on the border with Serbia and it has been chosen according to a general trend variation. Some of the characteristics comprise ethno-national divisions, traumatic events that occurred in the area at the time of the war, and sectarian polarisations. In specific, the methodological reasons why these choices were made are as follows:

Area affected by war. This is the first layer of selection, and it prescribes the experience of a conflict on a proximate level.

Accessibility to the community. In order to acquire the best possible pieces of information, it has been necessary to select a place that could be safe and accessible for foreign researchers. By doing preventive analysis, Vukovar demonstrated to be better positioned in terms of community openness, a bigger number of NGOs working in the area, and a lack of visible hostile acts toward research and researchers. Even if these factors might appear of limited relevance for the study at hand, they resulted in being the most crucial aspect to take into consideration when designing fieldwork strategies and objectives. Two were the main ambitions: more efficiency in data acquisition (due to time constraints) and the presence of as few as possible security hazards. For what concerns the latter point, Covid-19 emergency raised general concerns about instability in all countries, but the area of Western Balkans was facing aggravating factors as Bosnia and Herzegovina was experiencing the deepest political crisis after the war due to secessions threats advanced by Republika Srpska and Serbia, on its path to EU integration, was facing escalations on the frontier with Kosovo.

Ethnical balance between communities. In order to acquire the most varied information, we decided to work in an area with a high level of ethnic heterogeneity. The aim was to have the opportunity to intercept all kinds of narratives, not just the leading one. For instance, by selecting a very homogenous location, researchers could face a lack of counter-narratives, thus the absence of all the most diverse historical lenses.

Preference for more "static" communities. In order to pursue a better accuracy of peoples' experiences, the idea rotated around the ambition to focus on more static communities, therefore places that did not face extremely strong displacement or immigration (especially in recent years). Vukovar is a much smaller reality where it is less common for a Croatian coming from other areas of the country, or even foreigners, to find a job there.

The whole research will follow a qualitative approach as it will consider a small-N case and variables are treated with qualitative values. It will be pursued through state-of-art literature about various topics (post-conflict memories, traumas, socio-political instability etc., etc.), data available on institutional/international levels, and from local-based interviews.

While the macro level will be covered mostly by data acquired within literature and background information that emerged during interviews, an original approach will be used when analysing the results of micro-levels. The process will be built up in two phases. The first one concerns the creation of a brand-new research item through the combination of two already- existing concepts. The elements included in the definition of "memorialisation" and the aspect of "territorial proximity to traumatic events" will be combined into the idea of "constrictive memory".

After laying the foundations of this theoretical approach, the second phase consists in analysing the relationship between the new item, the constrictive memory, and socio-political instability. To do so, we will make use of an operationalisation process. Both concepts are to be declined into concrete and potentially measurable categories (e.g., violent events that occurred during the war, presence of dissimilar collective narratives, war casualties for constrictive memory; income inequality, governance structure, schooling segregation for the socio-political instability section). According to the actual consistency of data acquired, each category will be given a score and, thus, contributing to a better understanding of the impact of each category.

This piece of research has been pursued between June 2021 and March 2022 and is comprised of a number of interviews held directly in loco.

Theoretical Overview

Memory and Collective Memories

The past decades have seen an increasingly growing interest in the field of memory studies. Numerous disciplines started to cross contributions about this topic from various points of view. It is in this multidisciplinary prospect where the most interesting interceptions have arouse: sociology started to dialogue with anthropology; political science and history with the world of psychology. In this mixed scenario, the field of international studies has become increasingly interested in covering topics associated with the study of memory. Political scientists have understood the importance of how and what people remember whether as causes of a renewed

conflict or the establishment of well-designed peace processes. Nevertheless, the first attempt of academia to draw down some ideas about memory was started by sociologists and it is form there that all other disciplines take inspiration for their theories.

With the rise of sociological constructivist theories, the concepts of memory and identity have increasingly acquired relevance in the discipline, as well as later the political sciences. However, it was during the 1990s that the topic took a greater part in the literature. In particular, scholars have started to explore how ethnic, national, or religious identities are built on historical myths and how these define who belongs to a certain group.

Pierre Nora is one of the most productive authors when considering the concept of memory. He identifies it as a construction in permanent evolution, hold and kept safe by individuals and open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting. Therefore, it is formed by units of thought that can be subjected to censorship, projections or shields. In this regard, memory can be manipulated, consciously or unconsciously in order to present reality in a certain way.[3] Nevertheless, the essence of memory itself permeates the concrete world, the space, gestures, images, and objects. At this stage, he promptly points out the differences between memory and history. Firstly, memory distinguishes itself for being always an actual and vivid entity. History instead can be easily described as the reconstruction of events and facts that do not exist anymore. The intellectual processes that lead to its recognition require to be supported with precise analysis and critical discourse. This process can often lead societies to develop an aversion to interpreting those occurrences. The passage between memory and history made each group to reedify its identity through the revitalisation of its own history. The "must-remember" approach has converted each one in its history. Here is the necessity to recognise the behaviour of individuals: they feel the need to search for confirmation about their origins. Other authors[4] argue that memories are specifically reconstructed according to the theories of self, therefore all those personal views about who we are which belong to our personal narratives.

Among Nora's theories, he advances the idea of "liuex de mémoire". These are all those concrete and abstract elements which favour the act of remembrance: archives, museums, commemorations, anniversaries, symbols, treaties and monuments are all testimonies of a certain event. Places of memory do not generate themselves spontaneously, thus the necessity to pursue their creation and relive.[5] In this regard, Irwin-Zarecka asserts the great importance of official collectors, such as museums. These play an important home in terms of selecting, labelling, storing and making certain artefacts available for people. Archives too represent the traditional

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3 Nigel C. Hunt

4 Kihlstrom, 2002

5 Nora, p. 24-25

guardian of documentary evidence. However, these do not originate automatically: the creation of symbolic resources is the result of a combination between forces. For certainly, power is the main resource for securing more visibility in a memory project but this seems to happen more likely when the work involves many different sectors of civil society. Apart from this human experience, what in recent years has become more and more effective is the accessibility of privately produced records to the public itself.[6] In this way, it emerges an emphasis on the emotional aspects of the experience. It is by giving a public voice to people once unknown or forgotten that memory work gains much of its strength. Thus, the need for public support: individual narratives can carry a memory project in its first stages but without some institutional back-up, the results could not become available beyond a small circle of those directly involved.[7] In these terms she also recognises the importance of all intermediaries (like the "guardians of traditions" mentioned by Halbwachs[8]), thus what enters into collective memory and how. Realities of the past might be referred to as framed raw materials such as physical traces, records and recounts.

There are also cases of political regimes which declared particular events or people non- existent and proceeded to erase all memory traces accordingly. Countries, communities and politics are not equal in the positions they assign to different storytellers or in the importance they grant to remembrance and historical truth. What in one context represents a significant omission, may not do so in another.[9] Framing an experience as that of oppression is particularly present when a shared sense of trauma or suffering already exists.[10] Most of the countries do not experience a full ethnic homogeneity within their societies. As a matter of fact, even state borders do not manage to define the limits between "us" and "them". The most usual situation consists of a large majority of a certain part of the population sided with few minorities. This might result in what Łukianow and Wells refers for survivors as "territorial phantom pain"[11].

In terms of memory transmission, Irwin-Zerecka observes that communities try to preserve their past primarily through private tellings but also through the construction of physical markers. Great relevance is often given to memory carriers considered by the

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6 Irwin-Zarecka, p.105

7 Ibi., p. 139

8 Halbwachs, p. 48

9 Irwin-Zarecka, p. 121

10 Irwin-Zarecka, p. 59

11 Małgorzata Łukianow, Chole Wells, Territorial phantom pains: Third-generation postmemories of territorial changes, Memory Studies, 2022, p. 12

community and descendants as "intergenerational heroes"[12]. Moreover, she identifies the importance of the second generation: while the first one is more interested in making a certain fact or trauma to be remembered, the following generation has a crucial role in what concerns searching for its own ethical answers. Popov and Deák[13] argue that learning about the part inevitably produces a social individual with a particular social identity while Aleida Assman argue that the transfer of experiences and knowledge across generations creates what she calls "cultural memory"[14]. Memories become intersubjective because are selected to constitute both group membership and individual identity. These are constantly reshaped, reinvented and reinforced to create boundaries and links between individuals[15]. Families, friendship groups and communities constitute environments for mnemonic socialisation and by extension, the embodiment of political heritage.[16] On the other hand Volkan identifies that memory, mainly characterised by traumas and glories, are passed down on a generational basis. For this to happen, he highlights the crucial role of three entities: the interactions between parents and children, the educational approach in schools and the presence of a certain group's ceremonies dedicated to specific triumphs or traumas.[17] Hunt adds further considerations in terms of memory transmission. He identifies the great importance of technology in easily storing and spreading information about the past. In addition, he advances a more specific reference to the process' timing. In his opinion, the shift from memory to a sense of the past is over about three generations.[18] The experiencing generation having a memory of what their have experienced, their children taking on those memories in a weaker but still mnemonic sense, and their children perhaps still having a sense of memory from listening to their grandparents. After this generation, a certain event tends to vanish more easily as there is

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12 Efrat Ben-Ze'ev, Edna Lomsky-Feder, The intergenerational hero: Carrier of a bonding memory, Memory Studies, 2022, p.2

13 Anton Popov, Dušan Deák, "Making sense of the 'difficult' past: transmission of political heritage and memory-work among young people across Europe, in The Sociological Review, Vol. 63, No. 2, 2015, p. 38-40

14 Aleida Assman, Штыри формы памяти, Rocznik Ruskij Bursy, 2017, vol. 13, No. 13, p.

223. See also Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity, Fordham University Press, 2015

15 J Boyarin, 'Space, time, and the politics of memory', in J. Boyarin (ed.) Remapping Memory: The Politics of TimeSpace, Minneapolis, University of Mnnesota Press, 1994, p. 23

16 Keightley and Pickering, 2012

17 Vamik D. Volkan, "Large Groups Identity and Chosen Traum" in Psychoanalysis Downunder, no. 6, 2005

18 Hunt, p. 103

nobody left who personally witnessed the event and can impart it directly or indirectly into the following generations. The memory may become collective if it relates to a major societal event.

The narrative of victimisation can serve to bolster group identity or to support political claims.[19] Negative standards gain more public exposure.[20] The lines separating knowledge and visceral feelings are often blurred. [21] The transition from memory-as-possibility to memory-as- necessity raises the issue of justification in order to universalise the act of remembering. Finding the "right" reason to remember remains a challenge.[22]

Groups formulates specific meanings and goals, behaviours and acts of its members are specifically framed. Due to a precise interpretation of the world, the group's identity creates socially accepted and sanctioned roles. Here is the importance of a social construct in perceiving an identity: actions and results of behaviours are not derived based on preferences but rather from fulfilling the role allowed by collective identity. Also in a traumatic context, collective memory ensures continuity in a specific community. This enables future generations to construct their own personal and social identities by shaping their present in relation to the past associated to their community. This sense of social identity is directly related to the fact that memory is intrinsic to the process of binding, bonding and "othering".[23] The maintenance of a relatively stable political culture is fostered through commemorative and symbolically salient work that focuses on in- group sentiments and ideologies[24]. Following this logic, a relevant part IR decided to focus on the concept of ontological security linked to identity.

The Grey Areas of Socio-Political Instability

As we will see, the concept of socio-political stability is as much important as problematic. Sanders himself documented the lack of agreement on the very causes of stability and instability.[25] As a matter of fact, most authors who tried to approach the topic and to formulate a definition, come across diverse obstacles in terms of specificity. The entire field seems to be permeated by

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19 Irwin-Zarecka, p. 18

20 Ibi., p. 27

21 Ibi., p.29

22 Ibi., p.37

23 McGrattan, Hopkins, Memory in Post-conflict Societies: From Contention to Integration, in Ethnopolitics, Vol. 16, No. 5, p.488

24 Mc Grattan, Hopkins, p. 491

25 David Sanders, Patterns of Political Instability, Macmillan, London, 1981

confusion: correlation is counterweighted with causation, the causes of instability are unclear in their meanings; and different studies of apparently the same phenomenon attribute stability to uncertain or different political objects.[26] Most of the inconsistencies result in the nature of the data used in research activity: it is more commonly processed according to convenience rather than for its conceptual integrity.[27] In order to understand in a clearer way the research, at this point the chapter aims at representing a dive into the most relevant authors who covered the topic.

One of the most relevant authors in the field of political instability is Leon Hurwitz[28]. He promptly recognised the existence of a direct connection between the study of instability and democratic systems. As a matter of fact, he argues that the understanding of the causes of disorders does create more preoccupation with democracies rather than illiberal regimes. So, this is why his research is particularly focused on this aspect. In order to define the concept, the author proceeds with operationalisation. He thus identified three main "stability detectors". These can be identified with the following clauses:

The ability of the political system to persist turbulences

The existence of a legitimate political system

The presence of an effective decision-making structure within the political system

For the study of democratic political stability, he thus advances three indexes: the persistence of pattern, the index of legitimacy/system support, and the index of effectiveness. To support his research, he assigned a specific score according to the valence of the case. The macro-level applied are as follows:

Persistence. Each change in chief executive can represent evidence of instability. The cases that can apply follow this logic: pattern elements (i.e. general parliamentary elections), neutral elements (i.e. accidental death of the prime minister), and unstable elements (i.e. assassination of the chief executive).

Legitimacy. In order to be classified as stable, Hurwitz argues that a democracy has to maintain a certain value of support from citizens, thus being seen as legitimate.

26 Keith M. Dowding, Richard Kimber, The Meaning and Use of 'Political Stability, in "European Journal of Political Research, No. 11, 1983, p. 229

27 P. H. Melanson, L. R. King, Theory in Comparative Politics: A Critical Appraisal, in "Comparative Political Studies", Vol. 4, pp. 205-231

28 Leon Hurwitz, An Index of Democratic Political Stability: A Methodological Note in "Comparative Political Studies", Vol. 4, No. 1, April 1971, pp. 41-68

Effectiveness. The author supports the idea that, to be stable, a democracy has to have a minimum tendency of a roi fainéant.[29] The term refers to a "signifying acceptance of and satisfaction with governmental outputs by the population".

The study advanced by Hurwitz is one of the most relevant contributions about the definition of political stability. However, this does not preclude the presence of some irregularities. Yet these permeate the three focal points of his approach. In specific, the extent to which those could validate or invalidate the hypothesis. For example, in terms of persistence of governments, does it really reflect a stable democratic essence? Established the fact that he defines the government as an administration which favour post-election formation, change in the prime minister/president and resignation/re-election processes, by following the logic proposed: is a stable and healthy democracy really designed by the persistence of the same political élites? It is necessary also to evaluate other intervening factors such as a government that choose to call an election before the end of its full term or one that is forced to go to polls. Eckstein[30,] for example, sees the endurance of a regime as only a part of the meaning of stability because a regime may endure as a result of a series of lucky accidents. Instead of longevity, Gurr[31] proposed the concept of "durability" in order to furthermore stress the capacity to persist and adapt in response to stress. The same argumentation can be applied to the other two following points: is a high rate of social support and policy-making effectiveness true indicators of stability? There are plenty of cases in which authoritarian regimes could fit in this overview. This fact is inevitably confined to democratic systems and it cannot be used with other regime structures.

Another interesting approach, more society-oriented, has been advanced by Ake[32] and Sanders[33.] They decided to focus on patterns of behaviour, either concerning "regularity" or "normality" tendencies. The main hypothesis that Ake advances is that the political structure in society constitutes a network of role expectations that impose constraints upon the political acts performed by individuals. In other words, stability is given by the societal auto-restriction of behaviours imposed by the political system. Thus, any act outside those agreed is a manifestation of instability. In this way, the author gives strong weight to laws and conventions. On the other side, Sanders identifies instability as any variation in the normal occurrence pattern of regime changes, thus leading to a potential presence of infinite manifestations.

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29 View offered by Almond and Verba in "The Civic Culture", Ed. Little Brown, Boston, 1965

30 H Eckstein, A Theory of Stable Democracy, in "Division and Cohesion in Democracy", Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1966,

31 T. R. Gurr, Persistence and Change in Political Systems 1800-1971, in "American Political Science Review", Vol. 68, pp. 1482-1504

32 Ake, 1974, 1975

33 Sanders 1981

Even though the two authors draw interesting points in terms of political instability, the views they support face many problems of vagueness. Dowding and Kimber identified some critical issues in the definitions they propose. In their opinion, the propositions advanced stand far away from being linear, circumscribed and attached to demonstrable acts. First of all, Ake highlights the strong connection between instability and uncertainty, as they were part of the same equation. Even if a potential agreement in this sense could be viable, another aspect that leads the definition of political instability to be problematic is the idea that instability itself has to be represented by all acts performed in a political system.[34] Linked to this point, Sanders acknowledges that, as a consequence, there are various types of instability. However, the main question that arise is the following: what could we identify as a mere political act? Are protests, media criticism and strikes political expressions as well? Another imprecision is offered by Sanders when referring to "normality" in the potential succession of destabilising event. As a matter of fact, he does not provide a specific measurement to state the actual form of political stability: he just gives a rough idea of what stability might look but with no actual foundations. We just understand that it is related to the political sphere.

As evidenced until now, the only attempt of giving a fair definition of political instability incur into considerable shady areas. If from one side the persistence of a certain regime might allude to a strong and stable context, critics have been raised towards the actual importance in modifying the political system. Even if a common ground can be found between these two propositions, the major doubt surrounds the proper identification of destabilising political acts. Finally, the political culture, as a set of attitudes and beliefs which give meaning to a political system, contributes in diversifying categories. Nevertheless, the intention to approach this particular field has not been idle. All agree that political stability is not a mere abstract concept since it refers to certain facets of the society. In addition, what has increasingly gained evidence is the role of system change. This aspect should not be excluded in toto: what has emerged to be the discriminating factor is the type of change which pressure a system. Easton[35] adds that, to be considered stable, a system has to have a slow rate of change so as not to create problems affecting its survival or persistence. Dowding and Kimbers keep the same idea, but advance its contraposition with "forced change". They argue that this notion is essential to the idea of instability: change that is accepted voluntarily by any political object cannot be interpreted as a proof of instability.

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34 Dowding, Kimber, p. 233

35 1965, pp. 106-107

Another crucial point to evaluate is the impact of potential threats to the system. Indeed, these can be considered as the intervening factors which establish the level of order or instability. Cases such disorders, rallies and violent episodes within the society find themselves to be part of the final equation as well. In this cases, the State - or regime - has diverse choices at their disposal. If a government decides to react, the nature of the actions may vary: from laid-back approaches to firm impositions. Depending on the composition of the society, its political culture, its historical background and its level of wealth, reactions can be very diversified. A system can ignore certain contingencies and if no variation is perceived, it apparently shows a good resilience rate, thus it can be interpreted as stable. In other cases, the promotion of a softer line can represent the starting point of a broader series of causations.

A Two-Phased Study: The Introduction of "Constrictive Memory" as a New Research Tool

Scholars have produced varied literature contributions about memory. In recent years, the study has developed numerous facets in a manner that it started to become a proper nascent discipline. Due to its mouldable nature has given the opportunity to vivisect it through multiple lenses: from sociology to cultural studies, from political to psychological and finally technology. We agreed that memory may be in continuous mutation rather than something with rigid boundaries36, thus, the involvement of diverse frames of analysis often becomes necessary. Books and articles started to expatiate within the literature and scholars from diverse disciplines decided to offer contributions to combine different aspects of social sciences. Some of the most relevant fields that have emerged in the last few years concerning the use of technology in storing memories as well as how to better guarantee the generational transfer of memories within a community. By trying to analyse a number of experiences and different cases, practitioners have tried to provide new explanations for memory-related phenomena. Nevertheless, as of today, the field still remains very theoretical and empirical. Consequently, when approaching new research questions, current literature shows a lack of tools for the measurement of diverse memory impacts therefore fully analysing different contexts mere socio-political perspectives. It is for this reason that, with the ambition to pursue this kind of research and thus filling the empirical void, it has been decisive to think about a new and functioning route to let scholars and practitioners investigate the intersection between the role of memory and the socio-political structure of a country or a municipality making use of more comprehensive tools.

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36 Ed. Lucy Bond, Stef Craps, Pieter Vermeulen, Memory Unbound: tracing the dynamics of memory studies, Berghan Books Inc., 2016, p. 1

For all these reasons, this research constitutes a brand-new attempt to analyse the impact of post-conflict memories in societies where some sort of peace has been restored. The innovative aspect lays in the actual association of two already-existent elements which creates a completely new theoretical framework. As a matter of fact, memorialisation is generally referred to as the processes of preserving memories, but it does not refer to the actual influence of it on people and communities. In addition, the places of memory[37] present in certain areas do not always recall events or episodes that actually took place there. This fact presents a double-faced result: on one hand, the act of recalling certain events, which are disjointed from the territory where these occurred, creates a form of emotional disengagement; on the other hand, it becomes a potent form of symbolism which can be easily used to create or maintain social unity within a country or a specific region. For this reason, it is evident the need to focus on the substantial repercussions a localised community endure when both conditions are involved. In addition to these elements we need also to reflect on the importance of violent proximity in relation to war collective and individual memories.

Examples of such situations can be found in every society. We can instantly think about some of the grimmest cases that took place in the history of humankind: the Shoah, the Rwandan genocide, or people's memories from the Second World War itself. Thus, people's perceptions are bound to vary according to their connection to certain conditions. Among the most crucial ones it is worth to mention closeness to victims (which can be emotional, cultural, ethnic, and the most territorial immediacy where events took place).

On the basis of such evaluations, constrictive memory can be operationalized according to the following indicators: number of civilian losses, number of IDP/migrants arrived in the area, presence of commemorative monuments, recurrence of commemorations, violent events occurred, and critical details emerged during the interviews. All these relate to the 90's conflicts occurred on the municipal level. The reasons why these categories have been selected are multiple and will be discussed below:

The number of civilian losses in the area contributes to the establishment (or the lack of it) of a certain social attachment toward the conflict. As a matter of fact, it is to be assumed that a municipality which counts a larger number of victims will develop a stronger impact on both emotional and social levels. At the opposite, a smaller number of victims is expected to create less resonance on families and local dynamics.

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37 See Nora

In order to understand the level of acceptance towards a minoritarian community in post- conflict societies, a nationality-based demographic variation will be presented. Taking into consideration the last few censuses, we will try to understand whether a community once minoritarian feel more or less comfortable to live in the areas selected. Levels of distrust or acceptance for certainly reflect in the societal composition: the more hostility, fear and lack of opportunities a minoritarian group will face, the more they will leave and emigrate somewhere else. On the contrary, if a minoritarian community even increases in its number, we will find ourselves in a more welcoming place. Strong losses (therefore, negative values) are linked to higher impact of constrictive memory in the area. On the contrary, we expect that a high increasing percentage will refer it to a less impacting value;

The presence of commemorative monuments is particularly relevant as it represents the result of the actual process of negotiation on how to interpret the past[38]. The fact that a certain area developed "places of memory"[39] testify to the intention to make people and institutions revive given episodes of the past. In this way, there has been a form of public recognition. The process involves various aspects such as the support from the population as well as the political élite administering the area. For all these reasons, we expect that a bigger presence of monuments results in a much more developed culture of memory. On the contrary, it is safe to say that a less considerable amount of memory works will provoke a less impact on the society. Here we intend to specify a very crucial element: a small or none presence of monuments does not mean people do not carry bearings from past events. What changes is the fact that it lacks a certain process of the governing political élites (e.g. lack of democracy, weak impact of counter-narratives on the local socio-political   landscape,   lack   of   resources…).

Public commemorations represent another powerful way in which certain past events are remembered by the society. More importantly, if these are recurrent and potentially divisive. The more presence of a commemoration, the more impact will have on the society and the way the past is remembered. On the contrary, we assume that less public

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38 JO Eun A, Memory, Institutions, and the Domestic Politics of South Korean-Japanese Relations, International Organisation, 2022

39 See Nora

commemorations will have less effect and influence on the population.

In terms of violent events occurred during the war, it is easy to grasp their connection for the construction of collective memory. Here we advance two specific sub-categories:

Major fights and battles

Crimes against civilians

Among all facts of war, these two elements are strongly connected to people's memory and current attitudes towards former perpetrators. As a matter of fact, the actual physical and emotional proximity to such painful episodes further contributes to the eradication of negative feelings against the community who took part in these kinds of actions, In addition, if narratives are not managed, this situation can perpetuate. A sense of hostility and lack of trust within the population may worsen and remain latent even after various generations. For all these reasons, these categories have been inserted into this study. In point of fact, the fostered hypothesis suggests that the more presence of such events in a municipality will result in more difficulty for people to metabolise the past, thus resulting in more suspicion, detachment towards the opposite community and difficulty to reach a peaceful transition.

The second phase of this study involves the understanding of the actual correlation status between the elements pertaining to the theoretical approach and its actual practice. As a matter of fact, in order to pursue accurate research and elaborate on its results, it has been necessary to insert a further step into the methodology.

The aim of this section is to operationalise the above-mentioned concepts. Both constrictive memory and socio-political instability are thus divided into specific variables necessary to measure the effects of such research advancements. In the following paragraphs, the two items will be presented, and it will be given a brief explanation in order to clarify the relevance of the choice for each sub-categories.

After analysing all the variables linked to the concept of constrictive memory, now we will proceed by introducing those related to socio-political instability. For practical reasons, they have been divided into four macro areas: economic conditions, governance, social conciliation and security. Each of them includes a number of variables which are to better identify socio-political instability in the selected municipalities.

Economic conditions	Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
	Inequality
Governance	Election frequency
	Frequency in party changes
	Presence of minorities in government
Social conditions	Presence of schooling segregation
	Presence of urban segregation
	Presence of different worships
Security	Crime rates
	Number of police force

In order to compare and evaluate the results of the research objects, each item will be given a score. The act of giving a value to specific entries is necessary to provide the most accurate evaluation of the results. Grading will be done starting from 0 (minimum impact) and 1 (maximum impact). More precisely, scores will be differentiated as follows:

LOW = 0

LOW TO MID = 0.25

MID = 0.50

MID TO HIGH = 0.75

HIGH = 1

By making a proportion with the final results of each definition, we will have a single score for "constrictive memory" and another for "socio-political instability". The aim is to find an actual correspondence between the numerical values and their respective categories, therefore demonstrating a relationship between the two concepts analysed in this research

Vukovar: A Case Study

Since the end of the war, Croatia has often been seen as a successful country: re-establishing its economy as well as its political structure in such a short time in comparison to the other countries involved in the Yugoslavia dissolution process has been a very significant point. Not only the country managed to rebuild itself from the ground but decided to pursue a path toward the establishment of a fully democratic republic. The inclination toward democratic values led Croatia to increasingly align itself with the European landscape. The interest was so strong that Croatian governments decided to take the path of European integration. Croatia became an EU member in 2013 and in January 2023 will be entering the monetary union as well. A narrative of Croatia as

a success story of the EU's enlargement has always been presented by both national and international élites, however, there are still certain issues that need to be highlighted.

According to Freedom House report from 2018, Croatia has been experiencing a gradual democratic backsliding in areas of national-level governance, independent media, and judicial framework. Similar conclusions were reached in Kapidžić (2020) article about the rise of illiberal politics in Southeast Europe.

The Croatian Democratic Union (Hrvatka demokratska zajednica - HDZ) has been the most dominant political party and established its roots during wartime. As of today, it represents the most voted party and proved to be the one that governed the majority of legislatures since its independence from Yugoslavia. The Social Democratic Party (SDP) has managed to come to power only on two occasions when HDZ was experiencing a strong internal crisis[40]. In addition, there is a number of veto actors that share crucial ideological points of view with HDZ voters: the Catholic Church and the veterans' organisations. They make use of HDZ's rule to direct government resources to their particular aims. In turn, they are used by the party when in opposition to advancing conservative and nationalistic political agendas.[41] It is already evident the strict relationship between party ideologies and wartime dynamics: once again discourses about ethno-national divisions emerge in the socio-political spheres. For all these reasons, wartime dialectics are still used by the political élites during electoral campaigns, and segregation of Serb communities is present in all aspects of the society. A number of non-profit organisations are still working nowadays on human rights issues as well as freedom of speech, especially on war-related dynamics.

Vukovar is a town located in Easter Slavonia on the Croatian bank of the Danube River. Once essential for the Yugoslav economy due to its central positions, its large flat lands, and the great potentiality for the agricultural sector, has now become one of the poorest areas of the country. Placed far from big economic centres, job opportunities are very few. As a consequence, there are high rates of emigration.

Apart from economic issues, Vukovar has become a strong symbol for all Croatian nationals. Even at early life stages[42,] Croatian children are taught that the city had an extremely

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40 Dario Čepo, Structural weaknesses and the role of the dominant political party: democratic backsliding in Croatia since EU accession, Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, DOI: 10.1080/14683857.2020.1709721, 2020

41 Ibi., p. 4

42 Connie Svob, Norman R. Brown, Vladimir Takšić, Katarina Katulić, Valnea Žauhar, Intergenerational transmission of historical memories and social-distance attitudes in post-war second-generation Croatians, Mem Cogn, 2016

relevant role during the War of Independence, or, as they call it, the "Homeland War" (Domovinski rat): it was in that town where many Croatians gave their lives for the freedom of the entire country, and this is why it seen as a social duty to remember and celebrate it. Thus, every Croatian school are used to arrange field trips for their students to visit such an important symbol for the identity of the entire country.

War narratives are still very strong and, as we will see from the data exposed in this and the following chapter, they are part of the daily life of Croatian citizens. Starting from tv programmes about the life of war veterans, hate speeches towards the former enemy and contentious issues are often the focal point of public spheres. Even if a part of the society is not

happy with war memorialisation4344 great part of the society still sees in Vukovar the role of the "bastion of Croatian identity", also strengthened by the fact that it is located on the river facing the border with Serbia.

The city is split into two parallel45 realities: schools, local radio, stations, sport clubs, and cultural associations but also bakery stores and coffee shops are socially separated along ethnic lines46. In addition, the use of language and its script is another form of division that is put into practice often resulting in incidents or damage of street signs from the Croat community47.

In terms of constrictive memory, these are the results originating from the acquisition of

data:

	Civilian losses during the war	Demographic variation of minoritarian community	Presence of commemorative monuments	Recurrence of commemorations	Fight/battles	Reported crimes against humanity and war crimes
	3000*48	-13,49%49	1450	251	8752	553
Score	1	1	1	0	0.75	0.75

43 Potentially considered a "town monument to itself" as argued by Boris Dežulović in "Vukovar: A Life- Size Monument to the Dead City"

44 Nejboša Blanuša, Enes Kulenović, Hate Speech, Contentious Symbols and Politics of Memory: Survey Research on Croatian Citizens' Attitudes, University of Zagreb, p. 198

45 Hrvoje Cvijanović, On Memory Politics and Memory Wars: A Critical Analysis of the Croatian Dialogue Document, Croatian Political Science Review, Vol. 55, No. 4, 2018, p. 141

46 Anika Kosic, Charles David Tauber, The Perspectives of Reconciliation and Healing among Young People in Vukovar (Croatia), International Journal of Peace Studies, Vol. 15, No. 1, 2010, pp. 45-70

47 Ljiljana Šarić, Tatjana Radanović Felberg, "Cyrillic does not kill": Symbols, Identity, and Memory in Croatian Public Discourse, Družbodlovne razprave, Vol. 13, 2017, p. 66

48 There are no officially confirmed lists, so values are still subjected to argumentations. The number hereby offered represents the most realistic value proposed by Colin M. Fleming in Clausewitz's Timeless Trinity: A Framework for Modern War, Routledge, 2016 (taking in consideration various studies).

49 Comparison between 2011 and 2021 census results (https://dzs.gov.hr/naslovna-blokovi/u-fokusu/popis- 2021/88)

50 Spomenik Domovinski rat, Spomenik "Zadro Blago", Spomenik HOS-ovoj "Štafeti smrti", Spomenik žrtvama stradalim u Vukovaru, Spomenik pukovniku HV-a Petru Kačiću, Spomenik poginulim I nestalim policajcima u Domovinskom ratu, Spomenik Žrtvama za slobonu Hrvatsku, Spomenik Ovčara, Spomen dom hrvatskih branitelja (na Trpinjskoh cesti), Spomenik puklovniku HV-a Vlimiru Đereku-Sokol, Spomenik stradalncima u Domovinskom ratu na putu Nuštar-Marinci, Memorijalni centar Domovinskog rata, Mjesto sjećanja – Vukovarska Bolnica, Ploče s imenima vukovarskih žrtava 1991 godine, Memorijalno groblje žrtava domovinskog rata

51 Dan sjećanja (Remembrance Day), anniversary of Marko Babić death ("hero of Vukovar defence")

52 The "Battle of Vukovar" lasted 87 days, from the 25th August till the 18th November 1991

53 ICTY cases: Milošević; Dokmanović; Hadžić; Mrkšić et al.; Šešelj. List available on: https://www.icty.org/en/cases/interactive-map

TOTAL	0.75

From the evaluation of available information, Vukovar proves to hold a high level of constrictive memory. There are a few points to consider. First of all, the high number of memorials. If on one hand they present relevant historical facts and try to shape the national identity, on the other side they may strongly be obstructing reconciliation between the two communities as widespread encouragement of selective memory prevents society to move forward.[54] In addition, the strong demographic decrease of the Serb community proves that a big part of the society do not feel secure and comfortable to live in a society too focused on nationalistic ideologies.

For what concerns socio-political instability, there are the results reached during the research process:

	Economic conditions		Governance			Social Conciliation			Security	
	GDP	Income inequality (GDP difference with the capital)	Election frequency	Frequency in party changes	Presence of ethnic minorities in government	Schooling segregation	Urban segregation	Worship distribution	Crime rates (national)	Ministry of the Interior staff number
	1,299,444 EUR	54,304,855 EUR	3	None	None	100%	Intermediate	4	0.97	N/A
Score	1	1	1	0	0	1	0.75	0.25	0	N/A
TOTAL	0.55									

Vukovar appears to have a medium level of socio-political instability. There are two elements that stand out. The first one is the extremely different economic condition in comparison con the rest of the country: this may lead to renewed situations of disorders and discrimination. The second one is the number of police officers deployed in the area. In the Croatian context we find ourselves in front of a very curious situation: according to Croatian law, this is a sensitive situation categorised as "very secret" and "state secret". This fact certainly raises a lot of questions, but first of all the transparency of a democratic republic concerning a public service such as the security and safety of Croatian citizens. Secondly, as a researcher, doubts start arising about the

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54 Janine Clark, Reconciliation through Remembrance? War Memorials and the Victims of Vukovar, International Journal of Transitional Justice, Vol. 7, No. 1, 2013, pp. 116-135

actual sensibility of such information and the reasons why the country wants to keep this data secret: from a sense of insecurity towards potential confrontations as well as the level of militarisation of such forces.

Fieldwork Research

In order to understand whether exists a real correlation between constrictive memory and socio- political instability, a fine-grained causation analysis is presented with the support of the information gathered directly on the field. In this respect, an entire chapter will cover the data emerged during the interviews, thus focusing on the in-depth perspective.

The proper act of interacting with local population and organisations will enrich the reflections on all these dynamics and will give much more specificity to the topics covered during the operationalisation of the concepts analysed in this research (see "Phase 2"). As we will see, a series of strong explanations about particular variables will emerge, and these will definitely contribute to enrich the approaches of current literature as well as developing reflections on a policy level. Some of the dimensions that will be examined are: sense of insecurity, lack of trust, fear, hostility, perception towards politics and education.

The Croatian fieldwork experience turned out particularly smooth as access to communities resulted in being much easier than in other regional locations. Even if people were equally open and helpful, it was immediately clear that in Croatia individuals have less fear of any social or job repercussions from taking part in this project, this ensues more freedom of expression. Finding people to talk to was very feasible, even on short time notice. As usual, our aim was getting in touch with people working for non-profit organisations as well as people from academia and private citizens. Travels were easier too and more secure both on a personal and logical points of view.

Nevertheless, even though the country appears to be more open and less subjected to war memories, you just need to hint a scratch on the surface to see their legacies. As a matter of fact, nowadays war continue to have a very strong on the current Croatian society. The country has increasingly inserted nationalistic ideologies in their democracy, and you can see it already from the term "homeland war" (domovinski rat) they use to define the latest conflict. When watching TV, you can always bump into programs about Croatian war veterans telling their experiences and pointing the finger at Serbs and Serb paramilitaries. There is a considerable number of commemorations that take place to remember Croat soldiers who lost their life during the war, and you can find monuments about it everywhere around. It was not neither the different war

dynamics in comparison to Bosnia nor the entrance in the European Union that somehow mitigated the raise of nationalism and ethnic segregation. As a matter of fact, in the last two decades, life of minorities in Croatia, in particular Serbs and Roma, has increasingly become more and more difficult. Discrimination and hate speech are commonplace in the daily life.

As a consequence, there a considerable number of NGOs started operating in the field in the last two decades. Activities concerns dealing with the past issues, human rights and conciliation. These dynamics involve many parts of the country, not just the former "contentious territories" of Eastern Slavonia. Branka, from the Youth Initiative for Human Rights (YIHR), admitted being very worried for the raise on nationalism in the country. In her opinion the European context could not divert the nationalistic direction Croatia had started to take at the end of the latest conflict. She sees some resemblance with the ambiguous position of Hungary and its tendency for illiberal politics. Then, she mentioned to me a very peculiar case happened a few years ago. On the occasion of the unveiling of a statue representing Franjo Tuđman, a former combatant was arrested and incarcerated after he shouted "Franjo Tuđman was a war criminal!"55. "This is very worrying because this is supposed to be a liberal democracy where the respect of human right and freedom of expression should be at its foundations" she said. Since its foundation in 2003, YIHR has been fighting for these values besides justice, accountability, equality and peace through the power of youth and the strengthening of its network in Serbia, Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. "Even if it seems a peaceful society, there are still a lot of work to do" she added.

Croatian war narratives represent the dominant aspect of national politics, and this creates direct consequences on the approaches of citizens towards minorities, especially those coming from a Serbian background. This is why a conspicuous number of civil society organisations started to operate in area with the purpose of preserving Serbian culture and offering free legal aid for cases of discrimination and episodes of hate speech56. Among these, the Serb National

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55 See IndexHR, Čovijek koji je vikao da je Tuđman zločinac ispričao svoju stranu priče, 12th of December 2018, available at: https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/covjek-koji-je-vikao-da-je-tudjman-   zlocinac-ispricao-svoju-stranu-price/2049423.aspx; Oslobobođenje, Čovijek koji je napadnut jer je rekao "Tuđman zločinac" Plankoviću uzviknuo: Kako te nike sram dizati spomenik ovome zločinu?, 11th of December 2018, available at: https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/vijesti/region/covjek-koji-je-napadnut-jer-je-   rekao-tudman-zlocinac-plenkovicu-uzviknuo-kako-te-nije-sram-dizati-spomenik-ovome-zlocincu-sram-   vas-bilo-416139; Liberties, Man Jailed After Calling Former Croatian President a War Criminal, 5th of March 2019, available at: https://www.liberties.eu/en/stories/man-jailed-after-calling-former-croatian-   president-a-war-criminal/16825

56 See Council of Europe's report on "Croatia: Despite progress, discrimination persists against national minorities such as Serbs and Roma, says national minorities committee", 10th of June 2021, available at: https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/croatia-despite-progress-discrimination-persists-against-national-   minorities-such-as-serbs-and-roma-says-national-minorities-committee

Council57 is the most active one as it has always been able to access public debate, has many branches nationwide and provide support services on big numbers. There is also a number of other organisations present of the Croatian territory. This are the Serb Cultural Association Prosvjeta, the Serbian Business Association Privrednik, the Joint Council of Municipalities. Also, in line with the Law on election of Members of the Croatian Parliament and the Constitutional Law on National Minorities, national minorities are to be represented in the Parliament. According to national law, members of national minorities who represent more than 1,5 percent of the total population of the country are guaranteed a maximum of three seats in the parliament58.

In terms of transitional justice and dealing with the past, a huge contribution is given by the work of Documenta – Centre for Dealing with the Past (Centar za součavanje s prošlošću). With the joint forces of the Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights Osijek, the Centre for Peace Studies, the Civic Committee for Human Rights and the Croatian Helsinki Committee, the center focuses its work on collecting knowledge about war-related events, war crimes and violation of human rights. However, one of their most important roles concern monitoring processes of war crimes trials (current and finalized) both on the local and as well as regional level. In addition, they design activities aimed at strengthening sustainable peace in Croatia and the whole Western Balkan region by publishing research results, deepening dialogue programmes and taking part in the public debate on public policies to encourage taking actions to face and solve certain issues past like distrust, prejudices.

People stories

Historically, it was the Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights of Osijek was very active with peacebuilding activities to build trust between Croats and Serbs living in Eastern Slavonia. Among the initiators there was K. K., still nowadays the backbone of peace activism in the region. Well known in the entire society, she has not retired yet but continue operating in a great variety of projects. She decided to start the interview by telling me her personal story and how her life took the activist direction.

She studied medicine, and at that time she never took care of the social environment in Yugoslavia. When war started, she became aware of the personal responsibility she carried as a citizen and that was her first step towards social work. She started with activities aimed at stopping

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57 See website: https://snv.hr/en/

58 Zakon HR, Zakon o izborima zastupnika U Hrvatski sabor, available (in Croatian) at: https://www.zakon.hr/download.htm?id=355

the war even if it was too late. She met with other people, and they started to think how to try improving the post-war context. "Trying to solve division between people, which is an aspect of war, it's not just a question of solidarity or willing to be brave… it meant trying to solve something very destructive for the society and for the institutional structure of our region" she said.

After the war there was the need to have a space where to discuss how to rebuild their cities, what to expect and to aim for, how to deal with problems and try to solve them. She admitted they did not know how to do that on a practical level, so they started with workshops based on dialogue. Refugees, displaced people, local teachers, children and orphans were the first ones to be addressed in the project. They asked people from abroad to visit and support them with diverse methodology on how to deal with a social movement throughout war times.

She reminded me that during Yugoslavia, since it was a socialist regime, there was no existence of what we call "civil society". It did not exist, and nobody had any idea of what it was. Also, the idea of being a "citizen", an active individual interested in the construction and the protection of his or her socio-political community. "We were considered betrayers because we were working with both sides, so especially at the beginning it was very challenging". They thought they would be working only on human rights education after the war, instead, people started asking them for help in relation to huge variety of other situations. So, they started taking actions in the field of protection of people and advocacy against human rights abuses. "It was very dangerous; we were not prepared for all of that, but we managed to go on and continue the work until today". They were part of RECOM and Documenta. The activity brought about this small group of people soon became a local and regional institutions that took an enormous part even during the Peaceful Reintegration phase after the war. She decided to put all the developments of the first peacebuilding projects held in the region in a book: called "I Choose Life"59.

When we asked her about socio-political instability in Croatia, she said that the problem is that political élites have not offered "clear positions on peace with our previous enemy, it doesn't seem part of the national political agenda". She said that normalising the relations with Serbia was part of the objectives for European integration but still nothing valuable has been done. "There is no peace agenda not even with Serbians living in Croatia. It would be necessary to have good rules on a national level to tackle the cooperation with all minorities, especially the Serbian one". Then she mentioned the case of Vukovar by saying that they are still facing difficult times. Until a few years ago, the mayor is Croat, and the vice-mayor was representing the Serb minority,

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59 Centre for Peace, Nonviolence and Human Rights Osijek, I Choose Life: Post-war Peace Building in Eastern Croatia, ed. Katarina Kruhonja, 2001

and he was not allowed to attend the official meetings. "The missing of peace policy created a strong culture of memorialization which is not based on peace but the enmity against the other".

D. L. works at Vukovar Evropski Dom, a local NGO founded in 2000 and focused on European integration values such as the respect of human rights, dialogue, tolerance, solidarity and sustainable peace. They aimed at creating a space for citizens where they could pursue dialogue programmes, public panels about important social topics. Citizens and their freedom of expression is the most important aspect they wanted to stress, especially in a society where it is very common that people do not interact with each other. In the first years of work, they managed to create moments where locals talked with each other for the first time after the war. By trying to apply European values in the local society they observed an increase of communication and openness between Croats and Serbs.

In the first ten years, they faced some challenges to find young people to participate in the workshops they were organising. There were not many families interested in letting their children participating in their activities focused on dialogue. After some time, they managed to establish a sense of trust and young people started attending these events: it was the first time that Croat and Serb teenagers were in the same room, together. As a matter of fact, they had always been used to go to school in different shifts or even in different schools, so sharing space is not something they were and still are very used to. "War baggage is strong in families, and this is why young people still suffer from war consequences". Apart from the lack of participation, especially at the beginning, people were spreading negative ideas: "people were saying we were betrayals since we were working on both sides, or that we were taking suspicious money from abroad…it was very difficult to work in this context".

D. thinks that the most impacting element in local socio-political instability is the impossibility for people no to express and identify themselves freely. As a secondary factor, she exhibits strong episodes of inequality, especially in the job market: "Positive discrimination is to be regulated by law but it is not. Everything remains on the paper and nothing is done or checked by authorities so, if you are part of a minority, you have very little possibilities to find a job here. The only way to survive is moving away". When we asked her, which elements contribute even further to socio-political instability in the area, she said that according to her experience as a peacebuilder, she observed that acts pursued by partisan political élites and media are the most crucial. Politics is particularly focused on the concept of protection of Croatian identity, thus avoids taking into consideration the remaining parts of the society and builds its political consensus. On the other hand, media are used to report and focus only on negative events involving this society. This is why, she says, the rest of the country thinks that they are still in war.

An example of this is a typical bar fight: instead of investigating on the actual motives that led two groups of young people to act so violently, they immediately write huge titles about the aggressivity between Serbs and Croats on this borderland.

For all these reasons, the Evropski Dom of Vukovar decided to implement projects to foster dialogue and create a sense of unity not only on a local level but also national and even international. Among their most important project there is one they have been working on now for more than 10 years. Financed by the Committee on Human Rights and Humanitarian Aid of Germany, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia receive grants to organise workshops for young people belonging to these countries. They gather them every time in a different location (usually on the Croatian coast) and organize activities to make them know each other and exchange views on post-conflict issues. As organisers, they never take sides, never point fingers, they just try to send the message that violence is a very negative aspect of societies. The most important aspect they always want to teach is how to recognize violent signals in their societies that could bring a renewed conflict. Those occasions are particularly important since, for many of them, it is the first time they actually realise they are all the same, young people with the same interests, problems and dreams.

Another important project they have is an online platform for people from Vukovar. It is focusd on art and photography and the aim is brining together different groups through the on an inclusive aspect rather than war issues.

L. M. was born in Vukovar, has a broad experience in the field of peacebuilding but now has moved with her family to Germany. When she thinks about memory in Vukovar, she immediately wonders "which memory?". She argues that memory has a strong influence on everyday life of all citizens, and it is not inclusive. "As a citizen and as a mother I could feel that memory was passed on and dealt in a way that resulted in us leaving the city and the country. Memory became too oppressive. There was no consent from all sides of society but rather the profusion of just a dominant one with a strong nationalist approach. That started to influence our older son who is still only a child. Let me give you an example: yesterday we went to a demonstration in Stuttgart, a gathering to protest against the war in Ukraine. I was holding a flag. My son, who is thirteen said "It's so embarrassing, I am not holding any flag" and I said to him "Back in Vukovar I thought you were a candidate to be wearing a Croatian flag and march with football hooligans, how come you feel different here?". Unfortunately, in recent times he started to behave very aggressively, and we started to be very worried about his strong nationalist views and attitudes. At home, with us, he was definitely not receiving any of these inputs. His acts are the results of social and school pressures that shaped him in this way. We kind of fled here in

Germany to show him what it's a real multicultural environment and that there are places where everyone is accepted. In Vukovar, communities do not share memories, and this is a problem."

She argues that all spheres of society are affected by this divisive situation. Memory plays a big role even in kindergartens and she gave an example of it: "Around the day of the annual commemoration60, usually teachers give some tasks related to the celebrations such as drawing something together on the theme. Crosses, water towers, groups of people in the streets start to appear on papers in the form of drawings of four-years old children… I mean, you teacher… are you really qualified to do that? I participated in loads of workshops about dealing with the past and I can say I don't feel myself qualified to talk about difficult memories. How can teachers do that so easily? I question Croatian education system and what is offered to our children".

"When the conflict in Ukraine began, I started having flashbacks of what I lived as a child… I am afraid war veterans and other civilians like me are developing flashbacks of unresolved traumas too." Despite the phenomenon of re-traumatisation, she said she discovered a new perspective on war veterans in Croatia and, more specifically, in Vukovar. "This already started a few years ago when I visited Srebrenica but became much stronger now when seeing what's happening in Ukraine. I could see myself from outside and comprehend why certain communities develop hatred towards the other community, such for example Serbs in Vukovar… which is completely wrong, but now I can see why Ukraninans are celebrated and seen as strong and brave citizens to take up arms and fight against the Russians. Not until now I could truly understand the Croatian perspective in Vukovar whereas, having been in that conflict, I didn't see it in that way. It's just a multifaceted problem and phenomenon and as such has to be dealt with". All perspectives should be taken into account otherwise an unresolved conflict is bound to perpetuate within a post-conflict society: "there is not such things like one truth and one memory".

She argues that the rise of nationalism and populism did nothing else but narrowing down memory to the creation of just one accepted side of it. In terms of socio-political instability, she identifies the "lack of consensus" about past war narratives. "Pushing under the carpet grief and emotions of an entire community cannot do anything good" she said. At a certain point she pointed out a very interesting question involving the life in Vukovar. She denotes the existence of a parallel society, a Croaian and a Serbian one never intersecting on with the other. "It's all about the Croatian narrative and not vice versa. The Croatian one can only presume what's going on in the Serbian one, they just won't listen. The Serbian community builds up its pride, the spite is

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60 Here she refers to the Remembrance Day on the 18th of November

growing as well as animosity because nobody will listen to them. Ten-eight years ago the situation was better but not has gotten worst and worst, impossible to live in."

S. V. was one of the founders of the Association of the Serb Families - civilian victims of the war. In the past he was very active and participated in a lot of meetings with the aim of finding support from local and national government for all those Serb living in the territory of Croatia who experienced violence and losses perpetrated by Croats during the war. In the last few years, he left office "Because of the weak support of the Serbian leadership in Croatia, I gave up my involvement in the association. In Croatia being a Serbian victim is a very delicate issue. I can ask you one very simple question - have you heard of anybody in Vukovar, or from Vukovar, because of the events of 1991, was sentenced in Croatia, and was a Croat? So, have you ever heard that any Croat was convicted for crimes against Serbian civilians in 1991? I tell you that it is not, and you can very easily check it".

S. felt open enough to tell me his story: in June 1991 he was with his family when Croatian militias came to their house. His father was shot in the head and died on the doorstep of their house. "It is very difficult for us here to come up with any possibility to present our side of suffering", he added. "My family had lived here for centuries but since 1991 it is not welcome anymore. What I have is the fact that I survived, and that is a cross on my back. The State of Croatia kills us here every day, in the following way: they didn't respect our right to go after who killed my father. Nobody went to prison for that. Those who did these kinds of things here in Vukovar are still freely walking in the streets today. And I, who suffered, must be in the mouse hole".

When we started to talk about memorialisation in Vukovar, he said that monuments dedicated to Serb victims are impossible to erect. He tried many times to ask for them to the municipality but every time he was turned down. Two years ago, together with the association, he finally managed to create the monument but after five months they found that all the names had been erased. Then, he tried again: "We went to the mayor of Vukovar again to ask for a new monument and he didn't authorise. He told us to lay a wreath at the hospital… I don't think that is the right place where Serbs should lay a wreath...".

S. does not have much faith in the future. He told me: "I have only one wish - that my daughter does not experience what I have. In everything, there must be a conversation - one side cannot always be at fault and this is definitely what happens here in Vukovar all the time."

Discussion and Conclusion

In this research, we investigated a number of concepts related to memory and socio-political instability where weapons were laid down but still there is a persistence of hostility between groups. Initially, we went through current literature that offers explanations about the role of war traumas and collective memory in societies and their consequences in political spheres. Then we considered the tools that have been developed and used in recent years by governments as well as international and non-profit organisations for dealing with the past and favour a more peaceful coexistence in post-conflict societies. This research intended to offer new contributions by developing the concept of memory itself and putting it on the same levels as socio-political instability. As a matter of fact, there are endless literature contributions discussing the value and the characteristics of memory, however, there are no studies linking together memory and territorial proximity to violent events with socio-political instability. For this reason, we decided to advance this new format and try to establish a pattern to analyse and acquire answers from post-conflict societies.

Constrictive memory is the state-of-the-art research item developed in this research and, as already mentioned, intended to unify two elements: the presence of memorialization processes and the proximity to traumatic events. For what concerns the concept of instability, what it is important to mention is that as of today, scholars in the field of political sciences did not manage to reach a common view on this aspect. As clear and vivid as it may appear in the mind of each of us, from an empirical point of view socio-political instability raises numerous problems in its definition. Even more, if we wanted to measure its level or impact on society.

For all these reasons we decided to focus the research on these theoretical aspects and proceed with an operationalization process in order to reach two goals: explaining such research items and measuring their legacies in certain contexts. To do so, we declined the two objects of analysis respectively in six and ten variables. Constrictive memory has been categorised as follows: number of civilian losses during the war, demographic variation of the minoritarian community, presence of commemorative monuments, recurrence of commemorations, presence of relevant fights or battles in the area, and the number of reported crimes in the context of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. For what concerns socio-political instability instead, we divided the variables into four categories: "economic conditions" included regional GDP and GDP inequality values (in comparison with the rest of the country), "governance" referred to election frequency, frequency in party changes, current presence of ethnic minorities in the government; "social conciliation" presented as schooling segregation, urban segregation and worship distribution; finally, "security" involved data related to national

crime rate and the number of staff at the Ministry of the Interior. Each of them was given a range of scores in order to determine whether a certain variable was low, low to mid, mid, mid to high and high impact on society. Finally, the area we chose for this study comprised the Western Balkan region, more specifically Vukovar for Croatia.

The third chapter thus represented the actual work on variables and data acquisition. Firstly, we provided a brief contextualisation both on national and local levels. Subsequently, we provided the necessary pieces of information to help us determine the relevance of the variables and their essence. The results that emerged proved to be extremely significant.

From this study the town of Vukovar proved to be extremely subjected to both constrictive memory and socio-political instability. The high number of monuments related to war and one- sided war narratives, a strong demographic variation, and a large number of ICTY cases turned Vukovar into a case of strong oppression of both war-related legacies as well as its extreme proximity events that occurred during the war. The most interesting aspect was confronting the results with the data that emerged by the interviews held on the field. According to the testimonies of people living and working in the area, the most crucial aspect is the lack of recognition of war experiences faced by the minoritarian groups. Croatian governments demonstrated to be very committed to the creation of a strong national narrative, however, to the detriment of an entire historic community that lives completely segregated and in total frustration.

What has become clear is the existence of a relationship between the two research items, however, to reach more accurate results, it is necessary to broaden the evaluation and commit to a fieldwork activity. By analysing the results, socio-political instability seems to have less impact on the local society rather than constrictive memory. However, many of the variables identified has demonstrated to have strong connections. Nevertheless, according to this specific experience, it is necessary to point out that the lack of data transparency, the fear of expression, the control of the state over memorialisation issues, and the lack of dialogue openness are very strong elements that can divert attention to the actual context. This can only make us wonder what the real data would be if the country were more open to providing more transparent information.

Doing fieldwork was an incredible experience and resulted in being essential to support the analytical section. Thanks to all the conversations and chats we had with people, we managed to get to know the real problems private citizens live on a daily basis in every location. Many were the ideas emerged: the fear of repercussions and the poor job opportunities were the most present in the different locations. Finally, by observing the results of each variable and going through the thoughts and feelings of locals, it becomes clear the strong importance of people's perceptions of both constrictive memory values and the ones connected to socio-political

instability. As a matter of fact, as researchers in the field of political sciences, it remains very reductive to project the most human nuances perceived by locals into numbers, especially in areas where data is not fully available or less easy to be acquired. It is for this reason that direct approaches with local people strengthened our results. The uniqueness of this research was precisely given by the combination of data and personal testimonies of individuals who experienced on their skin the legacies of war in a post-conflict society. The ambition is that other scholars could use the framework offered in this research to support their work on other post- conflict societies.

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