Mut(e)able Landscapes: Collective Memory, Identity, and the Built Environment of Belgrade

by

Madeline Stull

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Approved July 2021 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Laurie Manchester, Chair
Anna Cichopek-Gajraj
Victoria Thompson

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

August 2021

ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that physical landscapes, from intentional sites of memory to average public spaces, play a foundational role in the formation and continuation of the official politics of memory that underpins Serbian cultural memory and collective identity. Thus, in order to understand the complexities of the Serbian collective identity, the landscapes that underpin such an identity must first be understood. Building off prior findings, the three landscapes to be considered relate to three pivotal moments in Serbian nation-building and identity formation: the end of the Ottoman presence, World War II and Yugoslavia, and the wars of the 1990s. This thesis put surveys of Serbian landscapes, which map both sites of remembrance and sites left to be forgotten in Belgrade, as well as oral histories with local young-adult Serbians in conversation in order to elucidate the extent to which individual conceptions of the past and of the Serbian identity correlate to the official politics of memory in Serbia. Young-adult Serbians have been selected, as their only personal experience with each moment of history under consideration is generational memory and state narratives of the past. Ultimately, this study seeks to expand and verify the themes of remembrance found in Serbia as well as understand how the reconstruction of the past, starting from the end of the Ottoman presence to the 1990s war, has figured into the various nation-building projects in Serbia. Building on Halbwachs and Nora, this study understands culture memory as dependent on objectivized culture, like buildings, which naturally challenges the traditional separation of memory and history. Though it does not represent the full Serbian public, this study demonstrates the limited role the physical landscape has in shaping the understanding of the past held by the Serbians interviewees.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER Page

1 INTRODUCTION 1

2 “LET’S MEET AT THE HORSE”: BELGRADE’S MEMORY OF THE OTTOMANS 12

The Ottoman Legacy by Historical Record 15

Ousting the Ottomans: Serbian Identity and the Ottoman Legacy in Belgrade’s Landscape 21

3 “SOMETHING TO PUT UNDER THE RUG”: REMEMBERING WWII IN BELGRADE 41

The Holocaust in Belgrade: The Case of Sajmište 50

A Dark Place: Consequences of the Politicization of Sajmište 59

4 “CIVIL WAR”: NARRATIVES OF THE 1990S 70

Understanding the Wars through Belgrade’s Landscape 73

Personal Experiences and Remembrance Methods 80

5 CONCLUSION.. 107

WORKS CITED 111

APPENDIX

A INTERVIEW QUESTIONS 121

Chapter 1: Introduction

Walking through the neighborhoods of Belgrade, the landscape of the city and the elements it holds, from ancient fortresses and royal homes to parks and cobblestone roads, illustrate both the natural and controlled manipulations of the landscape in the fight for Serbian statehood. A variety of architectural styles reveal themselves through Belgrade's congested neighborhoods – short, yet large and curved Ottoman-era homes can be spotted between the towering and encrusted Baroque buildings of the Austro-Hungarian Empire – each telling its own story of a state and nation fighting for the ability to build its nation and particular national consciousness through the curation of the landscape. The division in the layout of Belgrade is itself an artefact from Ottoman times, a relic of a moat "erased" from the city 150 years ago. The confused skyline of Belgrade illustrates the struggle the capital has endured in the ultimate effort to establish, and subsequently, understand itself. Given Serbia's complicated history, it is surprising that little scholarly work has been done focusing on the extent to which the complex built environment of Belgrade corresponds to Serbians' understanding of their national identity. Exploring the ways local Serbian young, educated adults—the ranks from which Serbia's future policy makers will emerge—engage with the curated landscape unearths the reception of the official narrative of the past, allowing the historian to ascertain the role landscapes as a form of memory play in identity-formation among private individuals.

This thesis views Belgrade's landscape as a palimpsest.[1] In this way, the landscape itself is a receptacle for memory, recording the political and social events that happened upon it. Monuments, memorials, and buildings create a layer of landscape upon which future structures will be built. From another perspective featured in this thesis, the construction of new monuments and memorials serves to superimpose new, national memories onto "already-existing memories" of "erased structures" from the Ottoman and Yugoslavian periods.[2] While the textured historicity of Belgrade's landscape brings with it ethical issues related to preservation, it also allows for distant memories to be easily accessible to an individual in the present. As such, the built environment's function as a palimpsest connects the physical commemorative media of the 19th century to the monuments and memorials created in the present-day. The narrative provided by the landscape is changed not with complete erasure, but rather by building on top of and in conjunction with existing monuments and memorials.

For a theoretical understanding of the built environment's relationship with collective memory, this study relies on Halbwachs and Nora, whose analyses offer a natural link to physical landscapes. Collective memory is a social framework of knowledge that "marks out the dimensions of our imaginations according to the attitudes of the social group to which we relate."[3] The structure of the framework is provided by *lieux de memoire*, or landmarks, which are often material in nature and are defined as

---

[1] Dunja Resanovic, "From Three Ottoman Gates to Three Serbian Sites of Memory: The Performative Rewriting of Belgrade from 1878 until Today," *History and Anthropology* 30, no. 4 (August 8, 2019): 393–405, https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2019.1624259.
[2] Dunja Resanovic, "From Three Ottoman Gates," 394.
[3] Piotr M. Szpunar, "Monuments, Mundanity and Memory: Altering 'Place' and 'Space' at the National War Memorial (Canada)," *Memory Studies* 3, no. 4 (October 1, 2010): 380.

"'particular figures, dates, and periods of time' which localize a society's mores, values, and ideals."[4] Memorials and monuments are commonplace forms of materialized collective memory. While Halbwachs' and Nora's view attends to everyday, "communicative memory," other scholars, like Assmann and Szpunar, extend their understanding of collective memory to what they defines as cultural memory.[5] Cultural memory deals with objectivized culture, which includes buildings, landscapes, or images that, like collective memory, constitute a structure of knowledge by which a group "bases its consciousness of unity and specificity…and derives formative and normative impulses."[6] Due to objectivized culture's formative role in collective identity, it too has the "structure of memory."[7]

However, the built environment does not only serve as a receptacle for memory. The plasticity of the physical landscape naturally lends itself as a medium to represent the past according to a specific understanding. As the state most frequently sponsors public projects, it is the state's view of the past that is most represented in the city's landscape. Manipulating, or curating, elements of the physical landscape by either changing an existing structure or creating new structure transforms a piece of objectivized culture from a receptacle of memory into a historical site– one that often provides a clear and unequivocal message of the past. As a piece of objectivized culture, these historical sites' function within cultural memory is to keep the memory of distance historical events

---

[4] Piotr M. Szpunar, "Monuments, Mundanity and Memory," 380.
[5] Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique*, no. 65 (1995): 126.
[6] Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," 128.
[7] This complicates the traditional separation of memory and history in my study, where buildings straddle memory and history through their dual function as palimpsests of memory and sites of historical curation.

accessible to individuals by providing tangible access points to collective memories of the past. Additionally, the state uses architecture as a way to express its territorial imperatives and to create a particular, or rather preferred, representation of that state, which is particularly salient in a state like Serbia which has undergone numerous political transformations since the 19th century.[8] This thesis will attempt to connect all of these roles of Serbian public spaces and the elements within them as pieces of memory, history, and products of politics to understand the current official cultural memory of Serbia and the extent to which it corresponds to Serbian's understanding of Serbian national identity.[9]

This thesis contributes to the field of East European history is its investigation of the private reception of the official politics of memory. In particular, it adds to our understanding of these issues relating to Serbian statehood. Currently there exists robust literature on collective memory, national identity, nationalism, and the built environment; however, this literature rarely takes on Serbia as its central topic. The literature that does focus on Serbia often foregrounds the Ottoman Empire, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, or Serbia's role in the dissolution of Yugoslavia, which highlight the multitude of ways the Serbians destroyed culturally relevant elements of Yugoslavia's landscape, like Stari Most and Dubrovnik, but otherwise do not address the importance of

---

[8] Swati Chattopadhyay, "The Landscape of War," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 72, no. 3 (2013): 289–91, https://doi.org/10.1525/jsah.2013.72.3.289; Maja Povrzanovic, "Identities in War: Embodiments of Violence and Places of Belonging," *Ethnologia Europaea* 27 (1997): 153–62.

[9] In this thesis, national identity is understood as a subcategory of collective identity.

the built environment.[10] Studies that focus on the destruction of culturally relevant elements of the Serbian landscape are few and far between, though those that do are foundational for the research of this thesis.[11] However, these studies are often limited by their focus on one area in Serbia or by the war in the 1990s as opposed to analyzing Serbia holistically and across a larger period.[12] Furthermore, many studies foreground the relationship between the built environment, memorialization, and cultural memory by analyzing specific and disparate spaces in the Balkans, often in cities or exceptional sites (like sites of war), but do not consider Serbia.[13] This thesis aims to offer a unified study

---

[10] For example, see: Janine Natalya Clark, "Collective Guilt, Collective Responsibility and the Serbs," *East European Politics and Societies* 22, no. 3 (August 1, 2008): 668–92, https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325408318533; Thomas A. Emmert, "A Crisis of Identity: Serbia at the End of the Century," in *Yugoslavia and Its Historians: Understanding the Balkan Wars of the 1990s* (Stanford University Press, 2003), 295.

[11] Sandina Begić and Boriša Mraović, "Forsaken Monuments and Social Change: The Function of Socialist Monuments in the Post-Yugoslav Space," *Peace Psychology Book Series*, n.d., 13–37; Dunja Resanovic, "From Three Ottoman Gates to Three Serbian Sites of Memory," 393–405; Stef Jansen, "The Streets of Beograd. Urban Space and Protest Identities in Serbia," *Political Geography* 20, no. 1 (January 1, 2001): 35–55, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298(00)00052-4.

[12] For example, see: Gruia Bădescu, "Making Sense of Ruins: Architectural Reconstruction and Collective Memory in Belgrade," *Nationalities Papers* 47, no. 2 (March 2019): 182–97, https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2018.42; Nataša Janković, "Architectural Terri(s)Tories: Jajinci Memorial Park in Belgrade," *AM: Art + Media* 0, no. 12 (April 1, 2017): 81–97, https://doi.org/10.25038/am.v0i12.169.; Mladenka Ivanković, "The Sajmište Exhibition Grounds in Semlin, Serbia: The Changing of Memory," *Jewish Political Studies Review* 22, no. 3/4 (2010): 59–67.

[13] Vladimir P. Goss, "Landscape as History, Myth, and Art. an Art Historian's View," *Krajolik Kao Povijest, Mit I Umjetnost. Pogled Jednog Povjesničara Umjetnosti* 21 (January 2009): 133–68.; Ana Ljubojević, Mia Jerman, and Kosta Bovan, "Cultural Trauma Set in Stone? The Case of Shelling of Dubrovnik," *Politicka Misao: Croatian Political Science Review* 54, no. 1/2 (January 2017): 197–219.; Vjeran Pavlaković and Davor Pauković, *Framing the Nation and Collective Identities: Political Rituals and Cultural Memory of the Twentieth Century Traumas in Croatia* (Milton: Routledge, 2019), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/asulib-ebooks/detail.action?docID=5763012.; Maja Povrzanovic, "Identities in War: Embodiments of Violence and Places of Belonging," 153–62.; Lauren A. Rivera, "Managing 'Spoiled' National Identity: War, Tourism, and Memory in Croatia," *American Sociological Review; Washington* 73, no. 4 (August 2008): 613–34; Laura Šakaja and Jelena Stanić, "Other(Ing), Self(Portraying), Negotiating: The Spatial Codification of Values in Zagreb's City-Text," *Cultural Geographies* 18, no. 4 (October 1, 2011): 495–516, https://doi.org/10.1177/1474474011414636.; Michaela

of the current landscapes in Serbia and the sites of memorialization within them in order to better understand Serbia's official self-perception and how that perception affects Serbian people. In doing so, I hope to construct a more comprehensive framework for analyzing memory, history, identity, and the built environment while simultaneously challenging more scholars to apply that framework to places that are relatively understudied, like Serbia.

This thesis also contributes to the wide array of studies on collective memory through its exploration of the various levels of memory within Serbian society. In each period discussed, from the late 19th century to the late 20th century, two distinct views of the past and how to best commemorate it become evident. These views of the past are divided between the state (and its elite actors) and the public. Examining the periods together also demonstrates how both the state and public hold three, period-specific commemorative prescriptions. As such, this thesis explores the multiple layers of memory and commemorative practices in Belgrade.

Additionally, this thesis seeks to address the dearth of oral history studies in a Serbian context. The studies focused on Serbia's built environment often lack an oral history component, and oral histories done in the region often lack a Serbian component. Those done in a Serbian context heavily center on memory of World War II and Yugoslavia, and those which incorporate the built environment tend to do so in a limited

---

Schäuble, "How History Takes Place: Sacralized Landscapes in the Croatian-Bosnian Border Region," *History and Memory* 23, no. 1 (2011): 23-61,157; Jelena Stanic, Laura Sakaja, and Lana Slavuj, "Renaming Zagreb Streets and Squares," *Migracijske i etnicke teme* 25, no. 1–2 (2009): 89–124.

fashion.[14] To remedy that fact, this thesis examines Serbian identities through a study of the space in which these identities are formed as well as a study of a sample of the people who hold and generationally pass along those identities.

Methodologically, this study examines the representation of three defining periods of Serbian history within Belgrade's built environment to understand the state's official narrative of these periods. The material items produced in each of these periods also builds upon itself, just like the actual landscape does when viewed as a palimpsest. The periods include the departure of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century, World War II and the formation of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and the 1990s wars. In each of these transitionary moments, the Serbian state and identity was reconfigured in tandem with the reconstruction of the city. During the transition from Ottoman to Serbian Belgrade, 19th century Serbian statesmen sought to define the modern Serbian identity by creating a linear connection between the glorious medieval Serbian state, which predated the Ottomans, to the independent Serbian state recognized in 1878. World War II and the formation of Socialist Yugoslavia presents a rupture in the 19th century state-building process, as Serbia became a part of a larger political system that prioritized the wellbeing

[14] Nataša Janković, "Architectural Terri(s)Tories: Jajinci Memorial Park in Belgrade," 81–97; Christine Lavrence, "Beyond Balkan Time: Memory, Monument and Agency in Belgrade" (Ph.D., Canada, York University (Canada), 2004); Dunja Resanovic, "From Three Ottoman Gates to Three Serbian Sites of Memory: The Performative Rewriting of Belgrade from 1878 until Today," 393–405; Heike Karge, "Sajmište, Jasenovac, and the Social Frames of Remembering and Forgetting," *Filozofija i Drustvo* 23, no. 4 (2012): 106–18; Mladenka Ivanković, "The 'Sajmište' (Exhibition Grounds) In Semlin, Serbia," 59–67; Dragana Ćorović, "Three Parks in Nineteenth-Century Belgrade," *Serbian Studies: Journal of the North American Society for Serbian Studies* 24, no. 1–2 (2012): 75–100; Sabine Rutar, "Oral History as a Method: Variants of Remembering World War II in Slovenia, Serbia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina," *East Central Europe* 34–35, no. 1–2 (2007): 245–65.

of the Yugoslavian whole instead of the peculiar needs of each ethnicity.[15] Finally, the wars of the 1990s mark the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the creation of the present-day Serbian state. As with all transition periods, the Serbian state found itself once again needing to construct a national identity in accordance with the state's view of its own history; however, the brutality enacted by Serbians during the wars complicated this process immensely. Further, NATO's 1998-99 bombing campaign in Serbia necessitated a building project in Belgrade, inadvertently creating an opportunity to appropriately commemorate Serbian victims of the war while accepting culpability. Instead of coming to terms with the wars, highly contested moments from both the Ottoman and WWII/Yugoslav period reappeared in contemporary Serbian political discourse and reinvigorated Serbian nationalism.

Looking at the material manipulations of the landscape, namely memorials and monuments, that came out of these periods, I have synthesized what I call the "official narrative" of the past. This official narrative of the past has two primary focuses– the once defeated medieval state and the repeated victimization of Serbian people. The state manifests these focuses in Belgrade's physical landscape through two methods. The first is through the creation of a monument or memorial that reinterprets or reframes the past due to the narrative latent in the design of the monument/memorial, the historical information provided with the monument/memorial, or in the monument/memorial's chosen location. The second method employed by the state is simply avoiding proper

[15] World War I and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia is not considered in this thesis. Because the thesis aims to ascertain the current Serbian state's use of the landscape, only periods that actively dominate memory politics are considered in this study. While the first Yugoslavia is a defining moment of Serbian history, its nation-building efforts were virtually erased by World War II and replaced with the establishment of the second, communist Yugoslavia.

commemoration of a historical site, ultimately for the larger purpose of silencing any memory the physical landscape might convey.[16]

From my analysis of the landscape, it appears the state's official narrative of the past buttresses contemporary Serbian nationalism. Contemporary Serbian nationalism is a form of ethnic nationalism that promotes the political unity of Serbians across the former Yugoslavian states, often thought to be achieved by the creation of Greater Serbia.[17] Slobodan Milosevic mainstreamed this iteration of Serbian nationalism when he was president of Serbia from 1989 to 1992, and it is characterized by an extreme focus on Serbian victimhood and delegitimization of political opponents, which both work together to justify violence in the name of Serbians or the Greater Serbia project.[18] Benedict Anderson's understanding of nationalism provides the definition of nationalism throughout this thesis. Namely, nationalism is an "imagined political community" that is both "inherently limited and sovereign," and is an anthropological phenomenon, like "kinship" and "religion," as opposed to an ideology like "liberalism" or "fascism."[19]

This study puts the official narrative in conversation with oral histories collected from Serbian university students to measure the efficacy of Belgrade's built environment in proliferating a Serbian identity based on the state's official narrative of the past. I

---

[16] Aleksandar Staničić, "Media Propaganda vs Public Dialogue: The Spatial Memorialisation of Conflict in Belgrade after the 1999 NATO Bombing," *The Journal of Architecture* 26, no. 3 (April 3, 2021): 371–93, https://doi.org/10.1080/13602365.2021.1897645.

[17] Greater Serbia roughly translates to the whole area of the former Yugoslavia except Slovenia.

[18] Rodoljub Jovanović and Ángela Bermúdez, "The next Generation: Nationalism and Violence in the Narratives of Serbian Students on the Break-up of Yugoslavia," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 21, no. 1 (April 1, 2021): 2–25; Stephen Engelberg, "Carving Out a Greater Serbia," *The New York Times*, September 1, 1991, sec. Magazine, https://www.nytimes.com/1991/09/01/magazine/carving-out-a-greater-serbia.html.

[19] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 5-6.

interviewed 12 students, three of which were graduate students, aged twenty-two through twenty-eight. Professor Nemanja Dzuverovic, a Peace Studies professor in the Faculty of Political Science at the University of Belgrade who I met while searching for an institutional affiliation for a Fulbright grant, put me in contact with a Ph.D. candidate of his who then provided more contacts for interviews. I conducted my self-structured interviews via Zoom, and each lasted anywhere from forty-five minutes to nearly two hours.[20] All of the interviewees studied political science therefore their view of the Serbian state and national identity is an exclusive one. Throughout the interviews, the interviewees intertwined their personal perspectives of contemporary Serbian memory politics with theoretical jargon and often separated their personal views from those of the "average" Serb.[21]

Taken together, my interviewees represent a highly educated view of present-day Serbia; however, taken individually they offer unique accounts based on their varied upbrings. A total of five interviewees were born and raised in Belgrade, while others hailed from Niš, Leskovac, Croatia, Prije Polje, Lazarevac, and towns in the Republika Srpska including Banja Luka and Popovi.[22] For the interviewees born outside of Serbia's capital, the University of Belgrade is what brought them to the city. These interviewees bring a view of Serbian history influenced by their localities and experiences as a

[20] The interviewees were conducted primarily in English, with small moments of Serbian when required for ease of communication.

[21] And rightly so, as my interviewees present the forthcoming academic elite. Their accounts demonstrate that education provides a degree of nuance that is incompatible with nationalistic thought. So, while their views are incredibly valuable, it is important to distinguish that they do not represent the majority of the Serbian public. My initial hopes were to collect oral histories from average Serbia, but unfortunately those plans were dashed by COVID-19.

[22] These towns represent the southern and central regions of Serbia, including the Sandžak.

minority in Bosnia-Hercegovina and Croatia. Additionally, three of the twelve interviewees hailed from the Republika Srpska, an autonomous Serbian region of Bosnia-Herzegovina. One interviewee– a Bosniak Serb from the southern region of Serbia, recounted experiences of being an outsider from within Serbia. Bosniaks are regarded as a separated ethnic group in Serbia, due to their Muslim religious background. However, the Bosniak interviewee, born and raised in Serbia, identifies as a Bosniak Serb.[23] As such, the consolidated group of future academics provides a mosaic of opinions, shaped and informed by the interviewees' unique backgrounds.

My treatment of the oral histories follows in line with the work of Alessandro Portelli and Takeyuki Tsuda. Portelli's focus on the mechanics of oral histories, such as the importance of the "velocity of narration" and identifying the use of collectives, allow the oral histories to reveal the "meaning" of the past as opposed to providing a record of the past.[24] Additionally, Portelli's emphasis on the social quality of oral histories, stemming from his belief that oral histories are "artificial, variable, and partial" because the interviewee is speaking "*to* the historian, *with* the historian and…*through* the historian," is a foundational assumption in this study.[25] Finally, my oral history analysis is informed by Takeyuki Tsuda's formulation of the insider/outsider relationship between the interviewee and the interviewer. As a graduate student myself, my interviewees could relate to me, their interviewer, on the level of a fellow student. However, as a graduate

---

[23] She is the only Muslim Serb interviewee included in the study.
[24] Alessandro Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different," in *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (Albany: State University of New York, 1991): 49-50.
[25] Portelli, 53; 56.

student from America, I also inhabit the role of the outsider. I could not relate to my interviewees as a Serbian, a Balkan person, or even as a European.[26]

The first chapter discusses the Ottoman impact on the landscape by looking at Kalemegdan, the Republic Square, and the Karadjordje monument to elucidate the official politics of memory guiding its representation in Serbian history. Through an analysis of an expectational WWII site, Sajmište, the second chapter explores the memorialization of Serbian WWII victims and the lasting impact of Yugoslavian memory politics. The third chapter discusses Serbia's inability to commemorate a contested event by discussing the memorials to Serbian victims of the 1990s at Tašmajdan Park as well as the fate of the 1990s memorial in Belgrade's city center. The conclusion synthesizes each period's landscape to argue that apart from the official narrative's foregrounding of Serbian victimhood, the official narrative of the past as represented through Belgrade's landscape corresponds to the view of Serbian identity held by the young adults interviewed here.

[26] Interestingly, however, in a few interviews my own family's history came up for discussion. Some interviewees were curious about the origin of my interest in Serbian history, especially considering my degree in Arabic Studies. I explained my background, which includes my Ashkenazi heritage. After these discussions, I noticed these interviewees try to relate to me on topic of WWII. Less often, some would minimize certain parts of their views on World War II in order to not minimize the suffering experienced by Jews.

Chapter 2: "Let's Meet At The Horse": Belgrade's Memory Of The Ottomans

In Serbian, Belgrade (*Beograd*) literally translates as the "white city." The present-day capital of Serbia derives its name from the massive, white, stone fortress that crowns the city, sitting just under the confluence of the Danube and Sava rivers since 35 BCE.[27] The various layers of this fortress, named Kalemegdan by the Ottomans after its continuous use as a battlefield from the fourteenth to eighteenth century, illustrate Belgrade's pattern of razing and reconstruction as it passed between from the hands of foreign powers seeking control of the city.[28] Since its capture in 1521 until the late nineteenth century, the city of Belgrade primarily remained in the control of the Ottoman Empire. During the Empire's tenure, the Muslim character of the empire inscribed itself in both the cultural and physical landscape of Belgrade.[29] While the young-adult Serbians interviewed for this chapter discussed the indelible mark the Ottoman Empire made on Serbian history, culture, and language, the present-day Serbian state's curation of Belgrade's landscape focuses on the Empire's legacy as that which ended the first medieval Serbian kingdom and– four hundred years later– gave way to Serbian sovereignty.[30]

---

[27] David A. Norris and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic, *Belgrade: A Cultural History* (New York, United States: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4.
[28] In Turkish, *kale* means town and *megdan* means battlefield, as Kalemegdan served as both a military fortress and residential compound.
[29] David A. Norris and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic, *Belgrade: A Cultural History*, 8-10. Belgrade fell to Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent of the Ottoman Empire in 1521, who seized control from Hungary which periodically occupied Belgrade since 1319.
[30] Prior to the Ottoman military conquest of the Balkans, a Serbian proto state formed under the leadership of Stefan Nemanja in 1169. The Nemanjić Dynasty would rule from southern Serbia for the next two hundred years. It was his son in 1217, also named Stefan Nemanja, who gained the papal recognition that made the territory a kingdom as well as secured the right to establish the autocephalous Serbian Orthodox Church, of which St. Sava, Stefan's brother, became the first

As the founding event of modern Serbia, the negative portrayal of the Ottoman legacy is a central aspect of modern Serbia's state-building project and therefore directs the shape historical representation takes in Belgrade's landscape. In order to connect the medieval past and (what the Serbian state repeatedly construes as) the enlightened present to Serbian national identity, nineteenth century nationalist discourse in Serbia transformed the Ottoman legacy into an unnuanced narrative of suffering and oppression against which the Serbian identity formed. In Belgrade's landscape, this presentation of the Ottomans most frequently takes shape through projecting a national consciousness that exists today onto historical events or by completely silencing the Ottoman past. While nineteenth century Serbian statemen enacted this policy of remembrance, the modern Serbian state, which came into existence in the early 1990s, has maintained this policy.[31]

The most recent addition to Belgrade's landscape made by President Aleksander Vučić in 2021, a massive statue of medieval Serbian leader Stefan Nemanja,

---

archbishop. On June 28th, 1389, Serbian Christian and Ottoman Muslim forces met for the first time under the leadership of Prince Lazar Hrebeljanovic and Sultan Murad, respectively. Contemporary scholarship deems the outcome of the battle inconclusive with both the leaders dying in battle; however, the idea of Serbian defeat in the battle evolved as a central national myth during the early 19th century to mark the end of the medieval Golden Age of Serbia and the beginning of the so-called Turkish yoke. The medieval Serbian state did continue to lose territory, eventually falling to the Ottoman Empire in 1459. David A. Norris and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic, *Belgrade: A Cultural History*, 8-33. John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was a Country*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 17.

[31] From the early 1800s to the 1990s, Serbia as a nation existed as an autonomous nation, part of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, then the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, then as Yugoslavia (consisting of Serbia and Montenegro), and finally as the state of Serbia that exists today. Because of these major transitions, suggesting a linear connection between the 19th century to the 21st century is tenuous. However, this study seeks to explore how the Serbian state produces Serbian identity for Serbian citizens. As such, a connection can be made between Serbian statesmen of the past and the present, as their role in building an independent Serbia serves the same purpose.

demonstrates this policy of creating a false sense of continuity between the Serbian medieval proto state and the modern nation state of Serbia. Standing twenty-three meters high, Vučić views the seventy-ton bronze statue as an "anchor of the whole Serbian nation" while his politic critics view the statue as an expensive manifestation of the populism and autocracy that has kept Vučić in power.[32] Regardless of critique and a nine-million-euro expenditure, Vucic dedicated the statue with the following words:

> This is not just an act of unveiling a monument to our father, the creator of our state, a saint, and the one from whom it all began. This is an act of taking care of ourselves, our identity, what we have learned, what we know, and where we are going. Long live Serbia![33]

This issue of Serbia's shared history with the Ottoman Empire and its relationship to the present-day Serbian national identity can also be found manifestly within present-day Kalemegdan, which exists as both a relic of the Ottoman past as well as a cultural site wherein government issued statues and monuments champion the Serbian national heroes, politicians, and intellectual elites who ushered in the modern Serbian state and brought an end to Ottoman sovereignty. Understanding the ways in which the state interacts with both the Ottoman Empire's physical and cultural legacy in Belgrade at memory/cultural sites throughout the city allows the historian to relationship between the Ottoman legacy, the modern state of Serbia, and the national identity that underpins it. This chapter focuses on the representation of the Ottoman past as curated in Belgrade's landscape by the 19th century Serbian state and maintained by the contemporary

---

[32] Dusan Stojanovic, "Kitsch or Artwork? Controversial Monument Unveiled in Serbia," AP News, April 20, 2021, https://apnews.com/article/stefan-nemanja-controversial-statue-998c811cec3f31bda94db2411d1212dd.

[33] "Monument to St. Symeon the Myrrh-Gusher (Stefan Nemanja) Unveiled in Belgrade," OrthoChristian.Com, accessed June 16, 2021, https://orthochristian.com/137008.html.

government, and the extent to which that landscape shapes the way college-educated, young-adult Serbians understand their own national identity and history.

The Ottoman Legacy by Historical Record

The nationalist reading of the Ottoman legacy in Belgrade as unmitigated "Turkish slavery" is at odds with the historical record, which shows that the Balkan region enjoyed a period of relative growth and prosperity from the fifteenth to seventeenth century.[34] The Ottoman Empire's *millet* system, the legal system for non-Muslim Ottoman subjects organized by religious subcommunities, and its localized taxation structure suited the Balkan's religiously diverse population well and provided stability to the largest section of the Balkan population, the Christian peasants (*reaya*).[35] An institution central to the construction of the modern Serbian national identity– the Serbian Orthodox Church– received more local authority than previously granted by the

---

[34] Florian Bieber, "Nationalist Mobilization and Stories of Serb Suffering: The Kosovo Myth from 600th Anniversary to the Present," *Rethinking History* 6, no. 1 (April 1, 2002): 96; 98.; David A. Norris and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic, *Belgrade: A Cultural History*, 21; Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History* (Random House, Inc., 2000), 41.

[35] Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History*, 46-47; 63-69; 74; Frederick Anscombe, *State, Faith, and Nation in Ottoman and Post-Ottoman Lands* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 32; John Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History,* 21. The millet system allowed for religious officials to preside over their own courts and collect taxes from their flock. Muslim courts and officials, however, still helped settle Christian and Jewish affairs, ranging from tax issues to land disputes. Due to the Islamic foundation of the Empire, Christians and Jews were considered second-class citizens, subject to higher levels of government intervention in everyday life and required to pay a head tax (*jizya*). However, nearly 80% of the predominantly Christian Balkans remained Christian, and some historians argue that the Islamic character of the Empire provided a "powerful ideological legitimacy" that allowed the non-Muslim inhabitants to feel assured by the state's religious commitment to justice. Regional memory of the empire's religious organization persisted even after the departure of the Ottomans. Though archival evidence of peasant voices is scant, Mazower provides an excerpt from H. N Brailsford (1905), in which Brailsford questions a few young boys from an isolated village. The boys identified their grandfathers by saying "they weren't Turks, they were Christians."

medieval Serbian empire and enjoyed increased freedom of practice while under Muslim rule. [36] The imperial administrative organization empowered villages and cities, and Belgrade developed as a commercial and living center under the Sultan.[37]

The Muslim character of the empire, however, imprinted itself in the architecture, culture, and traditions of Belgrade; in the words of one scholar, "the skyline was filled with the minarets of the many mosques" and homes were built as small compounds with central courtyards, underlining the Ottoman custom of keeping a clear division between public and private life. [38] From the seventeenth century onward, the Ottoman Empire steadily declined in power and influence, prompting Sultans to actively reform with the hope of holding the vast Empire together.[39] Modernization in the Empire, driven by the growing force of capitalism outside the region, created the circumstances for "political changes" by disrupting established patterns of social and economic relations, particularly those of the peasants.[40]

---

[36] Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History*, *The Balkans*, 68; 71. It is important to note that coexistence did not directly equate to toleration.
[37] Ibid, 52.
[38] David A. Norris and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic, *Belgrade: A Cultural History*, 12.
[39] Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, vol. 2 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 3; Frederick Anscombe, *State, Faith, and Nation*, 32. The decline of the Ottoman Empire is argued at length, but it was primarily due to the encroachment of the militarily dominant Christian Europe. The series of reforms under Sultan in early 1800s culminated in the Tanzimat Reforms (1839-1878).
[40] Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History*, 56. As John Lampe mentions in *Yugoslavia as History*, the Balkans are often described as "place where time stood still." The lack of development is often attributed to "foreign exploitation and imperialism" on behalf of the Ottoman Empire, however, Barbara Jelavich warns "the picture should not be made darker than it actually was" and can be partially attribute to internal issues. Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 5; 22; John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History,* 21.

Against the background of a centrally declining Ottoman Empire and the Napoleonic Wars emerged the First Serbian Uprising. The title of the event is somewhat misleading, as it implies national consciousness drove the Christian community in Belgrade to rise up against the Sultan. In actuality, the Christian nobles (*kneževi*), armed by the Ottoman appointed commander from 1804 to 1807, fought against a group of Muslim janissaries in support of the Sultan, Selim III.[41] In 1804, the Christian forces nominated Djordje Petrović, popularly known as Karadjordje (Black George), as their military leader due to his prior military experience.[42] Only after the janissaries were dispersed and Istanbul ordered the Ottoman forces to disarm the Christians did violence against "loyal" Ottoman troops occur, as the Christians feared the Sultan would be unable to assure the return of justice to Belgrade.[43] The Christian Serbs turned to Russia for assistance in 1806, and Russia funded Karadjordje's militia to fight against the Ottomans, ultimately transforming a local insurgency against corrupt officials into a liberation struggle.[44] However, Napoleon's invasion of Russia interrupted Russia's ability to aid the Serbians allowing the Ottomans ultimately put down the uprising in 1813.[45] Karadjordje fled to Hungary, and the Ottomans appointed one of his commanders, Miloš Obrenović

---

[41] Ibid, 96; David A. Norris and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic, *Belgrade: A Cultural History*, 29. Janissaries in the Pashalik of Belgrade sought to gain more control (and generally were opposed to the Sultan, Selim III, who was limiting their influence), so in 1801 the janissaries murdered Hadji Mustafa, vizier of Belgrade, on the basis of being pro-Christian, then started massacring the vizier's supports among the Christian and Muslim nobles.
[42] David A. Norris and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic, *Belgrade: A Cultural History*, 30.
[43] Frederick Anscombe, *State, Faith, and Nation*, 66; Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 3; Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History*, 97; David A. Norris and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic, *Belgrade: A Cultural History*, 29. New taxes and obligations to authorities were place on Serbs (and severe penalties), which also stirred discontent.
[44] Ibid, all; David A. Norris and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic, *Belgrade: A Cultural History*, 31.
[45] Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History*, 97.

(formerly Teodorović), as the prince (*knez*) of three districts to help pacify Serbians and bring control back to the Ottomans.[46] However, the Ottoman administrative and military forces exacted revenge on the Christians after regaining control of Belgrade, and the reprisals' similarity to the events of 1804 alarmed local Christians.[47] In response, Milos Obrenović proclaimed the start of "a new war against the Turks" in 1815, otherwise known as the Second Serbian Uprising, and this time with much better timing.[48] Obrenović, who was not a revolutionary patriot but rather a keen politician, leveraged the post-Napoleonic world order to gradually gain Serbian autonomy.[49] Napoleon's recent defeat at Waterloo allowed Russia to provide aid to their Serbian Orthodox brethren, and the Turks conceded and recognized Obrenović as the de facto ruler of Serbia in 1817.[50] Seeking every method to build his own local autonomy and stimulate trade, Obrenović sought to prove his loyalty to the Sultan and did so by sending the head of his political rival, Karadjordje, to Istanbul. Following the sultan's edict (*hatti-sherif*) delivered at Tašmajdan Park in 1830, Obrenovič was made hereditary prince (*knez*) of Serbia and the

---

[46] "Miloš, Prince of Serbia," Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed June 15, 2021, https://www.britannica.com/biography/Milos. Milos Obrenovic initially joined the revolutionary forces under Karadjordje. In his forces, Obrenovic was appointed a commander. After Obrenovic's half-brother was killed in 1810, Milos changed his surname and politically postured himself against Karadjordje.

[47] Frederick Anscombe, *State, Faith, and Nation*, 67; David A. Norris and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic, *Belgrade: A Cultural History*, 31; John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History,* 49.

[48] Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History*, 97; David A. Norris and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic, *Belgrade: A Cultural History*, 26. Obrenovic shuffled his "Muslim-blooded" brother to safety before declaring war. Additionally, he sent the head of Karadjordje to the Sultan, like the pashas before him. Obrenovic was not a revolutionary patriot, nor was he keen to meet the Ottoman Empire in open battle

[49] David A. Norris and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic, *Belgrade: A Cultural History*, 37.

[50] Ibid; Frederick Anscombe, *State, Faith, and Nation*, 67.

Ottomans declared they would no longer interfere in the internal affairs of the now enlarged Serbian territory.[51]

Throughout the nineteenth century as Serbian statesmen pursued independence from the Ottoman Empire and the Muslim population continued to dwindle, Serbian authorities expressed their power and developed a nation building project largely through the manipulation of Belgrade's landscape, despite the fact that popular fashion and architecture continued to reflect Ottoman styles.[52] Leaving the Ottoman Empire behind, the new state of Serbia viewed Western models of statehood premised on liberalism as a base for future improvement both socially and economically, and this view informed the ruling party's view on the development of Belgrade. Development primarily took shape in the construction of residential neighborhoods, public monuments, and public buildings.

---

[51] Ibid; Mark Mazower, *The Balkans*, 98; Miloš preferred autocratic rule, which did not please fellow politicians. Miloš's political opponents forced him to abdicate in 1839 and sent into exile. Aleksandar Karadjordjević, the son of Karadjordje and a member of dynasty rivaling the Obrenović dynasty, was recognized as his legitimate successor in 1842. Karadjordjević ruled from 1842-1858 but was a weak ruler and could not prevail over the debate between Constitutionalists and Monarchists in Serbia. In 1858, the Constitutionalists ousted the Karadjordjević dynasty. Miloš returned to power in 1859, but he would be replaced by his son, Mihailo, in 1860. Knez Mihailo was assassinated in 1868.

[52] E. Attila Aytekin, "The Production of Space during the Period of Autonomy: Notes on Belgrade Urban Space, 1817–67," *Journal of Balkan & Near Eastern Studies* 18, no. 6 (December 2016): 588-9; David A. Norris and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic, *Belgrade: A Cultural History*, 39-44; John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 50. The Muslim population declined following the 1830 hatti-sheriff, and by 1867, the Muslim population and Ottoman garrison left the city. Still, the Knez ruled "more in the style of a pasha than a European prince." Despite the fact that Belgrade was still an Ottoman-style town, the landscape demonstrates the slow and intentional shift to Western European styles of architecture. Intentional efforts to move beyond the Ottoman past became evident in the construction of the Church of St. Mark in 1835. Located in Tašmajdan Park, the church served as a "symbol of the new freedoms granted by the *hatti-sherif*," the Church was built in a Baroque style, unlike the traditional, Byzantine style. The church served as place for coronations, royal weddings, and funeral. After being destroyed in WWI, rebuilt, and destroyed again in WWII, this small, wooden Church was replaced by a large cathedral built in the Morava style.

In 1848, Knez Aleksander Karadjordjević dedicated the first public monument in memory of Kardjordje's rebels on the Vračar plateau near the present-day St. Sava Church.[53] To further support the state's goal of "erase[ing]" the Ottoman legacy from Belgrade's urban space, Knez Miloš Obrenović employed Emilijan Josimović to draft the first urban plan of Belgrade in 1867.[54] Josimović's plan, which intended to "transform Belgrade into a modern European city," actualized in 1878 following the international recognition of Serbia as an independent state.[55] Josimović designated the site of the future national cathedral of Serbia, St. Sava Church, on Vračar Hill where the Ottomans once burned St. Sava's relics in the sixteenth century.[56] Such a designation of land emulates the nineteenth century transformation of religion in Serbia into a "marker of national identity in ways not known in the past" by intellectual elites who instrumentalized religion to create a strong, modern Serbian identity linked to the increasingly mythologized Battle of Kosovo and the medieval Golden Age of Serbia.[57] Serbian clergy and statesmen viewed the church as a monument to St. Sava, and as explained by the Judge of the Court of Cassation in 1878, such a monument required an "architectural form and interior decoration" that would "represent the highest Serbian national

---

[53] Ibid, 199.

[54] E. Attila Aytekin, "The Production of Space during the Period of Autonomy," 590; Ljubomir Milanović, "Materializing Authority: The Church of Saint Sava in Belgrade and Its Architectural Significance," *Serbian Studies: Journal of the North American Society for Serbian Studies* 24, no. 1 (2010): 66.

[55] Ljubomir Milanović, "Materializing Authority," 66.

[56] Ibid; Milica Bakić-Hayden, "Saint Sava and the Power(s) of Spiritual Authority," *Serbian Studies: Journal of the North American Society for Serbian Studies* 24, no. 1 (2010): 57. By order of Sinan Pasha and carried out by Ahmed Beg Ochuse, the saint's body was transported to Vračar and immolated as a warning to Serbian Orthodox subjects to not take part in insurrections against their Ottoman rulers. Against the Ottoman's intentions, the burning of St. Sava's relic worked to elevate the saint to a martyr, laying the foundation for his use as a national icon.

[57] Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History*, 93; Florian Bieber, "Nationalist Mobilization and Stories of Serb Suffering," 98.

aspiration" and elevate Belgrade into a "center of Christian Serbian enlightenment."[58] Josimović's plan also included removing the moat around Kalemegdan and replacing the former main Ottoman gate to the city– the Istanbul Gate (*Stambol-kapija*)– with Belgrade's Republic Square.[59]

Ousting the Ottomans: Serbian Identity and the Ottoman Legacy in Belgrade's Landscape

The interviewees presented Kalemegdan as a site upon which Serbia demonstrated her viability as a nation against Ottoman rule, and this view correspondences to the Serbian state's use of the fortress as a site to present a seemingly continuous national narrative from the medieval period to the present. The fortress is home to an overwhelming number of statues and monuments rooting modern Serbia's history in a space all my interviewees viewed as *foundationally Ottoman*. One of the first monuments in the main entrance to Kalemegdan park is a relief depicting Knez Mihailo receiving the keys to the city from the Ottoman pasha, and the Knez is accompanied by a slew of busts and statues representing the literary and political figures central to the creation of Serbian culture and modern identity.[60] While Kalemegdan serves as a site to

[58] Statement by Sreten Popvic, Judge of the Court of Cassation, 1878. Quoted in Ljubomir Milanović, "Materializing Authority," 63-67. The actual construction of the Church was stalled by the Balkan Wars and World War I, and the Church was eventually constructed in 1926 in the late Byzantine style used during the medieval Prince Lazar's reign.

[59] Dunja Resanovic, "From Three Ottoman Gates to Three Serbian Sites of Memory," 395; David A. Norris and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic, *Belgrade*: *A Cultural History*, 27.

[60] David A. Norris and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic, *Belgrade: A Cultural History*, 18. Some of these figures include: Radoje Domanović, Jovan Dučić, Aleksa Šantić, Borisav Stanković, Miloš Crnjanski, and Jovan Skerlić. Other monuments have been erected overtime, alluding to various moments of Serbian history, like the Victor (one of the most famous monuments in Kalemegdan), the monument for Gratitude to France, and bust to three communist leaders.

represent the Serbian state's longevity and political supremacy, most interviewees portrayed the fortress and the park within as a testament to Serbia's culture of resistance but also to the shared culture between the Ottomans and Serbians.

Kalemegdan's association with Ottoman oppression is foundational to the anti-imperialist, freedom-focused facet of the Serbian identity offered by the interviewees.[61] The curation of Kalemegdan's explicitly Ottoman landscape relies on the state's view of the Ottoman Turks as "the colonizer, the Imperial Father who subjugated the Serbian nation" and their role in Serbian history as "exclusively negative" in order to provide modern Serbian identity a foil against which to form a glorious self-image.[62] Many interviewees explained that the Ottoman's most important function in Serbian history relates to its role in producing a Serbian identity united by a common language, religion, and ethos focused on "fight[ing] for freedom always."[63] Without Ottoman oppression, Serbian culture and identity would lack the "fiery" desire to "always defend our honor and our independence," which serves as a central tenant of the modern Serbian identity.[64]

When asked about Serbian history's relationship with Ottoman history, every interviewee answered by first invoking Kalemegdan. Ilma, a Bosniak Serb I interviewed from the Sandžak, the southern-most region of Serbia populated mostly by Serbian Muslims, initially responded to my questions about Kalemegdan by an anecdote about the different layers of stone, clear to the eye by the bitonal walls that make up the

---

[61] Sava Mitrovic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 28, 2021: 22:48.
[62] Sladjan Rankic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Banja Luka, Bosnia-Hercegovina, February 9, 2021: 20:35-22:48; Anonymous 1, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 16, 2021: 23:56.
[63] Sava Mitrovic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 28, 2021: 12:44.
[64] Anonymous 2, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 8, 2021: 1:05-1:06.

fortress. A friend informed her that the different colors resulted from the differing tastes of the Turks and the Hungarians; the Turks would construct an arch, the Hungarians would seize control and didn't "like the arch exactly there" and would move it "a little bit here," only for the Turks to regain control, fill the arch, and build one anew.[65] For the Hungarians, Turks, and later Serbians, Kalemegdan remained "one of the centers of attention in the struggle over space" as each regime endeavored to maintain the fortress as a "dominated space."[66]

The historical significance of Kalemegdan is directly related to its role in the Serbian "liberation" movement of the nineteenth century which sought to assert Serbian control over the fortress and city; it's the place where "wealthy Ottomans" would enclose themselves during rebellions and also the site where the Ottomans gave the Serbians "the keys to the country."[67] Ten of the twelve interviewees highlighted the First and Second Serbian Uprisings as defining moments in Serbia's history, and for some interviewees Kalemegdan provides an access point to that foundational moment in Serbian history. The massive structure conjures images of Belgrade when it was an Ottoman district (*pashaluk*), but also the moment when the keys of the city passed from the hands of the

[65] Ilma Kitivojevic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Prije Polje, Serbia, February 16, 2021: 1:06. Cultural historian David A. Norris provides a historical account of this anecdote, explaining how Austrian and Turkish forces always changed mosques to churches (and vice versa) as they lost and gained control of the city.
[66] E. Attila Aytekin, "The Production of Space during the Period of Autonomy," 597. A dominated space is defined as space transformed and mediated by technology and practice in the interests of the powerholders. Additionally, it is a space that is closely entwined with "the historical sphere, for its origins coincide with those of political power itself."
[67] Anonymous 1, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 16, 2021: 41:00; Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 1:10.

pasha to the knez. As such, Kalemegdan serves as both a site of oppression and liberation for Serbian identity.

Despite the fortress's contemporary use as a public park, all the interviewees first mentioned its historical use as a battle site within the larger framing of a struggle for Serbian independence. Every interviewee emphasized Kalemegdan's former use as a fortress, and attributed its primacy as a landmark of Belgrade to this fact.[68] One interviewee, Irena, described Kalemegdan as a "battlefield" by teasing the current Serbian Minister of Affairs, imitating his propensity to "say that, in Turkish, *kale* means hill and *megdan* means place that you fight."[69] But like her peers, Irena also understood Kalemegdan as both a former military fortress controlled by numerous foreign powers and a present-day park.[70] The constant switching hands of Kalemegdan draws on the larger destruction Belgrade endured throughout its existence, prompting one interviewee to state that "Belgrade may be the most battled around city."[71]

This understanding of the past is supported by the curation of Kalemegdan, where statues of Serbian statesmen who were made heroes fighting against Turks are grafted on top of an Ottoman-shaped landscape. The ancientness of the fortress itself furthers this message, that Serbia "had our kingdoms here long before the Ottoman Empire ever came to this territory," even before other Balkan nations, according to one interviewee.[72] While

---

[68] Sava Mitrovic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 28, 2021: 39:00.
[69] Anonymous 2, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 8, 2021: 1:05.
[70] Ibid; Anonymous 1, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 16, 2021: 41; Nikola Stanojcic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 22, 2021: 1:05.
[71] Nikola Stanojcic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 22, 2021: 1:06.
[72] Ibid, 45:49.

also a sign of oppression, the structure of Kalemegdan connects the modern Serbian state to every ruling power that occupied the fortress since the Romans.[73] However, for some interviewees the antiquity of the fortress makes the past feel incredibly distant from the individual, and for other interviewees the fortress is just that, simply "a fort, plenty of those across Europe."[74] Most pointedly, an interviewee stated: "Kalemegdan is supposed to be place of national symbolism, but in reality it's a place for teenagers to go make out, take a walk, see the night sky."[75] The interviewee's statement was not a judgment of teenagers violating a place of national symbolism, but rather underlined the failure of the landscape's narrative to connect with its younger audiences and "emphasize the history of the place."[76]

The same interviewees who identified Kalemegdan as a central site for the production of Serbian history and identity failed to mention any of the statues or monuments related to the founding of the modern Serbian state, and instead mentioned the famous Victor statue and the various remnants of the Ottomans throughout the fortress.[77] A Belgrade local mentioned the Turkish mausoleum, one of two remaining mausoleums in Serbia, and she explained the "Turkish man" remains buried there as he

[73] Nikola Stanojcic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 22, 2021: 1:08; Dušan Ristic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, Febraury 20, 2021: 58:35.
[74] Djordje Mihajlovic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Banja Luka, Bosnia-Herzegovina, February 9, 2021: 42:50.
[75] Sladjan Rankic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 9, 2021: 40:04.
[76] Dušan Ristic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, Febraury 20, 2021.
[77] Sladjan Rankic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 9, 2021; Ivana Dinic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, March 1, 2021; Jovana Nikolić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Leskovac, Serbia, February 15, 2021; Sanja Vojvodic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 23, 2021.

was "respected among Europeans."[78] The only Serbian Muslim I interviewed discussed the mausoleum at length, and connected the presence of the singular mausoleum to the absence of mosques in Belgrade, where there used to be "hundreds."[79] She mentioned directly Serbia's project of erasing the Ottomans from the landscape of Serbia, but emphasized the vestiges of the Ottoman past left in Kalemegdan.

In the same way the founding moment of modern Serbia requires recognition of the Ottoman Empire, Kalemegdan's existence invokes the shared history between the Ottomans and Serbians in a way that cannot be fully silenced. Therefore, physical memories of Belgrade's Ottoman past live on in Kalemegdan, and correspondingly the Ottoman legacy lives on in Serbian culture. Nearly every interviewee emphasized the impact Turkish made on the Serbian language.[80] The Ottoman legacy imprinted itself onto the traditions, customs, folklore, clothing, and even meals in Serbia. When asked about the Ottoman legacy in Serbia, one interviewee immediately responded: "for example, in my kitchen, you will find Turkish food."[81] Similarly, Ilma joked that "we smoke like Turks," but comedically included that she believed "Serbians smoke the most

---

[78] Anonymous 1, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 16, 2021: 45:00. The mausoleum referenced is a six-sided Turkish mausoleum (*turbe*), which is the burial site of Damid Ali Pasha, Selim Pasha, and Hasan Pasha Češmelija. Only one of two remain out of the original ten in Belgrade. Interestingly, Serbian author Ivo Andric's "The Excursion" (*Ekskurzija*). David A. Norris and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic, *Belgrade: A Cultural History*, 24.

[79] Ilma Kitivojevic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Prije Polje, Serbia, February 16, 2021: 1:07; András Riedlmayer, "Damage to Churches and Other Cultural/Religious Properties During the 17-18 March 2004 Attacks on Orthodox Heritage in Kosovo & On Islamic Heritage in Serbia" (Kosovo: Cultural Heritage Without Borders, April 15, 2004), http://www.chwb.org/. There were at least 60 major mosques and "many small Islamic places of worship," according to a report from the last remaining mosque, Bajrakli Mosque. Interestingly, the destruction of mosques and churches plays largely into the Kosovo/Serbia conflict (as well as in 1990s ethnic cleansing campaign in Bosnia).

[80] Ilma Kitivojevic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Prije Polje, Serbia, February 16, 2021: 35:41.

[81] Anonymous 1, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 16, 2021: 22:27.

out of all of Europe."[82] While the interviewees fondly recounted Turkish cultural influence, Ilma and other interviewees discussed the modern use of "Turk" as a pejorative to alienate Serbs whose families "sold out their identity for political status" while Serbia was under Turkish rule."[83] The complex, contested, and cultural history of the Ottomans in Belgrade dominated my conversations with the interviewees, which is a major departure from the consolidated narrative of a complete departure from the Ottoman past presented through the curation of Kalemegdan.

Unlike Kalemegdan, an Ottoman structure which remains standing, Knez Mihailo chose to construct Belgrade's Republic Square over the site of the former Istanbul Gate (*Stambol-kapija*), a massive stone gate which marked the outer limit of Ottoman Belgrade. In 1868, Knez Mihailo opened the National Theatre in the Square, and fourteen years later his son erected an imposing statue of Knez Mihailo Obrenović atop a charging horse, elevated by a large

Figure 1: Knez Mihailo Statue, as of 2019.

[82] Ilma Kitivojevic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Prije Polje, Serbia, February 16, 2021: 36:14.
[83] Ibid, 41:31; Dušan Ristic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, Febraury 20, 2021: 28:41.

podium.[84] The podium is inscribed with the names of each town liberated from the Ottomans by the Knez in 1867.[85] The front and back panels of the podium are dedicated to the Second Serbian Uprising, depicting Knez Miloš, the Serbian Orthodox Patriarch, and Filip Višnjić.[86] The Eastern frieze, entitled "The Serbs Take an Other over the Grave of Prince Mihailo," celebrates the continuation of the Knez's legacy after his death. The Western frieze, "A National Deputation in Front of Grand Prince Mihailo," illustrates the revival of the Serbian Golden Age in the restored Serbian state.[87] The Knez's head faces the interior of old Belgrade, while his right arm stretched toward the Southern region of Serbia which was still under Ottoman control at the time the statue was dedicated.[88] Collectively, the statue presents the entire "arc of Serbian history," from the Golden Age before the Ottomans to the nineteenth century period of "Liberation of the Cities," and allegorically represents the Ottoman past as a "dark age."[89] This representation of the past works to construct a binary opposition between the Ottoman Empire and Serbia, where the Muslim past is equated with backwardness and the Christian present with modernity and enlightenment. The Muslim/Christian binary within Serbia is an offshoot of the larger East/West dichotomy that underlies Orientalist discourse. While a majority

[84] David A. Norris and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic, *Belgrade: A Cultural History*, 27. The gate was "in the eyes of the Serbs was an iconic representation of Turkish oppression and became their main target when they launched their attach on the city in 1806." The Square marks the beginning of Knez Mihailo Street, which terminates at Kalemegdan, and is also home to the National Theatre, National Museum, and Veterans Club.
[85] David A. Norris and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic, *Belgrade: A Cultural History*, 67-68.
[86] Dunja Resanovic, "From Three Ottoman Gates," 394; 396. Filip Višnjić wrote the first epic song about the Serbian Uprisings called *The Beginning of the Revolt against the Dahijas.* The song emphasizes Serbian suffering under the Ottomans, contrasting the suffering with the glorious Medieval Christian Kingdom. The invocation of the Serbian Orthodox Church works to establish a sense of national continuity.
[87] Ibid, 396.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.

of the Serbians I interviewed cared little for the statue to Knez Mihailo, a few invoked the issue of Orientalism as plaguing outsiders' understanding of Serbia and the modern Serbian identity, unfairly coloring all Serbians as backwards or evil throughout the rest of their national history.

Interestingly, the few interviewees who invoked Orientalism also provided popular accounts of nineteenth century Serbian history that follow an Orientalist paradigm by ascribing qualities of backwardness and antiquation to Ottoman rule as opposed to the modern, liberal, and progressive qualities of the Serbian liberation movement. Few interviewees mentioned the Second Serbian Uprising as a defining historical moment in Serbia history, and only two mentioned a member of the Obrenović family as an important historical figure. Reflecting the grand image of the Obrenović legacy offered by the Knez Mihailo statue, one interviewee (Nikola) described Miloš Obrenović as transforming Belgrade from a "Turkish outpost" to a "country."[90] While Nikola describes the Second Serbian Uprising as "actually manag[ing] to liberate us," most other interviewees focused on the First Serbian Uprising as the date "when modern Serbia, as we refer to it, starts" and the "long occupation of the Ottoman Empire" ended.[91] However, turmoil dominated conversation of the nineteenth century, and one interviewee illustrated the importance of a nuanced understanding of the time by describing Miloš Obrenović as a "clever, not dedicated…, and corrupted" politician yet

[90] Nikola Stanojcic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 22, 2021: 38:44.
[91] Ibid, 27:54; Sanja Vojvodic, interviewed by author, Belgrade, Serbia, February 23, 2021: 22:27; Jovana Nikolić, interviewed by author, Phoenix, February 15, 2021: 9:51.

"good for the country."[92] Speaking directly to the topic of the Knez Mihailo monument, an interviewee (Jovana) referenced his arm outstretched to the south, which she believes is a misrepresentation of a "modern European leader who believed in democracy,… was really forward looking," and was not primarily focused on "liberating" southern Serbia.[93] Despite the nuance offered in some accounts of the past, the interviewees tend to ascribe backwardness to the Ottoman empire by stressing the modern and liberal qualities of the Serbian state. This binary opposition is also found in elements of Belgrade's landscape, like the Knez Mihailo statue, where a modern national hero coexists with medieval heroes for the purpose of presenting a continuous narrative of the Serbian state. It is this one entity, the eternal Serbian state, that suffered under the Ottomans and was freed in the nineteenth century.

In contrast to the narrative provided by the Knez Mihailo statue of liberalism bringing Serbia into modernity, the interviewees still feel as if Serbia exists somewhat outside of Europe despite their understanding of Serbia liberalizing along Western standards in the nineteenth century. While the interviewees' perception of the Obrenović dynasty and the relationship between the Ottoman legacy and Serbian national history appear to mirror the narrative offered by the Knez Mihailo monument, the similarity between the public and private narratives cannot be overstated. Two interviewees informed me that a common saying among friends when coordinating plans is: "let's

---

[92] Anonymous 1, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 16, 2021:18:09; David A. Norris and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic, *Belgrade: A Cultural History*, 83.
[93] Jovana Nikolić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Leskovac, Serbia, February 15, 2021: 55:41.

meet at the horse."[94] The large and familiar landmark is simply an element of the landscape you "live around" or "show to your foreign friends," not something to provoke historical inquiry.[95] However, the semi-orientalist framework that directs both my interviewees and the monument's representation of nineteenth century Serbian and Ottoman history as a struggle between modernity and antiquity also produces a negative view of Serbia and Serbian people, and the interviewees discussed this negative view of Serbians as causing conflict with people from the West. They at once perpetuate, though not maliciously nor without scholarly nuance, a semi-orientalist binary through their understanding of the Ottoman legacy in Serbia, yet also report discrimination by outsiders guided by the same discourse. One interviewee stated the West's view of Serbia is based solely on the Ottoman "part of our history," and this persistence to tie Serbia to the notion of the "East" is "difficult for Serbian identity."[96] Though the interviewees expressed a Saidian understanding of orientalism, they describe Serbia as outside of the strictly West/East dichotomy. Interviewees explained the Ottomans existed as the "other" for Europe and the West, but there was "always the Balkans somewhere in between."[97] Serbia's religion and geographic location prevents it from being totally relegated as the "East" nor "West," but still one interviewee feels Serbia may be somewhere worse, failing to exist within the binary even as "a bridge between the two."[98]

---

[94] Miloš Vukelić, nterviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 1:06; Sladjan Rankic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 9, 2021:3:15.
[95] Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 1:11; Anonymous 2, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 8, 2021: 6:37.
[96] Jovana Nikolić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Leskovac, Serbia, February 15, 2021:18:19-18:34.
[97] Ivana Dinic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, March 1, 2021: 25:10-26:10.
[98] Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 40:34.

Like the Knez Mihailo statue, the landscape of the St. Sava Cathedral which includes a Karadjordje Monument also works to reframe the relationship between Ottoman and Serbian history. The massive St. Sava Cathedral sits south of Kalemegdan on the Vračar plateau, the same location where the Ottomans burned the relics of St. Sava, the founder of the Serbian Orthodox Cathedral and the patron saint of Serbia. Presently the Cathedral is accompanied by a large, bronze monument to Djordje Petrovic, or Karadjordje, who set up his camp during the First Serbian uprising on the Vračar Plateau.[99] The original statue to Karadjordje was erected in Kalemegdan (where the Monument of Gratitude to France currently stands) in 1912, but near the end of World War One the statue was replaced by a large statue of Franz Josef.[100] In 1979, The Socialist Union of Serbia advocated for a new Karadjordje monument to the City Assembly of Belgrade, however the city had no funds for the project. Still intending to move forward with the project, the City Assembly approached the City's Institute for the

Figure 2: Karadjordje Statue and St. Sava Cathedral, as of 2019.

---

[99] David A. Norris and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic, *Belgrade: A Cultural History*, 196. The Karadjordje statue was rebuilt in front of the St. Sava Church after the original statue from 1848 was destroyed in WWI.
[100] Zoran Nikolić, "Beogradske priče: Neobična sudbina spomenika na Kalemegdanu," Novosti, accessed June 13, 2021, https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/beograd.74.html:452332-Beogradske-price-Neobicna-sudbina-spomenika-na-Kalemegdanu.

Protection of Cultural Monuments, who selected the location for the statue and located an old Sreten Stojanović sculpture to use as a way to cut costs.[101] This project produced the present-day Karadjordje monument, which looms in front of the St. Sava Cathedral and joins together memories of Ottoman oppression and the glorious rebirth of the Serbian nation in one religious site. Uniting historical moments from the distant and recent past by means of a religious site ultimately helps tie Orthodoxy to Serbian identity, but also brings Kosovo, the birthplace of Serbian Orthodoxy, into the equation as well. While creating a false continuity between medieval and modern historical events affects the perception of medieval Serbian history, it also influences the perception of modern events, like the First Serbian Uprising which is often separated from its origins and viewed as motivated by nationalism.

Unlike the official narrative presented by the landscape, the interviewees directly questioned the logic behind the curation of Vračar's landscape. My interviewees explained that nationalistic Serbs tend to ascribe an overstated degree of national consciousness to the past. Also, this manipulation of temporality brought topics related to the origins of the Serbian Church– like Kosovo– into the minds of my interviewees when asked about defining aspects of the modern Serbian identity. While many interviewees distanced themselves from the nationalistic view of these topics when discussing Serbian identity, many offered a nuanced understanding of religion and the political issues surrounding Kosovo unlike the state's use of the Vračar plateau. One interviewee directly

[101] "Spomenik voždu Karađorđu poklon Beogradu," Politika Online, accessed June 13, 2021, https://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/441010/Spomenik-vozdu-Karadordu-poklon-Beogradu. Sreten Stojanović was a famous Bosnian Serb sculptor who died in 1960.

spoke to a more nuanced narrative by questioning the relation of St. Sava and Karadjordje as the landscape presents them, given the men lived centuries apart from each other.[102] Another interviewee from Belgrade, Nikola, remembered the plateau as a childhood park, and another from the Republika Srpska in Bosnia-Hercegovina said it simply came to mind when thinking of Belgrade.[103]

However, nearly all the interviewees discussed the centrality of Serbian Orthodoxy in the modern Serbian identity, regardless of individual religiosity. Carrying out Orthodox traditions is a practice of identity, a type of cultural act– something an interviewee does when he is away from his parents during the holiday season and his nostalgia draws him back to what is familiar.[104] Given the religious identification of subjects under the Ottomans, its unsurprising an interviewee differentiated the Serbian nation from the Ottomans by emphasizing "Serbs are Orthodox" when discussing the Ottoman legacy.[105] Most other interviewees offered a similar conception of the Serbian connection to Orthodoxy, especially when considering how an average Serbian citizen would understand Serbian identity. Ilma, a Bosniak Serb, offered an interesting perspective. Serbians are so well-known in central and eastern Europe as Orthodox, that she will "pretend to be Serbian Orthodox" by explaining holidays and customs to foreigners who don't know her well, so as to avoid explaining her minority identity in

[102] Jovana Nikolić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Leskovac, Serbia, February 15, 2021: 28:44.
[103] Sava Mitrovic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 28, 2021: 39:00.
[104] Nikola Stanojcic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 22, 2021: 17:24.
[105] Ivana Dinic, interviwed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, March 1, 2021: 12:32.

Serbia.[106] The importance of religious and medieval figures spills over into accounts of Serbian history, as a few Orthodox interviewees mentioned St. Sava as "the father of our nation," Stefan Nemanja, and Tzar Dušan when thinking of important Serbian historical figures. [107] Similarly, the same interviewees highlighted the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 and the loss of the medieval Serbian empire as a defining moment in Serbian history, a moment in history they recognize as being "steeped in myth."[108]

Interviewees linked both Orthodoxy and the topic of Kosovo to a nationalist reading of Serbian identity, a view of the past to which all the interviewees made clear they did not subscribe. One interviewee stated the first two words that may come to mind to an average Serbian when asked about their identity: Orthodoxy and Kosovo.[109] Despite the interviewees indicating that this view of the past belongs to the nationalist populists, this tendency to link the medieval past directly to the modern nation was intentionally cultivated by intellectual elites in the nineteenth century, who drew on peasant folk songs and legends about the rebirth of a Serbian/Christian empire. The first ever written forms of the Kosovo Myth circulated during the time of the First and Second Uprisings.[110] Intellectuals and writers integrated the military actions of the medieval state and the modern to foster a sense of national consciousness among the Serbs, a fact most of my interviewees stated. While many of them discussed the First Serbian Uprising, they often

---

[106] Ilma Kitivojevic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Prije Polje, Serbia, February 16, 2021: 18:55.
[107] Sladjan Rankic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 9, 2021: 13:31; Sava Mitrovic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 28, 2021: 15:27; Sanja Vojvodic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 23, 2021: 25:09.
[108] Sladjan Rankic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 9, 2021: 11:18
[109] Dušan Ristic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 20, 2021: 12:29.
[110] Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History*, 87.

mention it was a "failure" and only the "turning point" before an independence movement.[111] The complex reading of the past recounted by my interviewees differs from the centralized narrative offered by the landscape; however, both the interviewees and landscape share a dedication to Karadjordje. Like the Vračar plateau, nearly every interviewee mentioned Karadjordje as a significant figure in Serbian national history, viewing him as important to the modern nation despite not feeling "personally attached" to him.[112] Despite distancing themselves from nationalist views of Serbian identity my interviewees associated with average Serbians, most still championed the same historical figures and moments as Belgrade's landscape.

The interviewees similarly expressed criticisms of Belgrade's most recent addition– a massive monument to Stefan Nemanja– in the middle of the city center. When the topic of the representation of the Ottoman past in Belgrade came up, a few interviewees concluded their discussion by bringing up a national debate that was ongoing at the time in Serbia and postured themselves with those against the new statue. The interviewees argued the "huge statue" was "inappropriate" not because it was Nemanja, but because of its "size" and the "state corruption" it represents.[113] The design and construction of the statue lacked transparency, leading Serbs who generally "don't

[111] Nikola Stanojcic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 22, 2021: 28:01; Djordje Mihajlovic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Banja Luka, Bosnia-Herzegovina, February 9, 2021: 15:00.
[112] Ilma Kitivojevic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Prije Polje, Serbia, February 16, 2021: 26:58.
[113] Anonymous 1, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 16, 2021: 103-105.

support the government" to "not support the monument."[114] Other interviewees were simply "bewildered" by its "postmodern style," and alluded to the fact that the architectural style is completely foreign to Serbia.[115] Another interviewee, Jovana, said the location of the monument "bugged" her because it mixes a relic of 19th century Serbian history, the first train station, and a Serbian leader from the twelfth century, effectively ignoring the unique histories of both.[116] The interviewee continued explaining the strange framing of the statue renders it "not very representative of Stefan."[117] Another interviewee offered a possible answer to Jovana's question of location by characterizing the statue as a matter of "nationalistic pride," mentioning that the state is using the state to assert that "Serbia has been here for centuries, we are strong, we are going to fight off all our enemies."[118] However, the same interviewee made clear that he "disagrees" with the nationalist direction material items like the Nemanja statue "take us."[119] The sentiment shared by the interviewees represents the larger debate going on in Serbia. An Associated Press news article published shortly after the statue's dedication reported that an independent Society of Serbian art conservators described the monument as an "ideological product of despotism," while social media commentators dubbed the

---

[114] Sava Mitrovic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 28, 2021: 54:45. The statue was a part of a larger project called the Belgrade Waterfront project, which is financed by a United Arab Emirates company. The final cost of the monument will be made public by Serbian authorities in 2023. Snezana Bjelotomic, "Stefan Nemanja Monument in Belgrade Will Cost EUR 9 Million?," *Serbian Monitor* (blog), December 29, 2020, https://www.serbianmonitor.com/en/stefan-nemanja-monument-in-belgrade-will-cost-eur-9-million/.

[115] Sladjan Rankic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 9, 2021; Ilma Kitivojevic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Prije Polje, Serbia, February 16, 2021: 1:15.

[116] Jovana Nikolić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Leskovac, Serbia, February 15, 2021.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Dušan Ristic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, Febraury 20, 2021: 1:01.

[119] Ibid.

sculpture "Saruman on a Kinder Egg."[120] Clearly, the monument did not connect with all its audience as Vučič intended.

Taken together, the elements of Belgrade's physical landscape recount the national history of Serbia as a glorious, long-lasting, Orthodox nation subjugated for centuries by the Ottomans, returned to its former glory by great men like Karadjordje and the Obrenović dynasty in the nineteenth century. Serbian independence represents the nation's acceptance of enlightened, liberal values, continuing the legacy of the Serbian nation that came before. This view relies on portraying the Ottoman legacy as "a yoke," however, vestiges of Ottoman power remain embedded into Belgrade's landscape and Serbian culture.[121] As the historical locus of both Serbian suffering and rebirth, dealing with the remnants of the Ottoman past became a focal point of the nineteenth century state-building project. The state began using sites of triumph and trauma, like Kalemegdan and the Vračar plateau, as a projection screens upon which to present a clear image of the modern Serbian state and the identity it supports.[122] Similarly, Serbian identity was constructed in opposition to the Ottoman Empire, therefore the medieval

---

[120] Dusan Stojanovic, "Kitsch or Artwork? Controversial Monument Unveiled in Serbia," AP NEWS, April 20, 2021, https://apnews.com/article/stefan-nemanja-controversial-statue-998c811cec3f31bda94db2411d1212dd.
[121] Djordje Mihajlovic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Banja Luka, Bosnia-Herzegovina, February 9, 2021: 7:15.
[122] Aleida Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity*, trans. Sarah Clift (Fordham University Press, 2015), 2-3.

Serbian empire, Orthodox figures, and nineteenth century leaders are associated with both the memory of the Ottomans and contemporary understandings of Serbian identity.

Taken individually, the memory sites around Belgrade illustrate the various aspects that constitute Serbian identity as conceived by the state, but the memory sites and manipulations made to them also allow the historian to ascertain how the representation of the past within these sites corresponds to the views of the past held by young-adult Serbians. My interviewees were aware of the de-Ottomanization that took place in nineteenth century Belgrade, and directly stated they recognized how the later iterations of the Serbian state repeatedly manipulated each of these sites to obscure any positive recognition of the Ottoman period to support a nationalistic, wholly negative view of Ottoman past. They understood the Ottoman character of Kalemegdan must persist in order for Serbian identity to be literally and symbolically built over it, yet not a single person stopped to correct the misrepresentation of the landscape. For example, even though Miloš Obrenović led a militarily successful revolution and seemingly ushered Serbia into modernity, he was still loyal to the Sultan until it was politically savvy to not be. Unlike the monument to the Knez, the keys of the city were not transferred to the Serbians at Kalemegdan, but rather at Tašmajdan Park. Further, in reality, nationalism emerged as a movement by which peasants could reassert their land rights and fair taxation in the face of growing class tension. As such, class antagonism drove nationalism in Ottoman Belgrade, rather than an emerging national consciousness

or connection to political abstractions.[123] For peasants, independence would bring about the return of stability and property security. However, most of my interviewees provided accounts of the past that mentioned the exact historical figures and moments utilized by the nineteenth century Serbian intellectual elite to develop a clear sense of a national identity.

Though informed about their nation's past and quite open to positively remembering the Ottomans, my interviewees maintained the "paradox of perceptions," where the Ottoman past is obvious yet acceptably erased to make way for a "distinct national past."[124] The interviewees response spoke to the language of "national religion" cultivated in the nineteenth century and reproduced by the Serbian state since.[125] Despite endeavoring to fairly represent Ottoman Belgrade, my interviewees upheld the semi-orientalist framework of understanding that causes others to view them negatively as Serbians. Milica Bakić-Hayden's concept of "nesting orientalisms," which is a gradated reproduction of the East/West dichotomy within the Balkans, explains how Serbians feel at once affected by the isolation created by an orientalist discourse and reproduce it.[126] However, many interviewees introduced a valid counterargument, which is that every nation displays the tendency to remember the past in this way. In fact, a few invoked the

---

[123] There is still a lively historical debate on the driving force of the First Serbian Uprising. Some, like Jelavich, posit that notions of liberalism and nationalism "penetrated" the Balkans from "the rest of Europe." Others, like Anscombe, argue that Balkan nationalism is solely a post-Ottoman phenomenon.
[124] Christine Philliou, "The Paradox of Perceptions: Interpreting the Ottoman Past through the National Present," 662.
[125] Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History*, 93.
[126] Milica Bakić-Hayden, "Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia on JSTOR," *Slavic Review* 54, no. 4 (1995): 918.

selective way the United States deals with its history and used this as evidence to the idea that Serbia is simply "following a pattern" created by Western nations.[127] While theoretical works on the nation underscore the importance of national mythmaking and creating a consolidated narrative from which to derive a collective identity, it does not mean these patterns cannot be examined critically. Such a critical view is required when the representation of the past and the national identity tied to it is instrumentalized repeatedly for a political end, as is the case in Belgrade.

[127] Djordje Mihajlovic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Banja Luka, Bosnia-Herzegovina, February 9, 2021: 29:29.

Chapter 3: "Under The Rug": Remembering World War Two And The Holocaust In Belgrade

A central component of Serbian nationalism is Serbian victimhood and the desire to "protect" Serbian nationals. Contemporary nationalist accounts of Serbian history most frequently source Serbian victimhood to World War II , focusing most pointedly on the mass murders of Serbs at the hands of the Axis allied Croatian *Ustaše* as well as the lack of recognition of Serbian suffering under the communist regime that came to power following the war.[128] Memorialization of World War II and the Holocaust is an ongoing process in Serbia, and the status of Holocaust memorialization can be used as a benchmark to understand the Serbian state's present view of victimhood's relationship to Serbian nationalism and national identity. Serving as the final moment of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia under Serbian rule and the founding moment of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Holocaust memorialization became particularly fraught with politics as it was incorporated into Tito's new nation-building project for Yugoslavia. The resulting treatment of the Holocaust sites in Yugoslavia helped laid the foundations for later manipulations by Serbian nationalists, like Slobodan Milosevic, to mobilize Serbs against fellow Yugoslavians.[129]

The topic of World War II alludes to Issues of civil war, Nazi occupation, systematic execution of Jews, Serbs, and Roma, and the creation of a new Yugoslavia that would also prove to fail the test of time. Given the Serbian puppet state's complicity

---

[128] Surprisingly, in 2019 I saw graffiti in Belgrade (on the side of the Botanical Gardens) that read: Tito=Tudjman=Ustaša.

[129] Stipe Odak and Andriana Benčić, "Jasenovac—A Past That Does Not Pass: The Presence of Jasenovac in Croatian and Serbian Collective Memory of Conflict," *East European Politics and Societies* 30, no. 4 (November 1, 2016): 805–29, https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325416653657.

in the Holocaust within Serbia, the near erasure of specific Holocaust narratives from Socialist Yugoslavian memorials after the fall of communism, and the later explicit politization of Holocaust sites by the modern Serbian state, the development of memorials at Holocaust sites in Serbia offers an interesting perspective on the state's relationship with its divisive past. This chapter explores the state's representation of a Belgrade-specific Holocaust site, Sajmište, and the extent to which it satisfies the public's understanding of proper Holocaust memorialization. Sajmište, which served as both a labor and death camp for Serbian Jews, Roma, and communists, sits just a few minutes' drive from Belgrade's city center and remains dilapidated, misused, and forgotten. The building is currently lived in by Roma, and the Serbian government's repeated plans to properly memorialize the atrocities that took place at Sajmište have never materialized. The state's refusal to incorporate Sajmište into Belgrade's commemorative landscape disturbs citizens in Belgrade. This chapter interprets the Sajmište complex as its own type of historical artifact, testifying to the current state of memory politics in Belgrade and its dissonance with Serbian citizens.

Despite Yugoslavia's initial efforts to stave off involvement in World War Two, the devastating Nazi occupation "shattered" the young Kingdom of Yugoslavia and laid the foundations for the forthcoming Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes first came into being on June 28th 1921, under the rule of King Aleksandar following a constitutional vote, which intentionally was set on the same date as the anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo in 1389.[130] This change was

[130] John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was a Country*, 93; 127-128. The selected constitution was the Serbian model. Based on French principles and modeled on the

emblematic of the systemic changes the King undertook throughout the years leading up to World War II, as he worked to establish a "royal dictatorship" which ultimately led to his assassination in 1934.[131] In 1935, under the leadership of the King's replacement, Stojadinović, who according to historian John R. Lampe, "expressed admiration for Hitler as a political leader and propagandist" and "appreciated the Nazi's anti-Communism," the Kingdom of Yugoslavia kept the option for German allyship open; however, Stojadinović did not implement a fascist program in the Kingdom and continued to work with Prince Paul to keep the "British option open."[132] Despite Stojadinović's reluctance to adopt a true fascist program in Yugoslavia, the government began to display outward signs of fascism, including the organization of youth groups

Belgian constitution of 1830, the Kingdom's constitution generally affirmed freedom of press and religion and promised representative government. Two days before the constitutional vote as a final form of defiance, a Croatian politician (Radić) proposed a new constitution for a fully autonomous Croatian Republic. However, the Serbian modeled still prevailed, and the Kingdom was ruled by a Serbian dynasty crowned on November 6th, 1921. Part of the reason for Serbian rule was the Balkan Wars, 1903-1914, which was considered the "greatest military triumphs in Serbian history" and convinced the public of Serbia's deserving role as leader in future Yugoslav state. Internal divisions, like those evident during the drafting of the constitutional proposals, plagued the Kingdom's politics until 1929, when the King abrogated the constitution and dissolved the sitting parliament (Skupština). In the same year, the King changed the name of the country to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. This change, and the gerrymandering of the country that followed, worked to support the King's personal dictatorship by increasing Serbian domination of the political system.

[131] John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 163. The King was assassinated while meeting with French Foreign Minister Louis Barthou by a man employed by a Macedonian successionist party, VMRO. The King's rumored last words were: "preserve Yugoslavia." After the assassination, Milan Stojadinović, the former finance minister, became Prime Minister in 1935. According to the late King's will, his cousin, Paul, was named senior regent and would fulfill all royal obligations until the King's son, Petar, turned eighteen in 1941.

[132] Ibid, 185-186. Lampe characterizes Stojadinović as a "political opportunist who bet on Nazi Germany for immediate economic advantage," believing that Germany would have no other geopolitical purpose in targeting Yugoslavia.

“clothed in green shirts” and the establishment of closer relations with Italy and Germany.[133]

In the next few years as the war grew closer to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Prince Paul lost faith in Stojadinović and created a new government under Cvetković, which would formally sign the Tripartite Pact in March 1941 despite repeatedly warning the German ambassador of the Serbian public’s general view of the Germans as “their enemy from the First World War.”[134] This view of the Germans made itself evident two days after the Pact signing, when a military coup supported by the government and public overthrew the Cvetković government and sent Prince Peter into exile.[135] The coup enraged Hitler, who vowed to “bring ruin” to Yugoslavia, and subsequently bombed Belgrade on April 6th, marking the start of the War in Belgrade.[136] Soon after the April 6th bombing, Serbia’s territory was reduced and split between the Axis powers and their ally, the new Independent State of Croatia, leading to a civil war between Serbian nationalist forces (*Četniks*), Croatian fascists (*Ustaše*), and communist Partisans that ran parallel to the world war.[137] Within Serbia, General Milan Nedić was appointed by the Nazi’s as the

---

[133] Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 202.
[134] Ibid, 197-200.
[135] Ibid; David A. Norris and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic, *Belgrade: A Cultural History*, 124. The military coup was led by General Dušan Simović on the 26th March. Winston Churchill described the uprising as the Yugoslav nations finding “its soul.”
[136] David A. Norris and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic, *Belgrade: A Cultural History*, 124; John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 204. The bombing was devastating; 2,300 civilians lost their lives (the same figure as losses suffered to Yugoslav army), national buildings were destroyed, and essential services were cut. The invasion’s brutality inspired poet Miodrag Pavlović to ask, “who’s this who dares/ take the apocalypse/into his own hands?” in his poem, Belgrade 1941.
[137] In the remaining Serbian territory, Serbian forces organized under Colonel Dragoljub “Draža” Mihailović. His soldiers were called the Chetnik Detachments of the Yugoslav Army, which mirrored the term *chetnik* used to name Serb groups who fought against the Ottomans. Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 267; David A. Norris and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic, *Belgrade: A Cultural History*, 125.

head of government during the occupation, and the occupation also gave support to Serbian fascist leader, Dimitrije Ljotić, allowing him to organize a corps of approximately 3,600 men.[138] Additionally, after the *Četniks* and Partisans failed to establish a cooperative relationship, *Četnik* units began to cooperate with the Axis and Nedić's regime.[139]

The four years of warfare laid ruin to Belgrade's landscape and virtually destroyed all existing political institutions in Serbia. The loss of life was immense. The total Yugoslavian causalities from World War II and the year it took for Tito to consolidate his state number two million.[140] While incredibly traumatic for Belgrade's inhabitants and Serbians at large, this same process created the necessary political environment for Josip Broz Tito's small party of Yugoslav Communists to seize power in 1945.[141] As highlighted by Christopher Browning, the partisan uprising intensified the violence of the war in Yugoslavia by creating a "theatre of war" where a level of violence "unthinkable in places like Paris or Amsterdam" could take place against the backdrop of German reprisal shootings, partisan battles, and Serbian refugees flooding in from Ustaša territory.[142] Further, due to the German reprisal policy, as the partisan movement grew more successful so too did the number of Serbian Jewish, Roma, and communist victims. As partisans continued to overrun German outposts and kill German soldiers, German High Command ordered the death of fifty to one hundred "communists" per German

---

[138] Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 263.
[139] Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 270.
[140] John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 233.
[141] John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 201; Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 266. Tito's party are also referred to as the Partisans.
[142] Christopher Browning, "Sajmište as a European Site of Holocaust Remembrance," *Filozofija i Društvo* 23, no. 4 (January 1, 2012): 104.

soldier killed by insurgents.[143] This policy in action can be seen following the partisan killing of twenty-one German soldiers in Topola, when two officers drafted an order that "2100 prisoners in the concentration camps Sabac and Belgrade (predominately Jews and Communists)," a group solely comprised of Jews and Roma, be sent for the reprisal shooting.[144] Jelavich explains the reprisal policy as chiefly applied in Serbia; the most extreme implantation of these orders occurred in Serbia as compared to other Balkan states.[145] By 1943, the Partisans prevailed over other Yugoslavian forces fighting within the civil war, and with the help of the Allied Offensives of 1944 the party also prevailed over their German occupiers.[146] Tito worked with Stalin so that the Partisan forces could accompany the Red Army to liberate Belgrade.[147] The estimated death toll of the war is enormous. Before the war, Yugoslavia was home to 78,000 Jews, of which anywhere between 45,000 to 57,000 were killed by Nazi and Ustaša forces.[148] For all Yugoslavians, the death toll is anywhere between 867,000 to 1.2 million people, of which approximately 581,000 were civilians.[149] Within one year of liberation, Tito's Partisans defeated the

---

[143] Christopher Browning, "Sajmište as a European Site of Holocaust Remembrance," 101.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans*, 268.
[146] John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 205.
[147] Ibid, 226.
[148] "The JUST Act Report: Serbia" (U.S. Department of State), accessed July 5, 2021, https://www.state.gov/reports/just-act-report-to-congress/serbia/. The 78,000 figure includes approximately 4,000 stateless Jews from Austria, Germany, and Czechoslovakia who were living within Yugoslavia's borders during the war.
[149] "Yugoslavia: Post World War II," *Mass Atrocity Endings* (blog), accessed June 20, 2021, https://sites.tufts.edu/atrocityendings/2015/08/07/yugoslavia-post-wwii-assaults/. The number of total Serbian victims from the war is between 346,740 and 530,000; for Croats it is between 83,257 and 192,000; for Muslims between 32,300 and 103,000; and for Roma it is between 18,000 and 27,000. The death tolls calculated by Tito's regime following the war were often inflated to bolster the number of victims of fascism, which lent the new communist state its legitimacy. Similarly, Serbian nationalists appropriated the inflated number not as a

battling domestic forces and established the new Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which lasted until a series of bloody wars that began in 1991.

Born from the destruction of World War II, Tito's new regime manipulated the state's memory of the recent past to establish a nation founded on "brotherhood and unity," and in doing so, the regime failed to appropriately memorialize the devastating losses experienced by Yugoslavians at the hands of their (now) fellow statesmen, the Croatian *ustaša*, as well as the Nazis.[150] The suffering experienced during the Holocaust does not fit into the "big narration about the glorious struggle for liberation and the glorious partisan fight," explains historian Jovan Byford, so the Yugoslavian state did not systematically preserve all important Holocaust sites, like Sajmište. Instead, beginning the 1950s, Yugoslavia only participated in commemorative efforts located in surrounding European countries or memorialized Italian-run camps within Croatia with the aim of emphasizing Yugoslavia's participating in the larger European anti-fascist resistance and "securing the country's place in the concert of European resistance movements."[151]

These memorialization efforts in the 1950s also included nascent plans for memorial complex at Jasenovac, the most infamous series of Ustaša death camps. Established in tandem with the fascist Independent State of Croatia in 1941, the Jasenovac complex was the largest string of camps in Croatia, located on the bank of the

---

representation of collective suffering, but to emphasize a sense of Serbian collective victimhood. Stipe Odak and Andriana Benčić, "Jasenovac—A Past That Does Not Pass," 811.

[150] John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as History*, 221; 227; 233.Additionally, major violence accompanied the installation of the new regime (example: Bleiburg Massacre), which has to defeat the domestic forces still postured against it. Lampe argues Tito's nation-building project left legacies in each respective Yugoslav country that would "return to haunt Tito's Yugoslavia after his death."

[151] Heike Karge, "Sajmište, Jasenovac, and the Social Frames of Remembering and Forgetting," *Filozofija i Drustvo* 23, no. 4 (2012): 110.

Sava River approximately sixty miles south of Zagreb.[152] Jasenovac was a notoriously cruel and torturous concentration camp complex where 83,145 people were systematically murdered by the Ustaša.[153] Though the number of victims is highly contested, more than half of the known victims (47,627) were Serbian.[154] Serbs were actively targeted by the Ustaša due to their status as "politically incompatible elements."[155] Additionally, between 12,000 and 20,000 Jews, between 15,000 and 20,000 Roma, and between 5,000 and 12,000 political opponents (most frequently ethnic Croats and Muslims) were killed in the camp.[156] Despite the camp's history, which directly challenged Tito's desired narrative of brotherhood, unity, and partisan glory, a memorial was built in the early 1960s. Even though the Jasenovac memorial is an outlier in terms of Yugoslavian Holocaust memorialization, the treatment of Jasenovac is still paradigmatic of both Yugoslavia's politics of memory during the communist period and the contemporary Serbian state's reaction to it.

The Jasenovac memorial, built in the early 1960s, was the first Yugoslavian attempt to memorialize victims killed in camps within Yugoslavian borders and operated by now-Yugoslavs (former *Ustaše*).[157] Though the architectural plans were initially

---

[152] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Jasenovac," in *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, accessed June 20, 2021, https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/jasenovac. The camps included: Krapje, Brocica, Ciglana, Kozara, and Stara Gradiška.
[153] Stipe Odak and Andriana Benčić, "Jasenovac—A Past That Does Not Pass," 808.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid.
[156] United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Jasenovac," in *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, accessed June 20, 2021, https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/jasenovac. Additionally, the Croat authorities murdered between 320,000 and 340,000 ethnic Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia.
[157] Heike Karge, "Sajmište, Jasenovac, and the Social Frames of Remembering and Forgetting," 109. One other concentration camp, Banjica which is located within Belgrade, was given a museum in 1969. However, Banjica was not a death camp like Jasenovac or Sajmište – it

fraught with ideological differences due to contested historical narratives of the war, a memorial called the "Stone Flower," designed by Belgrade architect Bogdan Bogdanović, was erected at Jasenovac. President of the committee tasked with devising the memorial, (Committee for the Marking and Renovation of Historical Sites of the War of People's Liberation), Aleksandar Ranković, explains in his own words in 1960 the lack of specificity in Yugoslavian memory politics in the context of Jasenovac: "If we build a memorial, why should we do so in Jasenovac? It would be a memorial not only for the victims of Jasenovac, but more generally for the victims in Yugoslavia."[158] From the discussion surrounding the commemoration of Jasenovac's victims within the planning committee, other aspects of Yugoslavian policy of remembrance like the prioritization of partisan victims come to the fore. From these discussions, it is unclear who committed violence and against whom. Instead, Tito's Yugoslavia used the memorialization of Jasenovac to highlight the common experience of the war by obscuring unique, national experiences, keeping in line with the general policy of centering the "partisan hero" in World War II narratives.[159] The narrative of heroism and partisan resistance threaded into Jasenovac's commemorative media stems from Tito's Partisan forces liberating the camp complex in early May 1945. [160] Since the 1980s, Serbian nationalists took Tito's inflated

imprisoned partisan Serbs, Jews, and Roma which were killed as mass shootings at firing ranges at Jajinci, Marinkova Bara, and the Jewish Cemetery in Belgrade.

[158] Ibid, 116.

[159] Heike Karge, "Sajmište, Jasenovac, and the Social Frames of Remembering and Forgetting," *Filozofija i Drustvo* 23, no. 4 (2012): 108. The memorial is a "steel rose." It is very bare on the outside but hosts a museum underneath the monument. On the monument's plaque, there is no mention of any victims.

[160] Ibid.

death tolls and ran with them, using it "to emphasize the sense of collective victimhood of their own people but also to depict others a perennial enemy."[161]

In post-Yugoslav Serbia, Jasenovac serves as a topic of continual debate and reimagining as a site of Serbian suffering; however, other Serbian sites involved in the Holocaust lack the same level of attention.[162] This response toward Jasenovac may be an overcompensation for the lack of remembrance paid to any specific victim by Tito's regime or simply a political strategy to isolate Serbs, but then why are other testaments to Serbian suffering under Nazi occupation, like the Sajmište complex, left almost completely unpreserved? In the same way the unadulterated narrative of Serb, Jewish, and Roma suffering at Jasenovac at the hands of Croatians failed to suit Tito's vision of Yugoslavia's memory of the war, what has prevented the incorporation of a concentration camp just kilometers from the city center into the commemorative landscape of Belgrade? Sajmište captures all the various dynamics of Belgrade's theatre of war, and its current existence allows for Serbians to interact tangibly with the memory of World War II. Viewing Sajmište as a case study of Belgrade's experience of World War II illustrates both the contemporary Serbian state's and the Serbian's public's changing relationship to the memory of the war. Further, tracing the changes from Sajmište's inception to the present-day provides a strong example of the contemporary politics of memory delimiting the commemoration of World War II sites in Belgrade.

---

[161] Stipe Odak and Andriana Benčić, "Jasenovac—A Past That Does Not Pass," 810.
[162] Milica Stojanovic, "Serbian President Plans WWII Jasenovac Memorial with Bosnian Serbs," Balkan Insight, August 26, 2020, https://balkaninsight.com/2020/08/26/serbian-president-plans-wwii-jasenovac-memorial-with-bosnian-serbs/.

The Holocaust in Belgrade: The Case of Sajmište

The remnants of the Sajmište concentration camp, the final destination for a great number of its 31,972 prisoners, sits on the left bank of the Sava River just a few minutes' walk from the city center.[163] As its Serbian name suggests, the Staro Sajmište compound once served as the national fairgrounds and centuries before as a battleground for Hungarians and Ottomans.[164] The location's use in Yugoslavian state building before the war and its treatment following the war makes Sajmište a window into Belgrade's complex memory of World War Two, which serves as both a painful and glorious moment in Serbian and Yugoslavian history respectively. Following World War I, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes opened an international competition for the masterplan of Belgrade, including development of the left bank of the Sava. Though no winner was selected, the plans for the left bank of the river were eventually carried out after a bridge was constructed across the Sava in 1935, connecting what would become New Belgrade to the city center.[165] The building project was funded by the government and organized by the Belgrade Society for Organizing Fairs and Exhibitions (Društvo za

[163] Gašić, Ranka, "The Old Belgrade Fairground: Judenlager Semlin a Place of Intentional Oblivion?," *Istorija 20. Veka* 29, no. 2 (1983):139. 1/3 died from hunger, illness, or were killed by guards.

[164] The location is currently called "Staro Sajmište," meaning "Old Fairgrounds" in Serbian. Before it was replaced in the 1950s, it was called Sajmište.

[165] Ranka Gašić, "The Old Belgrade Fairground," 135. Two plans considered, and emblematic of the trends in the submissions, were submitted by the Belgrade city architect, Djordje Kovaljevski, and a group of Austrian architects. Kovaljevski's plan, titled "The Illustrative plan of the Sava left bank city," envisioned a new settlement on the left bank of the Sava intertwining with the city of Zemun, the Great War Island (just across the river from Kalemegdan), and the old city of Belgrade. The Austrian plan, titled "Singidunum novissima," separated the new city from the old and offered a more modern design for the left bank, with a grid plan, parks, and the fairground. Only the plan for the fairground was carried out.

priredjivanje sajma I izložbi), who selected architects Milivoje Tričković, Djordje Lukić, and Rajko Tatić to oversee and execute the design. The fairground, which opened in July 1937, consisted of five pavilions, a central tower, a restaurant, a management building, and some auxiliary buildings. Additionally, the site housed "foreign pavilions" representing Italy, Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia, and each pavilion was designed by an architect from their respective country.[166] From the opening celebration and first international fair in 1937, the site grew into "one of the most important" fairgrounds in southeast Europe, hosting nearly 290,000 visitors in 1940 alone.[167]

In September 1940, sixty-nine barracks were added to the fairgrounds to house temporarily 12,000 German civilians from Bessarabia who were being sent to Poland.[168] This addition to the site foreshadowed the future use of the fairgrounds starting just a year later, when the German army defeated Yugoslavia, set up a military administration in Serbia, and gave the Independent State of Croatia jurisdiction of the fairground.[169] Though within Croatian jurisdiction, the Serb puppet government under Nazi occupation transformed the fairgrounds to Judenlager Semlin, a Jewish concentration camp run by Gestapo and a Serbian police force from 1940 to 1942.[170] The numbers of Jewish

---

[166] Ibid.; Slobodanka Ast, "Patriotic Tears and Calculations" (Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, n.d.), http://www.helsinki.org.rs/hcharter_t39a03.html. Pavilions dedicated to Turkey and Germany were erected in 1938 and 1939 respectively. Sajmište was more than a site of commerce, but also of politics due to the presence of these pavilions. The biggest pavilions, allocated to Italy and Germany, mirrored Yugoslavia's move closer to fascist Germany and Italy under Stojadinovic.
[167] Ibid, 136.
[168] Ibid, 137.
[169] Christopher Browning, "Sajmište as a European Site of Holocaust Remembrance," 100.
[170] "The JUST Act Report: Serbia" (U.S. Department of State), accessed July 5, 2021, https://www.state.gov/reports/just-act-report-to-congress/serbia/. Serbia fell to Nazi occupation in 1941. After, a Serb puppet government was created under former Yugoslav General Milan Nedić.

prisoners and executions at Sajmište during that period are contested, with some sources stating around 6,400 and others 8,000.[171] As Yugoslavian resistance forces intensified, Nazi authorities began to liquidate the Judenlager in order to transform it into an Anhaltelager, a reception point for captured resistance members waiting to be transported to labor camps in Germany, in an effort to suppress the resistance.[172] To that end, the Third Reich implemented their first experiment with a gas chamber, transforming Sajmište into the only death camp outside of Poland, Germany, the occupied Baltic countries, and the Soviet Union.[173] The experiment took shape in the form of gas vans, initially developed to assuage the psychological burden of murdering women and children as reported by the *Einsatzgruppen* in the Soviet Union.[174] An average of three hundred people were murdered per day in these vans, which were driven by German Security Police through the dense downtown of Belgrade to the burial site on the other side of the city.[175] Most of the gas vans' victims were women and children, as most Jewish and Roma men had already been exterminated by mass shooting, per the German reprisal policy. The distress to Belgrade locals caused by the death camp just minutes from the city center intensified as Gestapo officers carried deceased prisoners across the

---

This puppet government nominally supervised the Serbian regime and police forces under Nazi occupation.

[171] Ranka Gašić, "The Old Belgrade Fairground," 138; "Murder of the Jews of the Balkans and Slovakia," accessed May 3, 2021, balkans-and-slovakia.html. Also, approximately 600 Roma people imprisoned, who were mostly released by March 1942.

[172] Ranka Gašić, "The Old Belgrade Fairground," 137-138. Notably, Sajmište was the only Jewish concentration camp to represent that in its name: Judenlager.

[173] Christopher Browning, "Sajmište as a European Site of Holocaust Remembrance," 103.

[174] Ibid, 103.

[175] Ibid; Ranka Gašić, "The Old Belgrade Fairground," 138.

frozen Sava River for all the people in Belgrade to see.[176] Such distress, engendered by intimately witnessing genocide in progress, demands some type of memorialization to allow Belgraders to come to terms with such a gruesome past. Once a majority of Belgrade's Jews were exterminated– 15,060 of an original 17,200 Jews in Belgrade– Sajmište solely imprisoned political prisoners until an Allied bombing in April 1944.[177] The bombing left the fairground buildings heavily damaged, and the incoming liberation forces made the site unattractive to Croatian forces. At the end of the war, only the administration building, the Italian pavilion, the central tower, and the Spasic Foundation pavilion remained.[178]

The new Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia sought to leave this brutal chapter behind and start a new and better world, which required the total annihilation of the past especially in locations that anchor the past in the present, like Sajmište. From 1946 to 1952 as part of a five-year plan to build New Belgrade, millions of young adults working in "youth brigades" developed the left bank of the Sava, and their various building projects were directed

Figure 3: Staro Sajmiste in 2019, with a small playground and boarded up windows.

[176] Ibid.
[177] Ibid.
[178] Ibid.

from their headquarters located in remaining buildings of the fairground, where the concentration camp had stood.[179] The authorities were against rebuilding the fairground in the same location, perhaps seeking to abandon both memories of the Holocaust and the first Yugoslavia, so a new fairground was constructed on the right bank of the Sava in the 1950s. In the meantime, architects competing for government bids offered various plans for transforming Sajmište into a Modern Gallery in 1948, a Military Museum in 1949-50, and an Opera in 1971; however, none of the plans were realized.[180]

In 1987, the government classified Sajmište as a "cultural heritage" site due to public demand and instituted annual ceremonies to commemorate Sajmište's late inmates, which led Serbians to believe the site would soon be given a formal development.[181] The development of the site seemed eminent in 1992, when the City Council released a new detailed plan for a commemorative complex, which included restoring the old fairground to its pre-war state to use for commercial and touristic purposes and creating a museum of genocide. The projected plan, which revives both of the site's unrelated past functions, demonstrates the state's clear misunderstanding of the public's desire for commemoration, which will be discussed in the last segment of this chapter. The state underlined this misunderstanding by failing to actualize the plan once again.

---

[179] Slobodanka Ast, "Patriotic Tears and Calculations" (Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, n.d.), http://www.helsinki.org.rs/hcharter_t39a03.html. During this time, the remaining parts of the compound were used to organize party courses, discussions, League of Communist Youth of Yugoslavia conferences, night schools, performances, and concerts by the Radio Belgrade Symphony Orchestra.
[180] Ranka Gašić, "The Old Belgrade Fairground," 139. The Gallery was planned in 1948, the Museum in 1949-1950, and the Opera in 1971.
[181] Ibid; Mladenka Ivanković, "The 'Sajmište' (Exhibition Grounds) in Semlin, Serbia," 62.

Milošević's Serbia reinterpreted Sajmište through a memory of World War Two centered on a narrative of Serbian suffering, leverageable by Milosevic to achieve political dominance. The monument to commemorate Sajmište erected in 1995 makes evident the political instrumentalization of Sajmište. Designed in a brutalist style by Miša Popović, the massive, bronze monument is an abstract depiction of two parrying hands reaching into the sky stands outside the main compound of the concentration camp directly next to the Sava River and a football practice stadium.[182] In the final years of Milosević's presidency, Serbian nationalists continued to appropriate Sajmište as a symbol of Serb, Jewish, and Roma suffering at the hands of the Independent State of Croatia and the Ustatša regime as a politically expedient way to mobilize the populace.[183] For example, both Milošević and the Serbian Academy of Arts and Science supported an idea to construct a "Museum of Death" dedicated to the victims of Ustaša terror.[184] Milosevic built a state and national identity based on the interethnic hatred between Yugoslav peoples, like Croats and Serbs, and it allowed him to justify brutal military actions while in power. The practice of curating memory sites like Sajmište to complement desired political transformations follow Tito's minimal use of the landscape, despite the obvious difference in messaging. The monument at Sajmište itself is a prime example of the contemporary Serbian state's continuation of the Yugoslav policy of reframing the memory of the Holocaust, specifically by minimizing the unique history of Sajmište– namely its use as a death camp and its nominal *Ustaša* control– and redirecting

[182] The last time I visited in December 2019, the platform the monument is sitting on is covered in graffiti.
[183] Slobodanka Ast, "Patriotic Tears and Calculations" (Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, n.d.), http://www.helsinki.org.rs/hcharter_t39a03.html.
[184] Ibid.

the visitors' attention, in this case to other sites of suffering around Yugoslavia.[185] The redirection of attention is most salient at the end of the plaque, which is also dedicated to the primarily Serb victims of the infamous Jasenovac. The plaque on the base of the monument reads, as of 2019:

> This is the place where the Nazi concentration camp at the Old Belgrade Fair used to be during the occupation of Yugoslavia between 1941 and 1944. War crimes and genocide against around one hundred thousand patriots, members of Yugoslav National Liberation Movement, children, women and elderly, were committed here. Nearly half of the prisoners were killed either in the concentration camp or at the mass execution sties like Jajinci, Bežankjska Kosa, Jabuka and Ostrovačka Ada.[186] Many of them were relocated to death camps throughout the German occupied Europe. The victims were mostly Serbs, Jews and Roma. This memorial is dedicated to all of them. It is also dedicated to the victims of the notorious Ustashi concentration camp of Jasenovac, victims of Hungarian occupation who were washed ashore in Belgrade, as well as the heroic resistance to the Nazi terror and all Yugoslav citizens, victims of genocide.

In the Yugoslav style of World War II remembrance, the victims are discussed within a hierarchy, whereby the commemoration of civilian victims becomes secondary to Partisan victims.[187] Interestingly it also first presents the civilians without identifiers– as "children, women and elderly"– then later identifies the victims as "Serbs, Jews and

---

[185] It is important to note that this memorial is about a five-minute walk from the actual Sajmište complex. The complex has not been touched since the 1940s. The building is dilapidated, the windows boarded up, and Roma currently live in it.

[186] Like Jasenovac, the Jajinci and Jabuka have abstract memorials that fail to speak to the specificity of the sites' histories. The Jajinci memorial is an odd-shaped metal figure atop a large podium, and it is accompanied by a plaque that states "More than 80,000 Serbs, Jews, Roma and other anti-fascist were executed in this area during WWII." The plaque was installed in 1951 and it includes no mention of the use of the site as a mass grave for Jewish and Roma women and children killed on the drive from Sajmiste to Jajinci. The memorial at Jabuka was created in 1981 and is much larger than the other memorials and includes a small museum; however, the memorial and museum was much smaller and less comprehensive than advocated for by the local governments and regional veteran's association. The only plaque at Jabuka reads: "The stars were in the beginning, the stars will be there at the end, red will the furrow be." Throughout the 2000s, the memorial was neglected, stolen from, and the museum was abandoned and destroyed.

[187] Mladenka Ivanković, "The 'Sajmište' (Exhibition Grounds) in Semlin, Serbia," 61.

Roma." Additionally, "All Yugoslav citizens" become interpreted as sacrificing themselves for the anti-fascist cause.[188] The contemporary Serbian state introduces a new manipulation to the memory of Sajmište, connecting the Nazi-executed suffering in Sajmište to the atrocities committed in Jasenovac by Croatian Ustaše forces, building something of a memory bridge between the two sites. This addition near the end of plaque means Serbian visitors may leave the plaque thinking of Jasenovac. Finally, though "victims of genocide" is tagged on at the end, it noticeably lacks its necessary "Jewish, Roma, and Serb" descriptor. Instead, what is clear is that all the victims were all citizen of Yugoslavia.

In the twenty years since Milosevic's overthrow, Sajmište frequently appeared in Serbian news due to outcries from the Serbian public following the commercial development and use of the site. The sale of Sajmište land and the development of private business on the site demonstrates the clear disconnect between the states' intentions with Sajmište versus what the public's desire for Sajmište, as reported by Serbian news sources. In the election following the overthrow of Milošević and again in the 2008 election, Serbian politician Milutin Mrkonjic included Sajmište in his platform, advocating for the site to be transformed into a "Europolis" by building a new city center to attract "25 billion Euro investment" and secure "100,000 new jobs."[189] Mrkonjic's vision was never realized, but other business found homes in Sajmište. In the mid-2000s, a restaurant opened in the pavilion that was formerly used as the camp's morgue, and

---

[188] Ibid.

[189] Slobodanka Ast, "Patriotic Tears and Calculations" (Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, n.d.), http://www.helsinki.org.rs/hcharter_t39a03.html.

dance club named Poseidon (*Posejdon*) opened in the Spasić pavilion.[190] In 2007, a British rock bank, Kosheen, organized a concert at the Posejdon club, leading to massive public outrage.[191] The "Kosheen scandal" brought the misuse of Sajmište back into popular discourse and marked the beginning of a public call for proper commemoration.[192] In 2018, the government under the current president, Aleksandar Vucic, intensified public dissatisfaction by opening a party office in a building adjacent to the Spacić pavilion, and endeavored to assuage public outrage by promising three future museums: "one dedicated to the suffering of the Jews, another for the Serbs and a third for the Roma."[193] Like other plans for Sajmište in the past, no museum materialized; instead, a private business opened a kindergarten just a year later in the camp's former hospital.[194] Again, this led to public outcry, prompting legislators to introduce and pass a bill in Serbian parliament to establish a memorial center at Staro Sajmište.[195] So far, nothing has come from the bill.

---

[190] Ibid; Mladenka Ivanković, "The 'Sajmište' (Exhibition Grounds) in Semlin, Serbia," 63-64.
[191] Ibid, 64.
[192] "Death Camp Concert Is Canceled - The New York Times," *The New York Times*, November 5, 2007, https://www-nytimes-com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/2007/11/05/arts/music/05arts-DEATHCAMPCON_BRF.html%20%20%20%20https://balkaninsight.com/2018/01/24/serbia-s-progressives-open-office-at-wwii-camp-s-location-01-24-2018/.
[193] Filip Rudić, "Serbia Ruling Party Opens Office at Concentration Camp," Balkan Insight, January 24, 2018, https://balkaninsight.com/2018/01/24/serbia-s-progressives-open-office-at-wwii-camp-s-location-01-24-2018/.
[194] Aleks Eror, "Outcry as Preschool Sets up in Former Nazi Concentration Camp," the Guardian, August 14, 2019, http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/aug/14/outcry-as-preschool-sets-up-in-former-nazi-concentration-camp.
[195] "Serbia MPs Vote for Nazi Concentration Camp Site Memorial | Balkan Insight," accessed June 20, 2021, https://balkaninsight.com/2020/02/24/serbia-mps-vote-for-memorial-at-nazi-concentration-camp-site/. The law was passed with a vote of 159 out of 250. Many people, including the Eastern European Affairs director of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre, believe the bill "marks the final stage of the preparations of many years…to properly honour the memory of the numerous victims of the camp." Similar bills have been considered by Serbia's parliament before,

A Dark Place: Consequences of the Politicization of Sajmište

The significance of Sajmište as a World War II memory site speaks through the contemporary Serbian state's clear efforts to avoid proper memorialization as well as the public's disapproval of the current use of site. The present-day government inherited a run-down, tenant-occupied compound, where unspeakable atrocities occurred while Belgraders watched. The government inherited this compound in a political climate shaped by a regime which demonstrated the usefulness of the landscape in reinterpreting the past, and it continued on a path of reinterpretation. Instead of reducing the victims of World War II to nameless Partisans as Tito did, or instrumentalizing sites like Sajmište to call focus to suffering at Jasenovac, like Milosevic, Vucic's government has executed its reinterpretation of the past through a policy of erasure. While public pressure and the number of researchers creating projects to memorialize Sajmište in place of a state-led memorial continue to grow, the sitting government repeatedly promises some type of memorialization without ever delivering.[196]

The silencing of Sajmište's landscape embarrassed and saddened the young-adult Serbians interviewed for this study, who echoed the public outrage expressed in Serbian news outlets for the past decade. The shame of Sajmište as it exists currently and the need for proper memorialization dominated my conversations on the topic, and numerous interviewees directly targeted Yugoslavian politics of memory as the source of the

---

including one instance in 2017. The Holocaust Legislation proposed provoked criticism for "glossing over the role Belgrade's Nazi-allied WWII administration" in places like Sajmište.
[196] Research projects like: A Visit to Staro Sajmište, http://www.staroSajmište.info/en/project/about-us.html.

present-day issues with Sajmište. While every interviewees' dedication to a respectful and accurate memorialization of the former concentration camp, none mentioned the political signaling evident in Milosevic's use of the camp during his presidency in the 1990s and Vucic's later use in the past few years. Despite the absence of conversation on the explicit politicization of Sajmište, every interviewee discussed Sajmište as implicitly tied to politics. Despite the obvious contradiction in their statements, the interviewees located the abstract force of "politics" as preventing proper memorialization of Sajmište, but they also attributed Sajmište's contemporary significant to politics as well.

Shameful Remembrance

Though only a few of the interviewees were local to Belgrade, everyone was painfully aware of Sajmište and other Holocaust-related sites in Belgrade. Their familiarity allowed each to provide their own perspective on Sajmište, though one major consensus throughout is the shame the unremembered concentration camp brings Belgrade. One interviewee became particularly enraged, stating that she could not believe "in the twenty-first century you have these places that have no sign, no museum, people pass it like its nothing" and "that people build pizzerias there and eat pizza without knowing, or *pretending* not to know, what happened there."[197] Others followed the same line of questioning. One wondered how the state could let a place "so relevant go into such disarray" after characterizing Sajmište current state "slum-like," and others categorized Sajmište as a "big mistake of the country," "inappropriate," and a "huge

[197] Ilma Kitivojevic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Prije Polje, Serbia, February 16, 2021: 1:08-1:10

shame" to the country.[198] The shame felt by the interviewees stems from their intimate understanding of the importance a site like Sajmište has, both to individual's memory of the World War II and Serbia's collective memory of the war, as well as their knowledge of the camp's history. One interviewee, a one of the few Belgrade locals, discussed how the camp plays a large part is the "visual history of the city," adding that the camp has "much to tell" that is simply being left silenced.[199] This silence in the landscape combined with the interviewees' knowledge of the industrialized extermination of Jews and Roma at the site lends to the view of Sajmište as a "dark place."[200] One interviewee expanded on this idea, explaining that as a passenger on the tram that passes right next to the former concentration camp, "each time [she goes] by, some strange energy comes through [her] body."[201]

The interviewees unanimously agreed that memorializing Sajmište's victims properly would be a step toward justice for Serbs, Jews, and Roma, and highlighted the practical and political issues they see as barring the development of a "proper monument." Beyond emphatically stating that people "shouldn't eat pizza on the ground where people were burned," many interviewees highlight the efficacy of a balanced and appropriate monument in educating the populace and respectfully commemorating the memory of the camp.[202] Primarily, the monument would bring Sajmište into "Belgrade's

---

[198] Nikola Stanojcic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 22, 2021: 1:09-1:10; Anonymous 1, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 16, 2021: 50:12; Milos, 1:14. Dušan Ristic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 20, 2021.
[199] Sanja Vojvodic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 23, 2021: 46:22.
[200] Sanja Vojvodic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 23, 2021: 46:22.
[201] Ivana Dinic, interviwed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, March 1, 2021: 42:39.
[202] Ilma Kitivojevic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Prije Polje, Serbia, February 16, 2021. Though people were not burned at Sajmište, the sentiment is still applicable.

psyche," where it is currently absent, by reintroducing the camp into modern discourse and creating a landmark tourist, locals, and even schoolchildren can visit and use as a learning tool.[203] When thinking of what this monument or commemorative compound might look like, a couple of interviewees offered Germany's preservation of concentration camps as a means to testify to the history of the Holocaust as an exemplarily model for successful reconciliation with the past.[204] Specifically, one interviewee declared: "I mean, look at the Germans. They made peace with their past and have prosperity. Look at us– we are all frustrated. It's easy to just become one of the nationalists."[205]

Interestingly, this interviewee's comment could be understood as equating Serbian guilt for the Srebrenica genocide in the 1990s with the German guilt for the Holocaust. However, based on the entirety of the interview, I understand this interviewee's comment as a critique of Yugoslavian memory politics, which she views as failing to effectively assuage the interethnic tensions caused by the war. From her view, World War II and the Holocaust in Yugoslavia created conflict between Yugoslavian peoples, specifically Croatians and Serbians. Instead of making "peace" with the "past", Tito pursued his brotherhood and unity nation-building project causing Serbs to feel as if their suffering was ignored. Once Tito was gone, the unassuaged ethnic conflicts boiled over with the increase of nationalism, specifically Serbian nationalism. The frustration of

---

[203] Nikola Stanojcic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 22, 2021: 1:10.
[204] Anonymous 2, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 8, 2021; Ilma Kitivojevic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Prije Polje, Serbia, February 16, 2021: 1:18; Sladjan Rankic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Banja Luka, Bosnia-Hercegovina, February 9, 2021: 44:58.
[205] Ilma Kitivojevic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Prije Polje, Serbia, February 16, 2021: 1:19.

decades of unacknowledged suffering at the hands of Croatian made it “easy” to become a nationalist, as Serbian nationalists like Milosevic spoke directly to the feeling of Serbian isolation and victimhood.

The interviewees did not offer a specific physical description of a potential monument outside of citing examples in Germany, but many discussed the various issues barring the memorialization of Sajmište with varying degrees of interest. One interviewee apathetically stated that the only reason a proper monument doesn’t currently exists is, “politics, I guess,” while another provided a lengthy consideration of the various ideological disputes that would arise from a new monument, questioning in a self-patronizing way if it would be a “monument to the suffering of humanity and the perils of extreme nationalism? Or to the continuous Serbian collective suffering since we are– you know– exploited and exterminated by everyone that hates us?”[206] Others mentioned the camp sits on “prime real estate” and fears its future use as the site of “luxury condos.”[207] In addition to the sadness engendered by Sajmište as it currently stands, the understandable frustration expressed here also relates to the transition from a communist to capitalist economy, whereby free market capitalism without interference reins.

Some interviewees believed more than a traditional monument would be necessary to commemorate the site of the concentration camp, highlighting the need to bring the lives of individuals into Sajmište’s memorialization and bring attention to Sajmište beyond its presence in contemporary Serbian politics as a medium to reinterpret

[206] Djordje, 46:23; Sladjan Rankic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Banja Luka, Bosnia-Hercegovina, February 9, 2021: 44:58.
[207] Nikola Stanojcic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 22, 2021: 1:11; Sladjan Rankic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Banja Luka, Bosnia-Hercegovina, February 9, 2021: 45:30.

the memory of World War Two. “Real acknowledgement must happen” to properly remember Sajmište, and real acknowledgement takes form in commemorative materials– a sprawling monument or commemorative complex at Sajmište, a movie, a book– focusing on individual testimonies to make the narrative of suffering more concrete to people interacting with the memory of Sajmište.[208] Stories of families directly affected by Sajmište should be collected and incorporated into the memorial, and multiple interviewees stressed the need to bring Serbian students to the site to learn and interact with the relic of the war’s suffering within the city, though many of them had not visited themselves. One interviewee, who agreed with the need to appropriately commemorate World War II as a “breakthrough event” that profoundly “shaped the landscape of the city,” also warned of the need to be sensitive with changing the shape of commemorative landscape at Sajmište.[209] She advocated for creating a comprehensive memorial with historical details presented according to a consensus of historians, but she worried “overwhelming attention” toward Sajmište may provoke “opposite reactions” and “have repercussions.”[210] So whatever is to be done, it must be done sensitively, commemorate all victims regardless of nationality, and actually improve upon the current state of Sajmište.

The Will to Change: Yugoslavian and Contemporary Politics of Memory

---

[208] Anonymous 2, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 8, 2021; Ivana Dinic, interviwed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, March 1, 2021: 44:45. Serbian company just produced a movie, Dara of Jasenovac, that was mentioned by Sava as a great learning tool for the topic of World War Two.
[209] Sanja Vojvodic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 23, 2021: 47:21.
[210] Ibid: 48:00.

While the interviewees' tendency to focus on individual narratives in commemorative efforts of Sajmište and their warning to be sensitive in the process due to potential political repercussions may be a response to the Yugoslav policy of remembrance, none of the interviewees directly connected the modern state's use of Sajmište to their feeling of its shameful preservation. The interviewees discussed the misuse of Sajmište simply as a product of Yugoslav policy of remembrance but did not extend this governmental critique to the modern Serbian state, which also reframes the memory of the Holocaust at Sajmište. They did, however, discuss the impact of Yugoslavian memory politics and its lasting detrimental effects as well as general standards by which to judge an item or site's need for preservation. The standards provided by the interviewees do not always correlate to their recommendations for Sajmište's commemoration– perhaps suggesting locations of exceptional suffering require exceptional treatment– but most frequently do align. The interviewees' collective shame of Sajmište's erasure is a clear break from the state's use of the site.

When discussing the shame of Sajmište, the themes of politics and Yugoslavia guided most of my conversations. One interviewee, who personally believes the suffering of all ethnicities should be remembered, cited Yugoslavian politics of memory as the source of Sajmište's ruin, stating that "people did not have the audacity to say to the communist regime that those places should be memorialized in a different way" due to the fear of sowing the seeds of ethnic hatred in Yugoslavia.[211] Instead, the topic of Sajmište and World War II in general became something to "put under the rug" for

[211] Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 1:15:41.

politicians and individuals.[212] A different interviewee spoke on this topic at length, explaining the "communists didn't remember for the sake of brotherhood" and to "weaken the most powerful state in the Federation" to maintain the balance of power.[213] More than the minimization of Serbian suffering, this interviewee continued by highlighting the ways Serbian "sacrifice" before and during the first Yugoslavia was been downplayed in the second, but mostly attributed this failure to Serbian communists.[214] The cyclical nature of domestic violence was cited by one interviewee, who mentioned how "Serbs and Croats killed each other, and were told to forget during Yugoslavia, and then are killing each other again in the 1990s."[215] This observation, which puts the main issue of Yugoslavian and contemporary Serbian politics of memory simply, makes the fact that not a single interviewee discussed the currently existing Sajmište memorial even more surprising. A few interviewees questioned if Sajmište was marked at all, clearly demonstrating the ineffectiveness of the current memorial.[216]

In terms of marking Sajmište, the interviewees provided a general rubric to qualify items or site for historic preservation in Belgrade, and their prescriptions for Sajmište mostly fits the criteria. Almost every interviewee stressed the importance of preserving items that attest to both positive and negative moments in history, so that the items may present a balanced view of the past.[217] One interviewee stressed this point,

[212] Ibid: 1:16.
[213] Dušan Ristic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, Febraury 20, 2021: 1:05.
[214] Ibid: 1:06.
[215] Anonymous 1, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 16, 2021: 54:00.
[216] Djordje Mihajlovic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Banja Luka, Bosnia-Herzegovina, February 9, 2021: 45:17.
[217] Sava Mitrovic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 28, 2021: 48:51; Sanja Vojvodic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 23, 2021: 53:00.

mentioning that "ideological perspectives" should not determine what is preserved, but rather every item of "value" should be preserved so that both good and bad may be taught from the items.[218] The "value" of an item or location comes from its previous use as a national symbol, its designation by a politician, or its evident ability to represent the nation's past.[219] From this balanced material archive, a consensus of the past can be reached, which the interviewees discussed as a necessary step in the process of preservation and historical representation.[220] The interviewees demonstrated a tendency to champion the individual once again, mentioning the individual's superb ability to preserve familial items and the need to include stories of normal citizens in preserved materials.[221] Consensus was also present on the value of preservation, which revolves around progressing as a nation, keeping away future "tragedy," and its use as an educational tool.[222] Finally, one interviewee highlighted the efficacy of teaching history as a "visual phenomenon," especially in a city like Belgrade where you can see the various layers of "Byzantine culture, remnants of Socialist Yugoslavia, etc." as you walk through the city.[223] As such, these layers of history should not be erased, but rather should be taught and nurtured.

[218] Ibid.
[219] Sladjan Rankic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Banja Luka, Bosnia-Hercegovina, February 9, 2021: 46:24; Jovana, 37:30.
[220] Sava Mitrovic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 28, 2021: 52:51; Ivana Dinic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, March 1, 2021: 50:12; Sanja Vojvodic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 23, 2021: 51:00.
[221] Nikola Stanojcic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 22, 2021: 1:15.
[222] Ibid: 1:10; Anonymous 1, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 16, 2021.
[223] Sanja Vojvodic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 23, 2021: 28:58.

However, the same interviewee also pointed to the limitations of creating qualifications for preservation. She mentioned that in a "democratic society," each "generation has the right to evaluate and re-evaluate certain moments as worthy of preservation."[224] Other interviewees voiced similar concerned. One called attention to the fact that the value of an item or site can only be understood in hindsight, and more basically to the human tendency to try to forget painful or bad moments.[225] Items or sites relating to human suffering on such a massive scale, like World War II, require a "conscious effort from modern civilizations to actually try to remember."[226] The interviewees agree that a conscious effort has not been paid toward Sajmište; however, Sajmište demonstrates some issues in their rubric of preservation. Where does Sajmište figure into a democratic calculus of preservation? Prior generations have shown a will to disregard Sajmište, which the interviewees identified as morally wrong, a stain on the history of Belgrade. So, does Sajmište and other site of unthinkable brutality exists outside this framework? Unfortunately, Belgrade continues to struggle with the question of how to remember Sajmište. The interviewees often invoked a "general will to change," but so far this will has yet to reach Vucic's government or the old fairgrounds.

World War II is a complicated and revolutionary moment in Serbian history; it brings the end of the first Yugoslavia ruled by the Serbs and introduces a communist republic under Josip Broz Tito, where glorious national pasts were left behind in pursuit

[224] Sanja Vojvodic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 23, 2021: 49:41.
[225] Nikola Stanojcic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 22, 2021: 1:15.
[226] Ibid: 1:16.

of glorious internationalism. Under this regime, Tito's politics of memory made the individual experience of Serbian, Jewish, and Roma suffering into a common tragedy shared by all Yugoslav patriots. In fact, the experience was not "common," nor was it evenly shared. Not dissimilar to Tito's aim of casting Holocaust memorials in a partisan light, Serbian politicians in the 1990s targeted the issue of recognition through a policy of reframing achieved by half-recognizing sites of suffering within Belgrade while directing most commemorative efforts to sites of Serbian suffering in *Ustaša* run camps. Milosevic's Serbia added an essential layer to the remembrance of the Holocaust in Serbia: it must be connected to Serbian suffering at Jasenovac. In the present under Vucic, it appears any commemoration of the Holocaust has gone to the wayside of capitalist consumerism.[227] The manipulation of the landscape for political means by both regimes has left the public of Belgrade confused, apathetic, and in dispute over what "proper" memorialization even is.[228]

The complex of Sajmište is a microcosm of the larger issues surrounding World War II in Serbia. Tracing the history of the site from its inception, the observer sees the politicization of Holocaust sties and tensions between the state and public unfold time after time. One constant in the past decade is a public call for change. Serbian citizens, especially the young adults interviewed here, indicate the inability to move into the future as a capital city with an unmarked concentration camp. Further, private citizens fail to accept the state's continual policy of putting the Holocaust into the context of other

[227] This is an issue at other Holocaust sites in Belgrade, like Topovske Skupe, where Jewish and Roma men were executed by mass shooting.
[228] Sladjan Rankic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Banja Luka, Bosnia-Hercegovina, February 9, 2021: 45:15.

victims. This chapter is simply another form of Serbians calling on their government to remember Sajmište the way they do, as a place of unparalleled suffering requiring attention.

Chapter 4: "Civil War": Narratives Of The 1990s

It is impossible to speak of the present-day Serbian national identity without speaking of the 1990s wars; the nation of Serbia known today was borne out of the wars both in a literal and metaphorical sense. Literally, the wars finalized the dissolution of Yugoslavia with the goal of replacing the socialist federation with ethnically homogenized nation-states and redrew the map of the Balkans by way of the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords. Following Tito's death in 1980 and slightly before, tensions between republics increased and the presence of nationalism emerged in Serbian, Bosnian, and Croatian party leadership.[229] Without Tito to balance the various nations' competing political claims and the overwhelming surge of Serbian nationalism, the system started to crumble. Milošević, the leader of Serbia, consolidated Serbian power in Kosovo and Vojvodina to "bolster Serb influence within Yugoslavia," yet Yugoslavia was crumbling around Serbia as Slovenia, Croatia, then Bosnia declared their independence from the federation in 1991, officially marking the start of the war.[230] Under the guise of defending Yugoslavia and Serbian minorities in the region, Serbian leaders used the Yugoslav Army to wage a horrendously brutal war "to ensure permanent ethnic domination," primarily in the most ethnically diverse country, Bosnia-Hercegovina.[231] In an effort to defend their own peoples, Bosniak and Croat forces joined the fight, often expelling minority Serbian communities from their territory. Though war crimes were committed by these Bosniak and Croat forces, none compare to the scale and

[229] Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History* (Random House, Inc., 2000), 218.
[230] Mark Mazower, *The Balkans: A Short History,* 219.
[231] Ibid, 220.

violence of the Serbian war machine in Bosnia, including the Srebrenica Genocide and numerous other mass killings.[232]

Since the wars, a general will to properly deal with the past exists in Serbia and has been required from Serbia by the international community, yet the issue of properly memorializing the 1990s war is still heavily contested in Belgrade. This issue is particularly salient due to NATO's seventy-eight-day bombing campaign in Serbia, which was intended to end Milosevic's "moral catastrophe" in Kosovo near the end of the 1990s.[233] According to a Human Rights Watch report, the numbers of civilian victims range from 489 to 528. Serbs felt as if they were targeted for being backward and primitive, and the campaign ultimately worked to bring the population together, even in Belgrade where most citizens were unsupportive of Milošević's government.[234] In the September 2000 election, the Serbian electorate voted against Milošević, and instead of accepting the loss, Milošević sought to steal votes and stay in power. The opposition party led by Vojislav Koštunica organized a mass demonstration on the fifth of October, a now famous date in Serbian history for what came the next day. On October 6th, Milošević finally stepped down from power.[235] The following year, Milošević and ninety-three other Serbians were indicted in the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia due to their violations of international law during the war.[236]

---

[232] Relevant later, it is important to know that the Srebrenica Genocide was overseen by General Ratko Mladić.
[233] David A. Norris and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic, *Belgrade: A Cultural History*, 227.
[234] Ibid. The hostilities between NATO, Serbia, and Kosovo came to close in June 1999.
[235] Ibid, 231.
[236] "Key Figures of the Cases | International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia" (United Nations International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, May 2021),

The process of coming to terms with the past by means of the built environment is made even more difficult by Serbia's competing roles in the war. On one hand, Serbia is the clear aggressor, convicted of war crimes on an international level, and yet Serbians are also the victims of a NATO 1999 bombing campaign, which left Serbia's territory smaller and built environment scarred.[237] Further, Serbian nationalism and its focus on Serbian victimhood anticipated the war, and dealing with the horrific course of the wars and its consequences also serves as a touchstone for contemporary Serbian nationalism. The present-day iteration of Serbian nationalism still relies on the notion of Serbian victimhood, especially surrounding contested topics like the 1990s wars, despite the fact that Serbs controlled most of the might of the Yugoslav military arsenal and committed many of the wars' atrocities. As such, the efforts made by the contemporary Serbian government to memorialize the 1990s wars allow the historian to better understand how the state manipulates the memory of the wars to buttress a national identity centered on victimhood and isolation. The politicization of the 1990s by means of reframing the narrative of the war to foreground victimhood in place of proper memorialization is particularly important as reconciliation is bound up with memory of the war. So long as the memory of the 1990s remains contested, regional reconciliation is inaccessible.

This chapter investigates the discrepancies between the state's (lack of) efforts to memorialize the 1990s and the public's expectations as represented by the young adults interviewed for this study. The narrative provided by the landscape represents the state's

---

https://www.icty.org/sid/24. In total, 161 people were indicted. 94 were Serbian, 29 Croat, 9 Albanian, 9 Bosniak, 2 Macedonians, and 2 Montenegrins.

[237] Aleksandar Staničić, "Media Propaganda vs Public Dialogue: The Spatial Memorialisation of Conflict in Belgrade after the 1999 NATO Bombing," *The Journal of Architecture* 26, no. 3 (April 3, 2021): 371.

view of proper memorialization, which generally speaks to the state's policy of reframing the narrative of the wars of the 1990s. The outcome of this politics of memory, namely the promotion of Serbian victimhood, is a central component of contemporary Serbian nationalism, which instrumentalizes Serbian victimhood to redirect or silence claims of Serbian culpability for the atrocities of the 1990s. Contrastingly, the interviewees passionately discussed their prescriptions for remembrance and shared their hopes for the region if proper remembrance is achieved, all while eschewing Serbian nationalism. Because the wars are so politicized, even one's use of a specific name for the wars could possibly translate to specific political leanings. Throughout the chapter, I will be using the terms "Yugoslav Wars" and "1990s wars" to avoid misrepresenting any part of the wars nor draw comparisons with prior wars in the region.

Understanding the Wars through Belgrade's Landscape

Monuments to Serbian victims of the 1990s wars are limited in Belgrade. The absence of commemorative sites in the capital city demonstrates both the contested nature of the historical record of the 1990s and the Serbian state's inability to negotiate its roles in the wars as both aggressor and victim. As such, the importance of the memory sites that do exist is magnified. The post-90s governments of Serbia and private organizations have intentionally elected these few sites, including the Radio Television Serbia building, bombed in 1999 during the NATO campaign, and its accompanying monument, the Memorial to Children Killed by NATO erected in 2005, and a seemingly random monument to the defenders of the homeland near the city's main train station erected in

2012, to represent Serbia's experience of the war. These sites represent the two main entities producing cultural and national memory of the Yugoslav Wars in Serbia: the government and groups of private citizens. For the government, remembrance of the wars is primarily driven by the need to "placate domestic and international demands" of recognition of Serbia's role in the 1990s.[238] For private citizens and NGOs dedicated to proper remembrance, like the Documentation Centre for the Wars of 1991-1999 created in the early 2000s, dealing with the memory of the war is bound up with notions of justice and progress. For example, the mandate of the Documentation Centre is to "specifically address the question of Serbia's role in, and responsibility for, the wars. As stated by the project's 2002 mission statement, the project is driven by the conviction that "to accurately record, understand and remember the past is crucial for building a society of responsible citizens capable of shaping a peaceful and creative future of Serbia and the whole region."[239] Groups such as the Documentation Centre fill a clear void left by the state, which has continued an official policy of silence when it comes to memorializing the victims of the wars.

---

[238] Lea David, "Mediating International and Domestic Demands: Mnemonic Battles Surrounding the Monument to the Fallen of the Wars of the 1990s in Belgrade," *Nationalities Papers* 42, no. 4 (July 2014): 657.
[239] Christine Lavrence, "People in War: Oral Histories of the Yugoslav Wars," 178–85.

Since the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords, the Serbian government constructed three memorials to Serbian victims of the wars, and only one of these memorials was constructed in the city center.[240] Housed in Tašmajdan Park, two memorials demonstrate both the built environment's ability to support larger processes of coming to terms with the past and private group's ability to create viable memory sites.

Figure 4: The We Were Only Children Memorial, as of 2019.

The first takes shape in a memorial for the child victims of NATO's bombing campaign, and its title derives from the statement inscribed on the stone: "We were only children" (*Bili smo samo deca*). The memorial depicts a little girl with butterfly wings holding a teddy bear, standing on a podium. On the wings reads the title of the memorial, and the podium says, "dedicated to the children killed in NATO aggression, 1999." Boris Tadić,

[240] Aleksandar Staničić, "Media Propaganda vs Public Dialogue," 374. Commissioned by the Milošević regime before its fall, the first memorial called "The Eternal Flame," was built in New Belgrade's Friendship Park. Renowned sculptors Svetomir and Svetozar Radović designed the memorial, a white obelisk with an actual flame on top, with the formal intentions of commemorating the war casualties. However, the political climate colored the memorial as a symbol of the resiliency and eternity of the Socialist Party in Serbia, and the combination of its location in the Friendship Garden and the topic of the memorial led Serbians to see the intentions behind the memorial as a "mockery" of the friendships between ethnicities during Yugoslavia. After the overthrow of Milošević, the memorial was vandalized and the flame on top was extinguished.

president of Serbia from 2004 to 2012, dedicated the memorial in 2005 and delivered two political statements in 2006 and 2008 on the NATO bombing.[241] Unlike the leaders of Serbia that came before and after Tadić, the president redirected the narrative of the memorial, stating:

> "Today we need to remember all victims but also to learn something and make foundations for a new a peaceful policy, so that Serbian policy-makers never draw the country and its citizens into such danger. We need to make policy which takes care of the lives of ordinary people."

The monument to the child victims of the NATO campaign, spearheaded by Tadić, represents a clear outlier from the other memorials discussed here. Instead of constructing an intractable opposition between Serbs and NATO forces as the driving force of the NATO bombing campaign, Tadić focused on paying tribute to the victims of the bombings while moderately criticizing the actions taken by Serbia's former regime.[242] However, this shift in memory politics lasted only as long as Tadić's time in office, and even then it was challenged by members of the Socialist Party of Serbia who claim the NATO attack was motivated by NATO's desire to capture Kosovo and Metohija.[243] Also, at the bottom, the memorial characterizes the NATO bombing as "The NATO War of Aggression."

The second memorial commemorates the sixteen lives lost in the Radio Television Serbia (RTS) studio located on the outskirts of the park. The memorial is a slab of stone, almost like an oversized gravestone, with the single word "*Zašto*" (Why?)

---

[241] Marija Mandić, "Official Commemoration of the NATO Bombing of Serbia: A Case Study of the Fifteenth Anniversary," in *Memories and Narrative of the 1999 Bombing*, 4th ed., vol. 64 (Südosteuropa, 2016), 469

[242] Marija Mandić, "Official Commemoration of the NATO Bombing of Serbia," 469.

[243] Ibid, 467.

and the names of the sixteen victims etched onto the face of the stone. In addition to the dedicated memorial, the ruins of the RTS building remain undisturbed, like its own kind of morbid testament to the past. Seeing no initiative from the state to build a commemorative complex, the victims' families petitioned for an open competition to rebuild respectively the RTS building.[244] The competition yielded a winning design that provoked productive "political discourse" and proved architecture's ability to communicate the "wider implications of urban destruction and devise spatial solutions that can serves as cultural critiques" of political violence; however, as of now the memorial still has not been constructed.[245] Importantly, the monuments that currently exist for the RTS and child victims provide a "clear, unequivocal message, targeted audience," and had "private initiatives" backing the project that provided continuous media coverage and saw the projects through to their ends.[246] The Serbian government did not elevate either memorial to the official rank of national monument; however, the RTS memorial "comes close to becoming a surrogate for a national monument to the 1999 War" due to its wide recognition among the population in Belgrade and RTS strong media campaign based on a sense of "victimhood, pride, and defiance."[247]

The third monument came in 2012 when the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), the leading party of Serbia at the time, opened a competition for a new memorial, called "The

[244] Gruia Bădescu, "Making Sense of Ruins: Architectural Reconstruction and Collective Memory in Belgrade," 189. In fact, the government announced in 2013 that the building would be sold to an Emirati investor to build a luxury hotel. Even Donald Trump looked into buying the building as a real estate investment.
[245] Aleksandar Staničić, "Media Propaganda vs Public Dialogue," 387. The memorial plans were at first stalled by a funding issue, then COVID-19 placed it on a permanent hold.
[246] Ibid, 376.
[247] Ibid, 388.

Memorial to Victims of the Wars and Defenders of the Fatherland from 1990 to 1999," to be constructed in Savski Square, a heavily trafficked square in the center of the city.[248] Two young architects, Jelena Pančevac and Žarko Uzelac, won the competition and designed a modernist, minimal memorial meant to appeal to the masses while commemorating victims from both the civil war in Yugoslavia and the NATO bombing in 1999.[249] Despite their efforts, the general population regarded the memorial's form as "confusing" and "practically unnoticeable," and anti-war groups like the Women in Black protested the memorial's equalization of "victims and butchers."[250] Following the current president's assumption of power in 2017, the Serbian government, still controlled by the Serbian Progressive Party, once more announced an open competition for a memorial in Savski Square, this time for a statue of Stefan Nemanja, the founder of the medieval Serbian state.[251] The construction of the massive statue began in August 2020, and shortly after, the government completely removed the strange and unloved Memorial to Victims of the Wars and Defenders of the Fatherland from 1990 to 1999.[252] Many interviewees discussed the political uproar caused by the construction of the Stefan

---

[248] The monument is near the Central Railway Station and is in an area of town known for prostitution and sex shops. Lea David, "Mediating International and Domestic Demands," 656.
[249] Aleksandar Staničić, "Media Propaganda vs Public Dialogue," 375. The main feature of the monument is a long, narrow reflecting pool. The stones that line the bottom stick out near one end and gradually recede into the shallow water near the far end. Near the rocky end of the pool, a large and thin plate, two-thirds of which is glass, the remaining third steel. Small slits are cut in a sporadic pattern on both materials, and the title of the monument is etched into the concrete portion.
[250] Ibid. The Women in Black are a feminist-antimilitarist peace organization.
[251] In 2016, the party announced they would build the statue on the site of the Generalstab building, which produced a large public outcry.
[252] Ibid.

Nemanja statue, though none mentioned the uproar concerning the removal of the Memorial to Victims of the Wars and Defenders of the Fatherland from 1990 to 1999.

The only site related to the 1990s discussed by the interviewees happens to be the only memory site of the 1990s indirectly sponsored by the state. This site, the *Generalštab* or the General Staff Building, achieved its status as a memory site due to its lack of curation or manipulation despite constant debates on the proper method of commemoration.[253] Sociologist Lea David argues the Serbian state intentionally refuses to take action to memorialize the event because "obfuscating the past [is] a way of controlling and managing" the narrative of the event, "rather than pick[ing] a side."[254] The General Staff Building sits on Nemanjina Street near the center of Belgrade and was used as a military facility during the 1990s wars. In 1999, NATO bombed the building while it was unoccupied. Though the

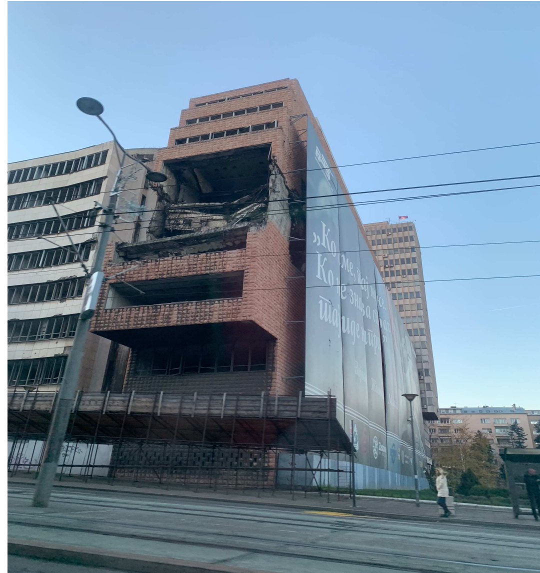

Figure 5: The Generalštab building, as of 2019.

[253] Filip Ejdus, "'Not a Heap of Stones': Material Environments and Ontological Security in International Relations," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 30, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 13-15. The state's inaction is understood as following the path of least resistance within the commemoration debates. Political elite and high-ranking clergy have expressed their desire to keep the bombed building as its own type of memorial. For example, in May 2014, the Patriarch of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Irinej, stated "I would never repair the ruins," and Zaharije Trnavcevic, member of the National Assembly, agreed and added the ruined building should be preserved as a "memento of the unlawful bombing of Belgrade and Serbia."

[254] Lea David, "Mediating International and Domestic Demands: Mnemonic Battles Surrounding the Monument to the Fallen of the Wars of the 1990s in Belgrade," *Nationalities Papers* 42, no. 4 (July 2014): 670.

bombing yielded no human victims, it left a gnarled building which has been mostly untouched.[255] The only addition to the building made in 2015 is a massive billboard, created by the Serbian Army, which features a quote from the famous Serbian WWI general, Živojin Mišić, in Serbian: “whoever knows no fear, moves forward.” When asked about memorials in Belgrade, one interviewee asked if she could discuss the Generalštab, as she wasn’t sure if it counted as a memorial despite being something “you pass by.”[256] She considers it a memorial due to her view of nationalistic Serbs’ reception of the building, which they see as “left there for a reason.”[257] Another interviewee invoked the Generalštab when discussing improper methods of remembrance. He believed the building was left “to remind them of what happened,” but he personally believes it “should be rebuilt” so that the narrative can shift from one centered on victimhood to one centered on reconciliation and moving forward.[258] Belgrade’s current use of the destroyed building as a political statement instead of as a site for dealing with the past “proves that Belgrade follows a long, established practice of suppressing the conflicted past.”[259]

---

[255] Tamara Popović, Jelena Marić, and Eva Vaništa Lazarević, “Reshaping Approaches of Architectural Heritage Devastated through Bombing: Case Study of Generalštab, Belgrade,” *Urban Design International*, 2020, https://doi-org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/10.1057/s41289-020-00139-1. The most damaged parts were carried away.
[256] Ivana Dinic, interviwed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, March 1, 2021: 35:45.
[257] Ivana Dinic, interviwed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, March 1, 2021: 38:02.
[258] Dušan Ristic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 20, 2021: 24:38.
[259] Aleksandar Staničić, “Media Propaganda vs Public Dialogue,”389.

Personal Experiences and Remembrance Methods

The interviewees' personal experiences with the war, which are heavily shaped by their families' place of dominion, ethnicity, and status during late Socialist Yugoslavia, closely connect to their personal understandings for the causes and course of the war. Three of my interviewees from three different regions demonstrate this tendency. When recalling the war, the interviewee from Belgrade first mentioned that she simply didn't "understand why the war happened" based on the way her parents fondly reminisced about Yugoslavia; however, when she "reads history books" the war seemed like the obvious ending to Yugoslavia.[260] The interviewee from Republika Srpska in Bosnia told a story about his family's experience in the war, emphasizing how the war led his father to become more attached to his national identity as a Serbian. As communists, the interviewee's family refused to align themselves with Serbian nationalists during the war, ultimately leading a SDS-affiliated neighbor to throw a bomb at his family's home.[261] The last interviewee, from the border region of Croatia and Serbia known as the Krajina, remembers houses being destroyed, "a lot of tanks, soldiers, and blue helmets."[262] Specific details of the war were blurred by his young age, though his family provided him with information, including the efficient method Croats used to prevent Serbs who had

---

[260] Anonymous 1, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 16, 2021: 34:38.
[261] Sladjan Rankic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 9, 2021: 25:24. The SDS, or Serb Democratic Party, was founding in 1990 by Radovan Karadžić, who was later convicted of genocide and crimes against humanity in the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. SDS's primary political goal was the unification of the Bosnian Serb community, which manifested in their effort to establish Serb Autonomous Regions (which would eventually materialize as the Republika Srpska in Bosnia). During the 1990s and 2000s, SDS maintained a reputation for its separatist and Islamophobic ideology. Fortunately for the interviewee and his family, the plot never materialized.
[262] Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 50:23.

fled Croatia from returning. In 2002, the interviewee's effort to return to this familial home in Croatia directly embroiled him in one of the immediate consequences of the war when his family ran into numerous issues in pursuit of regaining ownership of their home from a Croatian family.[263]

For the interviewees hailing from the Republika Sprska and the Krajina, where Serbs constituted an ethnic minority, preceding historical events, like World War I, the first Yugoslavia, and World War II inevitably paved the way toward the dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia, and each interviewee paid particular attention to the antagonisms between minority groups. Both interviewees drew attention to Serbs' minority status in post-Yugoslav countries, particularly in Croatia, and how this status led to victimization during the war and a lack of recognition following the war. Additionally, grappling with the processes of guilt appeared in the accounts of the interviewee from the Republika Srpska. The interviewee's experience of the war as related by his father led him to adopt a "Serbian stance on the war," namely that the "Bosnian president started the war," but over time and with education the interviewee became "fully aware" of the legitimacy of the Bosniak position and the "nuance" throughout the series of wars.[264] The same interviewee described a "considerable chunk" of the population of Serbia to be similarly "critical" of the course of actions in Bosnia and the Serbian nationalism that drove such actions.[265]

According to the interviewee from the Krajina, a Serbian presence in Croatia stood in the way of a homogenized nation, which he claimed is a model for modern

---

[263] Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 51:11.
[264] Sladjan Rankic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 9, 2021: 24:50.
[265] Sladjan Rankic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 9, 2021: 26:18.

statehood the Balkan nations grafted from Western European countries.[266] As such, Tudjman sough to reduce the total Serbian population to just three percent of the total Croatian population and began an expulsion program to that end.[267] A different interviewee hailing from the Republika Srpska emphasized that "Serbs in Croatia did not want to live in an independent Croatia," and he discussed how Croatia has ignored recognizing the expulsion of Serbs during the war by "denying the civil war against Serbs in Croatia" or "acting like only Serbian aggression caused the war, and not their succession from Yugoslavia."[268] Additionally, Serbs from outside Serbia proper highlighted the reality that Serbs living within Serbia "were not very involved."[269] The Serbs that were involved, however, were most likely "vulnerable to manipulation" due to the "frustration" caused by not having a "specific [guiding] ideology."[270]

Contrastingly, the Belgrader characterized the war as seemingly out of nowhere and drew attention to the actions of the international community instead of regional actions.[271] She spoke about the course of the war in generalities, describing the bloody skirmishes in border areas as a result of "someone" saying "today we are starting a war; you will start killing them and they will kill you," and focused more on the demonization of Serbia following the war.[272] For the Belgrader, her personal experiences of the war began after the war, when she found the international community equating the "Yugoslav

[266] Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 46:55.
[267] Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 47:19.
[268] Sava Mitrovic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 28, 2021: 29:31.
[269] Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 47:48.
[270] Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 51:02.
[271] Anonymous 1, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 16, 2021: 29:07.
[272] Anonymous 1, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 16, 2021: 25:40.

army" with the "Serbian military" and thereby depicting the violence of the war as "always just the Serbians."[273]

The sentiment of Serbian demonization by the international community discussed by the Belgrader was shared by another interviewee born and raised in Belgrade, named Irena. Irena asserted that Serbia is perceived as "always guilty," a "black sheep," and "the main bad guy," when the true "guilt" is shared between Milosevic and "Western countries who were not allies" of Serbia.[274] The international community paid undue attention to Serbia due to Serbia's "geopolitical location," Irena explained.[275] She based her reasoning on the fact that "many similar events" happened in Eastern Europe at the time, "like wars in the USSR" when it came to an end, yet the international community only speaks of the dissolution of Yugoslavia.[276] It is Serbia's precarious position "between East and West" that places the country "in the middle constantly," forcing Serbia to create "balance" between these two competing forces. Serbia's failure to properly balance its populace and politics, at least as judged by the West, is the "main reason why our war was perceived as such a drastic one, much more drastic than other wars in that time."[277] This topic of orientalist discourse and its clouding of the complexities of the war took the place of any discussion of the realities of the war on the ground– what and who caused it. Irena strongly asserted that Serbian war crimes cannot be denied, but also correctly included that war crimes were committed on both sides. Yet

[273] Anonymous 1, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 16, 2021: 28:25.
[274] Anonymous 2, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 8, 2021: 16:15.
[275] Anonymous 2, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 8, 2021: 31:25.
[276] Anonymous 2, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 8, 2021: 31:20. The only wars in the USSR were the Azeri/Armenia conflict as well as the Chechen succession efforts within Russia.
[277] Anonymous 2, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 8, 2021: 31:46.

"no matter how hard we try," Serbia will "always be perceived as the worst."[278] Interestingly, the overemphasis on Serbian culpability by surrounding countries and the lack of recognition of Serbian victims in Serbia was discussed in each interview, regardless of the interviewee's background.

Despite differing approaches to discussing the wars in the 1990s, each interviewee took care to stress Serbia's active role as aggressor in the war, highlighting the groups directly victimized by Serbian forces and lamenting the time when "people that yesterday lived together then took each other's lives."[279] In varying terms, all interviewees characterized the wars as a "mistake that never should have never happened" nor "should ever happen again" and recognized the evil that existed in the "whole region."[280] One interviewee explicitly stated the "crime in Srebrenica is the most embarrassing moment in our history."[281] The same interviewee explained "Serbs must look at ourselves in the mirror and admit our guilt for those wars," and that Serbs cannot continue to "deny those crimes by mentioning every crime that we suffered throughout history."[282] Importantly, the interviewee qualified this statement by mentioning that Serbs must accept the guilt for the "individuals from our people that committed those war crimes." [283] The interviewee is alluding to the idea that only individual Serbs, not Serbs as a collective, are guilty for the crimes of the 1990s.

---

[278] Anonymous 2, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 8, 2021: 20:53.
[279] Ivana Dinic, interviwed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, March 1, 2021: 26:53.
[280] Nikola Stanojcic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 22, 2021: 49:47; Ivana Dinic, interviwed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, March 1, 2021: 26:53; Anonymous 1, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 16, 2021: 24:45.
[281] Sava Mitrovic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 28, 2021: 28:49.
[282] Sava Mitrovic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 28, 2021: 26:10.
[283] Sava Mitrovic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 28, 2021: 26:12.

The state's reframing of the wars' narrative for political purposes drives the interviewees' tendency to revisit and revise previously held beliefs founded in Serbian nationalism, especially as young adults growing up in the shadow of the war. The issue of naming the war best presents the overt politicization of the war's memory. Other post-Yugoslav countries (and minority groups within the post-Yugoslav countries) delineate Serbia as the aggressor and define their relationship to the aggressor simply through the name chosen for the wars, whereas the interviewees stated that Serbians generally accept the term "civil war" to describe the wars in the 1990s.[284] To name a few examples of post-Yugoslav countries signaling their view of the war, in Dubrovnik, Croatia, the war is called "The War of Serbian and Montenegrin Aggression," and in Zagreb, Croatia it is "The Homeland War." According to my interviewees, Serbians living within Serbia prefer to call the series of wars a civil war. One interviewee shared an understanding of the war she believed to be "shared with most of my fellow Serbs," which is that the "Civil War" began when Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia declared independence from Yugoslavia.[285] One interviewee explained calling the wars a "civil war" is an "obvious fact" for Serbs, and another interviewee reasoned the self-evident nature of the term "civil war" derives from Serbian's attachment to Yugoslavia.[286] At the time and from a

[284] Djordje Mihajlovic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Banja Luka, Bosnia-Herzegovina, February 9, 2021:33:53; Irena, 30:16; Sava, 34:24; Dušan Ristic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 20, 2021: 35:03. Dusan explained that "Civil War" would be the closest English translation of the Serbian term, *Brato Biljački Rat*. The Serbian terms would directly translate to "war between brothers," or "fratricidal war." One interviewee said they would also call it an "Ethnic War" or a "Civil War."
[285] Anonymous 2, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 8, 2021: 30:16; Djordje, 33:53.
[286] Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 43:48; Sladjan Rankic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 9, 2021: 26:54.

Serbian perspective, Serbia and Montenegro kept Yugoslavia alive by ceasing to allow its fellow brother nations to defect from the federation. Outside of the emotional connections to Yugoslavia driving Serbians to defend their state, the two interviewees similarly discussed the causes of the war, namely Yugoslavia's political system which, according to the interviewees, pitted the national aspirations of the ethnicities within Yugoslavia against each other.[287] Both interviewees agreed that the only other name readily used for the wars in Serbia is "90s War in Yugoslavia," which suggests the need for the war's name to communicate the intimate nature of the war is dwindling in Serbia.[288]

The same two interviewees detailed the various names attributed to the war by communities throughout the Balkans, particularly in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, and the Republika Srpska. Both portrayed the war as the "founding moment" of modern Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia and explained that it only naturally follows that both countries "refer to the war differently."[289] In Croatia, the interviewees reported the war is generally called "The Homeland War," showing manifestly the foundational elements of the 1990s war for the countries surrounding Serbia and the use of the war's name to support nationalism in other post-Yugoslav states.[290] According to these interviewees, for groups like Bosniaks the war was "more decisive for their nations than the Serbs in terms

---

Sladjan Rankic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 9, 2021: 26:54. The interviewees who brought up this idea explained emotional connections can be sourced to Serb dominance in the first Yugoslavia. From their view, it was Serbia who brought other Balkan nations into their fold and under their dynasty.

[288] Sladjan Rankic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 9, 2021: 24:36.

[289] Sladjan Rankic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 9, 2021: 28:26; Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 44:36. The memory of the war is so contested that various groups of minorities, like Serbs in Croatia or even Croatians from Dubrovnik, will call the war by a name different than that of the nation they inhabit.

[290] Sladjan Rankic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 9, 2021: 28:35.

of building national identity, mainly due to having "newly established states."[291] Unlike their Bosniak and Croat peers, Serbians have the "luxury" to "contextualize" the war because Serbia locates its founding national monument in the 12th and 13th century, not in the 1990s wars themselves.[292] Finally, the interviewees shared that non-Muslim residents of Bosnia tend to call the war the "Defensive Patriotic War," because "each group was protecting their homes form the aggressive other."[293] Interestingly, this name both avoids pointing fingers at a country as aggressor while also not accepting culpability. Different names in different places reflect still the competing political priorities of Balkan states, and the lack of consensus on what to even name the wars seemed to somewhat annoy the interviewees. No one became angry, in fact this topic was one of few that produced a large amount of discussion, and yet most interviewees seemed as if the topic was tiresome; they seemed to feel that something like naming a war should be settled by the time thirty years has passed.

Each interviewee has a personal experience with the 1990s war– whether as a refugee or as an adolescent dealing with a perceived negativity surrounding their national identity– and each highlight the sheer lack of suitable remembrance of the war that takes their varied experiences into account, specifically as Serbians. Dusan, an interviewee, best stated the general consensus of the rest of the group: "Serbians have made mistakes, there have been war crimes on every side. Bosniaks made mistakes, they have committed war crimes as well. And as soon as we start appreciating their victims and our victims,

[291] Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 44:36.
[292] Sladjan Rankic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 9, 2021: 28:30.
[293] Sladjan Rankic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 9, 2021: 25:50.

we'll be closer to a final reconciliation."[294] Despite sharing the same goal in remembering the 1990s war, each interviewees' unique understanding of the war, shaped and molded by the interviewees' families and their place of origin, influences the interviewees' prescription for proper remembrance of the suffering caused by the war.

Methods of Remembrance: Interviewees v. Contemporary State

When discussing how the victims of the 1990s are currently memorialized in Belgrade, most interviewees emphasized the overall lack of monuments relating to the wars in the 1990s in the city, which mirrors the general lack of Serbs' reckoning with their past as perceived by the interviewees. The Belgrader, who spent a great deal of time traveling around other post-Yugoslav countries, focused on the few monuments to victims of the 1990s in Serbia as compared to the "rest of Yugoslavia."[295] She continued, reasoning that Serbia as a country simply does not "pay attention" to the memory of the war, instead they "try to move on and do not talk about it, just like they did not speak about World War II at the beginning of Yugoslavia" when Tito did not allow Serbs to properly commemorate their statesmen killed by the Ustaša.[296] Interestingly, the interviewees focused on the Serbian state's failure to "respect" Serbian victims of the

[294] Dušan Ristic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 20, 2021: 32:47.
[295] Anonymous 1, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 16, 2021: 52:53.
[296] Anonymous 1, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 16, 2021: 53:45.

1990s, and because of this failure Serbs now "lack a cultural reckoning with the War."[297] Instead, the only cultural media discussing the war is "vulgarized," or nationalized, and works to support the widespread "problem" of saying the "war happened, we did it."[298] This issue is further problematized by the failure to produce "one, single unanimous" narrative of events with which all parties involved agree that persists to this day.[299] The numerous narratives of the war particularly aggravates the Bosniak interviewee, who focused on the idea that the war serves as a "common" moment in each post-Yugoslav states' history, and as such proper remembrance of the war could offer a real medium for reconciliation.[300]

Though the interviewees did not provide a concept for a tangible memorial or monument to the victims of the 1990s, they all provide a set of parameters for proper remembrance. They champion the creation of a balanced and unanimously accepted narrative of the war that focuses on the massively evil capabilities of a small group of well-armed and positioned political elites to shatter a country. One interview, answering the question of how to remember the 1990s, simply stated a "history of ideological conflict with a continuous narrative from 1941-1999" must be written that highlights

---

[297] Dušan Ristic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 20, 2021: 33:10; Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021:1:05:22. The Belgrader mentioned how Croatia has done better for Croats in this regard. She mentioned in Croatia private homes that were sites of deaths during the wars in the 1990s have been marked accordingly. Anonymous 1, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 16, 2021: 52:53.
[298] Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 1:05:04; Ilma Kitivojevic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Prije Polje, Serbia, February 16, 2021: 42:35.
[299] Djordje Mihajlovic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Banja Luka, Bosnia-Herzegovina, February 9, 2021:33.26.
[300] Ilma Kitivojevic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Prije Polje, Serbia, February 16, 2021: 28:42.

"how Serbs suffered from bad political choices and the homogenizing of [other Balkan] peoples around them."[301] Other interviewees added some detail to this schematic. Many mentioned the need to emphasize the war as a "very evil" moment for the "whole" region, "not just Serbs," as well as to discuss "all sides of the story" of both victims and perpetrators.[302] A different interviewee elaborated on this idea, more directly stating the need for the agreed narrative to leave Serbian nationalism behind:

> "I think we, as a region of ex-Yugoslav nations, have to ask ourselves how do we want to remember the wars in the 90s? Do we want to remember them as glorious liberation wars? Do we want to remember them as wars in which the entire world was against us? And I think both of the narratives are wrong. I think we should consider the wars in the 90s with some kind of a middle ground, which is the closest to the truth. That the wars were not necessary, that the wars were a product of politics of a small group of people who had their own personal particular interests in mind and not the interests of the entire nations."[303]

The interviewees' requirements for remembrance of the Yugoslav Wars also includes "objectivity", an emphasis on better contextualizing the wars, and some form of cultural integration, all for the purpose of preventing any similar armed conflicts in the future. The need for objectivity was central to many interviewee's responses, one even tied objective remembrance as a form of "modern" remembrance.[304] An event as hostile and impactful as the Yugoslav Wars must be protected from the processes of "national myth making," and instead memory sites in Serbia must communicate all sides of

[301] Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 43:42.
[302] Anonymous 1, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 16, 2021: 24:45-26:04; Ivana Dinic, interviwed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, March 1, 2021: 26:53.
[303] Dušan Ristic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 20, 2021: 30:30.
[304] Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 49:45.

Serbia's involvement in the war.[305] Interestingly, by this interviewee's reasons, national myths in Serbia presently focus solely on the negative or positive moments of Serbian history; balance does not figure in the formulation of national myths. For the interviewees, teaching "both sides" of history, or as termed by another interviewee "approaching the history of the wars analytically," as opposed to focusing on national myths is a central facet of objective remembrance, and by doing so the potential memory site can avoid "victimizing" Serbia and "making things sound prettier than they were," which the interviewees identified as two central aspects of the state's policy of remembrance for the 1990s.[306] In order to provide an objective representation of the wars, the interviewees discussed the need to honestly contextualize the wars through a focus on the relationship between the various ethnicities (*narodi*) while existing as Yugoslavia, the actions of the international community near the end of the 1990s, and Serbia's varying degrees of progress in the decades following the war.[307] By considering the histories of the Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav wars together, citizens can better "pay attention" to the "destructive behavior" of power-seeking elites.[308] Outside of specifically pointing to Tito, the interviewees discussed the establishment and tenure of Socialist Yugoslavia abstractly; perhaps contextualizing the war in this way made Serbian actions in the 1990s more understandable to the interviewees. Further, this approach portrays the 1990s not to

---

[305] Ibid: 49:50.
[306] Anonymous 2, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 8, 2021: 1:32:10; Sanja, 36:55.
[307] In Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian, there are two words for nation. One, *država,* translates to a landed nation with borders, while the other, *narod,* translates to a nation of people. So, one can be a part of the nation (*narod*) of Serbia without living with the borders of Serbia the nation (*država*).
[308] Sanja Vojvodic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 23, 2021: 36:05.

be seen as an anomaly but an event that could "happen again," and allows average citizens to use their experiences from the 1990s as a medium to learn how to "stop these things from taking root again."[309]

To round out the narrative of the war, potential commemorative efforts must also discuss post-war Serbia– the Serbia that "saw the fifth of October," when Milosevic was ousted from power, "but never lived to see the sixth of October."[310] The interviewees discussed the popular movements of the 2000s that initiated "democratic changes" in the face of regime built on "oppression, lack of freedom, police brutality, controlled elections" and a total lack of political plurality.[311] This commemorative media offering an objective narrative presented within a continuous narrative from 1945 to the mid-2000s must also be integrated into the cultural sphere of the average Serbian in order for the information to be accessible. Whatever form the media takes, it must be easily understandable and engaging, not unlike the way *Maus* relates the complex narrative of World War II and the Holocaust.[312]

The interviewees expressed the central goal of their ideal commemorative efforts: regional reconciliation. If Serbia publicly recognizes its role as an aggressor, then "others will admit what they did to Serbs."[313] The interviewees readily accepted that "Serbians have made mistakes," but portrayed these actions as somewhat reciprocal to "mistakes" made by "Bosniaks" and other antagonistic groups in the 1990s.[314] Because of each

---

[309] Ibid: 37:01.
[310] Anonymous 2, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 8, 2021: 1:34:03.
[311] Anonymous 2, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 8, 2021: 1:32:06.
[312] Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 1:05:07.
[313] Anonymous 1, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 16, 2021: 52:27.
[314] Dušan Ristic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 20, 2021: 32:47.

group's rotating status of aggressor, recognizing victims of Serbian aggression is a vital requirement for Croat and Bosniak recognition of Serbian victims.[315] Serbia must first recognize their victims, as they contributed most to the violence of the wars. The memory of the war translated as accurately as possible to a historical representation should not be instrumentalized, or "used to point fingers," as it has been, but rather to have "real reconciliation."[316] In fact, one interviewee mentioned commemoration carried out in this way is the "only way to have real reconciliation."[317] The interviewees' prescription for proper remembrance of the 1990s corresponds to their responses to generalized questions focused on the criteria for remembrance, including what kinds of national events should be remembered and for what purpose. Many interviewees again invoked the concept of showing "both sides," believing that a balanced narrative of a nation's past allows a nation's history to serve as a "compass for how to act in the present" and a medium to provide "the full picture" of the past to its citizens.[318] Providing an accurate picture is essential, as one interviewee mentioned "history is the future of life," thinking of a saying Latin.[319] Also, the contextualization provided by a balanced narrative is particularly importance for commemoration of events as horrific as the 1990s, where "personal experience" of the wars is "so incredibly varied."[320]

When thinking of proper commemoration, the idea of balance came up more than once. One interviewee explained the need for balanced narratives at memory sites, stating

---

[315] Ibid: 32:53.
[316] Anonymous 1, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 16, 2021: 52:34.
[317] Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 49:52.
[318] Sanja Vojvodic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 23, 2021: 1:00:04; Jovana Nikolić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Leskovac, Serbia, February 15, 2021.
[319] Anonymous 2, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 8, 2021: 1:40:05.
[320] Jovana Nikolić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Leskovac, Serbia, February 15, 2021.

"if you don't highlight the bad as much as the good, then you can shift ultra-right," so instead a nation must maintain "balance" in remembrance to avoid being "ultra-right" or "ultra-left."[321] Another alluded to the same idea of balance, but extended this idea to private narratives of the past held by individuals and passed down by family members. The interviewee explained her understanding of the best practices for remembering private histories:

> Try not to forget, try to remember as much as you can, but then also, as much as you can try to ask yourself so what is the other side as well? Because I think if you're constantly, you know, just trying to, to remember the one and only thing that your– I don't know– Grandma or grandpa told you, I mean, okay, but then you should also ask somebody else's Grandma and Grandpa, and hear their side of the story.[322]

Not only should balanced narratives include both sides of an event, but they should also feature multiple narratives from varied sources. According to this interviewee and echoed by others, no one narrative– not even a family's personal history– should be privileged when trying to properly memorialize the past, even within private memories.

A few outlying interviewees allocated commemorative power only to political elites, and one mentioned the practical need for a nation to only recognize their own victims. Two interviewees mentioned that remembrance, specifically which moments are spoken of and which are silenced, is completely up to "political leaders," "elites, and institutions" – "and there's not much more too it."[323] One of the interviews explained the political control of remembrance does not need to be abandoned, but rather the "broader public" has their "own memory" that should be cultivated separately from the national

---

[321] Sanja Vojvodic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 23, 2021: 54:06.
[322] Ivana Dinic, interviwed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, March 1, 2021: 49:38.
[323] Sladjan Rankic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 9, 2021: 46:24; Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 1:20:03.

memory of the state.[324] Regarding the national narrative of the past, one interviewee offered a view that differed from all others. He explained that “Serbia will mark the events where Serbs were victims,” and naturally “the other nations will mark events when Serbs were perpetrators;” he described this oddly balanced view as a kind of “division of labor.”[325] But still, when pressed, the same interviewee stated that both moments of “victory” and “victimization” should be memorialized much like the views of the other interviewees.[326] However, it is clear the interviewee is pessimistic that nations can move beyond divided commemoration efforts.

A relative consensus exists among the interviewees regarding proper remembrance methods of the Yugoslav Wars, yet all mentioned various political and practical issues facing the execution of their ideas or any form of commemoration for the victims of the 1990s. Despite potential best efforts by Serbia or Serbian people to present a balanced memorial, museum, or some other kind of memory site, any endeavor invoking the 1990s could lead to political ramifications or division among individuals. One interviewee mentioned that “if you always have history in mind, you might always end up on the opposite side of others from other countries,” and for that reason “you should know history, but not be defined by history,” meaning a nation should be familiar with their history but not allow it solely to define their national identity or their nation’s future.[327] Additionally, interviewees discussed practical issues standing in the way of

[324] Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 1:20:11.
[325] Djordje Mihajlovic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Banja Luka, Bosnia-Herzegovina, February 9, 2021: 49:50.
[326] Ibid: 51:14.
[327] Dušan Ristic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 20, 2021: 1:09:36-1:10:03.

proper remembrance, including the "human tendency to forget the bad," varying degrees of individual access to accurate sources on recent Serbian and Balkan history, and the generational cycle of memory.[328] Each generation should "ultimately decide what should be emphasized" in national histories and as generations age, they must imbue younger generations with an appreciation for historical moments they find relevant so that the memory of such moment may persist.[329] Passing on generational memory of Serbia's past and creating a "conscious effort to remember the bad things" are central to overcoming Serbia's roadblocks to remembrance, especially due to the disparate knowledge base in Serbia, which is heavily dependent on personal "views, interest, and local history," and will help "keep society moving forward."[330]

Nearly every interviewee located issues blocking proper commemoration outside of Serbia proper, highlighting the pervasiveness of contested narratives across all post-Yugoslav states and the need for additional passage of time to consolidate the varying narratives. According to one interviewee, the question of remembrance cannot be "detached" from the larger question of remembrance within the region, where "disagreements about what happened" abound.[331] According to the Bosniak interviewee, "we cannot talk about the 1990s in five different ways."[332] Few interviewees discussed

---

[328] Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 1:21:02; Jovana Nikolić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Leskovac, Serbia, February 15, 2021: 41:07; Sanja Vojvodic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 23, 2021: 54:06.
[329] Sanja Vojvodic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 23, 2021: 54:20.
[330] Jovana Nikolić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Leskovac, Serbia, February 15, 2021: 41:10; Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 1:19:24.
[331] Dušan Ristic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 20, 2021: 30:20; Ivana, 29:09.
[332] Ilma Kitivojevic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Prije Polje, Serbia, February 16, 2021: 28:55.

the source of the contested regional narratives, and those who did located the source in the war's use as a "central part of national myth-making" in countries like "Bosnia" and "Kosovo."[333] In addition to the war as a founding moment for newly formed post-Yugoslav countries, the memory of suffering is still "so close in our memories" that one, consolidated narrative of the war is overshadowed by the multiplicity of personal experiences.[334] Instead, a variety of narratives appear, suiting each of the "different views" being produced and reproduced as Balkan peoples deal with their memories of the war.[335] The only remedy for this issue, according to the interviewees, is to allow "time" to "pass" so that "common knowledge" can be established and the war can pass from a recent memory to a "historical event."[336] One interviewee elaborated on this idea, mentioning that "new governments" unrelated to the messy "divorce" of Yugoslavia need to be established before "we can start talking about what happened to ordinary people" during the wars.[337] Once time has passed and new governments installed, then "historians" and politicians from all post-Yugoslav countries can come to a "roundtable" and "write one narrative" that solidifies a consensus on the exact number of victims and focuses on the personal experiences of private citizens.[338] Though one interviewee thinks

[333] Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 50:47
[334] Sava Mitrovic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 28, 2021: 25:44.
[335] Jovana Nikolić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Leskovac, Serbia, February 15, 2021: 19:17; Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 52:24.
[336] Djordje Mihajlovic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Banja Luka, Bosnia-Herzegovina, February 9, 2021; Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 52:24
[337] Anonymous 1, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 16, 2021: 25:30. This interviewee is speaking to the idea that any government shaped by the Dayton Peace Accords is connected to the wars. Currently, no politician in power was directly connected to the 1990s wars.
[338] Ilma Kitivojevic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Prije Polje, Serbia, February 16, 2021: 28:50; Ivana Dinic, interviwed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, March 1, 2021: 29:09.

the country will be less "burdened" and could potentially complete this process in "twenty years from now," another less enthusiastic interviewee explained the "political aspect" of the wars is still "very, very active," and the "people that are running this country" continue to "use" the war to create discourse only around "what they think the nation wants to hear."[339] Once the reality of politics in Serbia and the wider region entered the discussion on commemoration, a major shift came from same interviewees who provided optimistic views on methods for ideal commemoration. It seems their excitement for how the wars of the 1990s *could* be memorialized was dampened by their view of the political reality in which any memorial would take shape.

Unlike the rest of his peers, one interviewee called attention to the concept of collective guilt as a barrier to proper remembrance of the 1990s in Serbia. The interviewee stated that Serbs generally believe to admit "some Serbian general has done something wrong in Bosnia" is to admit "guilt of the entire nation," and this conflation of individual and collective action causes pause to those seeking to commemorate the victims of the 1990s.[340] In the Balkans, people adhere to this view of collective guilt as if it were "law," according to the interviewee, and therefore makes the concept "quite problematic."[341] The interviewee believes the concept to be so problematic, he issued a warning to those in the "social sciences or social sphere" to be conscientious when using it.[342] From this view, in order to move forward Serbians must be able to detach the

---

[339] Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 52:30; Jovana Nikolić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Leskovac, Serbia, February 15, 2021: 20:26.
[340] Dušan Ristic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 20, 2021: 33:10.
[341] Ibid: 33:20.
[342] Ibid: 33:23.

collective of "Serbians" from the individual Serbian who committed war crimes to enable remembrance of the crimes of the 1990s.

Impact on the Present-Day Serbian Identity

The negative effects of the current memorialization policies of the Yugoslav Wars, namely the continued proliferation of Serbian victimhood and a self-perceived notion of demonization, featured in my interviewees' discussion of their personal view of the Serbian identity. When discussing defining moments and figures in Serbian history, nearly every interviewee identified the 1990s wars and Milosevic; however, the qualifiers "of course" or "unfortunately" were always included.[343] The state of Serbia– its landscape, popular media, even its museums– was profoundly transformed during the war and in the years following. The Bosniak interviewee named Ilma, who finds her Serbian identity constantly questioned by Orthodox Serbians because she is Muslim, provided a detailed account of the various ways in which efforts at remembering the wars fleshes out the nationalistic underpinnings of the predominating Serbian identity among average Serbians. Ilma explained every Serb "who comes out and says that Mladić was responsible for genocide" will be called a "traitor," or accused of being "paid" by the "West."[344] Through invoking memory of Mladić and his actions in Srebrenica, two central tenets of Serbian nationalism– suspicion of the monolithic West and denial of

[343] Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 26:04; Ivana Dinic, interviwed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, March 1, 2021: 20:29; Dušan Ristic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 20, 2021: 15:28; 17:16; Ilma Kitivojevic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Prije Polje, Serbia, February 16, 2021: 23:57; Nikola Stanojcic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 22, 2021: 29:57.
[344] Ilma Kitivojevic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Prije Polje, Serbia, February 16, 2021: 45:48.

Serbian war crimes– come to the fore. Ilma introduces a third tenet– seeing outsiders as replacing Serbian victimization with demonization– when discussing what she perceives as a strange battle for the badge of ultimate victimhood. Because Serbs want to “show the world that [they] had it the worst,” Serbian commemorative efforts obfuscate the victims of other nations, most often those victimized by Serbian forces.[345] Every Serb, not just those in university, must remember that they are “not the only victims,” they “did not have all the horrors of the war,” and they must “make peace with the terrible things Serbia did.”[346] Ilma cannot understand why Serbian nationalism relies so much on being the “biggest victim;” “wouldn’t it be better to not be the victim?” she asked.[347]

While a majority of the interviewees echoed how Serbian victimhood roots nationalism in the minds of average Serbians, it is important to note none of the interviewees displayed this tendency. In contrast to the interviewee’s understanding of how most Serbian citizens might respond to similar questions regarding the 1990s wars, the interviewees provided a balanced understanding of the past that views Serbs as both aggressor and victim. However, Belgrade’s commemorative landscape more closely mirrors Ilma’s presentation of Serbian nationalism. The present-day memorials either reframe the narrative of the wars and NATO campaign through an explicit focus on Serbian victimhood or silence undesirable narratives by avoiding any kind of memorial (or destroying existing memorials). Though these memorials by no means capture the whole picture of the past, none of the memorials outright deny Serbian crimes during the war.

[345] Ibid: 45:53.
[346] Ibid: 43:28.
[347] Ibid: 46:46.

The image of victimhood central to Serbian nationalism buttressed by either the state's reframing or silencing events of the 1990s supports general feelings of demonization and isolation perceived by Serbians. For my interviewees, being Serbians means having a "long history" with plentiful prideful moments, but also moment of which they are "not very proud" and evoke sadness.[348] One interviewee born after the war reported the "biggest burden that our parents put on us is the idea that we have a crucial difference between us in our blood, and that's not true."[349] Dealing with the lingering perceptions of Serbia produced in the 1990s creates an environment where people of other ethnicities are seen "as Other with a capital O."[350] And why not, especially when "so many Serbs were indicted in the Hague" as compared to others of different nationalities who committed war crimes?[351] This interviewee, who was born and raised in Belgrade, explained that many Serbs feel this way despite her personal disdain for the stance and respond defensively to the asymmetrical Hague indictments by saying "but look what they did to us" before listing the atrocities committed against Serbs in World War II and the 1990s.[352] Though this interviewee did not relate to the nationalistic feelings of those around her, another interviewee, this one originally from Croatia, somewhat empathized with the claim of unfair demonization of Serbians from an academic perspective. No bombastic nationalist rhetoric was thrown around, but the interviewee did discuss the hypocrisy of Western nations. Western nations, he explained, present Serbs as evil for pursuing a homogenizing project, yet "Western European

[348] Anonymous 1, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 16, 2021: 15:03.
[349] Anonymous 2, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 8, 2021: 19:00.
[350] Ibid: 18:33.
[351] Anonymous 1, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia February 16, 2021: 26:54.
[352] Ibid: 54:13.

nations are so progressive today because they homogenized slowly and violently during the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Interestingly, "Western nations" were spoken of in the abstract and represented incorrectly as homogenous nations."[353]

While the interviewees described the Serbian tendency for self-victimization especially in relation to the Yugoslav Wars, the physical landmarks dedicated to the wars left little impression on the interviewees. In fact, many talked about Belgrade's commemoration efforts as if no monuments existed at all. Many interviewees, however, discussed the destroyed buildings of Belgrade, providing a testament to the untouched building's status as an unofficial monument to the NATO conflict. The narrative of Serbian victimhood latent in the ruined buildings without any kind of proper memorial to negotiate the memory of the past creates is isolating and uncomfortable to the interviewees. The interviewees' feeling of unfair demonization on the basis of simply being Serbian, despite some not even being alive for the conflict, stems from the Serbian state's centering of a Serbian victimhood that has yet to be recognized by other post-Yugoslav countries or what they perceive as the monolithic West. From the state's view, citizens aware of the destroyed buildings is ample remembrance, because such remembrance ultimately works to instill a sense of isolation and victimhood that easily plays into the hands of political elites.

The interviewees accounted for this effect but spoke of it as a phenomenon evident in the uneducated masses. Out of all the topics covered in the interviews, the interviewees presented the clearest divide between their understanding of the Yugoslav Wars and the understanding they believed an average Serb might hold compared to any

[353] Miloš Vukelić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 3, 2021: 47:01.

other topic. One interviewee explicitly mentioned that "general society" is not as "erudite" as the people interviewed for this study when answering a question about the general population's remembrance of the Yugoslav Wars.[354] Another interviewee jokingly "blamed her faculty" for constantly "talking about context" when discussing ideal commemorative practices for the 1990s wars.[355] One interviewee characterized the masses as the most nationalistic Serbs, often lacking higher education and exposure to differing viewpoints, are sensitive to any criticism of Serbia, which often leads them to refuse Srebrenica as a genocide.[356] The most nationalistic Serbs do not represent the majority views of the Serbian population, one interviewee explained, but they are the "loudest" and often informed only by media and right-wing organizations.[357]

Only comprehensive social dialogue can address Serbia's dual roles in the wars of the 1990s, and memorial architecture has the ability to support this kind of dialogue by encouraging reflection, providing education, and creating a space for public participation with the site.[358] Against the desires of the victims' families, the Serbian state still has not manipulated the space, either by reconstructing the building or by erecting a memorial. Instead, the state created a small memorial in an adjacent park which reads "Why?" and

[354] Nikola Stanojcic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 22, 2021: 1:17:15.
[355] Jovana Nikolić, interviewed by author via Zoom, Leskovac, Serbia, February 15, 2021: 41:07
[356] Ilma Kitivojevic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Prije Polje, Serbia, February 16, 2021: 47:10.
[357] Ilma Kitivojevic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Prije Polje, Serbia, February 16, 2021; Sladjan Rankic, interviewed by author via Zoom, Belgrade, Serbia, February 9, 2021.
[358] Aleksandar Staničić, "Media Propaganda vs Public Dialogue," 389.

lists the names of the victims. The same can be said for the Generalštab building, where the only manipulation to the building is a large military poster. The final state-sponsored memorial considered here, the We Were Only Children memorial, also supports the narrative of unwarranted NATO aggression. In their limited commemorative efforts, the state demonstrates its preference to lump together the 1990s wars and the NATO campaign in Belgrade as one, long conflict from 1991-2000. In doing so, all Serbian actions during the war are retroactively attributed as defending Yugoslavia and attention is deflected to the "War of NATO Aggression" in which Serbs were undeniably victims. This approach avoids dealing with Serbia's dual role as aggressor and victim during the period and instead foregrounds the notion of Serbian victimhood prevailing throughout the 1990s to the present-day.

When speaking of proper memorialization of the NATO bombing, Tadić's efforts to identify the main responsible agents as Milosevic and his regime is heading in the right direction. However, considering the number of civilian lives lost and traumatic memories surrounding the NATO campaign and the desire for a proper memorial voiced by the interviewees, it seems a proper memorial for the NATO campaign needs to find a balance between these two poles. It is clearly inappropriate to attribute NATO's bombing of the RTS as an effort to steal the Serbian country, as some Serbian politicians suggested; however, it is necessary for Serbia to mourn its civilian victims caught between Milosevic's regime and NATO. As seen from the memorials considered in this chapter, victims of the NATO attack must be memorialized separately from Serbians who lost their lives during the armed conflict of 1991-1995. Similarly, any representation of the

decade of the 90s must provide space for nuance when discussing the related, yet still distinct conflicts to avoid reframing the narratives of the wars and to achieve proper memorialization.

All the interviewees firmly believed Serbia must properly remember the wars of the 1990s in order to have regional reconciliation, progress, and to avoid repeating such an atrocity, and many interviewees believed the built environment was a necessary component of staring the commemorative process. Yet, many of the interviewees presented a pessimistic view of the masses, which begs the questions of how effective memorialization can really be in the face of pervasive nationalism. Additionally, most interviewees attributed narrative control to political elites, nearly robbing the masses of their agency when it comes to issues of the 1990s and introducing another question of the degree to which elites control memorialization in the city. As demonstrated by this chapter, private individuals– like the families of the RTS victims– do have the power and ability to shape the commemorative landscape of the city. While these commemorative efforts have yet to reach their full potential, the existence of a memorial is solely attributable to the effort made by those families. Further, as the interviewees have identified, the built environment has the potential to educate and inform those who interact with it, empowering the visitor to come to their own conclusions about the past. The type of commemorative landscape advocated for by the interviewees and scholars generally has not actualized in Belgrade, therefore it cannot be declared ineffective. If progress is to happen, it must begin somewhere; perhaps the most appropriate place is where those primarily affected by political conflict reside– on the city streets.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The built environment both records the past, like a memory, and offers itself as a medium to represent the past, like a history. When the built environment is manipulated to create a desired representation of the past, it necessarily affects the memory the landscape holds. As such, manipulations of the physical landscape, like a memorial, have the ability to manipulate the record of the past and influence the way people interact with specific memory sites. Demonstrated by this thesis, Serbia provides an interesting lens into the narrative tension latent in the physical landscape and the elements within it due to its numerous political transformations since the 19th century. The capital, Belgrade, physically shows the numerous layers of its long history, from the Ottoman-style cobblestone streets topped with relics of the Nazi occupation and brutalist statues of a now-past communist era. Looking at these various layers of the city and their manipulation, or lack thereof, reveals the state's view of its past.

From the memorials, statues, and memory sites considered here, the Serbian state's preference to reframe the past to support both a continuous national narrative from medieval times to the present and a narrative of Serbian victimhood becomes clear. Statues, monuments, and plaques dedicated to the glorious Serbian politicians and statemen who initiated "modern history" in Belgrade are superimposed on Ottoman sites and structures in an explicit effort to silence Belgrade's Ottoman past. Holocaust sites like the Sajmište complex inside of the city have been left unpreserved and advertised as available space to the highest bidder. The memorial that does exist for Sajmište fails to provide the history of the camp and redirects the viewer's attention to Jasenovac, an

Ustaša camp where Serb deaths outnumber Jews and Roma. The two bombed buildings and memorials to Serbian victims of the 1990s only commemorate Serbs caught in the crossfire between NATO and Milosevic's regime and fails to speak to the multitude of Serbian experiences during the early 1990s. Only two state-sponsored memorials, the We Were Only Children memorial and the monument to the defenders of the homeland, spoke to the memory of Serbian victims from the 1990s. The first, dedicated to the children, is the exception that proves the rule in that it manifested during brief period in early 2000s Serbian politics when it was acceptable to blame Milosevic for the NATO bombing campaign. Since then, as demonstrated by the fate of the monument to the defenders of the homeland, the state has regressed. The only other monument specifically dedicated to victims, despite the justified controversy surrounding it, has been removed and replaced with a statue of the Serbian medieval ruler, Stefan Nemanja. For the memory of the 1990s, it appears as if the state is now pursuing another policy of silence.

The public, however, has not been silent. The failure of the state to properly memorialize sites like Sajmište and the Radio Television Serbia building repeatedly causes public outcry and, in the case of the latter, private initiatives to remedy the problem. For Sajmište, the public has been waiting decades for their demands to be met. Unlike the state, these private individuals, solely represented by the few existing initiatives and newspaper articles, see the complexity of Belgrade's past in a positive light. Only by dealing with all the layers of the past, including the undesirable ones, can Serbian history and the national identify attached to it be understood and accurately

represented. The young Serbians interviewed here echoed this view and shared with me their hopes of supporting a balanced approach to Serbia's past in their future careers.

Though it does not represent the full Serbian public, this study demonstrates the limited role the physical landscape has in shaping the understanding of the past held by the Serbians interviewed for this study. Specifically, the interviewees were not receptive of the official narrative's unbalanced presentation of Serbian victimhood and silencing of the Ottoman past to create a linear connection between the medieval modern Serbian state. For my highly educated interviewees, the built environment in Belgrade became something to analyze academically and enjoy mindlessly as a student in Belgrade, not their primary source for learning and interacting with Serbia's national history. The only memory sites relevant to my interviewees in any meaningful way were Kalemegdan, Sajmište, and the Generalštab building. The interviewees viewed Kalemegdan as a fundamentally Ottoman space, and they located its contemporary cultural relevance in that fact. For most interviewees, their Serbian identity becomes more intelligible after learning more about Serbia's Ottoman past. As such, the Serbian statemen and politicians monumentalized in busts and statues are lost on my interviewees– they are simply statues on top of an Ottoman building or a landmark to use to easily locate their friends. The lack of memorialization of Sajmište and the Generalštab building is what drew my interviewees' attention to them as relevant memory sites. For a majority of the interviewees, the silencing of these memory sites makes it increasingly difficult to take pride in their Serbian identity; they found the state's silencing of the past isolating.

However, the interviewees were generally pessimistic about the views held by the masses, believing that their view of the past aligns more with the state's presentation of the past through the landscape, and even more pessimistic of younger generations, who some believed to be growing more and more nationalistic. These views cannot be confirmed until an oral history study like this one is conducted with a much larger scope. Initially, this study was an effort to give voice to the masses by surveying a much larger area of Serbia, with a special focus on the southern-most region of Serbia inhabited primarily by Bosniaks– the Sandžak. Unfortunately, COVID-19 prevented the immediate completion of this broader study; however, it is an essential avenue for future research. While the narratives of the past presented in the capital city and by educated, young Serbian are important, it would be remiss to attribute those views of the past to the entirety of Serbia. As such, more landscapes and a wider sample population of Serbians are needed to properly understand Serbian national identity today and its relationship to the built environment. Additionally, given the interviewees focus on contested histories as a source for most memorialization issues, a similar study executed in other post-Yugoslav nations, specifically in the Krajina, Republika Srpska, and northern Bosnia, would provide important insights on the role the built environment plays in anchoring contested narratives.

WORKS CITED

PRIMARY:

Dušan Ristic. Interviewed by author via Zoom. Belgrade, Serbia. February 20, 2021.

Ilma Kitivojevic. Interviewed by author via Zoom. Prije Polje, Serbia. February 16, 2021.

Anonymous 2. Interviewed by author via Zoom. Belgrade, Serbia. February 8, 2021.

Ivana Dinic. Interviewed by author via Zoom. Belgrade, Serbia. March 1, 2021.

Jovana Nikolić. Interviewed by author via Zoom. Leskovac, Serbia. February 15, 2021.

Miloš Vukelić. Interviewed by author via Zoom. Belgrade, Serbia. February 3, 2021.

Nikola Stanojcic. Interviewed by author via Zoom. Belgrade, Serbia. February 22, 2021.

Sanja Vojvodic. Interviewed by author via Zoom. Belgrade, Serbia. February 23, 2021.

Sava Mitrovic. Interview by Madeline Stull via Zoom. Belgrade, Serbia. February 28, 2021.

Sladjan Rankic. Interviewed by author via Zoom. Belgrade, Serbia. February 9, 2021.

Anonymous 1. Interviewed by author via Zoom. Belgrade, Serbia. February 16, 2021.

SECONDARY:

Adamek, Drew. "Zasto: Belgrade and the Remains of the NATO Bombing." *Heritage of Violence* 4, no. 1 (2016): 21.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 2006.

Anscombe, Frederick. *State, Faith, and Nation in Ottoman and Post-Ottoman Lands*. United States of America: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Assmann, Aleida. *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity*. Translated by Sarah Clift. Fordham University Press, 2015.

Assmann, Jan, and John Czaplicka. "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity." *New German Critique*, no. 65 (1995): 125–33. https://doi.org/10.2307/488538.

Ast, Slobodanka. "Patriotic Tears and Calculations." Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, n.d. http://www.helsinki.org.rs/hcharter_t39a03.html.

Attila Aytekin, E. "The Production of Space during the Period of Autonomy: Notes on Belgrade Urban Space, 1817–67." *Journal of Balkan & Near Eastern Studies* 18, no. 6 (December 2016): 588–607. https://doi.org/10.1080/19448953.2016.1196049.

Bădescu, Gruia. "Making Sense of Ruins: Architectural Reconstruction and Collective Memory in Belgrade." *Nationalities Papers* 47, no. 2 (March 2019): 182–97. https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2018.42.

Bakić-Hayden, Milica. "Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia on JSTOR." *Slavic Review* 54, no. 4 (1995): 917–31. https://doi.org/10.2307/2501399.

Bakić-Hayden, Milica. "Saint Sava and the Power(s) of Spiritual Authority." *Serbian Studies: Journal of the North American Society for Serbian Studies* 24, no. 1 (2010): 49–62. https://doi.org/10.1353/ser.2012.0015.

Begić, Sandina, and Boriša Mraović. "Forsaken Monuments and Social Change: The Function of Socialist Monuments in the Post-Yugoslav Space." *Peace Psychology Book Series*, n.d., 13–37.

Bieber, Florian. "Nationalist Mobilization and Stories of Serb Suffering: The Kosovo Myth from 600th Anniversary to the Present." *Rethinking History* 6, no. 1 (April 1, 2002): 95–110. https://doi.org/10.1080/136425200110112137.

Bjelotomic, Snezana. "Stefan Nemanja Monument in Belgrade Will Cost EUR 9 Million?" *Serbian Monitor* (blog), December 29, 2020. https://www.serbianmonitor.com/en/stefan-nemanja-monument-in-belgrade-will-cost-eur-9-million/.

Browning, Christopher. "Sajmiste as a European Site of Holocaust Remembrance." *Filozofija I Društvo* 23, no. 4 (January 1, 2012): 99–105. https://doi.org/10.2298/FID1204099B.

Chattopadhyay, Swati. "The Landscape of War." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 72, no. 3 (2013): 289–91. https://doi.org/10.1525/jsah.2013.72.3.289.

Clark, Janine Natalya. "Collective Guilt, Collective Responsibility and the Serbs." *East European Politics and Societies* 22, no. 3 (August 1, 2008): 668–92. https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325408318533.

Ćorović, Dragana. "Three Parks in Nineteenth-Century Belgrade." *Serbian Studies: Journal of the North American Society for Serbian Studies* 24, no. 1–2 (2012): 75–100. https://doi.org/10.1353/ser.2012.0001.

David, Lea. "Mediating International and Domestic Demands: Mnemonic Battles Surrounding the Monument to the Fallen of the Wars of the 1990s in Belgrade." *Nationalities Papers* 42, no. 4 (July 2014): 655–73. https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2013.874995.

"Death Camp Concert Is Canceled – The New York Times." *The New York Times*, November 5, 2007. https://www-nytimes-com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/2007/11/05/arts/music/05arts-DEATHCAMPCON_BRF.html%20%20%20%20https://balkaninsight.com/2018/01/24/serbia-s-progressives-open-office-at-wwii-camp-s-location-01-24-2018/.

Djordje Mihajlovic. Interviewed by author via Zoom. Banja Luka, Bosnia-Herzegovina. February 9, 2021.

Ejdus, Filip. "'Not a Heap of Stones': Material Environments and Ontological Security in International Relations." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 30, no. 1 (January 2, 2017): 23–43. https://doi.org/10.1080/09557571.2016.1271310.

Emmert, Thomas A. "A Crisis of Identity: Serbia at the End of the Century." In *Yugoslavia and Its Historians: Understanding the Balkan Wars of the 1990s*, 295. Stanford University Press, 2003.

Engelberg, Stephen. "Carving Out a Greater Serbia." *The New York Times*, September 1, 1991, sec. Magazine. https://www.nytimes.com/1991/09/01/magazine/carving-out-a-greater-serbia.html.

Eror, Aleks. "Outcry as Preschool Sets up in Former Nazi Concentration Camp." The Guardian, August 14, 2019. http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/aug/14/outcry-as-preschool-sets-up-in-former-nazi-concentration-camp.

Gašić, Ranka. "The Old Belgrade Fairground: Judenlager Semlin a Place of Intentional Oblivion?" *Istorija 20. Veka* 29, no. 2 (1983): 133–42.

Goss, Vladimir P. "Landscape as History, Myth, and Art. An Art Historian's View." *Krajolik Kao Povijest, Mit I Umjetnost. Pogled Jednog Povjesničara Umjetnosti* 21 (January 2009): 133–168.

Ivanković, Mladenka. "The Sajmište Exhibition Grounds in Semlin, Serbia: The Changing of Memory." *Jewish Political Studies Review* 22, no. ¾ (2010): 59–67.

Janković, Nataša. “Architectural Terri(s)Tories: Jajinci Memorial Park in Belgrade.” *AM: Art + Media* 0, no. 12 (April 1, 2017): 81–97. https://doi.org/10.25038/am.v0i12.169.

Jansen, Stef. “The Streets of Beograd. Urban Space and Protest Identities in Serbia.” *Political Geography* 20, no. 1 (January 1, 2001): 35–55. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298(00)00052-4.

Jelavich, Barbara. *History of the Balkans*. Vol. 2. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

John R. Lampe. *Yugoslavia as History: Twice There Was a Country*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Jovanović, Rodoljub, and Ángela Bermúdez. “The next Generation: Nationalism and Violence in the Narratives of Serbian Students on the Break-up of Yugoslavia.” *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 21, no. 1 (April 1, 2021): 2–25. https://doi.org/10.1111/sena.12339.

Karge, Heike. “Sajmište, Jasenovac, and the Social Frames of Remembering and Forgetting.” *Filozofija I Drustvo* 23, no. 4 (2012): 106–18.

“Key Figures of the Cases | International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia.” United Nations International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, May 2021. https://www.icty.org/sid/24.

Lavrence, Christine. “Beyond Balkan Time: Memory, Monument and Agency in Belgrade.” Ph.D., York University (Canada), 2004. http://search.proquest.com/docview/305111147/abstract/346D57E2F2E74130PQ/1.

Lavrence, Christine. “People in War: Oral Histories of the Yugoslav Wars.” *Oral History Review* 40, no. 1 (2013): 178–85.

Ljubojević, Ana, Mia Jerman, and Kosta Bovan. “Cultural Trauma Set in Stone? The Case of Shelling of Dubrovnik.” *Politicka Misao: Croatian Political Science Review* 54, no. ½ (January 2017): 197–219.

Mass Atrocity Endings. “Yugoslavia: Post World War II.” Accessed June 20, 2021. https://sites.tufts.edu/atrocityendings/2015/08/07/yugoslavia-post-wwii-assaults/.

Mandić, Marija. “Official Commemoration of the NATO Bombing of Serbia: A Case Study of the Fifteenth Anniversary.” In *Memories and Narrative of the 1999 Bombing*, 4th ed., 64:460–81. Südosteuropa, 2016.

Mazower, Mark. *The Balkans: A Short History*. Random House, Inc., 2000.

Milanović, Ljubomir. "Materializing Authority: The Church of Saint Sava in Belgrade and Its Architectural Significance." *Serbian Studies: Journal of the North American Society for Serbian Studies* 24, no. 1 (2010): 63–81. https://doi.org/10.1353/ser.2012.0018.

Encyclopedia Britannica. "Miloš | Prince of Serbia." Accessed June 15, 2021. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Milos.

OrthoChristian.Com. "Monument to St. Symeon the Myrrh-Gusher (Stefan Nemanja) Unveiled in Belgrade (+VIDEO)." Accessed June 16, 2021. https://orthochristian.com/137008.html.

"Murder of the Jews of the Balkans and Slovakia." Accessed May 3, 2021. balkans-and-slovakia.html.

Nikolić, Zoran. "Beogradske rice: Neobična sudbina spomenika na Kalemegdanu." NOVOSTI. Accessed June 16, 2021. https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/beograd.74.html:452332-Beogradske-price-Neobicna-sudbina-spomenika-na-Kalemegdanu.

Norris, David A., and Svetlana Velmar-Jankovic. *Belgrade: A Cultural History*. New York, UNITED STATES: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2008. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/asulib-ebooks/detail.action?docID=679344.

Odak, Stipe, and Andriana Benčić. "Jasenovac—A Past That Does Not Pass: The Presence of Jasenovac in Croatian and Serbian Collective Memory of Conflict." *East European Politics and Societies* 30, no. 4 (November 1, 2016): 805–29. https://doi.org/10.1177/0888325416653657.

"Outcry as Preschool Sets up in Former Nazi Concentration Camp | Cities | The Guardian." Accessed June 20, 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/aug/14/outcry-as-preschool-sets-up-in-former-nazi-concentration-camp.

Paletta, Carolyn. "Remembering the 1999 NATO Bombing | Reporting Balkans." Accessed May 24, 2021. https://reportingbalkans.com/remembering-the-1999-nato-bombing-of-radio-television-serbia/.

Pavlaković, Vjeran, and Davor Pauković. *Framing the Nation and Collective Identities: Political Rituals and Cultural Memory of the Twentieth Century Traumas in Croatia*. Milton, UNITED KINGDOM: Routledge, 2019. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/asulib-ebooks/detail.action?docID=5763012.

Philliou, Christine. “The Paradox of Perceptions: Interpreting the Ottoman Past through the National Present.” *Middle Eastern Studies* 44, no. 5 (2008): 661–75. https://doi.org/10.1080/00263200802285385.

Popović, Tamara, Jelena Marić, and Eva Vaništa Lazarević. “Reshaping Approaches of Architectural Heritage Devastated through Bombing: Case Study of Generalštab, Belgrade.” *Urban Design International*, 2020. https://doi-org.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/10.1057/s41289-020-00139-1.

Povrzanovic, Maja. “Identities in War: Embodiments of Violence and Places of Belonging.” *Ethnologia Europaea* 27 (1997): 153–62.

Resanovic, Dunja. “From Three Ottoman Gates to Three Serbian Sites of Memory: The Performative Rewriting of Belgrade from 1878 until Today.” *History and Anthropology* 30, no. 4 (August 8, 2019): 393–405. https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2019.1624259.

Riedlmayer, András. “Damage to Churches and Other Cultural/Religious Properties During the 17-18 March 2004 Attacks on Orthodox Heritage in Kosovo & On Islamic Heritage in Serbia.” Kosovo: Cultural Heritage Without Borders, April 15, 2004. http://www.chwb.org/.

Rivera, Lauren A. “Managing ‘Spoiled’ National Identity: War, Tourism, and Memory in Croatia.” *American Sociological Review; Washington* 73, no. 4 (August 2008): 613–34.

Rudić, Filip. “Serbia Ruling Party Opens Office at Concentration Camp.” Balkan Insight, January 24, 2018. https://balkaninsight.com/2018/01/24/serbia-s-progressives-open-office-at-wwii-camp-s-location-01-24-2018/.

Rutar, Sabine. “Oral History as a Method: Variants of Remembering World War II in Slovenia, Serbia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina.” *East Central Europe* 34–35, no. 1–2 (2007): 245–65.

Šakaja, Laura, and Jelena Stanić. “Other(Ing), Self(Portraying), Negotiating: The Spatial Codification of Values in Zagreb’s City-Text.” *Cultural Geographies* 18, no. 4 (October 1, 2011): 495–516. https://doi.org/10.1177/1474474011414636.

Schäuble, Michaela. “How History Takes Place: Sacralized Landscapes in the Croatian-Bosnian Border Region.” *History and Memory* 23, no. 1 (2011): 23-61,157.

"Serbia MPs Vote for Nazi Concentration Camp Site Memorial | Balkan Insight." Accessed June 20, 2021. https://balkaninsight.com/2020/02/24/serbia-mps-vote-for-memorial-at-nazi-concentration-camp-site/.

Politika Online. "Spomenik voždu Karađorđu poklon Beogradu." Accessed June 16, 2021. https://www.politika.rs/sr/clanak/441010/Spomenik-vozdu-Karadordu-poklon-Beogradu.

Stanic, Jelena, Laura Sakaja, and Lana Slavuj. "Renaming Zagreb Streets and Squares." *Migracijske I etnicke teme* 25, no. 1–2 (2009): 89–124.

Staničić, Aleksandar. "Media Propaganda vs Public Dialogue: The Spatial Memorialisation of Conflict in Belgrade after the 1999 NATO Bombing." *The Journal of Architecture* 26, no. 3 (April 3, 2021): 371–93. https://doi.org/10.1080/13602365.2021.1897645.

Stojanovic, Dusan. "Kitsch or Artwork? Controversial Monument Unveiled in Serbia." AP News, April 20, 2021. https://apnews.com/article/stefan-nemanja-controversial-statue-998c811cec3f31bda94db2411d1212dd.

Stojanovic, Milica. "Serbian President Plans WWII Jasenovac Memorial with Bosnian Serbs." Balkan Insight, August 26, 2020. https://balkaninsight.com/2020/08/26/serbian-president-plans-wwii-jasenovac-memorial-with-bosnian-serbs/.

Stokes, Gale. "Solving the Wars of Yugoslav Succession." In *Yugoslavia and Its Historians: Understanding the Balkan Wars of the 1990s*, 193–211. Stanford University Press, 2003.

Szpunar, Piotr M. "Monuments, Mundanity and Memory: Altering 'Place' and 'Space' at the National War Memorial (Canada)." *Memory Studies* 3, no. 4 (October 1, 2010): 379–94. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698010374286.

"The JUST Act Report: Serbia." U.S. Department of State. Accessed July 5, 2021. https://www.state.gov/reports/just-act-report-to-congress/serbia/.

Tsuda, Takeyuki. "Ethnicity and the Anthropologist: Negotiating Identities in the Field." *Anthropological Quarterly* 71, no. 3 (1998): 107–24.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "Jasenovac." In *Holocaust Encyclopedia*. Accessed June 20, 2021. https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/jasenovac.

APPENDIX A

INTERIVEW QUESTIONS

1. INTRODUCTION
    a. Tell me about yourself. Where are you from? What do you study?
    b. How long have you been in Belgrade? What first brought you to Belgrade?

2. SPACE/PLACE
    a. Generally speaking, when you walk through the city do you notice:
        i. monuments?
        ii. parks?
        iii. street signs?
    b. What is your favorite park in Belgrade? Why?
        i. If do not have one, why?

3. IDENTITY AND SERBIAN HISTORY
    a. What does it mean to you to be Serbian?
        i. Who is a Serbian person? What are the most basic yet necessary qualities of a Serbian person?
    b. What do you consider to be the defining moment of Serbian history? Why?
    c. Who do you consider the most important historical Serbian figure? (For example, an American might say George Washington)
    d. How should Serbian history be told? Through what mediums and what should the focus be?
    e. In your opinion, how does Serbian history relate to Ottoman history?
    f. Tell me about the war in the 1990s — whatever you are comfortable sharing. How should an event like that be remembered in Serbian history?
    g. How important is Serbian land to Serbian history?
        i. What makes Serbian land, Serbian land?

4. PLACES
    a. What memorials have you visited? How does the narrative of the event memorialized relate to the way you remember the event?
    b. Can you tell me what you know about Kalemegdan (Fortress)?
    c. Can you tell me about Sajmište or Banjica?
        i. If not, how should WW2 be remembered?

5. MEMORIALIZATION AND PRESERVATION
    a. What qualifies an item (a building, a place, etc.) to be preserved?
    b. What national events should be remembered?
    c. How should historical moments be remembered?
    d. How important is it to remember the past? Is it ever acceptable to "forget" certain moments?

e. To what extent does the form memorializations take inform contemporary political issues?