
Silvia-Lucretia Nicola, Felsberg Institute for Academic Research and Education

Silvia-Lucretia Nicola holds a B.A. in Political Science from the Free University of Berlin and the University of Granada, as well as a M.A. in Military History and Sociology from the University of Potsdam. She is currently working as a Research Associate at the Felsberg Institute for Education and Academic Research, as well as a policy consultant. Her academic interests lie on the research of various forms of violence, the dynamics of (armed) conflicts, and international organisations, such as the EU, NATO and the UN. She holds strong expertise on Iraq, especially its northern parts, the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan.

The Autonomous Region of Kurdistan in the north of Iraq and Kosovo in the south of Serbia are two landlocked regions, which have challenged the known international order by aiming to secede from their parent state. The people of both regions have been subject to crimes against humanity, systematic discrimination and oppression to various degrees over time by the parent state. While both entities have been deprived over decades from economic and social progress and development, the consolidation of a ‘distinct’ collective identity has evolved at full speed after 1992; nation-building becoming more ‘successful’ than state-building. However, precisely these processes have been the ones, which have fuelled contentious dynamics and burdened the already strained relationship with the parent state, being responsible for new spirals of violence. In order to understand these dynamics of violence, this paper aims at contrasting the way the Iraqi-Kurdish and Kosovar collective identities have been built around founding myths, the demonisation of the Other and negation of the identity of the parent state despite decades of cohabitation, and the re-activation and alteration of the memory of previous conflicts. This paper constitutes the first step of my dissertation project, shedding light on the role of external actors in the varying degrees of successfulness of achieving consolidated statehood and recognition based on the structured focused comparison between Iraqi-Kurdistan and Kosovo.

The Syria War and identity in the Balkans

Behar Sadriu, SOAS University of London

Behar Sadriu is a Senior Teaching Fellow at SOAS University of London. He completed his PhD in 2016 looking at Turkey’s engagement with the Balkans at the end of the Cold War. His interests include IR theory, Turkey, the Balkans and Islam.

This paper will build on my earlier work (Sadriu 2017) which looked at how Albanians living in the Balkans responded to the Syria War. The essay gave a broad overview of events between 2011 and late 2014 and charted state responses to the war in Syria. It explored how imams in Kosovo and Albania came to view the war and government-level responses. Analysing these, I was able to explore how violent ruptures in the Arab Muslim world impacted two of Europe’s largest Muslim majority countries. The aim with this paper will be to situate the case study more firmly in theoretical works on war, from the literature on ethnic / civil wars, to global transfers of counterinsurgency doctrine and Rob Nixon’s notion of ‘slow violence’. In so doing, it is possible to bring the Balkans and the Middle East in conversation with each other in more nuanced ways.
In between nationalising fields: Croatia’s policies towards Croats in Herzegovina
Mate Subašić, University of Liverpool

Mate Subašić is a PhD Candidate working on nationalism, identity politics and trans-border groups particularly in Southeastern Europe. He has worked on a number of international research projects across Central Europe and the Balkans where he conducted extensive fieldwork.

Transborder ethnic groups challenge established borders within Europe, and influence the development of national identities. The nationalising policies of ethnic minorities like the Croats of Herzegovina, which constitute the focus of this paper, have often been understood through Brubaker’s (1996) triadic nexus framework, which separates three mutually antagonistic ‘nationalising nationalists’. In this framework, nationalising policies of ethnic minorities are related to two other nationalisms: the external homeland’s nationalism and nationalism from within the state in which minority lives. However, the accession of Croatia – the ‘external homeland’ of Herzegovinian Croats to the EU, illustrates the importance of a fourth field, the international community (Smith, 2002), for understanding nationalising policies. The paper argues that the specific circumstance where the external homeland becomes, at the same time, an important actor within the international community, thanks to its EU membership, requires a new conceptual framework for understanding nationalising policies. Drawing on the strengths of existing approaches, this paper reconceptualises the relationships between different international and domestic (nationalising) fields through an analysis of Croatia’s policies towards Bosnia and Herzegovina in the period between 2013 when Croatia joined EU and 2016.

Rebel disarmament, identity and game theory: The case of the Yemeni Houthis
Júlia Palik, Corvinus University of Budapest, Peace Research Institute of Oslo

Júlia Palik is currently pursuing her PhD in International Relations and Security Studies at Corvinus University of Budapest. The author’s research focuses on the role of identities in intra- and interstate relations, especially in the Gulf-region. The author currently lives in Oslo and working at the International Peace Research Institution Oslo (PRIO) as a visiting researcher in the ‘Costs of Contention’ project.

In 2016, the UN-sponsored peace talks in Kuwait failed to terminate the Yemeni civil war because the Houthis and the Yemeni president, Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi was unable to find a mutually acceptable bargain. One core demand of the government was that the Houthis must withdraw from all territory they have occupied since 2014 and to disarm. Why the did the Houthis failed to agree to the disarmament clause? Achieving a negotiated settlement in a civil war is difficult because of the simultaneous presence of the time-inconsistency and the commitment problem. If rebels disarm, their bargaining power is considerably weakened. Furthermore, unilateral defection from the peace agreement becomes an appealing solution for the government who can renege on its previous promises and attack the disarmed rebel group. This paper examines how rebel groups identity is shaped by being able to maintain an effective, status quo challenging military force. Secondly, it examines how disarmament impact identity and what kind of security guarantees are needed for rebel groups to be ready to give up their arms. Including identity in the analysis of civil war termination enhances our understanding of the rational actor based game theoretical models of civil war. Research into this topic holds practical relevance for stakeholders wishing to gain a more nuanced
understanding of the failure of peace talks, and academic relevance in the assessment of the role of collective identity in civil wars termination.

**Melancholic response to war violence and the emergence of group assumption of post-ness**

Kalina Yordanova, MSF (Doctors without borders)

Kalina Yordanova, Ph.D., holds degrees in Psychoanalysis and Anthropology from University College London, UK. The topic of her doctoral dissertation was transmission of traumatic experiences across generations in the families of war survivors from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Kalina Yordanova has published on the topic of second generation’s imagery of the Bosnian War (2015). In 2016 she joined the MSF (Doctors without Borders). Over the last 10 years, she has been working with refugees of war and victims of torture, mainly from Syria and Iraq.

What response does war violence evoke in victims? How does war impact group identity? Drawing on my experience with war survivors from the Syrian war and the Bosnian war of 1992-95, I suggest that the memories of the war generation become the point of reference for their identity and that of their children. Loss, communicated in gesture, act and sites of memory, constructs a melancholic response in survivors and their descendants characterized by idealization of the pre-war past and the impossibility to invest the future. My hypothesis is that post-war communities extract joy from remembering the world before the war and complaining about the hopeless future. The unconscious assumption behind is that war brings loss that cannot be compensated and all attempts (integration programmes, humanitarian aid) present a mere substitute for survivors’ true desire: to restore the past. Absorbed by loss and fearing that history may be tragically repeating itself, community members create war-related art, visit places associated with the war, turn to pre-war practices (Tito’s birthday celebrations and regard the non-domestic with ambivalence (humanitarian aid offered to war refugees is described as “unfamiliar”, “spoiled” and “insufficient”; medical care is labelled as “unprofessional and slow”).

**Skirts and Words: The Art of Acknowledgment, War Time Rape and Albanian Nationhood in Kosovo**

Ivor Sokolić, LSE Research Officer

Ivor Sokolić is a Research Officer in the Department of Government at the London School of Economics and Political Science. His research interests focus on transitional justice and nation-building in the former Yugoslavia, with a particular interest in Croatia. He completed a PhD at University College London on that topic and he has published in Nationalities Papers, Nations and Nationalism, Sudosteuropa and The Croatian Political Science Review.

This article analyses a response to the legacy of mass atrocities as an indicator of everyday peacebuilding practice. Within this process, the construction of the nation is revealing of the process of a nation’s self-definition, both on its own terms as well as in terms of opposition to the ethnic other. The case of war time rape is often shrouded in silence owing to pressures coming from within an identity community. Consequently, the breaking of silence on war time rape provides a unique opportunity to track how the recognition of harm responds to, or interacts with existing national narratives of a post-conflict nation. Women’s voices can resist or reproduce, potentially simultaneously, existing power structures associated with national identity. Acknowledgment of war time rape can potentially perpetuate a collective understanding of the nation and it can have an emancipatory effect by allowing women to reclaim their voice as victims in non-ethnic terms. This article studies the artistic installation in Kosovo by conceptual artist Alketa Xhafa-Mripa. The collection
of 5,000 skirts, including those of victims, and their hanging on the wash-lines in the football stadium in Prishtina contributed to breaking the silence and stigma surrounding the war time rape. Drawing on diverse primary sources, this article investigates how this artistic activism, as an example of everyday peacebuilding, can be understood from the perspective of everyday nationalism.

**WHO ARE BOSNIAN RAPE-VICTIMS? Victimised Cautiousness & Narrative Fetishism in Post-War Identity Construction**

Dr. Nena Mocnik, University of Turku, Turku Institute for Advanced Studies, Finland

Dr. Nena Mocnik is a postdoctoral researcher at Turku Institute for Advanced Studies. She is the author of 'Sexuality after War Rape: From Narrative to Embodied Research' (Routledge 2017), for which she received a Bank of Montreal award from University of Ottawa (Women's Studies program). In 2014 she was a Fulbright visiting researcher at University of Southern California; in 2015 a BIARI Fellow and a guest researcher at University of Copenhagen. In March 2018, she will be a key note speaker at "Narratives of Trauma, Victimhood and Resilience following Wartime Rape in Post-WWII Germany and Post-Conflict Bosnia", a workshop held by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

The paper focuses on the narratives about massive rapes and rape survivors in the context of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina 1992-1996. Soon after first testimonies were recorded, feminist scholars began to problematize the use of the term 'victim' in this context, as it not only implies the cultural understanding of rape as victim's own responsibility and even her active involvement in the crime, but also represents the images of devastated, symbolically killed and disempowered individuals. Instead, those scholars proposed the shift of terminology, preferring the term 'survivor' and thus enabling alternative social connotations and perceptions related to this. However, this paper stresses how far does the change in narrative benefit the real life of survivors and if the change of terminology brings also the changes on the ground. Field research with survivors and the analysis of their own recognition in terms of one or another identity, shows several ideological misuses and epistemological gaps and also questions the problematic plead of the scholarship, where debate about survivors rather serves some type of intellectual exercise than active engagement and/or political advocacy for the affected community.

**The Sound of Silence: Narratives of War in the Education and Museums of Lebanon and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**

Giuditta Fontana, University of Birmingham

Giuditta Fontana is a political scientist specialising in cultural institutions in post-conflict and fragile societies. Her current project, supported by a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship, explores the function of cultural reforms in peace agreements and in their aftermath, with a focus on Lebanon, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Northern Ireland and Sierra Leone. Her first monograph on 'Education Policy and Power-Sharing in Post-Conflict Societies: Lebanon, Northern Ireland and Macedonia' was recently published by Palgrave.

Group identities are constructed through traumatic events (such as war), through the telling and retelling of narratives of the past, and through an equally powerful silence over past traumas. This paper explores the role of war and conflict in shaping history curricula and historical museums in Lebanon and in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (with a focus on the Archaeological Museum in Skopje and the National Museum in Beirut). Despite their obvious differences, Lebanon
and FYR of Macedonia are similar in one main respect: they are diverse societies that experienced conflicts in the recent past (the Lebanese civil war of 1975-1989 and the Macedonian conflict of 2001). This paper explores the extent to which museums and schools, as two prominent institutions of early socialisation, address the conflictual past explicitly and implicitly. It then turns to the long-term implications of these messages for the sustainability of the peace process and the functioning of power-sharing in the two countries. The paper is based on qualitative analysis of original interview material collected by the author in Beirut and Skopje in 2012-2013 and 2017, official curricula and educational reports.

From a Stormy Past to a Troubled Future: Regional Reconciliation and Commemorative Practices of Croatia's Homeland War
Vjeran Pavlaković, University of Rijeka

Vjeran Pavlaković is an associate professor at the Department of Cultural Studies at the University of Rijeka, Croatia. He received his Ph.D. in History in 2005 from the University of Washington, and has published articles on cultural memory, transitional justice in the former Yugoslavia, and the Spanish Civil War. He is also the lead researcher on the project ‘Framing the Nation and Collective Identity in Croatia: Political Rituals and the Cultural Memory of 20th Century Traumas’ funded by the Croatian Science Foundation (HRZZ).

Based upon the results of the FRAMNAT research project, this paper analyses how commemorative practices of Croatia’s Homeland War contributes to the creation of the official narrative of the recent past, and consequently, Croatian identity. It focuses on the Victory Day commemoration, held every year on the anniversary of Operation Storm. The victorious celebrations clash with the tragic memories of a segment of Croatia’s citizens, and the controversies around this operation and its commemoration continue to affect reconciliation, the ongoing militarization of society, and the ability of Croatia to openly deal with the legacy of war. Furthermore, beyond affecting domestic interethnic relations, counter-commemorations in neighbouring countries such as Serbia and BiH related to Operation Storm negatively impact bilateral relations and hamper reconciliatory politics which would contribute to faster Euro-Atlantic integration and long-term stability in the region. These domestic and international aspects surrounding the commemorative practices of Operation Storm can also provide insights into how to deal with future reconciliation efforts in the Middle East. This paper will provide an overview of the commemorative practices, and focus on the political speeches and key political/social actors involved in constructing the dominant narrative, as well as those efforts in providing alternative narratives which could allow for a more inclusive understanding of the past.

“KRVatska”, “Branitelji”, “Žrtve”: (Re-)framing Croatia’s politics of memory and identity
Taylor McConnell, School of Social and Political Science, University of Edinburgh

Taylor McConnell is a PhD Researcher in Sociology at the School of Social and Political Science at the University of Edinburgh. His dissertation project is titled, ’Memory abuse, violence and identity in the former Yugoslavia: Perpetuations of divided memory in Croatia and Serbia since 1995’ and seeks to examine the role of the Croatian state, through its influence in the creation of cultural memory and politics of remembrance, in continuing to divide mnemonic communities in the regions once heavily populated by ethnic Serbs prior to 1995’s Operation Storm. His research interests include memory politics, Yugoslavia past and present, identity construction, violence and transitional justice.
This paper will explore the development of Croatian memory politics and the construction of a new Croatian identity in the aftermath of the 1990s war for independence. Using the public “face” of memory – monuments, museums and commemorations – I contend that Croatia’s narrative of self is divided between praising “defenders”/“branitelji” and remembering its victims/“žrtve”, and that this divide is to a great extent dependent on geography and the various ways the Croatian War for Independence came to an end in Dalmatia and Slavonia. Building on ongoing research on new spaces of identity and memory cultures in the former Yugoslavia, this paper will discuss the potential for abuse of Croatia’s cultural memory (using Jan and Aleida Assmann’s framework of memory) by state and local leaders. The implications of memory abuse here represent a challenge not only for regional cooperation and potential reconciliation but also for the European Union as a whole, which in recent years has struggled to build and maintain a unitary identity. As well, the division of Croatian civil society, particularly between veterans’ associations and regional minority bodies, continues to disrupt amicable relations among the Yugoslav successor states and places Croatia in a generally undesired but unshakable space between “Europe” and the Balkans.

Why memory matters? Findings from Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Israel and Palestine

Lea David, School of Sociology, UCD

My work examines the impact that the international human rights regime has on nationalist ideologies. I question how the transition to democracy is changing the content of collective memory in conflict and post conflict settings and is producing new categories and social realities on the ground. My main research interests cover the interconnectedness of nationalism, human rights and memory politics; the Holocaust/Genocide nexus; the Balkans and the Israeli/Palestinian conflicts; and conflict and peace studies. Currently as a Marie Curie Research Fellow I am preparing a book manuscript ‘Mandating Memory in the Name of Human Rights’ to be submitted at Oxford University Press, Culture and Politics Series.

This paper explores the impact that post-conflict memorialization isomorphism has on identity making in conflict and post-conflict settings. Memorialization isomorphism refers to the standardized set of norms, promoted through human rights infrastructures that prescribe how to remember past human rights abuses. I ask here how successful memorialization isomorphism is in promoting universalist human rights values and whether memorialization isomorphism is capable of harvesting micro-solidarity in order to become an ideological cement that can overcome nationalism. Based on the accounts from the Balkans (Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia) and Israel and Palestine, I demonstrate that the outcome of such external mandating of memorialization standards rarely has transformative power on the ground. In both settings, attempts to mandate the commemoration of past human rights abuses through global human rights infrastructure end up in the perpetuation of conflicts, not in the promotion of human rights. In fact, forging of micro-solidarities in smaller groups, a key to the ideological implementation of human rights, is being harvested back by the nation-state to promote nationalist, ethnically based agendas. I argue that in contexts within which ethnic symbols and collective histories have played immediate roles in conflicts, and were further legitimized by peace agreements and human rights institutions, it is nationalist apparatus that is recollecting micro-solidarity on the ground.
Mapping post-conflict communities: Lessons from Mostar
Susane Forde, University of York

Susane Forde is an Associate Lecturer in International Relations at the University of York. She recently completed her doctorate at Liverpool Hope University where she performed the duties of lecturer in International Relations while completing her PhD. A monograph adaptation of her thesis is currently forthcoming, titled ‘Movement as Conflict Transformation: Rescripting Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina’ is to be published in the Palgrave Macmillan series, Rethinking Peace and Conflict Studies.

This work reflects on the processes and actors involved in the post-conflict reconstruction of Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina to start a discussion on the eventual post-conflict reconstruction in Syria. The city of Mostar has been divided since the start of the 1992-5 Bosnian war which involved a clash of narratives over the spatial ownership of the former Yugoslavia. During the war institutional narratives effectively divided communities and instigated ethno-nationalist violence. While the city of Mostar remains jurisdictionally divided, due to the political divisions entrenched by the Dayton Agreement in 1995, social actors have established shared spaces in the city of Mostar. These local actors have socially rescripted the city space which is staged as divided, demonstrating the agentive capability of social actors to be involved in conflict transformation and reconstruction. Theoretically, the work conceptualises social movement as rescripting space and the institutional definition of space as restaging (Forde, 2017). Space is important not only to narratives of the self but also to narratives of the nation state. Accordingly, the methodology of this work is spatially informed and demonstrates the importance of mapping as a participatory methodology which can engage local actors in reconstruction and memorialisation. However, this process is more effective when supported by top-down actors, it is at this intersection that this article proposes the use of mapping to engage local actors in conflict transformation and reconstruction.

Architectures of Memory: Post-war Urban Reconstruction and Shifting Identities in Sarajevo and Beirut
Gruia Badescu, School of Geography, University of Oxford

Gruia Badescu is a Research Associate at the School of Geography, University of Oxford. He has researched post-war reconstruction in the Balkans and the Middle East since 2008, when he obtained a National Geographic Society grant for his comparative research on uses of architecture and urban design in post-war reconciliation in Beirut and Sarajevo. Gruia conducted his PhD research on urban reconstruction at the Centre for Urban Conflicts Research, University of Cambridge, where he is also one of the conveners of the Places of Amnesia research group. Since 2017, he has organized workshops to bridge architects from the Balkans and the Levant in discussions towards the future rebuilding of Syria.

Beirut and Sarajevo share an Ottoman past and urban imaginaries of cosmopolitanism, as well as a recent experience of urban warfare, segregation, and post-war reconstruction. Based on fieldwork conducted between 2009 and 2017, the paper reflects on commonalities and differences between how war and post-war transformations in the two cities reflect the reshaping of memory and identity. Specifically, it scrutinizes the uses of architectural reconstruction as tools to promote post-war reconciliation on the one hand and 'nation-building' on the other, with the cityscape become an arena for mnemonic and identity battles. It relates urban transformation to broader political processes, including the Dayton framework in BiH and the Ta’if Accords in Lebanon, showing how state politics influenced architectural reconstruction. In Beirut, Prime Minister Hariri’s Solidere project highlighted
a sense of a regained confidence, unity in diversity and heritage. In Sarajevo, divided between two post-Dayton entities, architecture was employed to underline the new demographic and political realities. Beyond the local actors, the paper discusses how international capital shaped places in the two cities, favouring certain expressions of identity over others. All in all, the paper reflects on broader perspectives for reconstruction in the region, showing how the reshaping of urban space acts both as an arena and as an enhancer of the politics and practices of identity-building, memory and amnesia.

Commemoration Refurbished - The New Generation of Iran-Iraq War Murals in Tehran

Daniel Walter, Lund University, Center for Middle Eastern Studies

I hold a M.A. (Honors) in Middle Eastern Studies from the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Lund University. I also hold a B.A. in Political Science from Bonn University. In my MA thesis, I have dealt with state-sanctioned murals and non-official street art in Tehran, with a focus on commemoration and martyrdom symbolism. After having worked as a policy advisor to a German MP for a year, I am currently researching for my PhD application. I have presented at conferences such as Symposia Iranica (Cambridge, UK, 2017) and DAVO Jahrestagung (Tübingen, GER, 2016). I am a regular public speaker and blog contributor for Alsharq e.V., a German NGO doing educational work on West Asia/North Africa.

Tehran’s cityscape at times seems like a stage for visual narratives. The countless murals, billboards and posters function in different temporal dimensions and speak to different audiences. State-sanctioned murals from municipal and semi-official actors revolve around themes of what Babaie/Grigor have called “performance of kingship” resembled in Persian architectural and visual traditions such as coffeehouse paintings. Among the most prevalent themes depicted are those of martyrdom and commemoration of the Iran-Iraq war, the seminal event in the Islamic Republic’s nation-building process. Investigating the decision-making and aesthetic criteria within Tehran’s municipality of the past ten years, this paper shows the special role that war murals of the play in recent city beautification efforts. Drawing on extensive fieldwork material including interviews, photos and archival research, it shows the ways through which the war is getting (re)framed and its underlying symbolic language updated. The Iran-Iraq war, this study thus argues, performs a central identity-shaping function that is not reached by either the „revolution“ or the „leader“, the other prevalent mural themes, and showing the over-arching place it takes in the Islamic Republic’s national identity. Overall, the paper contributes to a broader understanding of how commemorative images are deployed by state actors within the daily contexts of modern Iran.