

The Long Shadow of Byzantium over Serbia's Entry into International Society

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Abstract

The traditional English School scholarship has been preoccupied with the global expansion of international society of sovereign states. Recent critiques pointed out that the entrant's agency largely went unnoticed and made the case that the research should focus on their identities, memories and foreign policy behavior. This paper probes how medieval memories influenced Serbia's attempts to enter international society in the 19th and 20th centuries. I argue that in order to make sense of their struggle against the Ottomans and the entry into the sovereign society of states, the early nation-builders in Serbia drew on the collective memories of the past suzerain system. Their memories, however, were not emerging from the experiences within the Ottoman but rather from the Byzantine Empire. These memories came with an understanding of politics as getting oneself at the center of the system. The first political project of the 19th century Serbia was therefore not to establish a sovereign nation-state for the Serbian people but to replace the Ottoman Empire with the resurrected Empire of Stefan Dušan (d. 1355). Since the imperial ambition proved to be not only beyond Serbia's capabilities but increasingly out-of-sync with the emerging European order as well, Serbia's nation-builders gradually replaced it with the Serb-Centric Yugoslavism. When Yugoslavia collapsed after almost a century of turbulent existence, Serbia's modern state-builders once again turned to medieval memories of the golden age, now organized around a past trauma, the Kosovo Battle. To date, this memory complicates Serbia's entry into international society.

Key words: International society, memory, sovereignty, suzerainty, nation-building, Serbia

Introduction

This article examines the influence of historical memories on the behavior of states entering the international society. In particular, I will investigate how Serbia's historical memories shaped its socialization with the European society of states since the early 19th century. Serbia's entry into international society began with the first Serbian Uprising of 1804. During the remainder of the 19th century Serbia slowly but steadily gained entry into the European society of states, obtaining full sovereign rights at the Congress of Berlin in 1878. In this article I intend to shed light on how Serbia's collective memories affected its foreign policy behavior during this process. In so doing I will take cues from the English School's concern with the expansion of international society. The conventional English School scholarship conceptualized the expansion of international society as a unidirectional diffusion of sovereignty from the center outwards (Bull and Watson 1984). More recently, this perspective has been challenged on various grounds including its disregard of the entrant's agency. Consequently, the attention has been drawn to study what the entrants, especially the late-arrivals, made of the process (Suzuki 2009, Neumann 2011, Zarakol 2011). In particular, Iver Neumann argued that the entrant's stance vis-à-vis the international society which it was aiming to join could be explained in terms of memory of the system it was leaving behind (Neumann 2011). He explained Russia's long, difficult and incomplete entry into sovereign society of states in terms of its experiences of being part of the Mongol Empire between the 13th and 15th century.

In this paper I will investigate how memories of being part of previous suzerain systems influenced Serbia's encounter with the sovereign society of European states. I will demonstrate that early nation-builders in the 19th century were heavily drawing on the medieval memories of suzerainty. I concur with Neumann that this memory came "with an understanding of politics as being about constituting the center of the system" (Neumann 2011: 464). Same as in case of Russia, the medieval memories significantly informed and complicated Serbia's subsequent entry into the European society of states. However, in this article I submit that the key memories that Serbia's nation builders drew upon were not related to the suzerain system from which they were immediately breaking

away, which was the Ottoman Empire. The collective memories that newborn Serbia of the early 19th century evoked in order to make sense of the world stretched much deeper into the past. These memories pertained to a medieval Serbian state that existed for centuries, belonging both culturally and politically to the Byzantine system of states, experienced its Golden Age in the 14th century and then came to an abrupt end. Those memories were productive in that they allowed Serbia's early nation-builders to imagine community not only in space but also in time, trans-historically as it were.

However, the historical memories of the medieval Serbian polity - petrified in the Janus faced image of the mighty Empire of Stefan Dušan and its collapse after the Battle of Kosovo in 1389 - complicated Serbia's socialisation within the European society of states ever after. With this memory came an understanding of politics as positioning oneself at the center of an imperial order. At the beginning of the 19th century this idea was badly out of sync with Serbia's poor military, diplomatic or economic capabilities. As the century drew to a close and Serbia grew stronger, the idea of *translatio imperii* was increasingly becoming anachronistic in the emerging age of self-determination. Consequently, during the second half of the 19th century the outdated and unwieldy idea of the Serbian Empire was gradually replaced with the idea of Yugoslavia, with Serbia at its core. The understanding of politics continued to shape Serbia's relations in the Balkans and beyond. Seven decades after it was established, the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia coincided with Serbia's reactivation of key medieval memories in the late 1980s. To this very day, medieval memories complicate Serbia's coming to terms with the post-Yugoslav geopolitical order, suspending it within the outer ring of European society of states.

The paper proceeds in the following order: first, I shortly present the extant literature on the expansion of international society within the English School of International Relations and recent critiques thereof. In the second section, I discuss the role that collective memories play in the entrant's foreign policy behaviour. Then, thirdly, I lay out the contours of Serbia's medieval history within the Byzantine system of states. The fourth section discusses the influence of historic memories of the medieval "past trauma" and "chosen glory" on Serbia's complicated stance towards the European society of

states. The final section expands the analysis to the Yugoslav period and beyond, suggesting that the long shadow of Byzantium still haunts Serbia's struggle for recognition and position in the international society.

1. The English School between Expansion and Entry into International Society

The English School is a collection of theoretical and empirical works in the field of International Relations (IR) that has been developed since the late 1950s. The School combined power-political insights of Realism with the idea that the international domain is also shaped by social forces, which was later espoused by social constructivists (Buzan 2004). The English School revolves around three key concepts – the international system, the international society and the world society. Each of these concepts is affiliated with three major scholars: Thomas Hobbes, Hugo Grotius and Immanuel Kant, and they have been codified by Martin Wight as the “three traditions” of IR - Realism, Rationalism and Revolutionism, respectively (Wight 1991, Buzan 2004). The international system is composed of two or more interacting states. According to Martin Wight there are only two types of state systems: sovereign and suzerain. The sovereign system is composed of states which recognize no superior authority among them. In opposition to this, a suzerain state system represents “a group of states having relations more or less permanent with one another, but one among them asserts unique claims which the others formally or tacitly accept” (Wight 1977: 23). Sovereign systems may also have a dominant power at any one time but, in contrast to suzerain systems, “hegemony passes from one power to another and is constantly subject to dispute” (Bull 1977: 11). Moreover, while the sovereign system is maintained through the balance of power, the suzerain is reproduced through the ‘divide and rule’ principle (lat. *divide et impera*).

In contrast to the *system of states*, the *society of states* is bound by a set of common rules, values and institutions (Bull 1977, Dunne 1998). It is defined as:

a group of states (or, more generally, a group of independent political communities) which not merely form a system, in the sense that the behaviour of each is a necessary factor in the calculations of the others, but also have established by dialogue and consent common rules and institutions for the conduct of their relations, and recognise their common interest in maintaining these arrangements (Bull and Watson 1984: 1)

Although the historic roots of the sovereign system of states in Europe can be traced all the way back to Ancient Greece, it truly started to take shape of an international society within the Western Christendom between 15th and 17th century.¹ The collapse of claims to the universal power brought forth international anarchy famously depicted by Hobbes and Machiavelli. From the outset, sovereign states were not only “gladiators, having their weapons pointing, and their eyes fixed on one another” as Hobbes would have it, but also social entities bound by certain common interests and values into the common European international society (Hobbes 2008: 85). The natural law theorists such as Gentili, Vitoria, Grotius, Puffendorf and Suarez provided intellectual inspiration for this “Christian International Society” as dubbed by Hedley Bull. It was quite loose in terms of membership since all kinds of entities were considered eligible, but it was also tied by rudimentary rules on the conduct of war as well as by still inchoate institutions of diplomacy (Bull 1977: 26-31).

As both ideas of *Res Publica Christiana* and *Imperium* slowly faded to historic irrelevance and sovereign states took shape, first in their dynastic form in the 18th and then in their popular form in the 19th century, the sense of exclusivity of the European international society grew with them. The European states fashioned a collective self-understanding distinguishable both internally from other ‘lesser’ political communities and externally from non-European powers such as Oriental and African empires and kingdoms, emirates and chieftaincies (ibid: 31-36). Moreover, they further built up institutions of diplomacy, balance of power and international law.

Although the sovereign European society of states emerged in Europe, it subsequently expanded worldwide, first through the European imperial conquest and then through the process of decolonisation that started in the 18th and ended in the second half of the 20th century. The attention that the English School paid to the expansion of international society was first caused by the landmark study *The Expansion of International Society* edited by Hedley Bull and Adam Watson (Bull and Watson 1984). It was soon followed by a growing number of studies on the expansion of the international society outside of

¹ Various dates are considered as the beginning of the European society of states such as the Peace of Lodi 1454, The Congress of Manuta 1457-1460, League of Venice 1494, Failure of the Universal Peace in London 1518, but most conveniently - the Peace of Westphalia 1648.

Western Europe (Zhang 1991, Stivachtis 1998, Sharp 2003, Suzuki 2005, Suzuki 2009, Neumann 2008, 2011, Zarakol 2011). These studies revealed three insights of critical importance.

First, they showed that the question of entry is not a question of ‘yes or no’ but rather the question of degree (Neumann 2011: 466). The Ottoman Empire, for example, was the first non-Western European state accepted as part of the European International Society by the Treaty of Paris in 1856.² Turkey achieved full formal equality within the international society in the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 (Bull 1977: 14). Even then, it could be argued that Turkey only entered the outer ring of the international society, while continuing its attempts to enter its inner core and affirm its ‘Europeanness’ throughout the 20th century. Turkey joined NATO in 1952, signed the Association Agreement with the EC in 1963, applied for membership in 1987, and was granted EU candidate status in 1999. Its socialization continued well into the 21st century without a clear foresight of when, and even if, this process will ultimately come to a successful conclusion.

The second insight gained from recent studies on the expansion of the International Society is that by emphasizing the principle of sovereignty and order among the European states, the orthodox English School approach neglected the relationship between European and non-European states in general, and the issue of Colonialism in particular (Keene 2002, Keal 2003, Suzuki 2005, Suzuki 2009). On the inside, the society of sovereign states tended to provide equality of rights and peaceful coexistence, while on the outside its goal was to civilize the backward non-Europeans (Keene 2002: 167). Drawing on Keene’s poignant critique, Shogo Suzuki investigated “how this particular aspect of European International Society affected non-European states’ socialization”. His empirical case study of Japan proved that Japan’s socialization into this “Janus faced” European international society did not have straightforward effects on the Japanese foreign policy, as the orthodox English School theorists would expect. In fact, it

² Its entry started with the Treaty of Karlowitz signed in 1699. Since it came after a series of devastating defeats suffered in the course of fourteen years of wars fought between the Ottoman Empire and the Holy League (Austria, Venice, Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth), it was the first treaty in which the Ottomans agreed to negotiate the terms with European powers and to accept mediation (Britain and Netherlands). Article 7 of the Treaty of Paris from 1856 stipulates that the protection of independence and territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire is in the general interest of European powers (Gourdon 1857, Neumann 1999: 40).

led to the adoption of two distinct foreign policies. In relation to other full-fledged members of the international society Japan did indeed adopt principles of sovereignty and mutual respect, adhering to international law and engaging in diplomatic relations European style. In relation to those “uncivilized states” from its Asian backyard that were on the outside of the club, however, Japan acted in an aggressive and imperialist manner (Suzuki 2005: 139). In order to prove their “in-ness” the newcomers such as Japan securitized and colonized the “uncivilized” space outside the club of sovereign states. Suzuki thus demonstrated that the historic record of the expansion of the International Society had ambivalent effects on the world order, to say the least.

The third and - at least for this article - the most important point made by the new generation of English School theorists is that entrants do not simply seek to conform to the standards of behavior prescribed by international society, be they tolerance or aggression. These studies argued that entrants also draw on their past experiences and memories. Ayse Zarakol, for example, pointed out that the stigma of outsiders as well as past defeats and humiliations caused new entrants to be extra-sensitive about their status and recognition (Zarakol 2011). Iver Neumann focused on the role that entrants’ memories of the past system to which they used to belong played in their entry into the sovereign systems they aspired to join. Given that “there has only been one sovereign system around for the last two long millennia”, Neumann concludes that “it follows that any new member entering European international society, which is conceptualized as sovereign, must have its background in a suzerain system” (Neumann 2011: 470). It is therefore by default that entrants draw on memories of the suzerain system from which they had broken free.

Neumann demonstrates his argument by presenting the case of Russia (or what was then the Rus), which used to be part of the suzerain system, ruled by the Mongol Khipchak Khanate or the Golden Horde from 12th to 15th century. Since the Khan had the exclusive right to conduct relations with the external realm, throughout this period Russia’s contacts with the European international society in the making - or, to be more precise,

with its Baltic sub-system - were limited to the commercial domain.³ Russia established its first political contacts with the Holy Roman Empire when the Mongol grip on it loosened in the 1480s, and its first demand was to be treated as an equal. From then on, drawing on the memories from the suzerain system in which the politics were about positioning oneself at the centre, Russia had attempted, time and again, to avoid subjugation and to position itself on a par with the greatest of sovereign powers of the time. Since the sovereign system is about the balance of power and not about hierarchy, this is, according to Neumann, the reason why Russia is “still suspended somewhere in the outer tier of international society [...] This applies to powers that have long claimed great-power status but only with mixed success such as China, Russia, Japan, Iran and India, but also to those like Egypt and Serbia” (ibid: 464).

2. Collective Memory, Time Collapse and Synchronization

In this paper I confirm that Neumann’s assumption also applies to the case of Serbia, and that the focus on collective memories helps us to better understand the complex relations that this state has had with the European society of states over the past two centuries or so. In other words, I fully concur with the argument that memories stemming from the past suzerain system influence the entrant’s foreign policy stance. Nonetheless I expand this theoretical argument further by making two additional claims.

First, I argue that the memories do not have to come necessarily from the suzerain system from which the polity is immediately breaking away. As we will see in the next section, Serbia’s nation-builders of the early 19th century, although most probably relying heavily on their immediate collective experience of being part of the Ottoman Empire at the level of practical consciousness, drew much more profoundly on the memories of the 14th century at the level of discursive consciousness (Giddens 1984: 49). Therefore, I submit that the question of which memories will prevail at which given moment of time does not have necessarily to do with the memories’ continuity or recentness but rather with their usefulness in making sense of the present situation. Further examination of this assertion would require a conceptual discussion of *collective memory* and *time collapse*.

³ Islamization and internal strife in the Mongol empire further isolated Russia from Europe because missionaries and merchants avoided land routes to the far East (Neumann 2011: 479)

Maurice Halbwachs provided an exceptional distinction between *autobiographical*, *collective* and *historic* memories. Autobiographical memory is based on personal experience that rests embedded within a certain social framework. Collective memory is based on mediated experience of the group that has a bearing on that group's identity. Finally, historical memory is systematically remembered past which is no longer important for the life of the group. As Halbwachs put it: "History indeed resembles a crowded cemetery, where room must constantly be made for new tombstones" (Halbwachs 1980: 52). My interest here lies with collective memories, those that sustain collective identity, endow polities with cognitive control of their environments and enable them to 'go on' with their everyday practices (Giddens 1991:38). The question is, however, not whether autobiographical or historical memories can be turned into collective memories but rather who does it, why and to what effect.

In order to provide a theoretical answer to these questions, I will rely on the work of psychiatrist Vamik Volkan. According to Volkan, collective identity resembles a large canvas tent that is emotionally binding individuals into a group. The canvas is held erect by the tent pole that represents the political elite at any given moment. In times of shared stress and anxiety, "the members become preoccupied with repairing and mending the tears in the canvas of the large-group tent. In fact, the main reason for rallying around the pole is to protect the large-group identity" (Volkan 1997: 28). Political leaders resort to a mnemonic technique called "time collapse" in which collective emotions about a shared past trauma or chosen glory fuse with those pertaining to the present situation. Chosen traumas, according to Volkan, influence collective identity much more pervasively than chosen glories, because they "bring with them powerful experiences of loss and feelings of humiliation, vengeance and hatred that trigger a variety of unconscious defense mechanisms that attempt to reverse these experiences and feelings" (Volkan 1997: 82). Entry into international society usually progresses through wars or great upheavals. In times of such immense collective stress, a window of opportunity arises for political elites to create time collapse, reactivate dormant past glories and/or chosen traumas from historical memories and turn them into what Halbwachs calls collective memory. This is how transhistorical memories are turned into powerful templates for action.

The second theoretical argument that I make in this paper is that once they are reactivated, collective memories are not preserved in their original form. Instead, they are continuously synchronized, more or less successfully, with the needs of the present situation. Having said that, the entry can be reconceptualized as the process of international socialization during which entrants continuously learn how to translate their past memories into the language of the new society of states they are aspiring to join. In the beginning, an entrant seems like an aphasiac or a foreigner described by Halbwachs: “He tries to be understood by others and to understand them – like a man in a foreign country who does not speak the language but knows the history of this country and has not forgotten his own history. But he lacks a large number of current notions” (Halbwachs 1992: 43). From the previous worlds the entrants bring a set of memories which are productive on the inside in the sense of their ontological security, but which may as well be - and often are - quite dysfunctional on the outside in terms of their physical security and wellbeing (Mitzen 2006). In time, however, entrants attempt to gradually embed their recollections into the new international social framework of memory. The next section turns to the case of Serbia, in which I demonstrate that the process of memory synchronization can take a very long time.

3. Medieval Serbia and the Byzantine System of States

Proto-Serbs arrived at the Balkan Peninsula in the 7th century probably from the Carpathian Mountains. By the 9th century they created their first polity in the Raška region at the border between what presently constitutes Serbia and Montenegro. The state was established by the Serbian Knez (Duke) Vlastimir in response to the onslaught of Bulgarians under their ruler Presian (836-852) (Ćorović 2005: 106-11). Turned away from the Adriatic Sea by the Venetians and the Hungarians, the Serbian state oriented itself towards the hinterland territories controlled by the Byzantine Empire (Pavlović 2004: 12). At the beginning of the 9th century, as a consequence of Byzantine-Bulgarian wars, the Serbian state was taken over by the Bulgarian Empire under Symeon I. After the death of Simeon I in 927, the Serbian state regained its autonomy under Knez Časlav,

with the help of Byzantium and its Emperor Constantine VII (Ćorović 2005: 126).⁴ By the 11th century the Serbian polity was strongly tied to the Byzantine Empire through military conflicts, but also through culture, marriage and investiture (Ferjančić 2009: 80, Pavlović 2004: 12).

The Byzantine Empire was a standard example of the suzerain system of states. As both the secular head of the Empire and the head of the Orthodox Church, the Byzantine Emperor - the Basileus - was the 'overlord of the universe'. "All other Christian princes", as Martin Wight observes, "were his representatives, and all lands that had formerly belonged to the Empire but were now lost would in due time return to their lawful sovereign" (Wight 1977: 23). The Byzantine Empire considered the rest of the civilized world the *oikoumene*, of tributary status (Wight 1977: 199, Watson 1992: 107). The Empire consisted of the Greek speaking Orthodox Christian core under the direct control of Constantinople and the periphery under the imperial dominion extending throughout the Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean and populated by many different ethnic groups and languages (Watson 1992: 108). Byzantium, however, didn't base its rule solely on coercion of conquered peoples but on diplomacy and soft power as well. Instead of engaging militarily with its restive 'imperial penumbra', the Byzantines preferred to pit barbarians against each other in the best diplomatic tradition of the Roman divide-and-rule strategy. In addition to this, it used its civilizing power to gain the loyalty of its subjects. For example, like most other South Slavs populating the Balkans, Serbs too received Christianity and alphabet from Byzantium in the late 9th century as foundations of their culture. In the words of Adam Watson, the Byzantine Empire achieved for them "what Rome at an earlier stage had done for the Celtic and Germanic peoples of the west" (ibid: 110).

However, once it received Christianity and statecraft skills from the Byzantine Empire, the Serbian state turned not only away from the Empire but also against it. Serbian ruler Stefan Nemanja (1166 -1196) used the Byzantine rivalry with Hungary to slip out of its control and territorially expand his principality in the second half of the 12th century

⁴ Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (905-959) wrote the work entitled *De Administrando Imperio*, the first written source about the arrival of the Serbs to the Balkans.

(Pavlović 2004: 12, Haldon 1999: 95). He used the turmoil created by the third Crusade led by Frederick I Barbarossa to take over important Byzantine cities such as Prizren and Skopje. Once the Crusaders' peril was gone, however, the Empire went into a counter offensive and defeated Stefan Nemanja in the battle of Morava in 1190. Immediately after, the Byzantium signed a peace treaty with the Serbian Principality, effectively recognizing it for the first time (Ferjančić 2009: 85).

Stefan Nemanja's son, Stefan Nemanjić, mastered to the art of playing West and East against one another to his own advantage. Although initially a Byzantine vassal and the Emperor's son in law, he shifted his loyalty to the West after the Crusaders captured Constantinople in 1204.⁵ That same year Stefan Nemanjić was granted the title of King by the Pope Honorius III: at the time, this represented a strong symbol of political independence from the Byzantine Empire. Moreover, this was an exception that confirmed the rule: Serbia was part and parcel of the Byzantine System of States. Stefan Nemanjić then managed to convince Constantinople to grant the Serbian Orthodox Church autocephalous status in 1219. A year later, his brother Sava Nemanjić, by now already the first Serbian Archbishop, crowned Stefan for the second time.⁶ Development of commerce and mining strengthened the Serbian polity both economically and militarily, setting the stage for further territorial conquest at the expense of Byzantium in the later half of the 13th century. This came hand in hand with stronger dynastic links and the penetration of Byzantine influence into all the pores of the Serbian polity including military organization, state administration, investiture, court ceremonies, architecture and economics (Ferjančić 2009: 104-109).

Until the beginning of the 14th century Bulgaria was the mightiest rival of the Byzantine Empire in the Balkan Peninsula. In the Battle of Velbazhd in 1330 Serbia defeated Bulgaria, replacing it as the strongest Byzantine opponent in the region (Radić 2010: 115). The peak of the Serbian power was reached during the reign of Stefan Dušan "the Mighty" (1331-1355) who continued with the policy of playing on others' differences,

⁵ In 1217 Stefan married Anna Dandolo who was the granddaughter of Enrico Dandolo, the Doge of Venice and the man who masterminded the Fourth Crusade.

⁶ "Wasn't he crowned twice so that both the East and the West could be satisfied" succinctly asks historian Stevan K. Pavlović (ibid:13).

both within the Byzantine system of states and vis-a-vis the West. However, in contrast to his predecessors whose aim was to escape from the Byzantine vassalage, he combined this strategy with sheer military conquest with the aim of conquering Constantinople, destroying the Byzantine Empire and replacing it with a new Serbian-Greek empire (Ferjančić 2009: 112).

Stefan Dušan immensely enlarged the territory of the Serbian state, elevated the status of the Serbian Orthodox Church into that of Patriarchate, and assumed the title of the Emperor of Serbs and Greeks in 1346. At the time of its greatest power, under Dušan, the Serbian Empire stretched from the river Drina in the North to the Peloponnesus in the South, and from Sofia in the East to Durrës in the West. Fearing that encroaching Turks who had already conquered Gallipoli in 1354 may thwart his plans for expansion, Emperor Dušan prepared a campaign with the Venetians to conquer Constantinople. He even promised to recognize Pope Innocent VI as the *Unam Sanctam* if he would grant him the title of Captain of the Christian Crusade against the infidel Turk (Pavlović 2004: 16).

Tsar Stefan Dušan suddenly died in 1355. As George White points out, Serbia “was a major power in Europe during its time and conceivably might have conquered the Byzantine Empire if Dušan had not died prematurely” (White 2000: 187). His son Uroš, who succeeded him on the throne, failed to maintain control over the vast territory of the Serbian Empire which fell into disarray and internal strife. Before long, Serbia was defeated on a number of occasions by the invading Turkish armies, most notably in the Battle of Maritsa in 1371 and in the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. This led to the demise of medieval Serbia which was gradually subjugated to the Ottoman Empire. The process was completed when Smederevo, the capital of the Serbian Despotate and the last vestige of the once famous Dušan’s empire, fell into the hands of the Ottomans in 1459. In the course of the following 350 years, the Serbian Orthodox Church preserved the canonized medieval rules from the oblivion, while the Serbian state existed only in the collective memory as a mythical saga about the glorious past sung into remembrance by local minstrels called *guslari*.

4. Resurrection of the Empire: Serbia's Entry into International Society in the 19th Century

The French Revolution and the ensuing Napoleonic wars in Europe (1789-1815) provided material and ideological preconditions for the national awakening under the rule of the Ottoman Empire.⁷ Unlike France, Great Britain, Germany or Russia, who could redefine their empires as nation-states, Christian nations in the making throughout the Balkans lacked their imperial states. As George White aptly observed: "The philosophy of Romanticism, however, provided a means for solving this; in addition to language and religion, Romanticism emphasized 'shared history' as a unique characteristic of People" (White 2000: 9). Thus most Southeast European nations reached to the past glories of great empires and attempted to resurrect them. Therefore, this was not an aberrant obsession only of Serbs, as some authors seem to suggest (Anzulović 1999). Warren Treadgold aptly summarized the Byzantine political heritage in South East Europe:

By the nineteenth century, some Bulgarians also conceived the idea of a Greater Bulgaria like the Empires of Symeon or Samuel, and some Serbs the idea of a Greater Serbia like the empire of Stephan Dushan. Some Romanians thought of a Greater Romania in Wallachi, Moldavia, and Transylvania. Each of these peoples aspired to take the role that they fancied Greeks had played in the Byzantine Empire, dominating other peoples in a multinational state (Treadgold 1995: 851).

Serbia began its entry into international society with the First Serbian Uprising in 1804. From the very start, the leaders of the Serbian Uprising made an unequivocal link between the medieval Serbian state and their present situation. When the group of Serbian nobles gathered in November 1803 to discuss ways to resist the Janissaries' terror in the Belgrade Pašaluk, the Archpriest Atanasije Antonijević began his speech with the following words: "Brothers! So many years have passed since all our glory was buried in what is for all of us a sad grave in Kosovo" (Milić 2006: 61). The Archpriest

⁷ Napoleon's Egyptian campaign (1798-1799) caused the Ottoman Empire to move its regular forces from Serbia to Egypt, leading to the entry of *dahias*, a janissary junta, into the Pashaluk of Belgrade. The execution of most prominent Serbs in Valjevo conducted by the *dahias* triggered the first Serbian Uprising in February 1804.

did not refer to the disappearance of Serbia in 1459, but rather to the mythical battle fought in 1389 which made Serbia a vassal of the Ottoman Empire.

When the First Serbian Uprising against the Ottoman Empire broke out in February 1804, the rebels had a limited aspiration: getting rid of the Janissaries' yoke and obtaining limited and internationally guaranteed autonomy. When they achieved first military victories against the Ottoman forces in Ivankovac (August 1805) and Mišar (August 1806), the rebels quickly upped the ante and now demanded full independence from the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, they quickly developed an ambition to avenge the Kosovo defeat in 1389 through the restoration of Dušan's Empire (Ljušić 2004:58-59).

The collective memory of the past glory stemmed from the two main sources of the time: the folk songs and the 18th century "monastic historicism", both cherishing Stefan Dušan's Empire and lamenting over the defeat in the Kosovo battle (Bataković 1994). The idea gained resonance among the Serbs living in the Habsburg Empire, particularly in times of peasant rebellions and upheavals (Ljušić 2004: 57). One of the exemplary initiatives came from the pen of Jovan Jovanović, the Bishop of Bačka, who proposed the creation of Serbo-Bulgarian Empire led by Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovich Romanoff of Russia (Perović 1978, 113-116). Finally, between 1792 and 1807, prominent Serbian religious and political figures from Montenegro also developed a number of ideas on how to restore the medieval Serb Empire and submitted them on several occasions to the Russian Empire (Ljušić 2004: 58, Bataković 2004: 121). In effect, 350 years after the disappearance of its medieval state, the contours of the Serbian political community were re-imagined into existence through the invocation of dormant medieval memories of past glories and chosen traumas.

Serbia was, naturally, far too weak to realize its imperial idea without the approval of any of the other great powers. In 1812, Russian and Ottoman Empires signed the Treaty of Bucharest that granted Serbia a semi-autonomous status, while Russia was proclaimed as its guarantor. In spite of the fact that Serbian rebels rejected the treaty, it represented the formal beginning of Serbia's entry into international society. Nonetheless, the lack of capabilities or international support for the idea of Serbian Empire did not prevent this collective memory from determining Serbia's foreign policy behavior in the decades to

come. According to secret plans of Prince Miloš Obrenović (1815-1839), the Serbian Empire was meant to include "Serbia, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Herzegovina, Uskokija (Krajina), Banat, the Slovenes, Illyria (perhaps Croatia), Dalmatia, Montenegro and the Albanian mountains" (Bataković 1994). Such an aspiration was shared by all the leaders of the Second Serbian Uprising (1815-1830) and "went without saying". The Second Uprising ended with the Hatt-i-Sharif from the 1830 which defined Serbia as an autonomous vassal principality within the Ottoman Empire.

The achievement of autonomy and prolonged socialization in the European politics did not weaken the influence of medieval memories on the nation-building project. To the contrary, throughout the entire 19th century, the Serbian nation-building project continued to rest on the idea that the Serbian medieval Empire simply put its existence on pause in 1389 to resume it five centuries later and continue its business as usual. This served well to legitimize the nation-building project both within and without Serbia. However, such a construction of identity carried with it particular memories that medieval Serbia had accumulated during its existence within the Byzantine suzerain system of states. These were the memories of politics being an art of positioning oneself at the center of the regional order.

An excellent illustration of this can be found in *Načertanije* (1844), the first document to define national interests of modern Serbia. Kept secret for half a century, *Načertanije* was practically the official national strategy until 1867, when Garašanin was dismissed. Unofficially, however, it served as the foundation for the Serbian foreign policy until the creation of the first Yugoslavia in 1918 (Lopandić 2010a).

Načertanije could not be more explicit about the role that medieval memories played in Serbia's foreign policy:

The Serbian state must strive to expand and become stronger; its roots and foundation are firmly embedded in the Serbian Empire of the 13th and 14th centuries and the glorious pageant of Serbian history. Historically speaking, the Serbian rulers, it may be remembered, began to assume the position held by the Greek Empire and almost succeeded in making an end of it, replacing the collapsed Eastern Roman Empire with a Serbian-Slavic one. Emperor Dusan the Mighty had even adopted the crest of the Greek

Empire. The arrival of the Turks in the Balkans interrupted this change, and prevented it from taking place for a long time. But now, since the Turkish power is broken and destroyed, so to speak, this process must commence once more in the same spirit and again be undertaken in the knowledge of that right (Hehn 1975).⁸

So, the collective memory had it that Serbia stopped short of getting hold of the center of the Byzantine system due to the unfortunate Ottoman conquest in the 14th century. Now that the once mighty Empire became the “sick man of Europe”, Serbia needed to get back on track and finish the job. Since the Greek-led Byzantine Empire was not around since 1453, Serbia aimed at positioning itself at the center of the Ottoman Empire which succeeded it. Serbia was meant to build its Empire anew from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire and, as the authors of the document assumed, “other South Slavs would easily understand this idea and accept it with joy”.

In the following decades the key medieval memory informed a number of similar initiatives. For example, when the Spring of Nations ignited Europe in 1848, Ilija Garašanin and Serbian *kapuće-haja* (ambassador) to Istanbul Konstantin Nikolajević unsuccessfully attempted to convince the Sublime Porte to transform the Ottoman Empire into a dual state. It was suggested that it be composed of two vice-royalties, the Asian Turkey and United Serbian States including Serbia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Montenegro and North Albania. These two states would be independent in everything but foreign affairs which would remain under the suzerainty of the Sultan (Lopandić 2010b: 65, 71). The plan was rejected, but the idea of creating either great Serbia or a Serbian led South-Slav Empire remained.

⁸ Načertanije was inspired by the Polish émigré Adam Czartoryski and his Czech emissary Franz Zach and written for the Prince of Serbia Aleksandar Karađorđević by the Minister of the Interior Ilija Garašanin in 1844. When writing *Načertanije*, Ilija Garašanin was heavily drawing on the *Plan for Serbia's Slavic Policy* written by Franz Zach, an agent of the former Russian Foreign Minister, and a Polish émigré Adam Czartoryski who was in Serbia at the time. Garašanin practically shortened Zach's plan and imbued it with the Serbian overtone by cutting out the parts that advocated for the creation of the joint common South Slav state with Croats.

During the second half of the 19th century, driven by memories from the Byzantine times, Serbia continued its slow entry into the European society of states. Although it didn't participate in the Crimean War, Serbia made it into the Treaty of Paris in 1856. The document replaced Russia's guarantees of Serbian autonomy with international ones. Moreover, although still a vassal state, Serbia became a member of one international body, the Commission of the Danube River. In the 1860s, Serbian diplomacy continued to follow the strategy set out in *Načertanije*. This was the period when its author Garašanin was Minister of Foreign Affairs (1861-1867). Serbia realized that it was too small and too weak to create an Empire of its own, and the idea of a dual Empire with the Ottomans was rejected by the Sublime Porte.

Consequently, Serbia failed to relinquish the idea and instead turned to other potential allies. It thus founded the Balkan Alliance, a set of bilateral treaties signed with other Balkan nations. The first treaty signed with Montenegro in 1866 was described by Prince Mihailo as "the cornerstone of an edifice that will reclaim what was destroyed in Kosovo" (Lopandić 2010b: 97). The treaty with Bulgaria was signed the following year, envisioning the creation of a South Slav Empire with Serbian Prince Mihailo as its emperor. A similar treaty was signed with Greece in 1867 by which the two sides agreed that Serbia would annex Bosnia and Greece would take over Epirus and Thessaly. Finally, the friendship agreement was signed with Romania as well, in 1868. The proponent of this policy, Prince Mihailo, was assassinated in 1868; as a consequence, Serbia changed its foreign policy by moving much closer to the Habsburg Empire, abandoning its erstwhile expansionist and imperial ambitions.

When Serbia declared war on the Ottoman Empire in June 1876, thus opening the great Eastern Crisis (1876-1878), only Montenegro followed suit. Even Russia, the closest Serbian ally among the great powers, turned its back on Serbia's great plans.⁹ After it was defeated by the Ottomans, Serbia signed a cease-fire without any territorial gain. In April 1877 Russia declared war on Turkey (with Serbia following suit) and in March 1878 signed the treaty of St. Stephano, thus creating the short-lived Great Bulgaria. Since such

⁹ By then, Russia had already signed with Austria the secret agreements in Reichstadt (1876) and Budapest (1877) on the division of spheres of influence in the Balkans. The Austro-Hungarian Empire would take over Bosnia and Herzegovina while Russia was agreed to take over the Eastern Balkans.

an arrangement was not in the interest of other European powers, another conference in Berlin was convened a few months later. Although Serbia was not an official participant at the Congress itself, it was granted full sovereignty. Moreover, with the support of the Habsburg Empire and France Serbia was allowed to keep its territorial gains to the Southeast at the expense of Turkey and Bulgaria albeit without Kosovo and Macedonia.¹⁰ Thus the state was formed and its entry into the outer ring of the European international society completed.

In 1885 Serbia initiated another short war against Bulgaria and was again defeated. This is how a prominent Croatian bishop and a champion of 19th century Yugoslavism¹¹, Josip Juraj Strossmayer commented on the crushing defeat of the Serbian military:

Crazy Serbs thought that once they manage to do away with the Croatian national idea with the help of archenemies of Slavism, the idea that provided them with safety throughout the centuries, and once they destroyed the good Bulgarian people, they will have a ready-made Dušan's Empire. Now I wish to God that they would realize that the grave they are digging for others is the same one that they are preparing for themselves. This entire idea of resurrecting Dušan's Empire is crazy and delusional... Today, it is an anachronism and a fraud (Ljušić 2004: 29).

Although Serbia's idea to resurrect Dušan's medieval empire from the ashes of the Ottoman and Byzantine Empires was definitely defeated, the idea of positioning itself at the center of the regional order was not. As the century was drawing to a close, the imperial memories were synchronized with the social and material structure of the European society of states. Socially, the medieval memory was being synchronized with the emerging Romanticist framework of self-determination and linguistically defined nation states. Materially, the medieval memory was synchronizing with the weak position of Serbia in the balance of European powers. The result was Yugoslavia.

5. From Dušan's Empire to the Rise and Fall of Yugoslavia

¹⁰ The Habsburg Empire occupied one of the key military objectives of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

¹¹ The Yugoslavism of Strossmayer has been disputed by some Serbian historians who argue that it was a fig leaf intended to cover Croatian nationalism and the interest of the Roman Catholic Church (Krestić 2001).

Although the idea of Yugoslavism began to resonate quite strongly in Serbia at the turn of the century, it is noteworthy that it had been simmering in the background during the entire century. The first author to use the term South Slav was the German historian August Ludwig von Schlözer in his book *Allgemeine Nordische Geschichte* published in 1771 (Ekmečić 1989: 50). One of the first people to imagine the community of South Slavs based on a shared language was Dositej Obradović, an Orthodox monk and ardent advocate of Enlightenment and Rationalism. In a Letter to Haralampije written in 1783, he poses the following question: “Who does not know that the inhabitants of Montenegro, Dalmatia, Herzegovina, Bosnia, Serbia (apart from Muži), Slavonia, Srem, Bačka and the Banat (except for the Romanians) speak one and the same language?” (Trencsenyi and Kopeček 2006: 222).

However, the first organized cultural and political movement to propagate South Slav unity was the Illyrian movement that was active in Croatia between the 1830s and the 1850s. Although Serbia advocated for the unification of South Slavs into a single Serbian Empire in the 1840s, it openly rejected the Illyrian movement. The main reason for this is the fact that Serbia had by then gained a certain level of self-confidence and was not ready to leave the leadership of the South Slav unification to Zagreb, which was viewed as being under the strong influence of Austria and Catholicism (Ekmečić 1989: 464, Pišev 2009:44).¹² For the same reasons, *Načertanije* did not envisage the creation of Yugoslavia with Croatia, or close cooperation with it for that matter (Ibid: 480).

When the revolution swept across Europe and shook the foundations of the Habsburg Empire in 1848, Serbia got involved in it through agitation and military support of the Serb struggle against the Hungarians who, on their part, revolted against Vienna. This inspired Ilija Garašanin, for the first time seriously, to give some thought to the creation of a joint Yugoslav state together with the Croats. In a letter written in the heat of the revolutionary summer, Garašanin wrote: “Although Serbia will not find perfect security for its nationality in its unification with the Slavs, it will have to embrace this idea should it prove to be the only option” (Simeunović 2000: 29). During the following two decades

¹² Nevertheless, prominent representatives of the Illyrian movement, such as Ljudevit Gaj, desired the restoration of the Empire of Dušan which they termed “Magnum Illyricum” (Ibid: 469).

or so, this idea was present on the agenda parallel to the one of resurrecting the Serbian Empire, and was even confused with it, particularly during the second reign of Prince Mihajlo Obrenović (1860-1868). After his assassination Serbia adopted Habsburg-friendly foreign policy and focused on a narrower goal of gaining independence from the Ottomans.

The 1903 coup d'état that removed the Obrenović Dynasty from the throne and replaced it with the Karađorđević Dynasty marked the beginning of an important shift in foreign policy. Once again, Serbia enlarged its expansionist appetites and focused on “liberating” from the neighbouring Empires all the territories where Serbs had lived and uniting them into a single state. In the Balkan wars of 1912/1913 Serbia vastly enlarged its territory at the expense of the Ottoman Empire, now encompassing Kosovo and Macedonia. As a result of the conflict with Bulgaria over Macedonia, the former dropped out of Serbia's future plans for the unification of South Slavs. Serbia also severely strained the relations with its erstwhile patron, the Habsburg Empire, mainly over its annexation of Bosnia in 1908.

The medieval memories of the chosen trauma of the Kosovo defeat still heavily shaped Serbia's policy, particularly in the Balkan Wars. Kosovo was “liberated” after more than five centuries. Mobilization of the Serbian military during these wars was entirely driven by the idea of “avenging Kosovo” (Tomić 1913). When the Serbian Military defeated the Ottoman forces at Kumanovo in October 1912, a slogan was created: “For Kosovo - Kumanovo”. Furthermore, during the First World War and even in the interwar period, the Kosovo myth grew into a veritable Yugoslav myth. However, the medieval memory of *the past glory* of Stefan Dušan's Empire seemed to slowly fade to irrelevance, in favor of the unification. As the former Prime Minister and famous historian Stojan Novaković remarked in 1914, the idea of Yugoslavism was a modern idea that was not grounded in the use of brute force, expansionism or historic rights (Trgovčević 2001: 260). In the wake of the First World War, Serbia's intellectuals were divided between the ideas of Greater Serbia and Yugoslavism. Those who advocated for the common Yugoslav state were themselves split between those that advocated for a centralist state and those who advocated for a federal one, inspired by the examples of Switzerland, Germany and USA

(Ibid: 262). Soon after the war broke out the National Assembly issued the Niš Declaration in December 1914, thus setting the unification of all the South Slavs into a single country as the key war goal of the Kingdom of Serbia. When the war was over, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was established on December 1, 1918.

What motivated Serbia's intellectuals and decision makers to embrace the idea of Yugoslavism and abandon the idea of resurrecting Dušan's Empire in the course of five decades between 1868 and 1918? Historian Ljubinka Trgovčević argues that it was the effect of the blistering academic success of the Yugoslav ideas in arts, science, ethnography, literature and linguistics (Trgovčević 2001: 260-261). One of the shining examples of this was the work of Jovan Cvijić, Serbian geographer and anthropologist. Among other things, Cvijić propagated a Serb-centric vision of Yugoslavism and argued that Serbia was both ethnographically and geographically at the very center of the Balkan Peninsula (Pišev 2009: 53-54). The academic prowess of advocates for the Yugoslav idea was surely among the key internal factors at play behind this important shift. However, I submit that the shift from the goal of resurrecting Dušan's Empire to that of Yugoslavia came as an effect of synchronization of medieval memories with the international political realities of the time. To use Halbwachs's term, it was the effect of simply adapting old recollection to the new social framework of memories.

Following the Spring of Nations in 1848, the entire idea of empire-building was becoming increasingly anachronistic. The European society of states which Serbia was aspiring to join in the later half of the 19th century was undergoing an important transformation. American and French revolutions have already challenged the traditional Westphalian international society composed of dynastic states whose borders could change only through war, marriage and inheritance (Bull 1977: 33). Romantic nationalist movements of the 19th century led to the redefinition of the European political geography through the unification of Italy (1861) and Germany (1871), but also to the reinterpretation of the concept of sovereignty. The members of international society were no longer only states, but also their subjects (Mayall 2000: 42). Empires grew out of fashion while nation states took to the center stage. Serbia abandoned the goal of resurrecting an unwieldy and anachronistic Empire and endorsed ideas of Yugoslav

unification as a result of a socializing process. However, the key memories of suzerainty and its understanding of politics as a struggle to position oneself at the center survived and continued to shape Serbia's conundrums with its neighbors and the international society well into the 20th century.

During the interwar years, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was a centralized parliamentary monarchy run from Belgrade by the Serbian King from the Karađorđević Dynasty. Serbs held the dominant position in the military, diplomacy and administration of the new state. This is why the Croats, as the second biggest ethnic group, proposed a looser, either federal or confederal organizational structure. When the assassination of three Croatian MPs in the Yugoslav Parliament led to a political deadlock, the King established a dictatorship and renamed the state Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929. Weakened by its permanent internal crisis, Yugoslavia was easy prey for Hitler and his allies who invaded, occupied and carved up the country in 1941. What ensued was a savage civil war.

When the Second World War was over, the country was brought to life for the second time as the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Although Belgrade remained its capital, the SFRY struck a better ethnic balance. The charismatic leadership of Josip Broz Tito and the mighty Yugoslav People's Army managed to hold the country firmly together for at least three decades. The post-war Yugoslav order started to disintegrate with the adoption of the Constitution of 1974 that, among many other unfortunate effects, further weakened the competencies of the federal government and introduced two autonomous provinces to Serbia. The death of Tito and the upheaval of Kosovo Albanians in the early 1980s sparked a revival of Serbian nationalism based on Kosovo as its past trauma and on Dušan's empire as the chosen glory (Dragović-Soso 2002).

Throughout the 1980s the Communist authorities condemned the medieval-inspired ethno-nationalist discourse as a threat to Yugoslav 'brotherhood and unity'. This will all change with the rise of Slobodan Milošević to power in 1987. In a series of rallies staged

between 1987 and 1989 Milošević managed to overthrow the leaderships of Kosovo, Vojvodina and Montenegro. Through this “anti-bureaucratic revolution” Milošević achieved dominance of Serbia in the federal institutions, raising the old specter of Serbian hegemony in the other republics.¹³ Moreover, as a pragmatic politician, Milošević understood very well the performative power of medieval memories in the context of collective anxiety that was present in Serbia following the death of Tito. In the early 1989, he consolidated his power within Serbia and staged a massive rally in Kosovo in June, marking the 600th anniversary of the famous battle. On this occasion he stated the following:

At this place, at this place in the heart of Serbia at the Field of Kosovo, six centuries ago, a full 600 years ago, one of the greatest battles of all times was fought. As with all the major events, there are many questions and secrets attached to it and they remain the subject of public curiosity and scientific research. By the force of social circumstances, this great 600th anniversary of the battle of Kosovo is occurring in the year when Serbia, after many years and many decades, has regained its state, national, and spiritual integrity. It is not, therefore, difficult for us today to answer that age-old question: How are we going to face Miloš, Miloš Obilić, the legendary hero of the Battle of Kosovo?

The speech was a prime example of time collapse, emotionally fusing medieval memories with key political challenges of the day. As Serbian nationalism reared its ugly head, it was feeding similar projects across a country that will soon break apart through a series of armed conflicts in the 1990s. The reactivation of medieval memories came with the urge to position oneself yet again at the center of the polity, thus extending a fatal blow to the already fragile structures of the country. The Gazimestan speech was the beginning of the end of Yugoslavia.

The state of Yugoslavia existed, under various names, different constitutional structures and variable membership until 2006 when the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro was

¹³ After the death of Tito in 1980, the collective presidency composed of 8 members took over. Each of the six republics had one vote while two votes belonged to Serbia’s autonomous provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina. Once Milošević managed to install his supporters in Kosovo, Vojvodina and Montenegro, he effectively controlled half of the votes of the Yugoslav Presidency.

finally disbanded. Having spent 88 years in the common South Slav state, Serbia reestablished its sovereignty. It can be argued that one of the key reasons for the failure of Yugoslavia as a state was the fact that too many Yugoslavs saw Yugoslavia as a Greater Serbian state. Therefore an understanding of memory of Dušan's Empire and other medieval Balkan states is a necessary requirement for understanding the territoriality of modern Serbian national identity as well as the causes for the rise and fall of Yugoslavia (White 2000: 190).

Conclusion

The medieval memory of the Serbian empire destroyed in the 14th century was the key foundation for the construction of the modern Serbian national identity. Modern Serbia was built on the recollection of the chosen glory of the Dušan's Empire (1331-1355) and the past trauma of the Kosovo Battle fought in 1389. The memories of being part of the suzerain Byzantine state system and succumbing in a crushing defeat to the Ottoman yoke clearly came "with an understanding of politics as being about constituting the center of the system" (Neumann 2011: 464). When the modern state-building project began in the early 19th century, the context in which such a memory was re-activated was, however, much different from the Byzantine state system that ceased to exist some 450 years earlier. The principality of Serbia did re-emerge as the vassal of the Ottoman Empire, thus enabling historic analogies about the desired central position of Serbia within the suzerain system. However, as the power of the Ottoman Empire weakened in the Balkans, the emerging regional order in the South-East Europe was increasingly sucked into the European international society. Aspirations to position oneself at the center of it proved to be in discord with the European principles of sovereignty and balance of power. The translation of medieval memories corresponded with the Romanticism of the early 19th century but not so much with the liberal currents that appeared after 1848. Serbian decision makers thus synchronized their formative memories with the new social framework of memory prevalent in the European society of states. Resurrecting the medieval Dušan's Empire was left behind, but the understanding of politics that came with it was not. Positioning oneself at the center of the system

continued to be the name of the game of Serbian politics throughout the Yugoslav experience in the 20th century.

When the Yugoslav polity weakened in the 1980s, medieval memories were invoked once again, first by Serbia's intellectuals and then by its establishment, in order to stabilize the "ethnic tent" and restore ontological security it provided. To be sure, medieval and ancient memories were evoked by nationalist elites across Yugoslavia. Although the intention of this paper was only to analyse only Serbian memories, it would be interesting for some future research to see how those memories shaped the policies of other Yugoslav nations. Throughout the 1990s, due to its involvement in violent conflicts, Serbia was ostracized from the international society and treated as a pariah state. However, once the war ended and Milošević was ousted from power, Serbia began its process of democratization and return into international society (Kostoviceva 2004). However, one of its biggest stumbling blocks remains the issue of Kosovo, which Serbia still regards as the medieval cradle of its statehood and the Serbian Jerusalem. It remains to be seen to what extent and how quickly Serbia will manage to synchronize its fading but resilient medieval memories with the new social framework defined by the EU and NATO enlargement and the imperatives of regional cooperation in the Western Balkans. In sum, this article aimed to demonstrate that both rise and fall of Yugoslavia, as well as Serbia's recent challenges, attest that collective memories can last longer and have a deeper influence on what actors think, say and do in foreign policy than the conventional IR scholarship has so far been willing to admit.

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