THE NEW (CHANGED) PAST AS VALUE FACTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

Nova (izmenjena) prošlost kao vrednosni činilac razvoja


KLJUČNE REČI kultura sećanja, prošlost, vrednosti, antifašizam, konzervatizam

ABSTRACT Image of the past is an active framework of reference values that indirectly gives a meaning to and influences social development. The past provides a symbolic framework to the individuals and groups by which they conceptualize their existence. Changing the image of the past is an important part of the transition of values. The past is an active framework of social action not just passively reframed ideas adapted to the needs of the present. Since 1990s the past has been radically changed, reinvented and reimagined in newly formed Balkan states in order to initiate new development towards the national capitalism. The changing of the past was rather patchy in Serbia. While the Serbian opposition in 1990s (similarly to ruling elites in other newly founded states) has reconciled quickly its vision of the past to the new image of national capitalism, the radical changes in official statements about the past happened only after the 2000. Broadly speaking, in the

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Serbian memory culture there are two main value orientations marked by the past: (1) antifascism and (2) Hilandar (a famous Serbian cloister in Greece). Antifascism is a mark of rationalism, multiculturalism, brotherhood and unity, left position and anticonservatism, Hilandar is a mark of religion and national exclusivity and conservatism and the right values. The first one withdraws, the second is presently hegemonic.

KEY WORDS memory culture, the past, values, antifascism, conservatism

Introduction

The topic of this article is a problem of the new past as a part of a structural and value changes in the new West Balkan states. Collective memory is an ongoing process. The fundamental shifts in history are also value shifts. My initial point is that the new (changed) past as value factor of development is visible in: (a) invented new histories and holidays, (b) renaming of streets, (c) rewriting of autobiographies. Broadly speaking, in the Serbian memory culture there are two main value orientations marked by the past: (1) antifascism and (2) Hilandar (a famous Serbian cloister in Greece). Antifascism is a mark of rationalism, multiculturalism, brotherhood and unity, left position and anticonservatism, Hilandar is a mark of religion and national exclusivity and conservatism and the right values. There are also other combinations as those of Hilandar and nationalized antifascism. Here we speak about main ideal types. For the sake of comparison, the similar opposite value points can be seen in the new memory culture of other ex-Yugoslav republics (Kuljić, 2006: 190-210).

1. Past and values

The new picture of the past is an active framework of social action. The new invented past as a product of memorizing the history was a very active part of new values because there is a connection between the actual picture of the past and the vision of the future. Remembering is a view about the past but always from the new present. The present influences the past, but the reconstruction of the past always depends on present-day identities and contexts. Memory can be seen as a broad and constantly mutable framework that explains and justifies the ends and means of organized social action and provides people with beliefs and opinions. New past, new imagined histories and new values go hand in hand. Life histories become coherent and credible only by invention, often in defiance of known facts: what is celebrated becomes immune to conscious revision (Lowenthal, 1996). The past is organized and contextualized in the present through emotions. What is fundamental to the process of both individual and collective memories is that they are increasingly mediated. In this way our understanding of the past is "manufactured" rather than remembered. Political elites modify us according to what should be
remembered and what should be forgotten. In order to understand the production of the new past we need to examine how elites actually maintain and cultivate a hegemonic common memory.

Memory and past are both a framework of meaning used by society to maintain stability and identity while adapting to a social change. Some authors write about management of memory as an instrument of conflict prevention or resolution (Price, 2003: 137). As a part of values, past is subject to change. In this light a public event constructed in official history produced new values with cognitive and emotional aspects. Like values, past is also continually recreated and renewed by different social groups and within different contexts. "Memory is not knowledge of the past", "it is knowledge from the past", and, as such, it is thought to advance and validate identities, fuel grievances (and thus define enemies), and give meaning and narrative coherence to individuals and collectivities (Griffin, 2004). The whole point of the past is not that the public should learn something, but that they should become something through the selected past values. Transition is also a selection of values through the new past. We could argue a lot about the importance of Tito for the Yugoslav or post Yugoslav identities. “Tell me what you think about Tito and I’ll tell you who you are.” The purpose of this effort is to examine how distinct local histories and myths reinforce, undermine or create different emphases within a broadly conceived transformation process toward “democratic” capitalism.

The focus of the paper is on the modern context of "memory crisis" or more specifically, on imagination of collective but glorious national past bounded in time and space, as well as on the reconfiguration of private life and private remembrance in the new Balkan states. We do not talk about critical history boom, but about memory boom in the new Balkan para-historiographies. In the last war memory was a weapon, “ersatz metaphysics”, a new emotionalism. The actual memorizing of history (the penetration of memory in the history) is at the same time its moralization. The highest moral value is national interest. There is no more wie es eigentlich gewesen (Rankes Imperativ) but the mobilization of memory to stake out moral claims. Thus national memory did little to encourage Serbs and Croats "to remember their own specific dark past" such as Jasenovac, Srebrenica, but only their own victims. It was the tyranny of memory (P. Nora). The new national narratives have provided machinery for all sorts of social action. The new narratives created and invented in the last civil war were a product of a sort of romantic nineteenth century historical consciousness. The new temporal order formed in 1990s was based on the new usable history where myth and memory were often mixed up. Past and present are not only connected, but they rather make a coherent and congruous whole. There is a strong narrative continuity without discontinuity in the glorious past and in the victimhood. After the collapse of Yugoslav socialism the suppressed reactive banned memory formed a new extreme homogenous memory system no
more usable for brotherhood, but for war and separatism. Both memory systems were extreme and constructed but with opposite functions: unity – separatism, national peace – war, federal state - national state, totalitarian socialism – democracy. Despite the contrast, in both memory systems the struggle is highly moralized, as a central connection in narration about the past: class and national liberation overtop all values.

The next step is to link social determination of memory to its consumption and use, unraveling in what way (if at all) recollections, celebrations, and commemorations of the past frame understands of the present, galvanize action or legitimize inaction, and condition morality and cognition at the present time (Griffin, 2004). Past is a very useful material. The current culture of memorizing is also a kind of memory of power: glorious fatherland war in Croatia, glorious revolution in Serbia 2000. It is understandable that the self-commemorative past is instrumentalized to legitimate the glory of the national state. But there is no place for the shadows of the own past. Since history was "a school of patriotism", the dominant value systems change and develop through the picture of the past. "Getting its history wrong is crucial for the creation of a nation" (E. Renan).

The relationship between the past and the present is an infrastructure of memory, a force of patriotism. During the last civil war in Yugoslavia memory industry with the moralization and emotionalization of war aims and victims sprang up. Past and moral claims became inextricably linked and values about victimhood sacrificed. The power of Kosovo values during 1980s revived sacred historical rights, Serbian national unity and glory. During 1990s there were great changes in the past in all new Balkan states. The collapse of the European one-party socialism opened a new future, but also a new past. The past was reconstructed and invented to legitimate a transition to national capitalism. For example, the new official Chetnik antifascism is an effort to maintain a new set of national values with the help of reconstructed past. National narratives have an unusual ability to organize remembrance and to make the past sensible.

2. Basic memory tension in the West Balkans

New revised official histories in all new Balkan states created a similar narrative continuity and provided similar set of memories of great own glorious past as a proof of coherent ethnic histories and absence of any common past. In the vacuum of memory, which was provoked by the collapse of the one-party system and federal state, the new ethnic personal and collective memory formed a new identity, new continuity and new set of values. A tension between antifascist values and new national and confessional identity can be seen everywhere. The disappearance of the decreed communist past left an explosive vacuum, where
ethnocentrism, nationalism, xenophobia and ancient values can flow. Because of the importance of the past it is crucial to emphasize that the year 1989 was not a year of revolution, but a year of restoration in double sense: as the return to capitalism and as the return to religion and nationalism (F. Furet, in Smolar, 2001).

In this light the new past is also a restorative past, formed as a reaction against the authoritarian official communist past. The clash of the two pasts determines the culture of memory in Eastern Europe. Mobilization of one powerful memory requires the suppression of the others (Price, 2004: 142). The main problem is much bigger: the reconstruction of the past is always a reconstruction of actual values.

A new constructed view of the own past and identity was especially conflicting in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia. A nation as mnemonic community maintains and cultivates a common memory. The last Yugoslav civil war was to a large extent a memory war, and the Balkan nations horrifically demonstrated what happens when memory turns into real wars. It was the aim of para-historiography with two main topic arguments: autochtonism and victimhood. My nation is the oldest and my nation was the main victim in recent wars. The Croats imagined themselves (and continue to do so even today) as belonging to catholic border (Hoepken, 1999: 221-223), the Moslems – as an island marooned in the hostile Balkan, Slavic or communist sea. The narrative past equips the nation with the emotional tone and style of its remembering. Poland is “the Christ among nations”, Serbs are winners in wars, but losers in peace, etc. In the countries of former Yugoslavia an effort to deconstruct multiethnic Yugoslavia from a national perspective is visible. In this purpose a new value system with its emotional points is necessary. Those emotional points are the atrocities of communist and of other nations.

Another aspect of memory power in the ex-Yugoslav wars was a special border memory culture with small ethnic and linguistic diversity, on the one, and virulent and exclusive articulations of identity, on the other hand (Todorova, 1999; Roksandić, 1995). Within the logics of European symbolic geography, such border area figures are used as either transitional zones or battlefronts between civilizations. These ideas made different basis for the construction of the past: brotherhood and unity on one and a border with other nation and civilization, on the other hand.

In the memory tensions there is also a new visible construction of a usable dark past in the inherent linkage between totalitarian identity and socialist past. A larger folk theory about socialist Yugoslavia as inherently totalitarian state can be seen everywhere. There are many factors in the new Balkan states that “deconstruct” the Yugoslav myths. The demise of the Yugoslav socialism led to a dramatic reconfiguration of the identity and of the past. Yugoslavia was a Croatian warder or a Serbian error. Forgetting about multinational past is organized to create a single national history. The actual pictures of constant sufferings of the Serbs, Croats,
Moslems or Albanians are active historical auto-stereotypes and creators of military values and virtues. Renationalization of memory by schools, churches, parties and mass media creates a new culture of remembrance which promotes the ideas of national identity and unity. Armed with the new radicalized past the ethnicities strode into civil war. Serbs were fighting against the Ustaschas, Moslems and Croats against the Chetniks. Everywhere the new constructed past was also a present counter-system against enemy’s values. The war was probably impossible with the old socialist past. The other art of the new past is inventing of heritage: for example, in the new Macedonian history, or in the "theories" about Serbs or Croats as the oldest people. Heritage also sets myth above truth since history was "a school of patriotism". Although being a myth, it should still be propagated, for such myths are essential to the national identity. Patriotism is above the truth, and this priority is an emotive and active motor of action. The power of such a memory is great. On the other hand, places of atrocities in particular, where executioners were from my nation, Jasenovac (for Croats), Srebrenica (for Serbs), are as much disputable.

The new future is also impossible without the new past. The new value system is not centered around capitalism (an unpopular term) but ideologically around transition, democracy and Europe. “Europe” became a main reference point (a new paradise and utopia) whether in a political sense, or in an economic, social, cultural or intellectual context (Brunnbauer, 2004: 26). According to this view, the past should be recomposed: history would begin anew from the point where it was interrupted by internal forces many years ago: in Croatia in 1918, in Serbia in 1945, etc. New zero hours are new value points. New historical whole is neither the Balkans nor Yugoslavia, but Europe. The aim is not “the Balkans to the Balkan people” any more, but Catholicism or Christianity as powerful markers of the European identity.

The new past substituted old past as a source of identity and reference (T. Judt, 1998). Both national history and autobiography gave unity, coherence, and priority to the particularities of time and place. There are many questions. How has the new past influenced the West Balkans’ present after the Cold War? How has the past been used in domestic struggles for power and as a new narrative value system? What values are in the new reworked past? How the political uses of the past have shaped the values we live in now? How is the past "made and remade to serve changing societal interests and needs" in the present? How is the past used to develop sense about themselves, their times, and their communities?

To sum up, memories are a problem because scholars still do not explain enough how they tie individuals to groups. While outside commentators often assume that there is too much memory in the Balkans and consequently regard their work of destructions as memory work, our historians create new and new books about the national monumental past and permanent own national victimhood. After
the collapse of one-party socialism the dramatized differences between the West Balkan religious groups and nations were explained by past. The revised history and memory commenced manipulation of memories into weapons of destruction through a process of radicalization and monumentalizing of the glorious past. Words of the dark or golden past become weapons of the war. In other words, every conquest has been glorified as liberation. Messianic nationalistic vision of the past as a defender of Christianity (Serbs and Croats) is very similar.

However, these readings of the past within ex-Yugoslav republics suggest a more complicated and nuanced understanding of the new invented past than a simple view of revisionism may have implied. We need to consider how it happens that a collective memory is "activated" in people's consciousness and becomes a motor for action. This topic is left largely unexplored.

3. The role of repressed past

The power of the new selected past, as a set of emotional mobilized values, culminated in the last civil war. New changed national memory was a counter-answer to the former decree communist history, and remembering of the international solidarity. In Tito’s Yugoslavia the most pervasive and divisive collective memories were officially banned in the name of “Brotherhood and Unity”. Historiography was one of the most ideologized discipline for legitimization of the communist rule. The elimination of all but the positive partisan past legitimatized the communist rule – a monopoly, single past was a basis for a single identity in a single state. There was a tendency to de-ethnicize the civil war in Yugoslavia (Hoepken, 1999: 200). In the official communist memory the ethnic dimension of the war was frozen (B. Denich) and it produced a “fragmented memory” and a “vacuum of memory”. But the polarization between false and real memory is not black and white. Even if the partisan past was decree and somewhat extreme, it was not entirely incorrect. In addition, it should not be forgotten that even authoritarian, the communist antifascism was real. The Yugoslav communists did not return to the country in the baggage car of Red Army, but through the efforts of their own antifascist resistance. After the collapse of socialism both the repressed past and values were brought back. Moreover, the repressed past has legitimacy per se, so do the repressed values. It is also the reason why the current historiography suffers from the extreme ideologization of nationalism. As usual, victims are transformed into executors. But it should be underlined that the partisan past was a basis of values which were different from actual ethnocentric values. The new official, invented and reconstructed past influenced the transition through values which were repressed in socialism (nationalism, capitalism, religion). New ruling elites are trying not only to revise history or to rework the past, but to change the values.
The ex-communist war past implies a heroic and symmetrical picture of antifascism, equally divided among different Yugoslav nations. The common multinational antifascist tradition implies the values of national equality between nations without supremacy or hate. It was a controlled communist image of the past, but also controlled values with many taboos. After the collapse of the one-party system the explosion of repressed past was also an explosion of taboo values and para-historiography. The transition of the past was the result of the revelation of the communist repression and its victims after 1945 (Marković, Ković, Milićević 2004: 285): first Goli Otok and later other communist atrocities. Roughly put, every newly discovered victim had its equivalent in the new value. In the awakening of the repressed memory there was very much of para-historiography and this non-academic writing was a very active creator of the new past. The former partisan paradigm is replaced with the Chetnik antifascist paradigm in recent Serbian history textbooks (Nikolić et al, 2002). The “Chetnik truth” is represented as a new, non-ideological approach to history. The official rehabilitation and redefinition of the Chetnik movement is the important step in relativization of antifascism. This is one of the reasons why after years of suppression, the glorious conceived ethnocentric past could be easily evoked in the crisis. Every fragmented and selective memory left niches for “subversive” memories (Hoepken, 1999: 2004). Yugoslavia has horrifically demonstrated what happens when memory wars turn into real wars (Müller, 2003: 17). The awakened conflicting monumental pasts showed all their destructive aspects in the war. The power of Tuđman’s word about the Ustashi state, as a historical aspiration of the Croats for an independent state, was immeasurable. Milošević’s speech on Gazi Mestan in 1989 also activated emotional memory of Kosovo revenge values. The shared memories of a traumatic national event like the Great purges in the World War Two in Jasenovac is a part of the collective memory of many Serbs. For Croats Jasenovac is a hard memory, blocked off and repressed because it is in fact an obstacle to the imperative of glorious national past. The official counter-memory by the Croats is Bleiburg as a place of national victimhood. The memories of genocide of the own nation and new authoritative statement “I remember” defined the other nations as being either good or bad. The central political beliefs and values were imposed through the narration of the revised past. The history of the nation is written as a teleological sequence of significant events (Brunnbauer, 2004: 18), which are strong symbols of victimhood.

There is no doubt that there are many similarities between new pasts in the new Balkan states. Developing of national state is the most important political issue. The revision of the past is fundamental in this effort. More specifically, we test hypotheses about the changes of the past from above: the politics of commemoration, the selective screen of memory and the privileged status of certain narratives about the past. Memory and past are sources of “factual” material for
propaganda. The memory of the Second World War during the last civil war (and even today) demonstrates the power of former repressed memory. “Serbian borders are where the Serbian graves are”, or the famous Tuđman’s words from 1990: “The Independent Croatian State was not the creation of the fascist criminals; it is also a manifestation of the historic aspirations of the Croatian people for an independent State” – are words that make memory into a common currency of war.

Our argument is that the changes in the past were not simple but active symbols in the perpetuation from the civil war in the following sense: myth of victimhood and myth of defender of Christianity or democracy. There is a similar cohort effect of the past war values in different regions from Slovenia to Macedonia. The post-socialist regimes required new historical legitimization of the new value system: new events and personalities from the past. We argue that memory is an important part of value transition. Revisionism was often based on a simple turnaround of certain aspects of the past. What the communists had painted black, was now washed white, and vice versa: religion instead of atheism, nationalism instead of internationalism, chauvinism instead of brotherhood and unity, etc. The new past is centered around new symbols as a key value. Re-nationalization and re-clericalization go hand in hand. Symbolically we mark those changes in the past of Serbia as the shift from antifascism to Hilandar.

4. Hilandar and antifascism

In the course of effort to create a new value system using the past, every revision finds a new “golden age” and new heroes. For example, we can mark Hilandar and antifascism as opposite central value orientations in actual Serbian memory culture. The former is hegemonic, the latter is in defensive. In the dominant Hilandar memory and value orientation there is no place for antifascism, and vice versa. The fact that there is conversion from antifascism to Hilandar by the same people is often forgotten.

The new memory is explained as a history liberated from communism and as an unfrozen memory. In fact, the new invented past in the revised histories is a strong value orientation and a kind of memory of power. This is not a memory in terms of personal experience, but as an organized official national memory. There is not a revolution, but a restoration of old values (capitalism, nationalism, religion, war) in the returned past during the last civil war in Yugoslavia and after it.

Research has shown that historical events are implicated in the formation and maintenance of collective memories if they represent significant long-term changes to people's lives, make people think about the events at the time of their happening, if they are emotionally charged, and exert collective psychological impact (Griffin, 2004). A good example is a new anti-antifascist culture of remembering. After the
collapse of European socialism, memories of the Second World War were “unfrozen” in the new Balkan states as well, not as a simple historical revisionism, but as an active weapon in the civil war. The former executioners (Quislings, Chetnics, Ustascha, Domobrans) become victims, the former victims (partisans) – executioners. The new past also interpreted moral values connected with politics.

However, considering that the Constitution of the EU states that modern Europe is based on antifascism, the acceptable vision of the past is reworked as national antifascism. It is questionable whether a nationalist could be an antifascist. On the other hand, there is a rehabilitation of the former fascists and quislings. Nationalization of antifascism and anti-antifascism go together. The new past in the Western Europe has taken a relatively benign form, but in the Balkans it was a war weapon. Anti-antifascism normalized chauvinism and collaboration. The Partisan liberation war is reinterpreted as detrimental and documented with communist atrocities. In the revisionist history antifascism in general was a tragic error. The solution was abeyance. In this view the Chetnic collaboration with Nedić and Ljotić is interpreted as having been patriotic. General Nedić, who governed Serbia on behalf of the Nazi authorities, is presented as someone who wished to ‘preserve the biological substance of the Serb people’; but no mention is made of the fact that around 170,000 people were killed inside Nedić’s Serbia during World War II. This revision of history was ordered from above, with the idea of presenting wartime collaborators with the Nazis as victims. The aim of turning executioners into victims is to revise the history of World War II in favor of the defeated side.

On the basis of such interpretation or the reinvention of the past it can be said that the new picture of the Second World War is an active and reactive motor of value changes. Moreover, we can speak about the constructed past as the reference of values. New selected past is expressed in new textbooks, holidays and official monuments. Some facts are celebrated whilst others are forgotten (battles, persons, heritage). What is celebrated becomes immune to conscious revision. In general, all official pasts are revised pasts, but some are more revised than others. Only various value implications of past are examined here. In Croatia and Slovenia the most obvious expression of new revisionism is the systematic destruction of the communist World War Two monuments in memory of partisans and the victims of fascism. In Croatia around 3000 memorials were destroyed, damaged or removed (Budak, 2004: 156). In Slovenia likewise (Luther, O. and Luther, B., 2003: 647-645). The political abuse of the past is an everyday value phenomenon. In Slovenia a new myth of the “functional collaboration” of the Slovene Home Guard in the World War Two suggests a clash over moral values between “godless communism” and Catholicism (Luther, 2004: 342-43). The new picture of Milan Nedić likewise, as one of the hundred most important figures in the Serbian history. In this view collaborators recognized the dangers of communism and were forced into
collaboration in the name of patriotism (Kuljić, 2005). The celebration of collaboration with fascism or passivity in the antifascist war as patriotism and the interpretation of the communist resistance as pathological and counterproductive episode in the national history is a universal framework for the post-socialist value changes in the new Balkan states. Moreover, it could serve as a paradigm for the new reactive official value system. As long as the Yugoslav state was still in place, the authoritative rejection of ethnocentric viewpoints was a basis of different antifascist values. Contrary to them, today the paradigmatic values of the new hegemonic, anti-antifascist memory culture are clericalism, ethnocentrism and antitotalitarianism. That is the reason why actual debates about collaboration and antifascism are so crucial and difficult. Above all, today’s anti-antifascist value system is a legitimization of animosity, war and ethnic cleansing.

The actual correct lesson of history is not “No more wars”, but “No more multinational states”. Yugo-nostalgic memory is interpreted as the enemy of democracy, amnesia of the old multinational antifascist past is a condition for a glorious national past. War propaganda especially emphasized a conflict during the dark past fifty years of peaceful coexistence in socialism by Moslems, Croats, Albanians and Serbs. Forgetting about peace between nations and an international antifascism was a condition of a new war ethnocentrism. This return of anti–antifascism has led to normalization of chauvinism. It was not liberated, but a conservative side of the unfrozen memory. However, the old necessary and decree communist memory is also responsible for the explosion of the repressed past and the process of new reactive mnemonic socialization. In general, there are not only paradigm shifts in historiography, but also value shifts. The ruling elites now are trying not only to rewrite history or rework the past, but also to change the values. Although the post-Yugoslav militant cognitive values characterized both communist and anticommunist tradition, there is a gap between those value systems. On one side there is class, rationalism and internationalism, on the other nation, religion and ethnocentrism. The similar authoritarian and military pattern should not be confused with deeper value differences.

In general, it can be said that the new past is becoming an important instrument in the legitimization of new values. We should also point out to a strong relationship between the dynamics of changes of the past and value changes. In order to evaluate the value changes in the past we must take into account that the hegemonic nationalism is based on the cult of exclusive past. The new past has become increasingly integrated into new values, and vice versa. The para-historians more than historians have appeared as important creators in reworking of identities and of new values (Marković, Ković, Milićević, 2004: 292-294; Kuljić, 2005: 281–282). Briefly, the recent history textbooks in most post-Yugoslav states have created not only new fragmented pasts, but also a new set of fragmented values.
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