

GENDER IN/EQUALITY IN NATION BUILDING: THE BREAK-UP OF YUGOSLAVIA AND THE CASES OF  
SERBIA AND KOSOVO

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## Introduction

Yugoslavia was an example to the whole world of how differences can be met and how diverse nationalities could live together. However, “nobody” supposed that Yugoslavia will end up with crimes on a mass scale that took place during its breakup. However, among the most significant war crimes that occurred during the breakup of Yugoslavia were mostly manifested by the rape of women (and men).

The paper will focus on how gender inequality narrative was built in peace time and how it was transformed in during the arm conflict in Yugoslavia (more specifically in Kosovo), through addressing the rape of women as a weapon of war. However, in our analyze we will likewise emphasis how sexual violence was also used against men, in order to better understand the issues of gender and the logic of sexual violence in peacetime and in wartime.

During the breakup of Yugoslavia, rape has been used as the strongest weapon by nationalist forces; where the women’s body has been used as a target to fight the enemy. Information about different rape patterns have been reported for the first time in 1992 after the refugees from the different regions had the opportunity to tell their stories. However, the reports that have been published after the conflicts in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and Kosovo, showed that the rape was a strategy to destroy the enemy by targeting the woman body. The large number of the rape that occurred in Yugoslavia (more especially in the case of BiH) were taking place and the existence of rape camps, but purposefully utilized spaces where the women, if they were not killed, were kept and abused (Beverly Allen, 1996, p. 45). Nevertheless, detention of women for sexual slavery was a less documented phenomenon in Kosovo than in BiH (Brammertz and Jarvis, 2016).

One of the main points of this work is that during the armed conflicts the women’s body becomes the main target of the enemy, since the “other” was not just based on ethnic identity, but also gendered and sexualized. Thus, the rape of women during the armed conflict in Yugoslavia happened for two reasons: firstly, the targets of rape were mainly women and secondly these women belonged to a particular nation and ethnicity. Yet, the attempt by raping man during the conflict, was to feminize them, which in the essence, the target was woman’s body. The emphasis

of this analysis will be put on the symbolic role that women play in nationalism; thus enabling us to understand the issues of gender inequality and the logic behind the rape of women during the breakup of Yugoslavia. Women's bodies have often been seen as an essential instrument of war strategy and these "bodies" often constitute the symbolic and actual battlefield of the conquest of an ethnic domain in "an endless construction of women as the universal Other" (Zarana Pasic, 1999, 156).

Wartime rapes against both men and women were not perceived as a crime against humanity before the codification of the International Criminal Tribunal Charters for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) (Hilmi, M. Azwati, 2007, p. 27). Actually ICTY and ICTR were the first ever tribunal in the history of the international juridical system to prosecute wartime rape as a crime against humanity (Hilmi, M. Azwati, 2007, p. 29). Definition of rape has restricted the elements of the crime to: "(a) a physically invasion (penetration) of sexual nature, (b) committed on a person (male or female), (c) under circumstances which are coercive (Hilmi, M. Azwati, 2007, p. 31). There is no doubt that International Criminal Court (ICC) was influenced by International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). Again, for the first time in the history of international legal discourse, "rape was defined in gender-neutral terms in the Tribunals' case law and in the ICC.

The focus of the paper will be more in the conflict between Serbia and Kosovo to better appreciate the logic behind the rapes during the conflict in Yugoslavia, as the hostility between Serbs and Albanians is based before the conflict. As Howard Clark argued that the core of the Serbian and Albanian relationship has been characterized by a pattern of domination, Serbs over Albanians or Albanians over Serbs, since Kosovo was part of Ottoman Empire (Howard Clark, 2006, p. 100). In Serbian history the "other" has generally always been the Albanians; who were described as uncivilized, barbarians, Islamist, Eastern. Worth noting is that, the Serbian history recognizes the Ottoman Empire, Austro- Hungarian Empire, Nazism as "others" as well. On the other hand, for Albanians "the other" was not only Serbians but the "Slavs" in general; who were described as barbarians and oppressors. Nevertheless, it is important to comprehend the connection of both two Serbian and Albanian (Kosovo) nationalism with Kosovo territory.

The 90's in Serbia were the years of crisis and basic social transformations. Social transformation in Serbia was also based on the deconstruction of the previous gendered orders. During the breakup of Yugoslavia, nation-building process became the ultimate necessity. Nation building process was based on the strategies of the traditionalization of women's identities as well as their roles. The structural connection between ethnic and gender violence is most clearly seen in the case of Yugoslavia. The brutality of the ethnic conflicts in Yugoslavia shows how ethnic hatred has been provoked in order to construct the new frontiers between the other states. Nevertheless, the assumption of entering the democratic state did not change the role of women in society significantly. It is noticeable that in the post conflict societies there is a need to go back to the traditional values. After the breakup of Yugoslavia in both Serbia and Kosovo societies there was an apparent need to rebuild the nation, which was based on the traditional values of these two respective countries.

### [Nation in nation state building, nationalism and gender](#)

#### Nation – State and Gender

According to Anderson nation is imagined as community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Moreover capitalism and print- technology created the possibility of the new form of “imagined community” (Benedict Anderson, 1997, p.7). Therefore, nations appeared as the new necessity of modern world. On the other hand, Anderson argues that “communities are to be distinguished, not because their falsity/genuineness but by the style in which they are imagined” (Benedict Anderson, 1997, p.6). Anderson was right by arguing the fact that nations are imagined communities. However, he also claimed that they would be distinguished, which so far did not happen, they have only been transformed in accordance with different political needs. On the other hand, Eric Hobsbawm, thinks that nations are constructed, however he does not completely deny the existence of some sort of feelings of collective belonging that already exist (Eric Hobsbawm, 1990, p. 46). Nationalism, as an ultimate idea helped states to create their nation-states. The normalization of the ideal of nation-states was the vital one; thus, we can find naturalization of the nation-state in different disciplines and many intellectual variations. On the other hand the idea of a social contract has been the core conceptual framework in which generally people in the Western World understand the relationship between the individual citizen and the

state. Based on the classic state theories of Hobbes, Lock and Rousseau, this implies that an individual consents to give up some of his/her (Carole Patmman, 1998, p. 180), rights in order for the state to deliver public goods for the collective benefits.

Appearance of nation-state came up with "rights of men" which provided citizen rights. Since nationalism is male invention, and nation states are based on nationalism; women were excluded from nation state building process. Within the logic of nation- state women has been seen as "patriotic mother", where they should educate their children into the values of republican citizenship. Women active in the equal citizen rights movement who refused to have the passive role in nation building or denying at all the nation building, which is based on male values, and honor. Within the modern nation building, as Balibar has argued women were not just "excluded from public space but also social roles that were assigned to them along with ideologies, the educational practices, and the corresponding symbolic complexes, were an effective condition of the political capacity of men, taken collectively" (Etienne Balibar, 1988, p. 724). Women have been excluded from public space, nevertheless, their responsibility towards public space were transformed into the "private space"<sup>1</sup> Women's responsibilities were considered the following: to give a birth, educate their children, be good wives, and to be ready to die for their country when it is required. They were considered "patriotic mother" (June Hannam, 2007, p. 22) in private space; therefore, women then would educate their children into the values of the republican citizenship.

#### Gender and Wartime Sexual Violence

As the oldest known difference, the gender and sex difference is inscribed into language and symbolically permeates all other dichotomies of thinking and legitimized historical hierarchies. "Gender should be understood not as a "real" social difference between men and women, but as a mode of discourse which relates to groups of subjects whose social roles are defined by their sexual/ biological difference as opposed to their economic positions or their membership in ethnic and racial collectivities" (Nira Yuval – Davis, 1997, p. 9).

Gender as nation is socially and historically constructed. In order to understand the meaning of term gender, we should differentiate the meanings of sexes and gender. The difference between sexes is described in terms of males and females, whereas gender differences are based on

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<sup>1</sup> So called "private space" is socially constructed to marginalized women presence in public life.

femininity and masculinity. Gender identity and role is not something that individuals are born with, but something built up cumulatively over time. On the other hand, sex (generally), is the biological condition which children are born with. Nira Yuval Davis has pointed out, that it is crucial to understand the discussion on gender as well as on the relationship between the notions of gender and sex in order to be able to any attempt to analyze the ways nations of femininity and masculinity are constructed within nationalist discourses (Nira Yuval – Davis, 1997, p. 4). National, gender as well as sexual differences refers to hierarchical differentiations. As Yuval-Davis once argued “nations are genders and the topography of the nation is mapped in gendered terms feminized soil, landscapes, boundaries and masculine movements over these spaces” (Nira Yuval – Davis, 1997, p. 53). Thus, beside biological reproduction, women’s task within the nation is also cultural reproduction; while men create and shape the culture women reproduce the culture. Considering the importance of culture in the nation-state building, the cultural reproduction of nation on behalf of women also implies the pressure and control to reproduction the culture that has been shaped and created by men. Sherry Ortner has pointed out that women tend to be identified with “nature” while men tend to be identified with “culture”.

Because the central importance of social reproduction to culture, gender relations often come to be seen as constituting the essence of cultures as ways of life to be passed from generation to generation (Nira Yuval – Davis, 1997, p. 43). Mother/woman represents the culture, the culture that is already created and shaped by father/man. “Cultural difference has been related to notions of otherness”, therefore, culture should be under men’s control. However, strict cultural codes of what it is to be a proper woman are often developed to keep women in this inferior power position ((Nira Yuval – Davis, 2003, p. 18).

All nationalisms are gendered, and cannot be understood without a theory of gender power. Subordination of woman to man, was deemed a natural fact. Other forms of social hierarchy could be depicted in familial terms to guarantee social difference as a category of nature. Nations are frequently figured through the iconography of familial and domestic space (Anne McClintock, p.66). We see that patriarchal nationalism is the mirror of patriarchal family of man. Hierarchical relations within family (the social subordination of women and children), have been presented as natural and familial. Therefore, in nation we see application of it. Hierarchy within unity, is an organic element of historical progress (Anne McClintock, p.43).

The differentiation of nation from the other's nation is structured based on women bodies, where women become the symbol of the national reproduction. Women's role is seen as a passive one in the process of nation building, while the men's role is active in creating the nation (Nira Yuval – Davis, 1997, p. 37). Although, man is the proper person who has to protect his state/nation borders, man is equipped with responsibility to fight for the motherland, which gives him an active role in nation building. Within nationalist rhetoric homeland is constructed as women/mother and which wars are fought to defend the “women and children”. Gender relations are perceived to be at the heart of nation and nationalism (Nira Yuval- Davis, 2003). Mothers, daughters are presented as the property of the nation. Therefore, they must be protected by husbands/fathers/sons. Women are perceived as a property of the nation since they are reproduction of the nation; women who refuse to have children become potential enemy of the nation (Julie Mostov, 2000, p. 92). Women often symbolize the collective unity. Julie Mostov argues that, a single woman presents a potential threat to the nation; a single woman becomes potential suspect in border transgressions (Julie Mostov, 2000, p. 92). Since woman represents the collective morality, man is responsible to protect the morality of his collectivity. Moreover, all societies have collective memories in which the image of the “others” and the “rules” how they should be founded (Nira, Yuval – Davis, 1997, p. 47). The “other's” men are seen collectively as sexual aggressors, and “our” women become the object of male temptation. In this context, “our women” are presented as chaste, honorable and in need of protection, which is the function of “our men” (Miranda H. Alison, 2007, p. 80). On the other hand, “their women” are unchaste and deprived. While the “other's” women become enemies as reproducers, “our” women are reminded of their moral duty to bear children for our nation. Gender roles are crucial role in constructing collective identities as well as to emphasize the difference to the others.

### *Wartime sexual violence*

Sexual violence is not a phenomenon that appeared just in the wartime period or ethnic conflicts. Sexual violence is seen also in peacetime. Therefore, it is important to understand the construction of sexual violence in peacetime and how it is perceived by the power, in order to understand the meanings of wartime sexual tortures. As Catherine Niarchos states, “during peacetime the individual's body, especially its essences- sexuality reproduction become the symbol of everyday domination and aggression. Wartime transforms individual bodies into social bodies as seen, for example, in genocidal rapes or ethnic cleanings, which are thought to purify

the bloodlines” (Catherine Niarchos, 1995, p. 662). Moreover, rape during the wartime means to terrorize, displace the local population, to force the birth of children of mixed “ethnic” descent. However, defining rape/sexual violence as male domination over women, stereotypes men as perpetrators and women as victims; rendering rape of men as abnormal and invisible (Valorie K. Vojdik, 2013, p. 925). Wartime sexual violence as “masculinized” social practice, make the perpetrators as dominant while subordinating enemy/other group (Valorie K. Vojdik, 2013, p. 945). Masculinity theory is important to understand the social norms of masculinity, which reproduce relation of power between men as an individual and between men and women (Valorie K. Vojdik, 2013, p. 926). However, masculinity helps in explaining sexual violence towards both women and men. Since sexual violence is type of showing masculinity.

Masculinity/femininity and manhood/womanhood social practices are constructed during the peacetime, and transformed within armed conflict. Masculinity in peacetime is constructed as man who is powerful, sexually dominant, and heterosexual, describing, “real mean” (Valorie K. Vojdik, 2013, p. 946). Raped men symbolically lose their gender identity as are constructed in the peacetime to be dominant and are feminized. The rape of man symbolically represents the powerless victim, who is not able to protect himself as well as his family. Yet, rape of women is often stigmatized as shameful, particularly in social or religious communities that seek to regulate women’s sexual purity.

All type of rapes are an experience of power, domination, degradation, and humiliation (Eaun Hague, 1997, p. 51), either if they are committed in peacetime or in wartime. Almost in all social and cultural level masculinity is determined as dominant and femininity as subordinate. Therefore, rapists hold the position of masculinity, and try to “feminize” their enemy, and to show their superiority. There are certain characteristics common to all the rapes. In the majority of cases, the rapes occurred in view of the others, including those who were forced to watch (Catherine N. Niarchos, 1995, p. 657). Many rapes involve sexual torture and sadism. However, describing acts of sexual abuse in a courtroom is difficult, since rape is still misunderstood crime.

To sum up, wars are sexualized; “wartime propaganda reinforces the link between war and sexuality and further objectified women” (Catherine N. Niarchos, 1995, p. 670). Enemy is always someone who tries to rape and murder “our women”; effort is directed at saving “our women” (Catherine N. Niarchos, 1995, p. 670). Wars are male domination/male decision; women are war’s



victims, their role is symbolic. If woman take part in war she should act with male values, more preciously she should fight like a man. However, women are not allowed judge war's aftermath (Catherine N. Niarchos, 1995, p. 657). Warfare is male domination and women are victim of men's war. It is clear that in warfare, bodies of women are used in most vulnerable way (they are raped, forced into prostitution, forcibly impregnated). Rape/sexual violence is happening both in war and peacetime nonetheless their aims are different.

## Gender and nationalism in Serbs and Kosovo during the breakup of Yugoslavia

Analyzing the brutality of conflicts in former Yugoslavia, we can see how the nationalist discourse was based on the objectification of women's body. Conflicts occurred in former Yugoslavia (as the other conflicts in different palaces) were man made. Actually, men took part in conflict for many reasons- for honor, patriotism or brotherhood, in self- defense, for liberation, to liberate the other. Likewise, nationalist narratives, used in the ethnic conflict in former Yugoslavian were based in specific gender identity. Women are simultaneously mythologized as the nation's deepest "essence" and instrumentalized their "natural" difference as the nation's life/birth (Zarana Pasic, 1989). During Tito's Yugoslavia "Bratstvo i Jedinstvo" - "Brotherhood and Unity", was, the core politics which managed to prevent any ethnic escalation. The message of the "Brotherhood and Unity" was clear, which implies that under the socialism every nation as well as ethnic group are equal and will be treated equally. Moreover, in Yugoslavia women and men were equal on the development of self-managing socialism. Taoists rejected the term "feminist" which they equated with bourgeois activism and, however, the role of women in socialist Yugoslavia was to contribute to the building of socialism through the family, work and political activity (Zarana Pasic, 1989).

The economic crisis occurred in the end of 1980, triggered the nationalist crisis (Louis Sell, 2002, p. 29). More precisely, the leaders of Yugoslavia were trying to increase the attention towards nationalism by using different propagandas, in order to make trivialize the economic crisis. In "newly emerged" nationalist discourse, created the need for the new gender roles, where the role of women within the system stated to be reformulated. Basically, women's political and civil rights that were guaranteed during the socialist Yugoslavia started to be violated. This was the clear view, to see how the women of former Yugoslavia struggled in the twentieth century within the framework of nationalist ideologies. Nevertheless, as Pasic said: " the structural

connection between ethnic and gender violence is most clearly seen in the case of Yugoslavia” (Zorana Papić, 1989). Nationalism is a “man business”; while men are perceived as a subject, women are perceived as an object. A gender difference between men and women serves to define the limits of national differences. Moreover, as Dasa Duhacek argues: “nationalism is sexualized in the case of Yugoslavia, where women’s bodies have been abused by systematic rape” (Dasa Duhacek, 2006, p. 117). The ethnic- national conflict in former Yugoslavia, lead us to better understand how the sexual violence become as the main instrument of ethnic escalation. There were different nationalist attempts towards the creation of nation-state in the territory of Yugoslavia. These nationalist attempts came out with the abuse of women’s bodies. Nation building process in the countries of former Yugoslavia resulted in two interdependent forms of violence against women by demanding the no abortion for insider women and extreme violence against outsider women.

### Politics in Serbia during the 90’s

The rise of nationalism in Serbia after the 90’s, was used by displacement of trauma referring to the bad experience that they had in Second World War and by criminalizing the *Ustasha* acts that they did during the Second World War. Increasing nationalism in Serbia was reflecting on re/traditionalization of social roles and relationships. Politicians, intellectuals and Orthodox Church, obviously became closely connected with the re-nationalization/re-traditionalization process in Serbia. Moreover, during this period, in Serbia the “Brotherhood and Unity” which was used in socialist Yugoslavia switched with “all Serbs” in “one” nation state, where both women’s and men’s identities had to be reshaped in order to fit within a new nationalist discourse. The economic crisis within the Yugoslavia brought out the new gender roles, especially within Serbia. Actually, economic crisis in socialist Yugoslavia, created a convenient environment where nationalist politicians can play their scenarios. The main nationalist policy and discourse during the 90’s in Serbia was re/traditionalisation of gender roles. The popular nationalist discourse used in Serbia was to return women into the private space where actually they “belong”. In the essence of returning women back to the private sphere were the consequences of deep economic crisis in Yugoslavia.

While in the Yugoslavia even before the 90s, Serbian women were perceived as autonomous beings, educated, engaged in work outside the family with alternative to motherhood. On the other

hand the Albanian women were perceived as machine of biological reproduction. Bracewell argues that, this role of Serbian women also fits into a more general oriental discourse, thus settings up a contrast between secular, democratic, and rational “Western” Serbs and primitive “Oriental” Albanians (Wendy Bracewell, 1996). However, ironically, politicians in Serbia started to produce the idea that women should take the role of reproduction of Serbian nation, while they have criticized the Albanian women for the same reason; seen as the machine of biological reproduction. As Papic mentioned, the nationalist revival of the patriarchal tradition invoked and strengthened the Serbian nationalist patriarchy, which was very much marked by the features of Milosevic’s rule (Zarana Papic, 1989, p. 16). Family plays the crucial role in every nationalism. Hence, one of the aims during the nation building process is to create the conditions where nationalist idea will penetrate into families. In Serbia the role of man/father as patriarch, has been reinforced as the father of the nation. Increasing the awareness that he is the father of the nation and responsible to educate family members how to respect authority. Women’s responsibility in patriarchal nationalism is to give a birth for particular nation. Politicians have begun a crusade calling for a national renaissance among the Serbs, understood in a very literal sense, as “rebirth”: the Serbian birthrate has to be increased if the nation is to survive” (Wendy Bracewell, 1996, p. 28). As Serbia continued to have decreasing birth rates, both politicians as well as doctors in Serbia coined as “the white plague”, Albanian were accused coercing women to maintain high birth rates- “multiplying like rabbits” (Nita Luci, 2002, p. 2).

The nationalist instrumentalization of woman’s body was also confirmed in the new abortion law adopted by the Serbian parliament in May 1993. The law permitted women to decide on an abortion only up to ten weeks into their pregnancy, while a commission composed of a physical, a psychologist, and a social worker would be empowered to take the final decision where women sought abortions between the tenth and twentieth week of pregnancy. Additionally, the initial draft of this law did not recognize rape as a legitimate reason for abortion (Zarana Papic, 1999). Serbian media” pumped out portraits of Albanian women as baby marker, calling their offspring “biological bombs”, labeling Albanian families’ life private and backward (Julia Mertus, p. 178).

Milosevic became the popular political figure in Serbia by increasing the attention of people on victimization of Serbian nation. He became a phenomenon; his pictures everywhere, people familiarized his image with the new Serb icon. People submitted to him: men and women, old and

young, educated and uneducated. Women would repeat; “he is so beautiful.” Why did the majority of Serbian women side with Milosevic? (Zarana Papic, 1989). The re/nationalization of women’s role in Serbia was based on love relationship! The will of these women was to be the mother of Serbian nation, particularly the mother’s of great warriors who will be ready to die for Serbian legacy. On the other hand, there were women in Serbia who constantly protested against Milosevic regime. Women in Black<sup>2</sup> starting form 1991-1996 every Wednesday, silently and wearing in black were protesting the Milosevic regime in the former Yugoslavia. Most of Women in Black’s actions connected to the wars in former Yugoslavia were initiated after the fall of regime in October 2000 (Stasa Zajovic, 2006).

### Civil Resistance in Kosovo

The Albanian factor in Yugoslavia was under double pressure; the pressure coming from political system and pressure that come with being an ethnical Albanian. However, economic and social reforms in Tito’s Yugoslavia enhanced women’s political and social position. In 1974, the new Yugoslav constitution allowed Kosovo status to be equivalent to that of six national republics within Yugoslavia (Denis Macshane, 2011, p. 37). The constitution of 1974 brought all entities in better position (Marc Weller, 2011, p. 85).

However, the rapidly growing of Albanian population, which lead on increase of the nationalism in Serbia (Nita Luci, 2002). The growing of Albanian population was perceived as a threat from Serbs, which also contributed to increase the nationalist narrative against Albanians. Relationship between Serbs and Albanians deteriorated further after the 1981 demonstrations, when Serbia began plans to withdraw Kosovo’s autonomy, and started propaganda campaigns (Shkelzen Gashi, 2012). Propaganda campaigns in the media against Kosovo Albanians were described as pressure against Serbs, rapes, destruction of property and even killings from national hatred. Main propaganda campaigns in Serbia during the 80’s were by representing Albanians as barbarian who were raping Serbs and Montenegrin women. On the other hand, although most Serbs believe that police harassment of Albanians thought was wrong, however they justified their presence, as they believed that Serbs were being threatened by Albanians (Sabrina Ramet, 1999,

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<sup>2</sup> Women in Black are an activist group and antinationalist -antimilitarist network made up of women from different generations and different ethnic groups. They try to bring visibility to women’s nonviolent resistance to war, nationalism, sexism, militarism, ethnic homogenization, fundamentalist, xenophobia, homophobia and other forms of discrimination.

p. 178). Propaganda campaigns that Kosovo Albanians were raping Serbian women were not perceived as just a threat to Serbian women; they were perceived as a threat to the whole Serbian population in Kosovo. Furthermore, the propaganda, which was used by Serbia, was not just to show that Serbian women were being raped, but also to show Albanian men as beings led by oriental values, thus they cannot control their libido. Allegations of rape in Kosovo became a 'political factor in the development of Serbian nationalism in the 1980s' (Bracewell, 2000, p. 563). Representation of Albanian men as a rapist increased the fear among Serbian women that they will be a rape victim. The figure of Albanians was portrayed as the rapists of the Serbian nation. Albanian masculinity was challenged from Serbian nationalism. "Reinforcing this figure of rape allegations about actual attempts by Albanians to rape Serbian girls. The important point in here is that the rape always present just an attempts to do so. A picture of the enemy thus takes shape as an Albanian who tries to rape Serbian girls but fails in doing" (Renata Salecl, 1997, p. 81).

80-90's in Kosovo are known as years of political and juridical oppression towards Albanian population. However, this decade is also known as a decade of the Albanian resistance in Kosovo. There were two different types of resistances going on in Kosovo: firstly the nonviolent/ pacifist resistance, and then the resistance that was manifested through armed forces (KLA). The formation of the KLA in the mid-1990's signaled the return of the armed resistance that eventually culminated in open warfare and brought the world's most powerful alliance into the conflict. Many girls and women participated in KLA, some of them left their studies in order to become part of KLA. The women, who participate in KLA, believed that it was necessary for Kosovo to gain its independence. Women who joined KLA were respected by their local male-comrades. However, Yuval Davis argues that women and men in the military are not homogeneous entities; they are posited differentially and participate differently in military, as well as in the war (Nira-Yuval Davis, 2008, p. 93). The "normalization" of figure of men as warriors, shows that military is gendered. A women can be a "good" warrior only if she acts as a man. Women who have participated in KLA, claim to have acted as a real "burre", which does not denote masculine physical traits, rather manly characteristics such is the defense of honor. Women have always fulfilled vital and specific roles in militaries, but have been excluded from the public military domain (Nita Luci, 2002, p. 98). Constructing the position of women in the military around the dichotomies of combat/ non-combat and front/ rear positions are results of ideological constructions of womanhood and manhood in society (Nita Luci 2002, p. 103). In military man

valued are considered as supreme, therefore, as it happened in KLA, women had to prove themselves more than men to show that they are equal to their male counterparts. On the other hand, men who participated in KLA saw it as obligation toward his “wife and children”, who should be his protection.

Being prepared to die for one’s country has been considered to be civic duty, which until relatively recently has been formally the specific domain of the male citizenship, central in the construction of masculinities (Miranda Vickers, 1997, p. 50). While women who participate in KLA are perceived as “a woman like a man”, men are perceived as the hero of the nation.

### *Gender based violence against Kosovo Albanians*

The ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia was characterized with large scale of victim of sexual violence. The torturers choose their victims based on their national and gender identities. Rapes used during the ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia were a form of “genocidal rape”. However, the fact that genocidal rape has a political aim does not change the rape victim’s traumatic experience (Eaun Hague, 1997, p. 50). In the recent conflict in Kosovo, rape has been used almost in the same manner as in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. Sexual violence in Yugoslavia has been used as a weapon of warfare. Rape has been tolerated as an inevitable occurrence of war, an inevitable feature of military conflict like pillage and looting. In the Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, rape was used as a means of “ethnic cleansing”. Police, soldiers, and paramilitaries raped women throughout Kosovo; the attacks occurred under a variety of circumstances. The most common circumstances that emerged from the testimonies of victims of rape and sexual violence and from corroborating accounts provided by eyewitnesses were rapes in women's homes, rape during flight from the country, and rape while in detention (Nita Luci, 2002, p. 2). Women victims and eyewitnesses also reported rapes that occurred as soldiers and paramilitary’s extorted money from Kosovo’s attempting to flee the country. However, up until now there has not been any serious investigation about the number of sexual survives during the Kosovo war. And the number of raped women during the Kosovo war, which is assumed to be around 20.000, has never been proven. Actually, this number has been used in public and political discourse after the World Health Organization report was published, which stated that organizations counted around 20,000- raped women during the Kosovo war (World Health Organization Kosovo, January 2000).

Sexual violence against Albanian women in Kosovo escalated after the first week of NATO bombings (Human Rights Watch, March 2000). This particular timeline shows that rape was used as a revenge tool against the Albanian ethnic group, because the body of a woman represents the honor of the entire Albanian society. Human Rights Watch has documented that rapes in Kosovo were not rare and isolated acts committed by individuals, but rather used deliberately as an instrument to terrorize the civilian population (Human Rights Watch, March 2000).

Raped women in Kosovo find it very difficult to talk about their experience, due to the fact that Kosovo is still a very patriarchal society. As Helena Smith claims: “rape is not a word that Kosovo women will ever use. This is not Bosnia; there is no cosmopolitan Sarajevo. There is only provincial Pristine. In the villages and hamlets, where the Yugoslav police, military and Serb paramilitaries evidently ran amok, rape has yet to enter their ancient lexicon” (Helena Smith, 2000, p. 1). In Kosovo it is easy to speak for women who have been raped during the war in Bosnia, by hiding the reality that took place in Kosovo. Women in Kosovo became voiceless about their stories; therefore, they try to describe their reality by exemplifying the rape of Bosnian women. While raped women have little support in their community, they lose their “purity”, raped men are considered only to give up their masculinity. Raped men are feminized; they are not considered “real men” anymore. Women who are raped or sexually assaulted tend to hide this as a sacrifice for the nation. As it has been argued before, violence against women is not restricted to war; it is known that its roots are well established in peaceful times and thus the use of sexual violence against women in times of war cannot be understood without understanding preexisting socio-cultural dynamics (Nita Luci, 2002).

Nevertheless, it is significant to understand how rape is used as a strong weapon during armed conflict. Moreover, it is important to understand the position of Albanian women who have been raped during the Kosovo conflict. Their exclusion from their family, because in the Albanian culture rape is not perceived as violence, but rather seen just as sex. In Islamic tradition for a woman to be raped means that “she has become an outsider in her own family and community” (Cindy S. Snyder, Maj J. Wesley, J. Dean and Nihada Zulcic, p. 190). Women in Kosovo were raped to be humiliated and subjugated, but foremost to make it less likely that they will ever return to their homes. It is noted that many cases of rape are unreported, due to cultural values concerning sexual violence and the stigmatization of victims. As it is used in primordial nationalism, rape

occurs as a way to “clean” women ethnically, by forcing her to give birth to a child with a mixed ethnicity and thus taking away the ethnic men’s ability to “produce” the nation (Nita Luci, 2002, p. 2).

### Gender and nationalism in post conflict Kosovo and Serbia

After the conflict, the successor countries of Yugoslavia entered the period of transition to democracy. Nevertheless, women’s position during the transition to democracy did not change in practice. However, as Renata argues in her book that “the transition to democracy in Eastern Europe did not bring about emancipation for all the people: women are forced to accept even more in the way of patriarchal roles than they had under the socialist regime (Reneta Salecl, 1994, p. 113). Post conflict countries of Yugoslavia became more attached to their traditional and religious values.

Many authors agree that societies recovering from oppression or violent conflict need legal and restorative approaches, in addressing different levels and dimensions of truth and justice. Truth is the ultimate necessity in post conflict countries. If members of one side assert truth that is ignored by the other, their assertion is hardly a mark of reconciliation, because the truth needs to be shared in indication of some degree of reconciliation (Martina Fischer, p. 417). On the other hand justice is needed as those who have suffered oppression or atrocities seek redress (Martina Fischer, p. 416).

### Building gender roles in Serbia

Gender in/equality in Serbia is one of the main issues of contemporary Serbian society. The mechanisms for the reproduction of the hierarchal relations are deeply immersed in the social structure. Re/construction of Serbian identity, which began in the late 1980 and intensified during the Slobodan Milosevic regime, had negative influence on rebuilding gender roles/identities. Serbian Orthodox Church supported the violence of the Milosevic regime in the hope in the creation of the “Greater Serbia”.

The end of Milosevic’s rule was hailed as the rebirth of “democratic” Serbia, and re/normalization of relations with the rest of Europe. The removal of Milosevic did not represent revolution (in contrast with expectations), but rather the continuation. The attitude that Serbia was the victim, continued, even after the Milosevic regime (Eline Berghuies, 2012, p. 42). Moreover,



the influence of the Orthodox Church in national politics grew in 2004 when Vojislav Kostunica became Prime Minister of Serbia. Kostunica had close relations with Serbian Orthodox Church. Under Kostunica's leadership, Serbian Parliament passed the Law on Churches. "The Law on Churches not only gives the SOC extraordinary legal rights and legally legitimizes the church by recognizing it as historically connected to Serbian culture, but also potentially puts a financial strain on national and local governments" (Stasa Zajovic and Katie Mahuron, 2011, p.3). Christianity is seen as a very important characteristic of the Serbian nation, which has always brought cohesion and unification. SOC played and continues to play crucial cultural and political role in Serbian society.

Yet, gender has played a critical role in construction of the national identity not only in the nation building process, but also in the context of EU accession when the new notions of national identity based on the principles of liberal pluralism and tolerance emerged. Normative conceptions of gender played a central role even in the cases where national identities are constructed on the bases of liberal pluralism and human rights. Nevertheless, the cultural logic of nationalism that instrumentalized particular norms was greatly supported by SOC (Katja Kahlina, 2013, p. 3).

However, Women in Black was great opposition against nationalist groups in Serbia. Women in Black, have organized different educational programs in order to increase the awareness in gender equality. These educational activities had a clear impact on creating a critical attitude among women toward the political misuse of religion, the Serbian Orthodox Church and certain traditional rituals. The Serbian Orthodox Church, refused to have any contact with Women in Black, and criticized their activities. Women in Black faced frequent attacks by non-state actors and fascist organizations, as well as attempts by state institutions to criminalize the network. For instance, "spokesman of the counter-terrorist unit of the Ministry of Police Radomir Počuča (on March 25th 2014) encourage hooligans in his Facebook status to attack with Women in Black, following the commemoration of the 15th anniversary of war crimes of Serbian forces against Kosovo Albanians" (Stasa Zajovic, 2014, p. 3).

#### [Building gender roles in the post conflict Kosovo](#)

Gender identities in Kosovo have been reconstructed and reconfigured through the national institution and international organizations (Vjollca Krasniqi, 2007, p. 2). Kosovo is under UN protection since the following of 1990 conflict. Reconstruction of social, economic, political, and

cultural under UN protection had enormous impact on restructuring gender roles (Vjollca Krasniqi, 2007, p.2). Nevertheless, since 1999 the majority of the work done in Kosovo has ignored gender perspective. They mainly have dealt with the origins and conduct of the Kosovo war and with the nature of post-conflict international rule (Vjollca Krasniqi, 2007, p.2). Women's war, experiences, particularly the reality of raped women, has been absent from public discussions in Kosovo. Nationalist project and memory entrepreneurship in Kosovo was based on war memories, where men are basically the main actors. The reality of raped women is hidden from public discourse, since it has potential to destroy the honor of Albanian masculinity.

During the 2014 in Kosovo started the collection of signatures for a petition to pressure the United Nations to investigate rapes that took place in Kosovo during the war. The petition was a reaction towards the local institutions that did not show any support towards raped women since the end of the war. The petition was not end up unsuccessful.

The President of the Republic of Kosovo, Mrs. Atifete Jahjaga, has decreed the establishment of the National Council for the Survivors of Sexual Violence during the War on March 5, 2014. The Council contributed to change the discourse positively regarding the sexual survivors. However, the main discourses on women's rights, gender equality, and gender mainstreaming in Kosovo confirm that gender constructions is an on-going process (Vjollca Krasniqi, 2013, p. 5). Instead of dealing with a past, the political decision- makers in Kosovo have been only focused on looking towards the future. There has been lack of adequate mechanisms to deal with the past and to provide a better sense of social justice. The post-war situation in Kosovo has provided empirical evidence that post-conflict reconstruction cannot happen without addressing "the women question". It seems that politics of post conflict Kosovo are based on the perception that only men fought for liberation for Kosovo, thus they own all the political rights. In the post-conflict Kosovo, there is marginalization of women from political life, which is ironic, since women have fought for the liberation of Kosovo just like men have.

Patriarchal norms in Kosovo society became even stronger after the war. After the war, the re/traditionalization of the society was apparent. Usually in post-socialist and post-communist societies, there is a phenomenon of returning to their traditional values. Re/traditionalization means reconstruction of gender and sexual roles in society. Women's participation in state building process has been minimal because, has failed to challenge hierarchical power relationship,

reinforcing tradition notion of femininity. Nevertheless, women have continued to be secondary actors in Kosovo nation building process. Re/traditionalization of Kosovo's society has been challenged with the desire of reconstruction of Kosovar Albanian national identity as Western/European. It seems that Kosovo's national identity is in positioned between re/traditionalization and Westernization paradox. This paradox of Kosovo Albanian identity become even more apparent, when "the public face of the nation has to be the Western women with secular look, while in the private realm she has to be a good mother, daughter and sister" (Vjollca Krasniqi, 2013, p.4).

The image of male heroes, particularly after Kosovo conflict, has structured and shaped national collective memory. On the other hand, it has narrowed women experiences and roles where the image of dedicated, suffering mother emerged as the main national image (Linda Gusia, 2014, p. 3). Women in Kosovo's society are not treated as subjects; they are treated more as "property" of someone. While Kosovo's nation building process is based on men suffering during the Kosovo conflict, women are imagined as "strong" mothers who have sacrificed their sons/fathers/husbands for national liberation. During the Kosovo conflict, women have been encouraged to participate in KLA. However, post-conflict period in Kosovo, shows how a society dominated by patriarchal values accomplished to return women in their "private" sphere. Considering the amount of memorials male statues with the weapons have been circulated in all internal and international media, have had a great impact in creating the image that women that did not have a stake in Kosovo's liberation (Kosovo's Women Network, 2011, p. 77). National project in Kosovo is based on creating memories of the male scarifications during the war.

### [The solidarity between Serbian and Kosovo women](#)

Ethnic conflict in former Yugoslavia became the cradle of systematic rapes mostly toward women. Hence, since rape is used a weapon of war, I would argue that gender justice should be an integral part of social justice. However, the issue of raped women during the armed conflict has been ignored and excluded from reconciliation process. Reconciliation must be accompanied by acknowledgement of the past, the acceptance of responsibility and steps towards re-building trust. Solidarity among women has a significant importance (particularly in Yugoslavia) in, protecting women's identity from patriarchal/male dominated nationalism. An accurate number of crimes committed against women should be provided, because the institutional legal system does not

satisfy justice, at the neither international nor national level. Political elites of the countries of former Yugoslavia invest effort in getting around justice for their personal political interests.

Women in all successor countries of former Yugoslavia have suffered; although not in the same magnitude. The network of women in Sarajevo-Belgrade and Pristina was powerful even during the war (Women in Black, 1999, p.452). Women, who were against Milosevic regime and his oppressive policy, were seen as a Serbian enemy (Stasa Zajovic, 2006, p. 25).

The women's peace coalition is comprised of the Kosovo women's network and the women in Black Network – and groups from Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia, Italy, Spain, Israel etc (Stasa Zajovic, 2006, p. 25). This initiative was result of solidarity, support, as well as cooperation between women from Serbia and Kosovo. Application of resolution 1325 in the former Yugoslavia countries led a better understanding of the sufferings that women went through, well as open the new spaces for cross-national women's solidarity. Reconciliation between women is significant in order to achieve solidarity that has been harmed from nationalisms, wars, and propagandas. Reconciliation must be accompanied by acknowledgment of the past, the acceptance of responsibility and steps towards re/building trust.

## Conclusion

The subordination of the women's position in the nationalism gives us a clear picture how Serbian and Albanian women suffered during the breakup of Yugoslavia. Women's bodies become the target of the nationalist propagandas between Serbians and Albanians. As we analyzed the terminology, which was used historically in nationalist discourse in the context of building the nation and nation states, it appeared how it was based on masculinity, whereas women played passive or a symbolic role in nationalism. This passive and symbolic role was determined by male domination.

The brutality of sexual violence, which was apparent during the breakup of Yugoslavia, was the consequence of nationalism, which rose radically in the beginning of the 90's. Woman's political and civil rights, which were guaranteed during the socialist Yugoslavia were violated. Systematic rape was used as a weapon during the armed conflict in the process of the breakup of Yugoslavia. The significant importance of the rape during the wartime period is transformation of individual bodies into social bodies, as it seen for example in genocide rapes or ethnic cleansing.

Since the body of women represents the moral of the society as a whole, it is used to demoralize and destroy the enemy. Moreover, it is used to terrorize, displace the local population, to force the birth of children of mixed ethnic descent.

The power which rapist hold allows to torture and attack or inferior the victim. However, women in Kosovo were raped not just to humiliate and subjugate, but also to make it less likely that they will ever return to their homes. It is noted that many cases of rape go unreported, due to cultural values concerning to sexual violence and the stigmatization of victims. As it is used in primordial's nationalism, the purpose of rape was to "clean" women by mixing the ethnicity of the child that will be given birth to, and thus takes away the men's ability to "produce" the nation. Serbian police, paramilitary forces against Albanian women, used genocidal rape. Albanian women have been excluded from their family since the rape is not perceived as violence but as sex in Kosovo community. Raped women in Kosovo find it difficult to talk their rape experience. They try to describe their reality by putting forward the Bosnian raped women. The society, which is constructed in accordance with patriarchal values, pushed Kosovo women bear the guilt of being raped during the conflict.

Both Serbia and Kosovo are in the new period of nation building process. There is no abrupt cut-off between conflict and post conflict period in the successor countries of Yugoslavia. Survives of the conflict are traumatized and trauma which occurs is generally gendered. Moreover, the transitional justice in these countries is not based on gender sensitivity. The subordinate position of women in political life remains the same even after the conflict. More precisely, there is the continuation of patriarchy and masculinity in the present system. The women's sufferings during the conflict are ignored by the male leaders, which also show the lack of solidarity of men towards women.

The whole experience of ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia appeared to show that the system is against the women. However, the post-conflict period is against women and women's rights. Women's sufferings during the conflict are not recorded and seen as the obstacles on peace building-process. The women's rights, which are ignored during and after the conflict, could be solved just with women's solidarity. Women's solidarity should fight against nationalism and militarism, which objectified the women's body. War did not solve anything in the successor

countries of Yugoslavia; it just left behind the victims of war. The strategy, which was used in wartime, is built in peacetime.

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