

## We Were Gasping for Air

[Post-]Yugoslav Anti-War Activism and Its Legacy

Bearbeitet von  
Bojan Bilic

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Bojan Bilić

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[Post-]Yugoslav Anti-War Activism  
and Its Legacy



Nomos

## **Southeast European Integration Perspectives**

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# We Were Gasping for Air

[Post-]Yugoslav Anti-War Activism and Its Legacy



**Nomos**

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## Introduction

On 6 April 2012, Sarajevo — that city which “dies and is at the same time born and transformed” — marked the twentieth anniversary of one of the longest sieges in the history of warfare.<sup>1</sup> A large installation, which comprised 11,541 red chairs, stretched along Maršal Tito Street all the way up to Ali-Pasha’s Mosque, commemorating the same number of victims of the crime with few parallels on the European continent.<sup>2</sup> While the images of this event spread across the globe, hardly anyone remembered that, in June 1992, thousands of Belgrade citizens poured into the streets to protest against the siege and express solidarity with Sarajevans.<sup>3</sup> They carried pieces of black paper which — once united — formed a kilometre long ribbon, a symbol of their condolence and compassion (Figure 1). A couple of years later, some of those who took part in this undertaking also travelled via Croatia and Hungary, crossed the Igman Mountain and walked through the Sarajevo Tunnel<sup>4</sup> to enter the besieged city and bring to its people a message that many “on the other side” were against the senseless destruction.

More than a decade after the end of the Yugoslav wars (1991–1999), there is little that we know about the processes through which the imminence of an armed conflict awakened dormant social networks and strengthened existing activist circles or created new ones. Even less is known about the plethora of ideological positions driving civic engagement, its tensions and fragmentations. There are no social scientific accounts that are sufficiently appreciative of the relevance of anti-war organising for the intricate geometry of the present day civic linkages and resistances in the post-Yugoslav space. All of this constitutes a serious — although not entirely surprising — lacuna in the burgeoning amount of research on Yugoslavia’s dissolution.

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1 Ivo Andrić, “Jedan pogled na Sarajevo,” *Jugoslavija*, (1953) 7, pp. 20–3. Available at: <[www.lupiga.com/vijesti/index.php?id=5685](http://www.lupiga.com/vijesti/index.php?id=5685)> (Accessed 11 April 2012).

2 For more information of the practices of resistance in the besieged Sarajevo itself, see Larisa Kurtović, “The Paradoxes of Wartime “Freedom”: Alternative Culture during the Siege of Sarajevo,” in Bojan Bilić and Vesna Janković (eds.), *Resisting the Evil: [Post-]Yugoslav Anti-War Contention* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2012), pp. 197–224.

3 See Gordana Logar, “Sramno ćutanje Beograda,” *Danas*, 8 April 2012. Available at: <[www.danas.rs/danasrs/kolumnisti/sramno\\_cutanje\\_zvanicnog\\_beograda.883.html?newsid=237798](http://www.danas.rs/danasrs/kolumnisti/sramno_cutanje_zvanicnog_beograda.883.html?newsid=237798)> (Accessed 15 July 2012).

4 The Sarajevo Tunnel was dug by the citizens of Sarajevo in 1993 to connect the neighbourhoods of Butmir and Dobrinja which were controlled by the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Through it, food, humanitarian aid and weapons could enter the besieged city.

This book is based on extensive fieldwork in the region and it draws upon the conceptual apparatus of social movement studies to start recovering anti-war activisms in Serbia and Croatia.<sup>5</sup> They constitute a complex phenomenon both in relation to the value orientations of their protagonists as well as in terms of their effects and strategic options. By taking a social movement/civic contention approach, I offer a framework for collecting and evaluating empirical information and generating knowledge on the collectively organised — and sometimes institutionalised — ways in which many Croatian and Serbian citizens resisted the 1990s armed conflicts.

Figure1: Demonstrations against the siege of Sarajevo (Black Ribbon),  
Belgrade, 7 June 1992



© Goranka Matić

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5 I use the word *activisms* to underline the geographical, ideological and strategic diversity of the (post-)Yugoslav anti-war engagement.

My central argument is that these civic enterprises did not appear in a political vacuum. Rather, various (post-)Yugoslav anti-war activisms appropriated and developed dormant social networks created through student, feminist and environmentalist engagement in socialist Yugoslavia. Anti-war activisms, in turn, served as platforms for generating social and material capital which enabled the establishment of present-day organisations devoted to human rights protection across the ex-Yugoslav space.

Throughout this book, I argue that Yugoslav anti-war activisms cannot be understood without appreciating both the inter- and intra-republican cooperations and contestations, occurring in the context of Yugoslavia's socialist experience. I employ a trans-national approach which treats Croatia and Serbia as a nexus that comprises an abundance of antagonistic war perceptions and ideological vantage points which condition divergent activist strategic options. In this regard, the compound *(post-)Yugoslav* is used to indicate that the civic engagement to which I am referring was initiated during Yugoslavia's existence and continued after the country's dissolution. (Post-)Yugoslav is most frequently employed as a geographical term pertaining to the above-mentioned spatial core of my interest, in the context of its relays with other Yugoslav republics.<sup>6</sup> I am, however, explicit about those instances in which the term *Yugoslav* signifies a set of internally dynamic ideological orientations towards the ethnic, cultural and linguistic affinities of the South Slav people, both independent from and in relation to a possible federal organisation of their territories.<sup>7</sup>

The title of this work could suggest that within its pages the reader would find the "entirety" of (post-)Yugoslav anti-war activisms "dissected" and explained. Its broad formulation could welcome an array of research foci and take students of conflict and contestation down many exciting interpretive paths: trans- and intra-national networking, social memory, the economy of collective enterprises, the construction of responsible citizenship, democratisation, transitional justice, to name but a few. Nevertheless, the neat syntax of *(post-)Yugoslav anti-war activism* is not a manifestation of my ethnographic authority. The social scientist as a "knowing subject" — that Lacanian *sujet supposé savoir* — is constituted through acts of drawing personal research experiences through the prism of theoretical abstractions. By doing so,

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6 For an outline of anti-war activities in Montenegro, see Srđa Pavlović and Milica Dragojević, "Peaceniks and Warmongers: Anti-War Activism in Montenegro, 1989–1995," in Bilić and Janković (eds.), *Resisting the Evil*, pp. 137–58.

7 For Andrew Baruch Wachtel, Yugoslavism is "the vision of the South Slavic community as an essential unity despite differences in language, religion and historical experience". Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 1. See also Dejan Đokić, *Yugoslavism: Histories of a Failed Idea, 1918–1992* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003). For a brief account of the relationship between Yugoslavism and anti-nationalism, see Ljubiša Rajić, "Jugoslovenstvo kao antinacionalizam," *Republika*, 3 (1991) 17, p. 12.

(s)he supposedly generates exhaustive knowledge on the phenomena of his/her interest.<sup>8</sup> Given that this work cannot be all-encompassing, I seek to identify the broader socio-political trajectories of anti-war organising in Serbia and Croatia.

This book, in principle, leaves numerically smaller or geographically narrower — but undoubtedly important — instances of anti-war engagement outside of its empirical grasp. It cannot consider many local officials and (individual) citizens who showed enormous civic courage when trying to promote peace and tolerance in their communities.<sup>9</sup> For example, Josip Reihl-Kir (1955–1991) was the head of the police department in Osijek, Croatia, who was killed, along with Goran Zobundžija and Milan Knežević, in a political murder in 1991 by (a Croat) Antun Gudelj, when returning from a negotiation with the Serb community in Croatia.<sup>10</sup> Srđan Aleksić (1966–1993) was a Serb beaten to death by a group of his co-nationals in Trebinje, Bosnia and Herzegovina, because he tried to defend his Muslim fellow-citizen, Alen Glavović. Srđan was posthumously awarded the Charter of the Helsinki Committee of Bosnia and Herzegovina and streets and passages were named after him in Sarajevo, Novi Sad and Pančevo.<sup>11</sup> In a poorly known episode of individual resistance to war, Vladimir Živković, a forcefully mobilised reservist from Valjevo, Serbia, drove a Yugoslav People's Army [Jugoslovenska narodna armija, (JNA)] armoured personnel carrier all the way from the Vukovar frontline and parked it in front of the Yugoslav Parliament in

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8 Richard Handler, "On Dialogue and Destructive Analysis: Problems in Narrating Nationalism and Ethnicity," *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 41 (1985) 2, pp. 171–82.

9 How shocking war must have appeared as a solution for the Yugoslav crisis, is testified by the results of research done by the sociologist Vladimir Goati in all of the Yugoslav republics and provinces in 1991. He found that only 6.7 per cent of the population thought that Yugoslavia would disintegrate and that numerous independent states would be formed on its territory. Public opinion polls carried out in Serbia in September 1991 showed that 80 per cent of the population favoured peace (75 per cent of men and 86.4 per cent of women). See Anđelka Milić, "Women and Nationalism in the Former Yugoslavia," in Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller (eds.), *Gender Politics and Post-Communism: Reflections from Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 109–22. A violent dissolution of the country could not have been envisioned by social scientists either: in a survey organised by Slaven Leticica during a political science conference in Zagreb in October 1989, none of the 30 leading Yugoslav sociologists, political scientists and economists thought that "civil war, terrorism or violence" were possible; 18 responded that the status quo would prevail, 6 that there would be a strengthening of democratic tendencies, four that a sort of administrative arbiter (and a possible Yugoslav People's Army intervention) would appear and only two said that the country would disintegrate. See Silvano Bolčić, "Sociologija i 'unutrašnji rat' u Jugoslaviji," *Sociološki pregled*, 26 (1992) 1–4, pp. 9–25.

10 An exhibition about Josip Reihl-Kir, entitled *Who is Reihl-Kir for You?* [Tko je tebi Reihl-Kir?] and prepared by Tanja Simić-Berclaz, was opened in Belgrade in July 2010 before touring other cities of the former Yugoslavia.

11 In February 2012, Srđan Aleksić was decorated for bravery by the president of Serbia Boris Tadić. See the documentary *Srdo* (2007). See also Svetlana Broz, *Dobri ljudi u vremenu zla* (Banja Luka: Media centar Prelom, 1999).

Belgrade, symbolically pointing to what he thought was the source of irrational violence (Figure 2).

While I hope that all of these and many other similar cases will find a more prominent place in our memory, this research deals with the ways in which activists — in their capacity of collective actors — conceptualised the possibilities of resistance in the environments characterised by fundamentally different power positions within the armed conflicts. Whereas I examine the local, regional and republican organisational peculiarities as a function of power distribution within the conflicts, the resources which I had at my disposal prevented me from giving them equal treatment.<sup>12</sup> My analytical chapters follow the protest cycle and discuss the anti-war collective organising in Serbia and Croatia, starting with the processes of recruitment and actor constitution and tracking their development during and after the Yugoslav wars.

Figure 2: Vladimir Živković parked a JNA armoured personnel carrier in front of the Yugoslav Parliament, Belgrade, September 1991



© Art klinika<sup>13</sup>

However, this book cannot offer an analysis of all the “cycle stages” across cities and republics. It is limited to a series of case analyses, such as recruitment to the Anti-War Campaign of Croatia [Antiratna kampanja Hrvatske (ARK)] or the collective identity of the Belgrade Women in Black [Žene u

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12 Along with both local and foreign anti-war actors, there were groups of civic activists across Europe who were of Yugoslav origin, but living abroad. One such group — Mi za Mir [We for peace] — operated in Amsterdam and consisted of young Yugoslavs who wanted to evade military mobilisation. Nives Rebernak was one of the founders of the group which was also supported by the Dalai Lama.

13 This photo, taken by Zoran Raš, was used in a “dealing with the past” campaign organised by the artist groups Art klinika, Led art and the Belgrade-based Centre for Cultural Decontamination. Available at: <<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/sh/2/27/Tenkisprepskupstine.JPG>> (Accessed 16 July 2012).

crnom (ŽUC)], also in instances where a cross-case comparison might be plausibly expected. My reasoning has been that — given the lack of literature on the topic — a more deductive approach, outlining and illustrating dominant trends, should be preferred to a meticulous exploration of more specific issues. I hope to offer one possible framework which future research could supplement and revise.

Whereas the body text represents an analysis of the broader trajectories of post-Yugoslav anti-war organising, the footnotes bring a more “personal” account, highlighting the main actors and giving their elementary biographical information. As is often the case when exploring “fluid” social phenomena, like civic enterprises, the list of names mentioned here is not exhaustive. While it is not my intention to “personalise” the movements and initiatives I study, I do believe that

[...] individuals are extremely important because activist work is a struggle against defeatism and passivity. Not a single programme, activity or organisation could have been created without the initiative and the efforts of the individual activists who are sometimes also called *social entrepreneurs*. People are the carriers of both war and anti-war initiatives and it is for this reason that the naming of civic participants is crucial for the acknowledgement of the value of civic engagement and resistance to evil. [...] The naming of the persons who took part in anti-war activities throughout the 1990s is all the more important given the fact that it was a small number of people who had the courage, craziness or both to struggle for these “unpopular” topics in hard times.<sup>14</sup>

This study has a distinctly ethnographic character because it deals with what Povrzanović Frykman calls “the lived experience of war”.<sup>15</sup> Grassroots perspectives, be it in relation to the war victims, soldiers and conscientious objectors, have often been eclipsed by the grand narratives of nationalism and the geo-strategic transformations after the fall of East European socialism.<sup>16</sup> Dragović-Soso claims that the academic literature on Yugoslavia’s break-up has been overly interested in elites at the expense of local, social and family histories and grassroots forms of mobilisation.<sup>17</sup> I recover the agency of individual and collective actors who did not have the powerful political and mili-

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14 Vesna Janković and Nikola Mokrović (eds.), *Antiratna kampanja 1991.–2011.: Neispričana povijest* (Zagreb: Documenta, 2011), p. 17.  
Available at: <[www.documenta.hr/assets/files/publikacije/ARK\\_kb\\_novi.pdf](http://www.documenta.hr/assets/files/publikacije/ARK_kb_novi.pdf)> (Accessed 9 August 2012).

15 Maja Povrzanović Frykman, “The War and After: On War-Related Anthropological Research in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina,” *Etnološka tribina*, 33 (2003) 26, pp. 55–75, here p. 58.

16 For an exception, see, e.g., Paula Pickering, *Peacebuilding in the Balkans: The View from the Ground Floor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 190.

17 Jasna Dragović-Soso, “Why Did Yugoslavia Disintegrate? An Overview of Contending Explanations,” in Lenard J. Cohen and Jasna Dragović-Soso (eds.), *State Collapse in South-Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on Yugoslavia’s Disintegration* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press), pp. 1–39, here p. 28.

tary apparatus at their disposal. In this regard, my study departs from the premise that “political violence works on lives and interconnections to break communities... and yet in the midst of the worst horrors, people continue to survive and to cope”.<sup>18</sup> Products of ethnographic encounters and social scientific accounts stemming from them, may have a transformative potential which should not be underestimated. Sociological imagination and analysis should constitute a platform for a critical intersection of a multitude of voices — “whispers, screams, silences”<sup>19</sup> — that may have been marginalised both politically and academically.

This book focuses on Serbia and Croatia because they are widely regarded as the “central” Yugoslav republics constituting the “axis” of Yugoslavism [jugoslovenstvo].<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, Gagnon claims that these two countries/(ex-)republics “represent cases of what Western observers characterise as extremist nationalism leading to violence, and they are often held up as the paradigmatic examples of ethnic conflict”.<sup>21</sup> It is, thus, all the more important to show that, throughout the 1990s, both Serbia and Croatia and, in particular, their capitals, were places of intense civic engagement that went counter to the elites’ efforts to impose congruence between ethnic identity and political position.

While examining civic activisms in their various forms and strategic options, this book does not test a single social movement theory as a set of premises accounting for numerous aspects of movement emergence, opera-

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- 18 Veena Das and Arthur Kleinman, “Introduction,” in Veena Das *et al.* (eds.), *Remaking a World: Violence, Social Suffering, and Recovery* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 1–30, here p. 1.
  - 19 Paul Stubbs, “Nationalisms, Globalisation and Civil Society in Croatia and Slovenia,” in *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, (1996) 19, pp. 1–26. Available at: <[www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/62/066.html](http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/62/066.html)> (Accessed 13 July 2012).
  - 20 The centrality of the Serbo-Croat political axis for the Yugoslav wars is also evident from the operation of a small Bosnian and Herzegovinian peace initiative called People’s Peace Movement [Narodni mirovni pokret], organised by Vasvija Oraščanin in August 1991 in Bosanska Dubica. On 4 August 1991, there was a peace gathering of around 15,000 Muslims, Serbs and Croats who crossed the bridge on the Una River which is a link between Bosanska [Bosnian] and Hrvatska [Croatian] Dubica. The movement had its own Peace Charter [Povelja mira] which was supposed to be signed by the presidents Franjo Tuđman and Slobodan Milošević. Franjo Tuđman received a movement delegation led by Vasvija Oraščanin at his official Zagreb residence Banski dvori on 17 August 1991. At that occasion Tuđman agreed to sign the Charter. At the same time, another movement delegation left Bosanska Dubica for Belgrade where president Milošević refused to sign the Charter. Soon after, Oraščanin was forced to leave Bosanska Dubica after her husband was shot at. They moved to Ljubljana where she was helped by the Slovenian activist group Movement for the Culture of Peace and Non-Violence [Gibanje za kulturo mira in nenasilja]. Oraščanin continued her pacifist engagement and worked on the preparations for a meeting of the Yugoslav peace activists from all of the republics and provinces with Lord Carington as well as a peace protest in Strasbourg. See Vasvija Oraščanin, “Kako je prepučen mirovni pokret,” *ARKzin*, (1991) 1, p. 8. See also Janković and Mokrović (eds.), *Antiratna kampanja*, p. 59.
  - 21 Valère P. (Chip) Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004), p. xix.

tion and decay. Rather, the extant field of political contention studies is here approached as a Foucauldian “toolbox” which supplies the means for understanding collective engagement around the protest cycle.<sup>22</sup> I select from this repository those concepts whose explanatory charge and abstracting potential I consider relevant to the issues in question. My research offers certain theoretical advances because it applies the conceptual armoury of social movement studies to a context in which it has not been extensively used. Nevertheless, the objective of my work is primarily empirical in nature. The pages that follow are a contribution to a corpus of historical data which should enable (post-)Yugoslav anti-war engagement to assume its proper place in the interpretations of the country’s disintegration. By drawing upon Western sociological scholarship, this book promotes a potentially fruitful cross-fertilisation between the non-Western episodes of political contention and the Western conceptual means for studying collective undertakings.

While it focuses on anti-war contention, this study does not intend to relativise the nationalism argument or negate its primacy in accounting for Yugoslavia’s break-up. The turbulent history of the Yugoslav peoples points to the unwavering significance of their “national questions”. No other paradigm could substitute the relevance of the destructive Yugoslav nationalisms which reached their climax in the early 1990s. Attempts to dilute the importance of the nationalism argument could absolve the Yugoslav republican leaderships from their responsibility for the country’s painful demise.<sup>23</sup> However, an exploration of anti-war initiatives diversifies the Yugoslav political scene and cuts across strictly national affiliations. It supplements the authoritative, but sometimes mono-focal, nationalism studies by pointing to political alternatives as important pieces in the intricate mosaic of Yugoslavia’s dissolution.

Moreover, before proceeding, there is a need to conceptually differentiate between anti-war and peace activism because these two terms are related, overlapping and sometimes interchangeably used. Anti-war activism can be an ambiguous concept because it refers both to a general resistance to an armed conflict and to civic engagement with a pronounced personal/local dimension. Anti-war activists in the latter sense experience private war-related grievances which stimulate resistance to a particular war happening “here and now”. They need not be against war as such, but may reject a particular war out of ideological convictions (e.g. that war being aggressive or “unjust”).

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22 Foucault said: “I would like my books to be a kind of toolbox which others can rummage through to find a tool which they can use however they wish in their own area... I would like the little volume that I want to write on disciplinary systems to be useful to an educator, a warden, a magistrate, a conscientious objector. I do not write for an audience, I write for users, not readers.” Michel Foucault, “Prisons et asiles dans le mécanisme du pouvoir”. Available at: <[www.michel-foucault.com/quote/2004q.html](http://www.michel-foucault.com/quote/2004q.html)> (Accessed 6 June 2012).

23 See Olivera Milosavljević, “Fatalističko tumačenje razaranja Jugoslavije,” *Republika*, (2003) 316–17. Available at: <[www.republika.co.rs/316-317/19.html](http://www.republika.co.rs/316-317/19.html)> (Accessed 12 November 2011).

Anti-war attitudes are, then, plausibly articulated also from a nationalist perspective.

Peace activism, on the other hand, is informed by a set of broader values according to which war or any other kind of military means must not be used for conflict resolution. Peace activism stems from a clear, mostly left-leaning, political stance. Simply put, an anti-war activist is not necessarily pacifist, whereas a pacifist is by definition anti-war oriented. For the lack of a more precise concept, anti-war (orientation) — as a generic term suggesting resistance to armed conflicts — is regarded as incorporating pacifism throughout this book, except in those instances in which I insist on a conceptual differentiation.

In one of the very first attempts to engage with Serbian anti-war activism in a more theoretical manner, Paunović differentiates between anti-war and pacifist movements and argues that an anti-war movement could only appear in a country which had not experienced any military activity on its territory.<sup>24</sup> The overt support of the Serbian general public for the anti-war cause was relatively weak due to a lack of civic culture in which an anti-war stance is a matter of spontaneous citizen reactions (such as draft-dodging).<sup>25</sup> According to him, anti-war activities in Serbia mushroomed between autumn 1991 and summer 1992, coinciding with the period of the most intense draft into JNA. It is only at this stage that one could talk about an anti-war movement.<sup>26</sup>

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24 Žarko Paunović, "Mirovne aktivnosti u Srbiji: između inicijativa i pokreta," *Filozofija i društvo*, 20 (1995) 7, pp. 107–25.

25 It is, in this regard, also pertinent to differentiate between, on the one hand, draft-dodging as a spontaneous reaction which prompted people to hide from the authorities or leave the country and conscientious objection as a political stance, on the other. Although the Yugoslav regime insisted on peace (which was also one of the central principles of the Non-Aligned Movement [Pokret nesvrstanih]), serving in JNA was a legal duty of all mentally and physically able men. Refusing military service on the basis of conscientious objection was considered law infringement. One of the most well-known cases of conscientious objection in socialist Yugoslavia was Ivan Čečko, a Jehovah's Witness from Maribor, Slovenia. The Belgrade Military Court sentenced him to four years of imprisonment in 1979, five years in 1983 (three of which he actually served) and five more years in 1986. The case of Čečko was important in stimulating a public debate about the role of the Army in Yugoslav social life as well as about conscientious objection and civic service; see Slavenska Drakulić, "The case of Ivan Cecko: Yugoslav Youth Stir It Up," *The Nation*, (1987); Available at: <[www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-4839012.html](http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-4839012.html)> (Accessed 8 September 2011). For the relevance of conscientious objection for the Slovenian Peace Movement, see Marko Hren, "The Slovenian Peace Movement: An Insider's Account," in Bilić and Janković (eds.), *Resisting the Evil*, pp. 63–82.

26 In his memoirs, General Veljko Kadijević argued that the operation of JNA was considerably affected by the failure of the Serbian authorities to mobilise reservists. See Veljko Kadijević, *Moje viđenje raspada: vojska bez države* (Belgrade: Politika, 1993), pp. 76–7. According to CAA, turnout rates were around 5 percent in Belgrade and around 20 percent in provincial areas. Other reports give a figure of about 50 percent in Serbia and 15 percent in Belgrade. See Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War*, pp. 108–9. On the issue of conscientious objection in the Yugoslav wars, see Bojan Aleksov, "Resisting the Wars in the Former Yugoslavia: Towards an Autoethnography," in Bilić and Janković (eds.), *Re-*

Also, among a vast majority of regional civic activists, Serbia's involvement in the Yugoslav conflicts is regarded as aggressive in character. Political actions undertaken by the Milošević regime throughout the 1990s stimulated many civic protagonists to contest the state from within. Somewhat paradoxically maybe, such a constellation tends to afford the Serbian (and almost exclusively Belgrade-based) activists the highest amount of discretionary leverage in the regional extra-institutional sphere. This, yet again, results in resistances and contestations that I discuss in the chapter devoted to the effects of anti-war engagement. Such a state of affairs is also related to the problem of "unequal" representation of the former republics in contemporary Yugoslav scholarship which has been noted by Dragović-Soso and to a certain extent perpetuated in this book.<sup>27</sup>

Moreover, a lot of tensions among Yugoslav activists stemmed from the cleavage which separates anti-war from pacifist efforts. Spontaneously gathered activists do not cluster in one or the other group at the beginning of their public engagement. At that point they are motivated by opposition to violence and destruction which only later obtains relevant theoretical substantiations. The subtle difference between anti-war and pacifist stances becomes more prominent as a result of specific developments, such as, for example, foreign military interventions in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1995) or Serbia (1999). The Serbian civic scene became severely polarised when 27 of its protagonists appealed to foreign governments and NATO commanders asking for an immediate termination of the NATO bombing. A few activists, on the other hand, perceived this campaign as a legitimate means to oppose the Milošević regime (see Appendix 2).<sup>28</sup> Such sharpening of intra/inter-state attitude is a critical element in the existence of any collective enterprise and it is at the heart of a lot of segmentation processes within (post-)Yugoslav anti-war activism.<sup>29</sup>

This book cannot fully appreciate the theoretical significance of the conceptual differentiation between anti-war and pacifist engagement, which

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*sisting the Evil*, pp. 105–26; Bojan Aleksov, *Deserters from the War in Former Yugoslavia* (Belgrade: Žene u crnom, 1994); Aleksandra Milićević, *Joining Serbia's Wars: Volunteers and Draft Dodgers, 1991–1995* (Los Angeles: University of California, 2004 — PhD Dissertation).

27 Dragović-Soso, "Why Did Yugoslavia Disintegrate?" pp. 1–39. See Bojan Bilić and Vesna Janković, "Recovering (Post-)Yugoslav Anti-War Contention: A Zagreb Walk through Stories, Analyses and Activisms," in Bilić and Janković (eds.), *Resisting the Evil*, pp. 25–36.

28 See, e.g., Nadežda Radović, "Pismo pod bombama," *Vreme*, 12 September 2002. Available at: <www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=321887> (Accessed 26 July 2012).

29 For an analysis of the relevance of the 1999 NATO bombing campaign for the tensions among the Belgrade liberal intelligentsia, see Jasna Dragović-Soso, "The Partying of Ways: Public Reckoning with the Recent Past in Post-Milošević Serbia," in Timothy Waters (ed.), *The Milošević Trial: An Autopsy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming). See also Olivera Milosavljević, "Tačka razlaza: povodom polemike vođene na stranica lista *Vreme* od 1. avgusta do 21. novembra 2002," *Helsinkiške sveske*, (2003) 16, pp. 6–18.

is also relevant when discussing the involvement of foreign pacifist activists in the Yugoslav conflicts. The following excerpt shows how a group of non-Yugoslav members of War Resisters' International (WRI) replied to the letter of Yugoslav anti-war activists in which they asked their international colleagues to protect Bosnia and Herzegovina "by all means possible":

There is an alarming phrase in your statement, when you suggest defending the Bosnia-Herzegovinian state by all means possible. This could be taken to mean "warfare without limit": at worst, nuking Belgrade; more probably, the sanitised language of "surgical strikes" belying a reality of massacred civilians and children, as in Baghdad. We assume that this is not what you meant. Perhaps our reaction to this phrase shows a difference in sensibility.<sup>30</sup>

Whereas it certainly constitutes an exciting research topic, I do not expound on the international dimension of the wars of Yugoslav succession. There are already a few publications regarding the engagement of international anti-war activists in the Yugoslav region.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, the role played by foreign diplomats and various political actors, mostly characterised by insensitivity and partiality, has been extensively — although not conclusively or comprehensively — covered elsewhere.<sup>32</sup> Andrew Pakula, a long-term peace activist, argues that:

[...] international mediation in the Yugoslav crisis has been plagued by inconsistency, confusion, lack of coherence, disagreements about strategy, tactics and mandate, poor coordination and planning, inadequate understanding, idle threats, and the dominant role of self-serving, short-sighted national policies driven mainly by *Realpolitik* and nostalgia [...]. At best, the engagement of the world's political organisations in the former Yugoslavia has been ineffectual. At worst, it contributed significantly to the escalation and persistence of violence.<sup>33</sup>

There are two other important elements that have remained outside of the theoretico-empirical grasp of my research design: first, this book does not discuss the efforts of Kosovo Albanian activists to articulate a strategy of

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30 See Appendix 3 for the full letter of the Yugoslav activists and an abridged version of the WRI response.

31 See, e.g., Vesna Janković, "International Peace Activists in the Former Yugoslavia," in Bilić and Janković (eds.), *Resisting the Evil*, pp. 225–42; Barbara Müller, *The Balkan Peace Team 1994–2001: Non-Violent Intervention in Crisis Areas with the Deployment of Volunteer Teams* (Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2006); Judith Large, *The War Next Door: A Study of Second-Track Intervention During the War in Ex-Yugoslavia* (Stroud: Hawthorne Press, 1997); Christine Schweitzer, *Strategies of Intervention in Protracted Violent Conflicts by Civil Society Actors: The Example of Interventions in the Violent Conflicts in the Area of Former Yugoslavia, 1990–2002* (Coventry: Coventry University, 2009 — PhD Dissertation).

32 See, e.g., Brendon O'Shea, *The Modern Yugoslav Conflict, 1991–1995* (London: Routledge, 2006).

33 Andrew Pakula, "War and Peace: Yugoslavia, the World's Failure," *Peace Magazine*, (1995) 5–6, p. 16.

peaceful resistance to the severely nationalising Serbian state. Given that I am interested in the broad dynamics of civic organising in the Yugoslav space, I believe that it would be useful to examine the relationship between the Kosovo-based civic actors and the efforts to maintain peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina or Croatia. I am aware of the specificities of the Kosovo political situation and the widespread disrespect of the Kosovo Albanians' human rights which occurred throughout the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>34</sup> In this regard, I touch upon the issue of Kosovo to the extent to which it served as the criterion for gauging the democratic potential of any ideological option articulated within the Yugoslav political space throughout the rule of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia [Savez komunista Jugoslavije (SKJ)] and its Serbian successor — the Socialist Party of Serbia [Socijalistička partija Srbije (SPS)].<sup>35</sup> Although many protagonists of this work might have never visited Kosovo, their position on the complex Kosovo question was an important identification mark in the Yugoslav political arena.<sup>36</sup> So much so that, as one of my interviewees told me, in the 1980s Yugoslavia there was a simple formula for finding one's place in the political spectrum: "Tell me what you think about the Kosovo Albanians and I will tell you who you are". The importance of Kosovo for Yugoslav civil organising is evident in the words of Vesna Teršelič, the long-term coordinator of ARK:

[...] I feel this was a mistake that we all made together, citizens of a country that later disintegrated through a series of wars. In fact, we all have some responsibility for mistakes made before the 1980s, because I believe if we had reacted more loudly to the violation of human rights in Kosovo, all the events that ensued might have never happened.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, it is not the primary goal of this book to contribute to the field of peace studies. Peace as a phenomenon and the efficiency of various strategies for achieving and maintaining it are not in the focus of my attention. I do not discuss the plausibility of the programmes or actions that my respondents attempted to implement, nor do I offer practical guidelines on where they

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34 For more information on various forms of civic resistance in Kosovo, see Gëzim Krasniqi, "For Democracy — Against Violence": A Kosovar Alternative," in Bilić and Janković (eds.), *Resisting the Evil*, pp. 83–103. See also: Howard Clark, *Civil Resistance in Kosovo* (London: Pluto Press, 2000).

35 It was after his first official visit to Kosovo in April 1987, that Slobodan Milošević consolidated his authority in Serbia's political life. See Nebojša Vladislavljević, "Nationalism, Social Movement Theory and the Grass Roots Movement of Kosovo Serbs," *Europe-Asia Studies*, 54 (2002) 5, pp. 771–90.

36 See Srđa Popović, Dejan Janča and Tanja Petovar, *Kosovski čvor: drešiti ili seći?* (Belgrade: Chronos, 1990).

37 Vesna Teršelič, "One Should Use These Unexpected Chances," in Helena Rill, Tamara Šmidling and Ana Bitoljanu (eds.), *20 Pieces of Encouragement for Awakening and Change: Peacebuilding in the Region of the Former Yugoslavia* (Belgrade and Sarajevo: Centar za nenasilnu akciju, 2007), pp. 75–94, here p. 81.

might have “gone wrong” and what should have been done instead.<sup>38</sup> I do not, in principle, engage with peace scholars (or peace scholarship) although some of them have been quite active in the region.<sup>39</sup> This work is interested in the articulation of political alternatives or in carving political opportunities for such articulations, in which peace becomes an imposed meta-topic, a fundamental precondition for their development and realisation.

### *Methods*

This book is embedded in a qualitative research tradition where social enquiry is understood as a process in which questions are revised in the light of collected empirical material and bibliographical sources. Such a perspective, appreciative of the uniqueness of personal biography and the historical context surrounding it, acknowledges the researcher’s co-constructivist role in knowledge production. The ethnographic encounter is a rich and intricate tapestry of values, predispositions and behaviours for which shared experiences and shared language are essential. The arguments which I make in this book do not derive their legitimacy or their “truth” from the fact that I am a “local”. I hope to have destabilised such a possibility by crossing borders and working in Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and across Europe, constantly — and either willingly or unwillingly — switching between the position of “insider” and “outsider”. However, a flow of sensitive information is, of course, facilitated in a meeting of two persons with an overlapping portion of “lived reality” behind the corpus of mutually understandable wor(l)ds.

Biases and preconceived ideas, even among those who attempt to shed them, are almost unavoidable, and this applies to outsiders as well as to insiders. Indeed, the outsider’s view is not necessarily inferior to the insider’s, and the insider is not necessarily anointed with truth because of existential intimacy with the object of study. What counts in the last resort is the very process of the conscious effort to shed biases and look for ways to express the reality of otherness, even in the face of paralysing epistemological scepticism.<sup>40</sup>

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38 For a more activist approach to the issue of peace-building in the post-Yugoslav space, see Rill *et al.* (eds.), *20 Pieces of Encouragement for Awakening and Change*; Goran Božičević (ed.), *U dosluhu i neposluhu: Pozitivni primjeri izgradnje mira u Hrvatskoj u 90-ima i kasnije* (Grožnjan: Miramida centar, 2010); Janković and Mokrović (eds.), *Antiratna kampanja*.

39 Among the most prominent are Diana Francis, Adam Curle, Johan Galtung, Howard Clark and Dieter Senghaas.

40 Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 9.