GLOBAL HUMANITIES

Year 6, Vol. 8, 2021 – ISSN 2199-3939

Editors Frank Jacob and Francesco Mangiapane

Identity and Nationhood

Editorial by
Frank Jacob and Francesco Mangiapane

Texts by
Amrita De
Sophie Gueudet
Frank Jacob
Udi Lebel and Zeev Drori

edizioni Museo Pasqualino

direttore Rosario Perricone

GLOBAL HUMANITIES

8

Biannual Journal

ISSN 2199-3939

Editors

Frank Jacob
Nord Universitet, Norway

Francesco Mangiapane
University of Palermo, Italy

Scientific Board

Jessica Achberger
University of Lusaka, Zambia

Giuditta Bassano
IULM University, Milano, Italy

Saheed Aderinto
Western Carolina University, USA

Bruce E. Bechtol, Jr.
Angelo State University, USA

Stephan Köhn
Cologne University, Germany

Dario Mangano
University of Palermo, Italy

Gianfranco Marrone
University of Palermo, Italy

Tiziana Migliore
University of Urbino, Italy

Sabine Müller
Marburg University, Germany

Rosario Perricone
University of Palermo, Italy

GLOBAL HUMANITIES

Year 6, Vol. 8, 2021 – ISSN 2199-3939

Editors Frank Jacob and Francesco Mangiapane

Identity and Nationhood

Editorial by
Frank Jacob and Francesco Mangiapane

Texts by
Amrita De
Sophie Gueudet
Frank Jacob
Udi Lebel and Zeev Drori

edizioni
Museo
Pasqualino

© 2021 Associazione per la conservazione delle tradizioni popolari
Museo internazionale delle marionette Antonio Pasqualino
Piazza Antonio Pasqualino, 5 – 90133 Palermo PA, Italy
www.edizionimuseopasqualino.it – info@edizionimuseopasqualino.it

Regione siciliana
Assessorato dei beni culturali
e dell'identità siciliana
Dipartimento dei beni culturali
e dell'identità siciliana

ISBN 979-12-80664-01-3
DOI https://doi.org/10.53123/GH_8

Design and Typesetting
Francesco Mangiapane

Printing House
Fotograph S.r.l., Palermo, Italy

Cover
© Khashayar Kouchpeydeh, *Mankind will never stop having wars with itself unless none is left but one, @ Unsplash*

The articles in this volume were peer reviewed.

The publisher is available for any claimants who could not be contacted.

This volume is covered by copyright and no part of it can be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any electronic, mechanical or other means without the written authorization of the owners of the copyright.

The paper used for printing is made with a fibrous mixture made of 100% recycled fibers and is guaranteed by Blauer Engel certification. Its fibers are bleached with Chlorine Free processes. It is therefore 100% ecological.

Table of Contents

Editorial

Frank Jacob and Francesco Mangiapane

The nation state is back, or, more accurately, it was never gone. It is striking that the end of the Cold War did not lead to the world flourishing while liberalist ideas, which Francis Fukuyama had so prominently declared victorious at last, determined politics around the globe. The end of the "Soviet Empire" led to new nationalist struggles that seem to have determined the first two decades of the 21st century. With challenging and challenged ideas for national independence in all parts of the world, nationalism is again having a strong impact on political decisions and is stimulating the rise of nationalist populism and right-wing parties alike.

Nevertheless, every nation state is based on the idea of a nation that is, as Ernest Renan formulated it, created by a shared past and the consensus of the present. It is the root of each nation state, but it can also divide the latter and force them into secession. Therefore, the nation and its formulation are important topics to study from different angles and within different academic disciplines. The rise of nationalism is without any doubt a global phenomenon, and the present issue of *Global Humanities* therefore takes a closer look at the formation of nationhood and the symbols and figures involved and offers a broader view on the history and actuality of the nation and the states that refer to this idea to legitimize their own existence. Considering that the history of nationalism is not over and will not be over in the near future, the articles in this volume will hopefully help to further the ways nationalism impacts our daily lives and also stimulate new research on relevant aspects related to the formation of nation states and their creation of national narratives to remember in the future.

Bodø, Norway and Palermo, Italy
June 2021

https://doi.org/10.53123/GH_8_2

Gallipoli
The Rise of Mustafa Kemal, and the Martial Creation of the Turkish Nation

Frank Jacob

Nord Universitet, Norway
frank.jacob@nord.no

Abstract. The Gallipoli Campaign was often considered a sideshow of the Great War, but it played an important role in creating the myth of Mustafa Kemal, who should become the leader of Turkish nationalism after the First World War ended. The Turkish nation was created by war and Kemal, later Atatürk (Father of the Turks) was the decisive figure within the process. His fame might have originated by defending the Ottoman Empire against foreign invasion, but his political power was based on the victories during the war of independence. The present article traces the rise of Mustafa Kemal, the genesis of Turkish nationalism in the first third of the 20th century and the role the Gallipoli campaign played for it.

Keywords: Gallipoli, Mustafa Kemal, Turkish nationalism, First World War.

Although the main focus of research related to the centennial of the First World War is still directed on the campaigns in Europe, in particular the Western Front, "the Gallipoli operations are the most famous and well-remembered today" (Ulrichsen 2014: 75).[1] The memory of the events related to the Gallipoli campaign (Macleod 2015) has played an important role in Britain, as well as in Australia, where discussions about the reasons for its failure and the ANZAC (Australian and New Zealand Army Corps) myth, respectively, were at the center of commem-

1 For extensive discussions of the campaign, see Haythornthwaite (1991), Carlyon (2003), Hart (2014), Erickson (2015a, 2015b), Liddle (2015), Moorehead (2015 [1958]) and Jacob (2020a).

Photo © Australian War memorial P01141.001. *The Commander Mustafa Kemal Bey (Ataturk) (Fourth From Left) With Officers And Staff Of The Anafarta Group, Of Which He Was Given Command 1915-08*, Gallipoli, Suvla Bay Area.

orative events (Hopkins-Weise 2007; Prior 2015). However, the victory at Gallipoli was as important for the Turkish memory as the defeat and shared suffering were for the Australian identity (Jacob 2019). Ulrichsen emphasizes the role Gallipoli-related memories have played for the Australian and Turkish nations since the end of the First World War, as this military campaign "has come to symbolise the rise of a national consciousness in both countries, and the memory and bravery of those who took part continue to reverberate a century on" (2014: 75). However, Gallipoli as a symbol lost its power with the end of the Ottoman Empire. Although the Ottoman victory at the Dardanelles established the myth of Mustafa Kemal, the later Atatürk, who led the troops of the Ottoman Empire into the attack against foreign invaders, the post-war political leader of independent Turkey would reshape the semiotics related to his own role during the First World War and the following war of independence. Instead of referring to his early military success as an awakening point of Turkish nationalism, he would change the semiotics to focus stronger on his own role as the leading man of a new era. The following article will address how Atatürk reshaped Ottoman nationalism into Turkish nationalism, by shifting the focus from Gallipoli towards the more important legacy of the war of independence and his own role during these years. The article will also show how this Atatürkian shift is currently contested by Neo-Ottomanism and a return to pre-Republican narratives and semiotics.

After the Battle for the Gallipoli Peninsula, Kemal himself had become a symbol of the resistance of the Ottoman Empire against Western invasion, something the Ottoman military leadership had intended by its participation in the First World War on the side of Germany. With their decision to join the war on the German side in 1914, the Ottoman leadership had originally intended to save the empire from partition and colonial rule, but the war would trigger its further decline and fall (Aksakal 2008: 2). The Young Turks and their attempts to reform the empire had already stimulated a Turkish nationalism before the First World War (Feroz 1969; Findley 2010: 201-205), but the Balkan Wars had weakened the empire, and their defeat in 1918 initially limited the chances for the Turkish national struggle, although the nation would be forged in wars continuing until 1922 (Findley 2010: 219-226). The rise of the Turkish nation from the ashes, to use a metaphorical expression, was related to another rise, namely that of Mustafa Kemal, a military officer who would begin to determine and decide the future of an independent Turkey in the aftermath of the First World War. His success was based on the victory at Gallipoli as well, because Kemal, who would become known as Atatürk, "Father of the Turks," was not only remembered as the defender of the Turkish nation in the post-war period, but also as someone who in 1915 had already defeated the imperialist attempt of the Entente to conquer the soil that would later belong to the Turkish nation. Kemal's rise to power was consequently related to his military successes that laid the foundation for his political reshaping of Turkey from 1922.

The present article therefore intends to follow the history of the building of the Turkish nation state, to emphasize how the role of Atatürk was reshaped and redefined. The commemoration of Kemal's military victories at Gallipoli and between 1918 and 1922, when he defended the new nation against foreign invaders stimulated an anti-imperialist nationalism, which was quite common in colonial and semi-colonial regions of the world in the interwar period.[2] However, Kemal went further than just building an independent nation, he inscribed himself as a semiotic figure within the national nar-

2 For example, for a discussion of Chinese nationalism in relation to the First World War and Japanese imperialism, see Jacob (2020b).

rative. To achieve this, Kemal would not only use a nationalist language, which, according to Umiker-Sebeok (1977: 122) is not the only way to establish a semiotic system, but used his own image to emphasize his role for all Turkish people to be seen. Kemalism became part of a semiotic system in Turkey in which he provided what Umberto Eco referred to as a form communicative process: "When the destination [of a communicative process] is a human being ... we are ... witnessing a process of signification—provided that the signal is not merely a stimulus but arouses an iinterpretive response in the addressee. This process is made possible by the existence of a code. (Eco 1979: 8) Remembering the birth of the Turkish nation meant remembering Kemal, whose statue would be seen in all parts of Turkey to define a new set of semiotics for the national narrative that went beyond language and image alone (Barthes 1977: 9), i.e. to provide a possibility for the popular understanding of what the Turkish nation was supposed to be based on: Kemal Atatürk. The new semiotic instrumentalization of his own past and its broad visualization was consequently supposed to establish meaning (Genosko 2016: 1. Also see Kristeva 1971: 1)

1. Kemals's Rise after Gallipoli

Before further elaborating on Kemal's nationalist interpretation of Ottoman and Turkish history, a short description of his career and achievements seems to be in order here. Born in Thessaloniki in 1880/81 as Mustafa Kemal, he undertook a military career that would eventually also change the way people referred to him. He achieved the rank of brigadier in the Ottoman Army by 1916, and he was thereafter referred to as Mustafa Kemal Pasha. After 1921, when his victory against the Greek Army at the Sakarya River turned him into a national hero and defender of Turkey, he was called Gazi, which could be translated either as "conquering hero" or "champion of Islam." In 1934, once he had established and secured the independent nation state of modern Turkey, the national assembly chose to award him with the name "Atatürk" and would thereby forever inscribe his history into that of the Turkish nation (Zürcher 2012: 130). This rise to power was made possible by Kemal's military successes, and until the end of the First World War, his career was a purely military one. While Kemal had been trained according to Western standards during his time at military schools and the academy for future members of the general staff in Constantinople (today's Istanbul), he shared the idea of Turkish independence early on and therefore joined the Young Turks in 1908 and participated in their "revolution" during the same year (Hanioğlu 2001; Der Matossian 2014; Lévy-Aksu & Georgeon 2017).

Sultan Abdülhamid II had intended to modernize his empire by establishing institutions that would provide Western-oriented education, but this also stimulated "the emergence of an enlightened intelligentsia within the ranks of the civil and military bureaucracy that adopted the principles of the French Revolution" (Dincsahin 2015: 9). With an enlightened military elite, the sultan had also created his own enemies, who would demand political reforms to turn the Ottoman Empire into a constitutional monarchy to prevent its further decline. This was also a secular movement, as the Young Turks "despised Abdülhamid II's personal piety" and "blamed his attachment to Islam for his autocratic conservatism" (Reynolds 2011: 83), although they shared the same enemy as the Muslim forces of the empire, namely Western imperialism. The Young Turks were consequently not a homogenous movement but divided into different factions, with the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), the one Kemal had been a part of as well, being one of the more progressive forces (Dincsahin 2015: 9).

The "revolution" of 1908 had shown that the diversity of the Young Turks movement would cause problems, especially since "non-Muslim communities sought opportunities to establish self-rule

in their own nation-states rather than remaining subjects of the Sultan" (ibid.). Kemal nevertheless continued his military life for the next few years and in 1911 organized guerilla warfare against Italy in Tripolitania before serving during the Balkan Wars. He continued to be active and influential in the CUP, although he was not one of its political leaders. During the July Crisis, Kemal, at that time a lieutenant colonel, served as the Ottoman military attaché in Sofia for the Balkan states, namely Bulgaria, Montenegro, and Serbia (Tetik 2007). While he was negotiating with Bulgarian authorities to join the war on the side of Germany and the Ottoman Empire, Kemal realized that he would prefer an assignment of combat duty instead, and in November 1914, when war had officially been declared, he approached Enver Pasha with the request to be transferred. His anti-German position, as he had criticized the German military mission in the Ottoman Empire before, as well as his activities with regard to the CUP prevented such an assignment at that time. However, in January 1915, as the war had continued and demanded capable officers, "Mustafa Kemal finally left Sofia to take command of an Ottoman division that as yet existed only on paper" (Hanioğlu 2011: 73). In February 1915, Kemal was in Thrace to recruit and train his division, but a British attack, passing through the Dardanelles with a fleet, alarmed the military leadership and commanded him to head for Gallipoli. Hanioğlu has emphasized how the war created a window of opportunity for Kemal, whose rise was now made possible, and although "[s]eated at an embassy desk scarcely one month before, he now found himself in the midst of one of the greatest battles of modern times. At last he would have the chance to command an offensive operation within the context of a defensive campaign and win thereby a place in history" (ibid.: 74).

It was the victory at Gallipoli and Kemal's role in defending the landing zones against the Allied troops – he had taken the initiative and attacked the latter ones without waiting for a German approval – that proved that the Ottoman Army was not inferior, as many war planners in London had anticipated. In addition, the Ottoman military victory laid the ground for Kemal's reputation as a successful defender of national interests (McMeekin 2012: 38). When the "British withdrew their entire expeditionary force in January 1916, Gallipoli had become synonymous with Allied humiliation and Turkish triumph" (ibid.), and Kemal's rise to power began, although the German commander of the defending troops, Otto Liman von Sanders, would later complain that the Turkish officer's role during the Gallipoli campaign had been overemphasized.[3] Regardless of such a critical view by a former German commanding officer after the First World War, the Turkish nation-building process centered around "two key victories: Gallipoli and the Turkish War of Independence of 1919-22, which culminated in the republic's recognition in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne" (Macleod 2015: 155). Both of them were relevant for Mustafa Kemal, who, however, would due to political necessities rather emphasize the latter, which made out of the Ottoman defender of the Dardanelles the hero and "father" of Turkish independence. The defeat in the Balkan Wars had already made the Young Turks demand "a new spirit and enthusiasm" (Beşikçi 2014: 555) for the army, and men like Kemal had tried to strengthen their political influence as well. However, the Ottoman Army was suffering from several problems, including insufficient logistics and diseases (Ozdemir 2008: 28-31, 48). All in all, the Ottoman Army was nevertheless able to mobilize around 3,000,000 men during the First World War (Turkish Military Archives, Ankara, BDH, Folder 62/File 309A/Index 005, cited in Beşikçi

3 Liman von Sanders to Carl Mühlmann, Munich, January 30, 1927, German Federal Archives, Military Archives (BArch MArch), RH61/1088.

2014: 558), and the experience of the war was shared by many men who would later support Kemal's claim for independent power under his leadership.

Regardless of their large number, Beşikçi described several problems the Ottoman Army was weakened by:

> First of all, there was the problem of lack of standardization among regions regarding recruitment. [...] Secondly, although at the beginning a short war was generally expected, the Ottoman state began to have difficulty in sustaining a large-scale and permanent mobilization as the war continued. And, thirdly, resistance to conscription in the forms of draft-evasion and desertion became a major problem especially in the second half of the war. (2014: 558)

The victory at Gallipoli was consequently an outstanding experience, as it showed that the Ottoman Army was capable of winning battles if led by commanders like Kemal, who consequently became a kind of figurehead of Turkish nationalism during the First World War, since other military leaders, like Ismail Enver Pasha, had failed to secure victories, e.g. in the Caucasus region. For the "foundation myth [of the Turkish nation], the War of Independence is by far the more important, but the memory of Gallipoli is nonetheless interesting and the link between the two is Mustafa Kemal" (Macleod 2015: 155). Kemal was therefore the central figure, and and after playing a role in the pivotal moments of Gallipoli and the War of Independence "he then went on to lead the Turkish national movement which fought to overthrow the stipulations of the Treaty of Sèvres, end the Ottoman sultanate, and establish sovereign, secular, and democratic government in Turkey" (ibid.). For the establishment of the independent Turkish nation, the defense of a multi-national empire, however, seemed to have been rather unsuitable and Kemal would later rather rely on an Anatolian-based Turkish nationalism to forge the new semiotic system that would center around his own person as the decisive national leader. Therefore the "nationalist historiography inaugurated by the republican regime in the 1930s" tended to not overemphasize the impact of Gallipoli as an important moment that triggered Turkish nationalism, but rather "present[ed] the emergence of Turkish nationalism as a process of 'awakening,' belated yet inevitable," (Özkirimli 2011: 90), it was also inevitable that Kemal's role as the central figure remained an important aspect of Turkish nationalism in the decades to come, because it would serve as the base for an exclusively Anatolian-Turkish nationalism that needed to be separated from its Ottoman past. When it emerged from the War of Independence in 1922, as Ugur Ümit Üngör correctly highlighted, "[m]entally, the young nation state was still blank and needed a memory. The continuous process of defining and fine-tuning a national identity entailed a parallel process for a national memory" (2011: 218). It was Kemal who provided an integrative nationalist figure, the "Father of the Turks," whose transition into Atatürk reached back to the last rearing up of the Ottoman Empire when fighting the Allied invasion forces at the Dardanelles and on the Gallipoli Peninsula, but at the same time provided a new direction for the establishment of a semiotic system, in which this victory should play a rather marginalized role.

During the battles for independence, Kemal "galvanized the simple Turkish soldier with a new courage. They were ready to follow him to hell" (Armstrong 1972: 80). This would be part of the foundational myth of modern Turkey, as without Gallipoli there would have been no opportunity for Kemal to rise. Regardless of this interrelation between the military officer and the establishment of the modern Turkish nation state, "the creator of modern Turkey, has been one of the most controversial personalities of the Muslim world in the twentieth century. Some admire him while others despise him. In some quarters he is considered a role model for Muslim leaders and in others, the enemy of Islam" (Sohail 2005: 133). Kemal's military success was initial-

ly not rewarded when the sultan acknowledged the achievements of the 27th and 57th regiments and decorated soldiers and officers in April 1916. Nor was he mentioned in official publications about the successful Ottoman defense of the Dardanelles (Macleod 2015: 157), which also seems to highlight that the depiction of his decisive role was rather related to later post-war narratives, which in a way overemphasized it to fit the new semiotic system of a Kemal that towered all Turkish citizens like a national father figure. The sign of Gallipoli, as Peirce defined it, was consequently interpreted from a retrospective point of view (Peirce 1998, vol. 2: 478) The government was interested in documenting an important victory, not a single officer. One sent "writers and journalists Ağaoğlu Ahmed, Ali Canip, Celal Sahir, Enis Behiç, Hakkı Süha, Hamdullah Suphi, Hıfzı Tevfik, Muhittin, Orhan Seyfi, Selahattin, Mehmed Emin, Yusuf Razi, Ömer Seyfettin, İbrahim Alaeddin, and Müfit Ratip; the musician Ahmed Yekta; and the painters İbrahim Çallı and Nazmi Ziya" (ibid.: 158) to the battlefield in July 1915, just six months after the Allied troops had been evacuated from the peninsula. It is therefore worth noting, as MacLeod emphasizes, that "Kemal's role at Gallipoli became significantly more acclaimed after he attained power. Prior to that, it was the humble soldier who was primarily celebrated for his heroism at Gallipoli" (2015: 155). This is important, as the victory at Gallipoli was later more heavily emphasized to construct a line of Turkish nationalism that began with a victory against invading foreign forces, a victory that had been made possible by the man who would also unite Turkey during its fight for national sovereignty between 1918 and 1922, and it was thus an essential element of the War of Independence as well. Although Kemal was mentioned as a hero in some Ottoman reports about Gallipoli, his role would be more and more central in later narratives, although the focus tremendously shifted away from Gallipoli towards the battles related to the Turkish War of Independence. A tradition of nationalist defense was eventually invented (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983) to match the necessities of Kemal's later rule as Atatürk.

In some ways, Kemal's life story was nevertheless very typical of a military officer who was part of the Young Turks movement (Zürcher 2012: 130), but his experience of the First World War in general, and the Gallipoli campaign in particular, as well as the War of Independence, also provided him with a chance to create an "imagined community" (Anderson 1983) for all Turkish soldiers that naturally centered around Kemal, whose experiences were shared by the soldiers, and whose national program would naturally exploit references to this shared past. Kemal could, with regard to the military, and especially the new elites related to it, refer to a shared semiotic system based on the experiences of the battles and wars that had led towards independence. The Turkish nation could be built due to the struggle against foreign occupation, which is why, as Andrew Mango outlined, "[t]he emergence of a fully independent, stable Turkish national state within the community of civilised nations was a fortunate, if unintended, consequence of the policies of the victors of the [First World] War" (2010: 3).

2. The War of Independence and Turkish Nationalism

After the armistice in 1918, the Ottoman Empire was occupied by the Allied powers, whose political representatives had already discussed plans on how to divide it among themselves. The fear that caused the Ottoman leaders to join the alliance with Germany in the first place would now, four years later, become a reality. In this situation, Kemal began to rise up as a prominent figure and eventually the leading man of the nationalist liberation movement (*Kuva-i Milliye*), as he "managed to pull together a coalition of diverse constituencies, which, despite profound differences of opinion and allegiance, were unified in their opposition to the foreign takeover of Anatolia" (Kezer 2015: 4). Considering the new situation

and the end of the Ottoman Empire, Kemal attempted to establish a modern nation state of Turkey, based on a more homogenous Turkish nation—excluding any minorities from power—instead of returning to the status quo ante. As a Young Turk, he had demanded reforms, but now he would long for a clear discontinuum, i.e. a new start (ibid.: 5).

Although the state, due to the necessities of military mobilization, had begun to centralize its power in the war years (Besikçi 2012: 1), there had been side effects, namely "new alliances between the state and the Anatolian Muslim population" (ibid.: 2) as well as more state control on the local level. The wartime mobilization, as Besikçi emphasizes, consequently "achieved certain objectives and played a major role in reshaping Anatolia's social infrastructure in the years immediately preceding the Turkish National Struggle of 1919-1922" (ibid.: 314). Kemal could consequently base his efforts to secure a new and modern Turkish nation state on some aspects that had already been developed during the war. He could also channel a strong sense of nationalism, which had been directed toward minorities within Turkey, namely the Armenian population, who would become the victims of genocide during the war (Akçam 2013; Suny 2017; Morris & Ze'evi 2019), but Kemal would now use and direct these nationalist sentiments against external enemies.

In May 1919, Kemal was appointed as the new inspector of the Ninth Army at Samsun, and he was supposed to help the British occupation forces to suppress banditry in the Black Sea region. Regardless of his appointment, Kemal began to forge an alliance for national resistance with other army officers, namely Kâzım Karabekir and Ali Fuat (Cebesoy). Between June and September, several meetings and congresses in Amasya, Erzurum, and Sivas led to the formation of a Turkish nationalist principle and the alliance that was supposed to defend it against the foreign invaders. A National Pact (*Misak-ı Milli*) was ratified in the soon-to-be new capital, Ankara, and the government by the sultan Mehmet VI was declared illegitimate, while Kemal and his supporters claimed to represent the Turkish nation. Constantinople was therefore sacked again by British occupation forces, who would rule the city by martial law (McMeekin 2012: 41). Due to these events, "outraged parliamentary deputies fled to Ankara to convene the Turkish Grand National Assembly (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi) on 23 April 1920, promptly electing Kemal its president" (ibid.). The Grand National Assembly acted as the new government of Turkey so that, politically, the separation from the Ottoman past had been completed, but the peace treaty of Sèvres in May 1920 had severe territorial consequences for the new nation, as Greece received almost all of Thrace and was authorized to gain the Izmir region, to be confirmed by a subsequent plebiscite. Eastern Turkey was supposed to be divided between Armenia and Kurdistan, while Italy and France would receive occupational zones between Antalya and Afyon and in Cilicia, respectively (ibid.). These terms would limit Turkey's national integrity and sovereignty for years, and the accord stimulated a nationalist reaction as it was considered to be a dictatorial and anti-Turkish treaty, especially since it favored former minorities. McMeekin's evaluation of the treaty's impact highlights the nationalist responses that played into Kemal's hands: "Sèvres was the best possible recruiting poster for Kemal's nationalist army, which, from its base in Ankara, began a multifront war against now-independent Armenia in the Caucasus, the Greeks advancing inland from Izmir and Bursa, (in theory) the Italian and French troops to the south and southeast, and even the British, responsible for defending the Straits and the capital" (2012: 41).

The war that would follow between 1918 and 1922 was one in which Turkey had to fight alone against all, and the task seemed doomed, considering that no support could be expected from any other

power with an interest in the region, especially since Russia faced its own civil war in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution. Since Kemal and the Soviet Russian government were under pressure, they at least agreed on a pragmatic alliance, formally established by the Treaty of Kars in October 1921. Territorial claims were exchanged and granted. Kemal could thereby pacify his eastern front, and without the threat of a two-front war, he could focus on his main enemy, the Greek forces. Initial Turkish successes were countered by a Greek offensive, leading to the decisive battle between the two armies at the Sakarya River, in which 90,000 Turks would make a stand against 100,000 Greeks. What started as a possible battle of annihilation, as a Turkish defeat would have left the capital Ankara, around 50 miles away, open to an attack by the enemy, would, regardless of the Greeks' superiority in firepower, become a victory that would even intensify the image of Kemal as a nationalist hero who not only had defended the Ottoman Empire at Gallipoli, but also the Turkish nation at the Sakarya River: "The victory at Sakarya heralded Turkey's national revival." (ibid.: 42). The British authorities were willing to revise the Treaty of Sèvres in favor of Turkey in March 1922, granting them the Aegean region, although Thrace was supposed to remain Greek. Kemal realized that the full extent of the Turkish nation could not only be secured by peace and opted for, in a kind of Bismarckian sense, "blood and iron" to solve the current issues of the post-war order. In June 1922, the attack on Greece began, and Izmir was finally taken back in September. The Turkish forces were eventually also successful in regaining eastern Thrace, and the British had to accept these realities, while David Lloyd George, the "mastermind of Sèvres," resigned in October, "never to return to public office" (ibid.).

The Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 would eventually secure the new Republic of Turkey territorially, and not only had the nation thereby "won its independence under arms, which gave its new Republican government the international prestige and legitimacy" (ibid.: 43), but Kemal had also laid the ground for his dominant role within the new nation state in the years until his death. As its first president, he would turn his military success into political power and influence, making him the main winner of the Turkish War of Independence (Zürcher 2012: 131). He would use this power to strengthen his position even further when conflicts with his former allies erupted once the foreign enemies had been defeated. In November 1924, Kazim Karabekir, Rauf Orbay, Ali Fuad Cebesoy, and Refet Bele, who had been important during the War of Independence as well, founded an opposition party in 1924, but Kemal used emergency laws to counter the menace to his uncontested position as the first man of the Turkish nation state. Until 1926, "all of the former leaders of the independence struggle had been purged in a spectacular political trial in which they were accused of involvement in a plot to assassinate the President" (ibid.: 132), and Kemal was free to continue his political course as he alone saw fit.

Vogel referred to the following period as one of Kemal's "transformative leadership" (2011: 513) as the latter began to secularize and modernize Turkey in the years that followed the establishment of the new nation state (Hanioğlu 2011: 160-61). Kemal, as Vogel further highlights, "took an ancient empire that was being dismembered, firmed up some of the remaining borders, and built new institutions to remake Turkey into a modern, Western-style and Western oriented nation" (2011: 513). Hanioğlu in this regard argues that Kemal's "new ideology, unsurprisingly, was a modified, scientifically sanctioned version of Turkish nationalism" (2011: 161). Kemal intended, as the new political leader of Turkey, to replace the religious bonds of his citizens with nationalist ones "through a radical reinterpretation of Islam from a Turkish nationalist perspective" (ibid.: 132). He needed to give his people a new national narrative, which also means a new

semiotic system that would be centered around himself, and when he spoke for more than 36 hours during the six days of the first Republican People's Party's congress in October 1927, he intended to create the narrative for Turkish nationalism and to further center the power within the new nation state in his own hands. In his lectures, he reinterpreted the previous year and ensured that he alone would be remembered as the savior of Turkey (ibid.), and this overemphasis also stimulated later reinterpretations and myths about his role at Gallipoli (Macleod 2015: 159). The history of Turkey as an independent nation was consequently a semantic construction by Atatürk himself, whose words, *ipse dixit*, described what should later be understood as the history of the Turkish War of Independence and the genesis of the modern Turkish state. Stories about this campaign would now be more like a *vaticinium ex eventu*, as Kemal's eventual success stimulated the overemphasis of his role in the military campaign to defend the Dardanelles as well. Kemalism would consequently become a "prime example of a personality cult manufactured by the state" (Zürcher 2012: 132), creating a semi-religious person-bound nationalist narrative.

That Kemal at the same time based his nationalist narrative on modernization and secularization was also a necessity in regards to his own self-representation, as the beliefs related to Sunni Islam prohibited the glorification and depiction of bodies, e.g. as statues. Although it caused possible problems with such religious traditions, statues of Kemal would be erected in many cities, especially in central spaces. Kemalist nationalism was consequently in some regards even anti-Islamic, as the messages represented by the personal cult of the military hero and political leader of Turkey went against existent religious rules (ibid.: 132-3). Later, Atatürk became a central element of Turkish nationalism, as he

> has been depicted over and over again in a limited number of well-defined roles. The repertoire of visualisation seems to be limited in two senses: the number of roles in which Atatürk is depicted and the freedom of artistic expression. Only four different roles can be clearly identified (military hero, teacher, father and emblem of modernity), and the vast majority of the paintings and statues, and even of the poses taken up by actors in the Atatürk films, go back to photographs that can be easily identified. There seems to be a strong reluctance to allow for artistic licence when depicting the leader. (Ibid.: 136).

These different interpretations and images already show that it was hard to clearly identify Kemal/Atatürk, and the narrative seemed to offer a variety of ways to attach him to one's own wishes and ideas. Kemal seems to have supported this "flexibility" of his own image, considering that his own reports about the Gallipoli campaign were not published before the early 1940s (Macleod 2015: 160). The commemoration of the events of 1915/16 played a less important role in the nationalist agenda after 1922, but it was part of Kemal's personal story and therefore of some interest, although the memory of the First World War and the last years of the Ottoman Empire obviously did not arouse too much attention in the early years of the republic, and as Macleod emphasized, when "it was remembered, it was increasingly known for the role of Mustafa Kemal as well as for the devotion of the country's ordinary soldiers" (2015: 161).

It is interesting to note here, too, that the legend of the Turkish president in relation to his military service at Gallipoli was later prominently supported, e.g. when Winston Churchill called Kemal a "man of destiny" (ibid.: 162). The campaign would especially be remembered by British veterans and other visitors who would travel to Turkey for trips to the Gallipoli Peninsula, but there were also visitors from other countries who would, during a cruise through the Mediterranean Sea, use the opportunity to visit the famous battlefields (ibid.: 165). Official commemorations had nevertheless come to a halt in the interwar years, as Kemal focused on the War of Independence as a source for and focus of the new national narrative. It is therefore quite ironic

that he expressed the following thoughts about national history in 1931: "[W]riting history is just as important as making history: if the writers are not faithful to the makers, then the immutable truth will be altered in ways that can confound mankind" (quoted in Kezer 2015: 1). Nevertheless, Kemal's nationalist approach was successful, and as Atatürk, the "Father of the Turks," he would remain an essential part of the country's national identity for decades.

3. Atatürk's Turkish Nationalism and the Commemoration of Gallipoli

Once in power, Atatürk "spent the latter part of his life secularizing and Westernizing state and society" (Navaro-Yashin 2002: 189) as it not only served the necessities to build up a strong and modernized nation state but also to secure his own image as some kind of enlightened leader, or national educator. For these purposes, "he organized a major transformation from a polity governed by Islamic law to one that strictly separated affairs of religion and state" (ibid.) and, due to his achievements, was well remembered for the remaining decades of the 20th century. With regard to "so many other charismatic leaders in recent world history, … [it is] the very length of his symbolism, its all but unanimously positive nature, and its near universality, both in his own country and world wide" (Weiker 1982: 1), that make Kemal Atatürk a powerful symbol of 20th century Turkish nationalism, although his political agenda was quite an internationalist one at the same time.

The unity between the man and the nation was not only emblematized by the many statutes but also by his mausoleum (the Anıtkabir), which "is more than just the final resting place of Atatürk's body but also a national stage set and a representation of the hopes and ideals of the Republic of Turkey" (Wilson 2009: 225). With regard to the visualization of Turkish nationalism and thereby a semiotic systematization of his image, Atatürk became a central aspect of the existent sign system of the nationalist narrative, both on the textual and the visual level. While sayings by him became winged expressions and were often cited, his face would be extremely prominent in the public sphere of Turkey where statues were errected in many cities and in central places. The "Father of the Turks" was made omnipresent. You could see or read Atatürk almost everywhere. More importantly, the "Kemalist elite that followed Ataturk envisaged a militantly secular, ethnically homogeneous republic ready to join the Western world. It banished Islam from school curricula, glorified Turkish history, and 'purified' the Turkish language in order to foster national pride and unity" (Çandar 2000: 89). The course of secular Turkey would be continued in the following decades (Macleod 2015: 60-62) until the 1980s, with Atatürk remaining "still far and away the most central single symbolic focus of his nation" (Weiker 1982: 1).

Since the 1990s, Turkey has begun to remember Gallipoli more thoroughly, as it helped to stimulate friendly international relations with the former Allied powers, probably Australia first and foremost. The references to the campaign, however, also changed in their wording, and nationalist pride was no longer focused only on Atatürk but also on the victory of a battle that had laid the foundations for his rise in later years (Macleod 2015: 175-187). The images of Atatürk at the same time were diversified once more and his prominence increased even more (Özyürek 2004: 374), leading to some kind of omnipresence of the national hero, who in a way linked the history of the last roar of the Ottoman Empire with the nationalist rise of a new and strong Turkish nation state. However, there was also a change with regard to the role of Islam from the 1990s, as "the state stresse[d] the public role of Islam to ensure social harmony and to serve as an ultimate source of legitimization just as it did in Ottoman times" (Yavuz 2003: 79). This "neo-Ottoman turn" (Aydıntaşbaş 2019) was even strengthened after Recep Tayyip Erdoğan determined the political fate of Turkey,

although Atatürk's personality cult remained strong in the early 2000s (Ökten 2007; Özyürek 2006). Consequently, Kemalism was one side of a dichotomic Turkish identity, and those who represent the secular part of it "suggest that Kemalism is the Turkish equivalent of the enlightenment; a guiding philosophy which brought Turks out of their dark age and onto the road to modernity" (Ciddi 2009).

The idea of a Western-oriented modernization has nevertheless been criticized as a form of intellectual concept that provided no clear definition for the Kemalist agenda and its predecessors, but was rather a tool to connect Turkey to a capitalist world system in which its national position should be as strong as possible. Somay argues with regard to this problem that

> The hypothesis that "modernisation," "Westernisation," "Europeanisation" and "development" (economic or otherwise) were all used as euphemistic signifiers for the advancement of capitalism, also indicates that they have little to do with their root concepts "modern," "Western," "European" and "developed." Since all these terms entered Oriental cultural structures and intellectual life as external factors, conceptualised, defined and put into circulation by either colonial or patronising European powers, the Oriental cultures that are supposed to modernise, Westernise, Europeanise or "develop" had little say in what they were supposed to mean. (2014: 9)

Modernization meant different things for different people in different times, but the diverse ideas were in a way united with regard to the idea of a strong Turkish nation by the central authority of Kemal after 1922. Nevertheless, the system was only held together by his commemoration and dominance, as different people continued to want different things when they talked about modernization. While "[e]verybody wanted some of them, but never all of them, and combinations and permutations (depending on the priorities) that emerged were almost as varied as there were people" (ibid.), Kemal's authority provided the link for different interests and channeled them in the same direction for a long period of time. For a long time, his mausoleum would represent the idea of the Turkish nation like no other building or space in Turkey. "An essential component of nationalist projects that seek to institute a new sense of nationhood and define a new national subject is the construction of national space" (Çinar 2005: 99), and so, along with the mausoleum, other Atatürk memorials also played an important role to create a sense of national belonging, a sense of being part of the nation that had been created by the "Father of the Turks" himself. Çinar highlighted in this regard that "nationhood is not only about the collective imagination of a national community, but also about the imagination of national space" (ibid.).

Atatürk was consequently an important factor of the Turkish nation from 1922, one that was also considered anti-imperialist in any sense of the word. In his early military career, he had opposed the German military mission, whose officers ran the Ottoman Army and were very influential (Grüßhaber 2018: 26-102), and the Gallipoli-related operations were "a prime example of combined arms warfare. The battle proved an instructive experience for all combat parties involved. This was especially the case for the more than 3000 German soldiers that saw action during the campaign" (ibid.: 79)/ However, "members of the German mission not only advised the Ottomans but actually took over field commands during the First World War" (Zürcher 2012: 130), something Kemal had not only criticized but maybe even considered when he turned out to be relatively reluctant to commemorate his own involvement in this important Ottoman victory. As mentioned earlier, German officers, like Otto Liman von Sanders, still considered Gallipoli to be a German victory (Prigge 1916), and reports about Kemal in Nazi Germany actually depicted a much more positive image of the strong Turkish leader. In the category "men of the month," the *Zeitschrift für Politik* (Journal for Politics) published a feature that compared

Kemal's role for Turkey with that of Hitler for Germany:

> The "sick man" [Turkey] has become healthy today, healthier than ever and takes the position in the political power play of Europe that is his due to his geopolitical situation determined by barren and harsh Anatolia, by a man who equals—if not even surpasses—this landscape in harshness and spartan unpretentiousness! (Heberlein 1937: 168)

Since Atatürk did not run a democratic state after 1923 but rather an autocratic democracy in which an opposition was not free to express criticism, the parallels made Hitler even feel some kind of admiration for the Turkish statesman (Ihrig 2014: 109-110). "Atatürk and his New Turkey were understood [by National Socialists] not only as 'one of us' in the Third Reich, but also as forerunners of the new kind of völkisch modernity" (ibid.: 148), and criticisms of an overemphasis of Kemal's role at Gallipoli eventually disappeared.

The centennial would resemble the climax of interest in the campaign, as it had been developed in Turkey over the years, yet it came at a time when Atatürk's legacy had been contested by a new form of Turkish nationalism (Uyar 2016: 165). The history of the defense of the Gallipoli Peninsula had eventually "earned its prominent position in Turkish history only after a lengthy and arduous journey, having long remained solely of interest to Turkish military officers and a small group of enthusiasts" (ibid.). For many years, there had only been local commemorative events, and the attention the battlefields received by Australian and British tourists had not been matched by Turkish visitors. The Ottoman leadership around Enver Pasha had already tried to use the victory of Gallipoli for political purposes, but after the War of Independence, Kemal would not pay too much attention to this issue when "[t]he glory and sacrifices of the Gallipoli war dead and the campaign's veterans faded in the glow of the newly established Turkish Republic" (ibid.: 168). In later years, however, the myth of Gallipoli was transformed, and sparked the new interest of people beyond the military ranks, who were interested in "a new form [of myth] in which 'Turkish' soldiers replaced the more multinational Ottoman or Anatolian troops and Atatürk became the commander who led them to victory. Gallipoli, unlike other campaigns, became the first defence of the motherland, although it carried no more significance than that" (ibid.: 170). The Gallipoli myth was consequently transformed agaon, "Turkified," so to speak, to match the new national narrative, and the events of the campaign were said to match the overtowering image of Atatürk as the first man of the new and strong nation of modern Turkey. The now "official" Gallipoli myth was fully developed in the 1960s, and only military historians would provide different evaluations of something that had already been interpreted within the public space of national memory.

In the early 1950s, a debate about the insufficient commemoration of the events in 1915/16 also finally led to a broader recognition of Gallipoli's role, and demands for proper memorials to the fallen soldiers were made. It would, however, not be until 21 August 1960 that the Dardanelles Martyrs' Memorial (Çanakkale Şehitler Abidesi) was finished and would address from then on the "sacrifice, victory and national pride" (ibid.: 173) of the Turkish nation under Kemal's leadership in relation to the last roar and victory of the Ottoman Empire. Further monuments would follow, and the area would eventually be turned into a national park, although the interest of the government in Gallipoli decreased for a while.

Conclusion

The rise of Turkish nationalism since the 2000s, however, again revived the interest in Gallipoli, although it tends to reinterpret the semiotic system again. It is no longer Kemal, who is so important. The unity of the Turkish soldiers, resisting foreign powers, seem to be more central now, especially since this narrative also fits a government, whose representatives rather want to see themselves reviving Ottoman great power policy, than to commemorate a secular Kemalism in

Turky today. Gallipoli, as well as Kemal Atatürk, are consequently signs within the system of Turkish nationalism that are currently redefined again. What the final outcome of this reprogramming of the semiotic system of the nation will look like in the end, is hard to be foretold. However, these signs had been redefined before and they will play a role in the future, although it is not exactly clear how this role will look like.

In 2011 the Turkish foreign minister, Dr Ahmet Davutoğlu, had declared that "[w]e are going to introduce the year of 2015 to the whole world. We will do so not as the anniversary of a genocide as some people have claimed and slandered, but as the anniversary of the glorious resistance of a nation, the anniversary of the resistance at Çanakkale" (cited in Macleod 2015: 154). The remembrance of Gallipoli, as well as the commemoration of Atatürk today, however, is problematic. First of all, both, the battle and the political leader, as semiotic elements of the Turkish nation, are connected to the history of the Ottoman Empire's participation in the First World War and the Armenian genocide. Secondly, the new religiously determined nationalism of Erdoğan is rather reluctant to acknowledge the success of Atatürk, who secularized Turkey and tried to modernize it according to more Western standards.

The commemoration of Atatürk and his role during the Gallipoli campaign are consequently being reconsidered and reframed at the moment, and are being related to a different form of nationalism that has been quite strong since the beginning of the 21st century and which is directed toward tradition and religious values rather than enlightenment and modernization. Since the political climate between Ankara and the EU has worsened due to conflicts in the region that created a "Neo-Ottomanist" expansionism by the Turkish government and which were directed toward political enemies, ethnic minorities, and foreign states, where Turkish migrants in the diaspora are drawn into the political struggles at home, the future of Turkish nationalism and the role Atatürk will play within it are currently being renegotiated. Time will eventually show which elements will be important for the reshaped nation of Turkey in the 21st century, but it is not yet clear which role the rise and impact of Kemal as well as the commemoration of Gallipoli are going to play.

References

Ahmad, Feroz. *The Young Turks: The Commettee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics 1908-1914*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1969.

Aksakal, Mustafa. *The Ottoman Road to War in 1914: The Ottoman Empire and the First World War*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.

Armstrong, Harold Cortenay. *Gray Wolf-Mustafa Kemal: An Intimate Study of a Dictator*. Freeport, NY 1972 [1932].

Aydıntaşbaş, Asli. "From Myth to Reality: How to Understand Turkey's Role in the Western Balkans." (2019). Accessed April 20, 2021. https://ecfr.eu/wp-content/uploads/from_myth_to_reality_how_to_understand_turkeys_role_in_the_western_balkans.pdf.

Barthes, Roland. *Elements of Semiology*, transl. by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith. New York: Hill and Wang, 1977.

Bedross, Der Matossian. *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014.

Beşikçi, Mehmet. "Mobilizing Military Labor in the Age of Total War: Ottoman Conscription before and during the Great War." In: *Fighting for a Living: A Comparative Study of Military Labour 1500-2000*, ed. Erik-Jan Zürcher, 547-580. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2014.

Besikçi, Mehmet. *The Ottoman Mobilization of Manpower in the First World War: Between Vo-luntarism and Resistance*. Leiden: Brill, 2012.

Çandar, Cengiz. "Atatürk's Ambiguous Legacy," *The Wilson Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (2000): 88-96.

Carlyon, Les A. *Gallipoli*. London: Bantam, 2003.

Ciddi, Sinan. *Kemalism in Turkish Politics: The Re-publican People's Party, Secularism and Nationalism*. London: Routledge, 2009.

Çinar, Alev. *Modernity, Islam, and Secularism in Turkey: Bodies, Places, and Time*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005.

Dincsahin, Sakir. *State and Intellectuals in Turkey: The Life and Times of Niyazi Berkes, 1908–1988*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015.
Eco, Umberto. *A Theory of Semiotics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979.
Erickson, Edward J. *Gallipoli: Command under Fire*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015.
Erickson, Edward J. *Gallipoli: The Ottoman Campaign* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2015).
Grüßhaber, Gerhardt. *The German Spirit in the Ottoman and Turkish Army, 1908-1938: A History of Military Knowledge*, Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2018.
Findley, Carter V. *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity: A History, 1789-2007*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010.
Genosko, Gary. *Critical Semiotics: Theory, from Information to Affect*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.
Hanioğlu, Şükrü M. *Preparation for a Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
Hanioğlu, Şükrü M. *Ataturk: An Intellectual Biography*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Press, 2011.
Hart, Peter. *Gallipoli*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
Haythornthwaite, Philip J. *Gallipoli 1915: Frontal Assault on Turkey*. London: Osprey, 1991.
Heberlein, Wolf. "Kemal Atatürk." *Zeitschrift für Politik* 27, no. 3 (1937): 168-172.
Hobsbawn, Eric, Terence Ranger. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
Hopkins-Weise, Jeff. *Blood Brothers: The ANZAC Genesis*. Auckland: Penguin NZ, 2007.
Ihrig, Stefan. *Atatürk in the Nazi Imagination*. Cambridge, Massachussets: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014.
Jacob, Frank. "The Construction of a Memorial Space: The Gallipoli Campaign and Spatial Remembrance." In *War and Memorials*, eds. Frank Jacob and Kenneth Pearl, 189-207. Paderborn: Schöning, 2019.
Jacob, Frank. *Gallipoli 1915/16: Britanniens bitterste Niederlage*. Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2020.
Jacob, Frank. "China's Eruption after the First World War: Japanese Imperialism, Western Jingoism, and the Awakening of Chinese Nationalism." In *Zeiten des Aufruhrs (1916–1921): Globale Proteste, Streiks und Revolutionen gegen den Ersten Weltkrieg und seine Auswirkungen*, eds. Marcel Bois and Frank Jacob, 171-213. Berlin: Metropol, 2020.
Kezer, Zeynep. *Building Modern Turkey: State, Space, and Ideology in the Early Republic*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015.
Kristeva, Julia. "Introduction: Le Lieu Sémiotique." In *Essays in Semiotics/Essais de Sémiotique*, eds. Julia Kristeva et al., 1-7. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1971.
Lévy-Aksu, Noémi and François Georgeon, eds. *The Young Turk Revolution and the Ottoman Empire: The Aftermath of 1908*. London: Bloomsbury, 2017.
Liddle, Peter. *The Gallipoli Experience Reconcidered*. Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2015.
Macleod, Jenny. *Gallipoli*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
Mango, Andrew. *From the Sultan to Atatürk: Turkey*. London: Haus Publishing, 2010.
McMeekin, Sean. "World War I and the Establishment of the Republic." In *The Routledge Handbook of Modern Turkey*, eds. Metin Heper and Sabri Sayari, 35-43. London: Routledge, 2012.
Moorehead, Alan. *Gallipoli*. London: London H. Hamilton, 1956.
Navaro-Yashin, Yael. *Faces of the State: Secularism and Public Life in Turkey*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002.
Ökten, Nazli. "An Endless Death and Eternal Mourning." In *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey*, ed. Esra Özyürek, 95-113. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2007.
Ozdemir, Hikmet. *The Ottoman Army 1914-1918: Disease and Death on the Battlefield*, Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2008.
Özkirimli, Umut. "The Changing Nature of Nationalism in Turkey: Actors, Discourses, and the Struggle for Hegemony." In *Symbiotic Antagonisms: Competing Nationalisms in Turkey*, eds. Ayse Kadioglu and Emin Fuat Keyman, 82-100. Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 2011.
Özyürek, Esra. "Miniaturizing Atatürk: Privatization of State Imagery and Ideology in Turkey." *American Ethnologist* 31, no. 3 (2004): 374-91.
Özyürek, Esra. *Nostalgia for the Modern: State Secularism and Everyday Politics in Turkey*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006.
Peirce, Charles S. *The Essential Peirce*, vol. 2., eds. Peirce edition Project. Bloomington I.N.: Indiana University Press, 1998.
Perk, Kadri. *Çanakkale Savaşları Tarihi*. 3 vols. İstanbul: Askeri Matbaa, 1940.
Prigge, Erich R. *Gallipoli: Der Kampf um den Orient, von einem offizier aus dem Stabe des Marschalls Liman von Sanders*. Berlin: A. Scherl, 1916.
Prior, Robin. *Gallipoli: The End of a Myth*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015
Reynolds, Michael A. *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires 1908-1918*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
Sohail, Khalid. *Prophets of Violence - Prophets of Peace: Understanding the Roots of Contem-*

porary Political Violence. Toronto: White Knight Publication, 2005.

Somay, Bülent. *The Psychopolitics of the Oriental Father: Between Omnipotence and Emasculation*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Tetik, Ahmet, ed. *Sofya Askerî Ataşesi Mustafa Kemal'in Raporları, Kasım 1913–Kasım 1914*. Ankara: ATASE Yayin-Iari, 2007.

Ulrichsen, Kristian C. *The First World War in the Middle East*. London: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Umiker-Sebeok, D. Jean. "Semiotics of Culture: Great Britain and North America." Annual Review of Anthropology 6 (1977): 121-135.

Üngör, Ugut Ü. *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1950*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Uyar, Mesut. "Remembering the Gallipoli Campaign: Turkish Official Military Historiography, War Memorials and Contested Ground." *First World War Studies* 7, no. 2 (2016): 165-91.

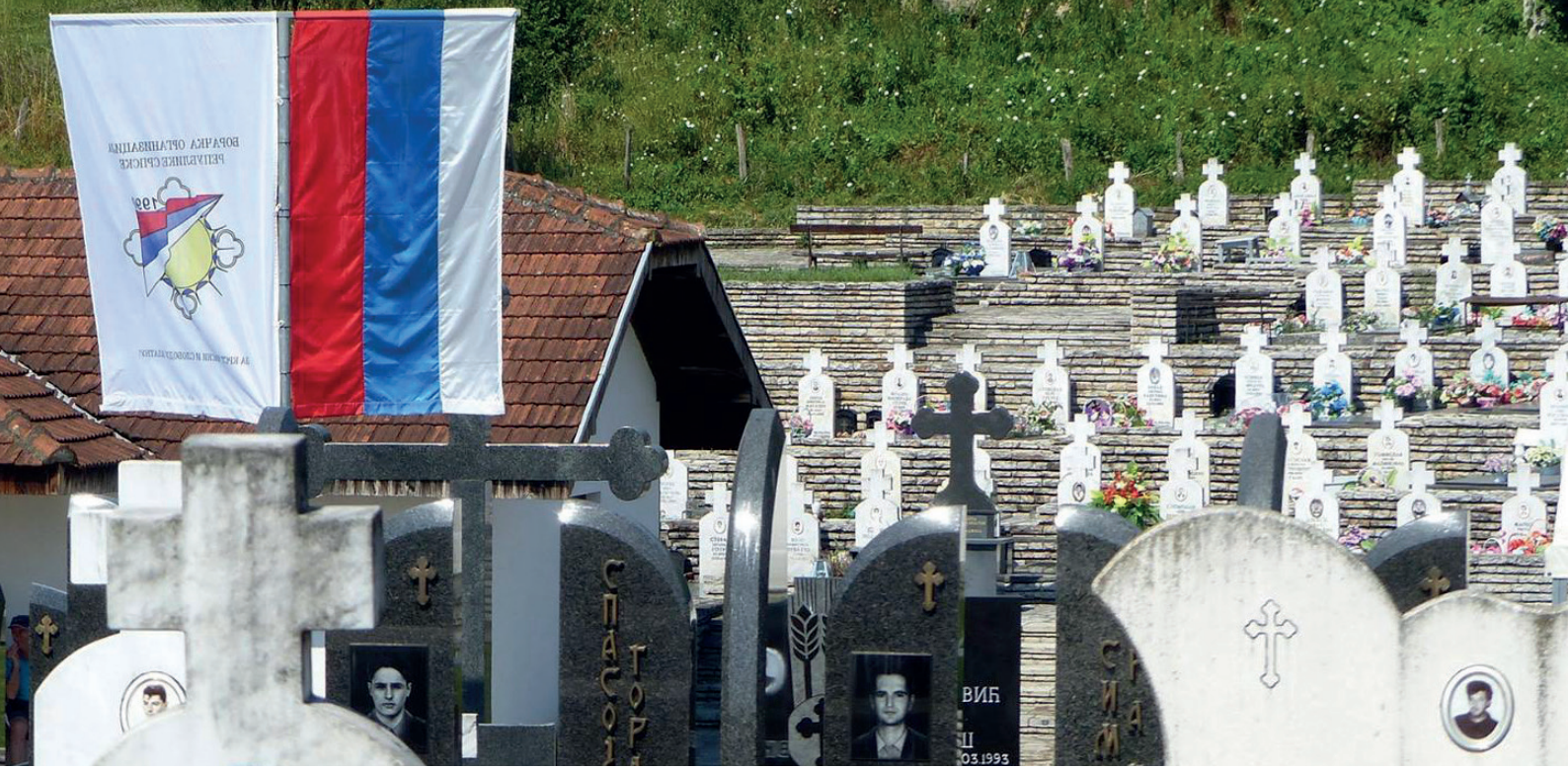
Vogel, Ezra F. "Nation Rebuilders: Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Lee Kuan Yew, Deng Xiaoping, and Park Chung Hee." In *The Park Chung Hee Era,* eds. Byung-Kook Kim and Ezra F. Vogel, 513-41. Massachussets: Harvard University Press, 2011.

Weiker, Walter F. "Atatürk as a National Symbol." *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin* 6, no. 2 (1982): 1-6.

Wilson, Christopher S. "Representing National Identity and Memory in the Mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 68, no. 2 (2009): 224-53.

Yavuz. Hakan M. *Islamic Political Identity in Turkey*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Zürker. Erik-Jan." In the Name of the Father, the Teacher and the Hero: The Atatürk Personality Cult in Turkey." In *Political Leadership, Nations and Charisma,* eds. Vivian Ibrahin and Margit Wunch, 129-42. London: Routledge, 2012.



https://doi.org/10.53123/GH_8_3

Violence in Republika Srpska's National Narrative

Sophie Gueudet

Norwegian Institute for International Affairs (NUPI)
sophie.gueudet@nupi.no

Abstract. This article investigates the integration of violence as a semiotic, cultural and his- torical phenomenon within the Bosnian-Serb national narrative by the government-backed dominant historiography. Based on the analysis of a corpus of historiographic works produced by historians of Republika Srpska, it seeks to interrogate how they have become entrepreneurs of historicising strategies turning violence into a momentum of the entity's history.

Keywords: Republika Srpska, former Yugoslavia, historiography, nationalism, political uses of the past.

1. Introduction

The semiotics of collective memories are more often than not conveyed by circulating signs that contribute to mold Nora's sites of memory (French, 2012). As such, they can either be used to unite a given population around shared memories of the past that structure the group or to stir divisions and conflicts among two or more distinct groups, with polarising collective memories being one of the fault lines. The cultural and social functions of those representations, signs and symbols of a collective past, whether violent or not, also shape the historical narrative of this past and therefore hold an eminently political value (De Zalia, Moeschberger, 2014, 1). This value proves to be even higher when it comes to a divided and violent past, as the semiotic, narrative and representation mechanisms once used to stir conflicts might

© Picture by Sophie Gueudet, *Bratunac Cemetery on the 12th of July 2016 for the celebration of Bosnian-Serb victims of the 1992-1995 war.*

later become tools for unification among a formerly warring population or might remain divisive in order to perpetuate the wartime dissensions.

When it comes to "symbols that bide and divide," the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina is worthy of study. In the 1990s, Western and sometimes local historiography and common knowledge usually considered the Western Balkans as a space of unresolved disputes, inherently belligerent peoples and therefore inevitable wars (Kaplan, 2005). This essentialist reading eludes the long-, middle- and short-term structural causes for the upsurge of high-scale violence that characterized the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1992 and 1995, among which were authoritarian and populist power, a corporate, corrupt and mafia state, and the instrumentalization of ethnic nationalism by those same leaders (Lukić, 2004; Ramet, 2009). It also fails to account for how this violence has been explained, represented and signified within post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina and how the specificities of the last conflict have endured in order to forge the polarised national narratives of the three constitutive peoples, Bosnian Muslims, Croats and Serbs.

This issue will constitute the core of this article, with a special focus on Republika Srpska, which is the predominantly Bosnian Serb-populated and Serb-governed federated entity of post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina, for which the reason is twofold. Firstly, while the three warring sides have to be held accountable for the atrocities of the war, the concentration of armaments, troops and material and financial supplies provided by the government in Belgrade strongly favored the army of Republika Srpska during the conflict and led to unparalleled manifestations of violence from its part, such as the siege of Sarajevo, the campaigns in Central and Eastern Bosnia between 1992 and 1993, and the fall of Goražde, Zepa and Srebrenica in the summer of 1995. The non-Serb historiography stresses how these brutal onslaughts resulted in the majority of the ethnic cleansing, forced displacement, mass murders and destructions that paved the war. Some scholars state that the entity was born from a criminal and genocidal endeavor (Gow, 2003), a reading also defended by predominantly Bosnian Muslim leaders to advocate for the dissolution of Republika Srpska. As a matter of fact, violence has surrounded Bosnian-Serb statehood since the proclamation of the entity on 9 January 1992, and semiotics of conflict, and more particularly semiotics of violence, have remained particularly vivid in the last two decades of peace following the Dayton Peace Agreement in November 1995.

How they have remained that vivid is the second reason why Republika Srpska proves a valid case study for one interested in the semiotics of violence in a post-war polity and which will be more particularly the core of this article. The study of the reactivation of divisive pasts in post-communist Europe, which can be seen through memory politics and quarrels over historiographic interpretations, have in the past decades been brought to scholars' attention (Mink and Bonnard, 2010; Mink, 2007). The state's intervention in the field of interpreting historical facts leads to the apparition of new strategies of historicization (Mink and Bonnard, 2010, 21) that are the common point among various institutional realities of reactivating the past. Those strategies rely on "representations of historical facts internalized through formal (for example at school) or informal (for example in family) socialization which have a potential for collective mobilization, necessary for political influence" (Mink, 2007, 17). With them appear new uses and new entrepreneurs of history, but also new configurations for the position of historians who can become, among other things, the artisans and users of a symbolic past designed to form the collective references of national history. Post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina has not been a stranger to the phenomenon, as the exhaustive work of Cecile Jouhanneau shows: the necessity to deal with the past

faces the contradictory injunctions of formal arrangements sought by international authorities and the real objectives of local authorities (Jouhanneau, 2019).

In the case of Republika Srpska, the complex history of violence it experienced during the war is an integral part of historiography politics in times of peace. It has been mobilized by successive governments to back up claims for extended statehood, to widen the divide with the central government in Sarajevo, and to stress the specific national identity of the Serbs of Bosnia and Herzegovina in comparison to their fellow constitutive peoples. Driven by a combined political and scientific engineering, signs, symbols and representations of violence in Republika Srpska fall directly into the category of those with the double function of uniting one group against another. The semiotics of violence, to be understood as the symbols and signs of both physical and rhetorical violence inflicted by or upon the Serbs of Bosnia and Herzegovina throughout the defined frame of their national history, have to be thought of as a signifier within the historiographic narrative produced in Republika Srpska. They provide a convenient means to analyze the fabrication and maintenance of a Bosnian-Serb identity territorially anchored in Republika Srpska as the historiography erects them as inherent expressions of nationhood (Elgenius, 2005, 302). This semiotics of violence must therefore, but not exclusively, be studied as a mirror of the nation and references of a complex notion of community. However, the contribution this article intends to make is not limited to accounting for expressions of the nation in the semiotics of violence that pave Republika Srpska's national narrative and reflecting on the construction of post-war Bosnian-Serb nationalism. It also, and mostly, seeks to interrogate how the historians of Republika Srpska have become entrepreneurs of historicising strategies by taking up semiotics of violence and turning them into a founding characteristic of the national narrative.

For the article to capture the mechanisms through which the dominant historiography has, over time, integrated violence as a semiotic, cultural and historical phenomenon within Bosnian-Serb national narrative, it will be based on the analysis of a corpus of historiographic works examined during research stays in Banja Luka and selected based on the following three criteria: the relevance of the topic in relation to the last war, the history of Republika Srpska and the Serb people; the academic position of its writer(s) in Republika Srpska (academic staff employed permanently or partially by a Republika Srpska university); and the date of publication (post-1995). These sources will be completed by the collection of press archives gathered at the National Library of Republika Srpska in Banja Luka, as well as materials from international organizations involved in wartime and post-conflict Bosnia and Herzegovina. Finally, it will rely on a prosopographic study of historians of Republika Srpska in order to identify the common characteristics of a group of historical actors based on systematic observation of careers and political involvement.

The demonstration is organized in three points. First, the proclamation and the state-building of Republika Srpska occurred in a highly turbulent paradigm of mass violence that historians have integrated and made consistent with a longitudinal history of violence, suffering and victimhood of the Serbs that is presented as a defining characteristic of the nation. Second, the very specific context in which historiography is produced in the entity tends to turn historians into producers of the dominant national narrative, and as a matter of fact to blur the divide between science and politics. And third, as national history occupies a growing place in the contemporary public debate, semiotics of violence become usable tools, dedicated to supporting historicising strategies and a political agenda of reclaiming statehood, as the 2016 constitutional crisis around the celebration of the National Day of Republika Srpska proves.

2. A History of Violence: Its Semiotics as a Founding Paradigm in the National Narrative of Republika Srpska

On 21 December 1991, Radovan Karadžić declared in front of the newly founded Assembly of the Serb People of Bosnia and Herzegovina that the goals Serbs pursued could be achieved in peace and that war would not bring anything that could not be done peacefully. In 1992, however, the Serb Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina proclaimed unilaterally that it had gone too far down the warpath. At the sixteenth session of the Assembly, both Karadžić, then President of Republika Srpska, and General Ratko Mladić, Chief Commander of the Republika Srpska Army, disclosed the war goals and the military plans to be carried out. Karadžić enunciated six "strategic objectives" for the Serbian people of Bosnia and Herzegovina:

1. Drawing state borders between Republika Srpska and the rest of BiH
2. Drawing a corridor between Semberija and Krajina in order to connect RS and RSK (Plan Most)
3. Drawing another corridor in the Drina Valley in order to connect the territories held by RS along the border with Serbia (Plan Drina)
4. Establishing the border of RS via the Una and Neretva rivers
5. Partitioning Sarajevo between Serbs and Muslims
6. Providing RS with access to the sea (Karadzić, in Donia, 2012).

Given the territorial imbrication of the constitutive peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the *opština* were not, by an overwhelming majority, populated by a Serb majority. Therefore, the question of non-Serbs in Republika Srpska was raised very quickly by the authorities after the proclamation of the aspiring state. This issue was presented, in the words of the deputy, as twofold: first, it was absolutely necessary to prevent non-Serbs from settling in the territories claimed by Republika Srpska and, at the same time, to discourage the non-Serbs who had already settled from staying. In December 1991, even before the war began, a deputy expressed the concerns raised by the presence of the Muslim population in the region of Krajina in front of the National Assembly (Kuprešanin in Donia, 2012, 161). According to him, the presence of 200-300,000 Muslims in the area did not sit well with Bosnian-Serb plans and might even be detrimental to them, especially in terms of housing once other Bosnian Serbs came to settle in those lands. This question found itself at the heart of the debates for the rest of the war and was an object of discord between the civilian government and military command.

The resort to ethnic cleansing, through the systematic displacement and/or mass murder of non-Serb populations, aimed, as Marie-Janine Calic puts it, to "break military resistance by the Bosniak population and secure what they called the vital 'corridor of life'" (Calic, 2009, 126), but also, as a result, to change the ethnic structure of administrative units where a majority of Serbs had not lived prior to the war. When comparing the figures, it is quite clear that the ethnic balance reversed in originally mixed areas, such as Foča, where Bosniaks and Croats, who used to comprise 51 percent of the population in 1991, were almost all gone by the end of 1992 (Calic, 2009, 125-127). The same goes for *opštinas* like Zvornik, Bratunac, Ključ and Sanski Most, that is, zones of strategic interest that happened to be populated by a significant number of non-Serbs before the war. The Srebrenica massacre of 10-11 July 1995 was the climax of this strategy when more than 30,000 persons from the Srebrenica-Žepa "safe havens" were forced to flee and between 6,500 and 8,800 men were slaughtered after the VRS (*Vojska Republike Srpske*, the Army of Republika Srpska) conquered the zone (Calic, 2009, 129).

This incredibly brutal and multifaceted violence was not the sole fact of the Serb military and paramilitary but was rather a structural aspect of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (United Nations Security Council, 1994). Nevertheless, even though not unique, it must be con-

sidered as an indissociable element of the process of the constitution, nationalization and statization of Republika Srpska and, more particularly, not only in times of war but also in times of peace. Therefore, it is worth focusing on the semiotic mechanisms surrounding the issue of the last war, its mass violence and atrocities, and one of its outcomes, that is, the recognition of Republika Srpska as a federated entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Dayton Peace Agreement.

These mechanisms mostly rely on the narrative of the "war for the defense of the homeland." They come to signify that the upsurge of violence committed by the Republika Srpska Army and connected or disconnected paramilitaries during the war was imperative and legitimate. They are particularly visible in the historiographic production concerning the war. Indeed, the narrative on the Serbs fighting for the "defense of the homeland" during the Bosnian war holds a particularly federative potential and grants it a key place in writing the "national novel." The strategy of labeling and conceptualizing the Bosnian war as such conditioned both the dominant historiography and the political discourses related to the conflict. The use of the term "homeland" to describe the Bosnian-Serb war goals reveals much of what its historians want to transmit: fighting this war was, on the Bosnian-Serb side, lawful and just.

For instance, in *Istorija Republike Srpske*, Čedomir Antić and Nenad Kecmanović (2016) make a point of the suppression by the SRBiH Assembly (National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia) of the right for opštine to exert their constitutional right to secession and instead established the Council for the Equality of the Peoples. Therefore, the creation of the Assembly of the Serbian People of BiH is depicted as a legitimate response to the process towards independence impulsed against the will of the Bosnian-Serb representatives and of the Bosnian-Serbs as a constitutive people (Antić and Kecmanović, 2016, 306). Hence, the outbreak of the war could not be read, in that perspective, as a manifestation of Serb and Serbian irredentism, but rather as an act to defend Yugoslavia, torn apart by the Bosniaks' and Croats' undue and unilateral will for independence. In the book, no mention is made of the other violent actions led by SDS (Serb Democratic Party) activists in towns other than Sarajevo, for instance Mostar, Goražde and Bosanski Brod, where they were the first ones to fuel the tensions (Ramet, 2006, 427). Second of all, high-scale operations of ethnic cleansing were committed by Serbian paramilitaries against non-Serb populations throughout the entire war without necessarily responding to previous aggression, as was the case for Bijelina, for instance (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, 1997). The foundational meaning of this truncated narrative is to deny that the Republika Srpska government and Belgrade had prepared for war since the very first steps taken by the SRBiH Assembly towards independence (Antić and Kecmanović, 2016, 335). According to the historians, the reason for being of the "war for defending the homeland" lies in the fact that Serbs could not accept the dissolution of their state, which had had a detrimental impact on them, and simply responded to that.

Indeed, the thesis of the "war for defending the homeland" cannot sustain itself if historians do not present the unfolding of the events as spontaneous and uncontrollable, since the defensive aspect would then be undermined. In that regard, the historiography shows the role of Yugoslavia as a political actor and that of the JNA (Yugoslav People's Army) as a military one as something remote, punctual and not structured. It is unclear whether this "homeland" describes Bosnia or Yugoslavia; however, the historiography rejects the intervention of the Yugoslav military forces along with the VRS and adheres to the version corroborated by the authorities of both governments, that is, the JNA never intervened on Bosnian soil after its withdrawal in April 1992. Subsequently, the "war for defending the

homeland" also relies on the labeling of the conflict as an intra-state one, a civil war allegedly led without backup, at least on the Bosnian-Serb side, from exogenous military forces. This historiographic dimension proves crucial for understanding how the Serbian and Bosnian-Serb dominant historiographies reject claims of irredentism coming from local and international historians as well as officials.

The military interventions of Croatia to support the HVO (Croatian Defence Council) that destabilized the front and made the VRS lose ground are then vehemently denounced as aggressions and parts of a broader strategy to harm Republika Srpska and the Serbs as a whole (Spaić, 2008; Velimirović, 2012). The book published by the Republika Srpska Bureau for relations with the ICTY (International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia) in 2008 on the "Aggression led by the Republic of Croatia on the territory of Republika Srpska" reports that the Croatian military campaign consisted of an "occupation of the territory of Republika Srpska" and provoked an exodus of its population and a breach of its sovereignty (Velimirović, 2012, 27). The NATO bombings of Bosnian-Serb positions during the summer of 1995 are depicted in the same light as the Croatian deployment of troops: as an unfair targeting of the Serbs in a context of civil war for a conflict in which all parties should be held equally responsible. The historiography denies that the Serbs led a high-scale campaign of ethnic cleansing as part of the territorial and political war goals and "the vision of perpetrators that had been imposed on them" (Kojić, 2017, 234). Under the guise of narrating in a new light, different from the academic and political readings that are dominant in the international arenas, some voluntary omissions, mitigations, minimizations, and sometimes historical distortions are at work. The dominant national narrative in Republika Srpska knowingly excludes central historical elements related to the war and its unfolding, for instance, by alluding that the Serbian paramilitaries such as those of Šešelj or Arkan formed spontaneously to defend Serbian land and people instead of having responded to Belgrade's orders (Vukusić, 2019, 256-272), or to the fact that the JNA paved the way for the formation of the VRS by leaving Bosnian-Serb staff, weapons (including heavy artillery) and ammunitions behind in the wake of its withdrawal (Gow, 2003).

The narrative of the past war must be integrated into a broader one about the historical sufferings of the Serbs that has become a topos in the literature. The historiography describes them as targeted victims who were attacked precisely because of what they fought for or what they were by essence: Serbs. The post-socialist period marked the end of the institutionally-imposed silence about the extent and the scale of the crimes committed by the Independent State of Croatia against the Serbs and the calling into question of the institutional narrative backed by two reports unveiled by the regime, one from Tito himself and one from the "State Commission for establishing the crimes of the occupying forces and their supporters" (Sindbæk, 2012, 52). Globally speaking, the historiography, as shared by the communist regimes, consisted of depicting the war as a struggle between two distinct factions: the Partisans on one side and their opponents on the other, terms encompassing the Axis, the Ustaša and the Četniks as well, to the great displeasure of the next generations of Serbian historians (Sindbæk, 2012, 41). Putting Četniks and Ustaša on the same scale and not acknowledging the anti-Serb nature of the NDH (Independent State of Croatia) regime and the persecutions that resulted from it has been read in post-socialist Serb historiography as supplementary proof of the absence of emphasis on the suffering of Serbs throughout history. The socialist policy of not directly confronting the reality of the facts led to the use, from the perspective of nationalistic mobilization, of distorted figures and historical manipulations at the dawn of Yugoslavia's dissolution by Serbian intellectuals and politicians. Indeed, it

helped fuel the narrative according to which Socialist Yugoslavia had discriminated against the Serbs and built itself against them from the start, as well as the narrative regarding the potential risks, if Serbia's ruling elites did not awaken, of seeing the emerging Croatian politicians striving for independence and achieving the irredentist project of a Greater Croatia (Krestić, 1983, 375-431; Krestić, 1998). As a matter of fact, those maneuvres endured, and the sensitivity of the issue makes it a very useful historiographic subject to insert into the national narrative, especially into one in the making, as in Republika Srpska.

The common thesis is that, once again, the suffering of the Serbs is overlooked and even denied, and a unitary country has been rebuilt without solving those pending issues and punishing the criminals who committed crimes against the Serbs. In many works, a comparison between Jasenovac and Srebrenica appears, followed by the argument that one cannot ask the Serbs to recognize the genocide in Srebrenica without recognizing the genocide against the Serbs under the NDH, since its severity resulted in between 100,000 and 300,000 victims, of whom approximately 50,000 died in Jasenovac (Ramet, 2006; Pavlovic, 2008). This parallelism aims to defend the thesis according to which the suffering of the Serbs is equal to or even worse, in terms of time and quantity, than any other national group in former Yugoslavia, but is not worth the same in the eyes of other constitutive peoples and the international community. The document *Report about Case Srebrenica* provides the best example of the claims by the dominant historiography that violence, sorrow and suffering punctuated the history of Serbs in BiH and that it has been voluntarily obfuscated.

The account was not stricto sensu a scientific text, however. From the start, it undoubtedly carried a historiographic intention as well as a political value. It was commissioned by the government to the Republika Srpska Bureau for relations with the ICTY in order to comply with the demands of the HR and other international actors urging Republika Srpska to shed light on the events following the capture of Srebrenica by the VRS. Its publication in 2004 provoked huge turmoil within Bosnian and international circles. Castigated by the ICTY as "one of the worst examples of revisionism in relation to the mass executions of Bosnian Muslims committed in Srebrenica in July 1995" and by the HR as "tendentious, preposterous and inflammatory," the main argument of the report, apart from the fact that the actions conducted by the VRS were perfectly appropriate in a context of war, was to insist on how Srebrenica and its surroundings became through time a *locus terribilis* for the Serbs, and that the crimes committed against them in the area in WWII and at the beginning of the Bosnian war (especially in Bratunac) partly justified the firmness of the VRS in July 1995 (Bureau for relations with the ICTY, 2002). The introduction of the reports therefore states that "the goal of this report is to present the whole truth about crimes committed in the Srebrenica region regardless of the nationality of the perpetrators of the crimes and the time when they were committed" (Bureau for relations with the ICTY, 2002, 5), implying that emphasis would also be placed on the Serb victims in the area during the war. The report begins with the enunciation of five postulates:

> [T]he events in Srebrenica can not be considered as detached from the crimes committed in the rest of the territory of BiH; events connected to Srebrenica can not be cut off from events around the Srebrenica-Bratunac region; the events of Srebrenica can not be cut off from what happened between 92-95; the events in Srebrenica can not be seen as specific to a nationality, particularly in relation to the crimes committed by the so-called "BiH army" and possible crimes committed by the VRS; truth about the above-mentioned events is important in the process of reconciliation and peace, because it can not be done without justice; the perpetrators of crimes committed against Serbs between 92-5 can still go freely, while the RS holds information about crimes and perpetrators and gave them to the UN General Assembly and Security Council. (Bureau for relations with the ICTY, 2002, 5)

The rest of the report unfolds as a tribute to the "depressive history of Serbs in Srebrenica," detailing how Serbs from Bratunac and Srebrenica had faced attempts to exterminate them carried out during WWII by the SS Handžar legion, composed of Bosniaks, and how the demographics testified to the extent reached by the process, pointing out that, before WWII, Serbs represented 50,6% of the population in Srebrenica, compared to 35,6% in 1991 (Bureau for relations with the ICTY, 2002, 12). Arguing that this historical fact had been disregarded by those who pressure Republika Srpska to shed light on the 1995 massacre, the report also points out the lack of consideration for the Serbs who found shelter in the area after fleeing the Bosniak-controlled territory and that they still lived in terrible conditions without drinking water, home repairs, basic sanitary infrastructures or economic prospects (Republic Statistical Office of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 2002, 9). The construction of a victimhood discourse together with a structural denial and permissiveness for the exactions committed characterized the content of the report throughout.

The *Report about Case Srebrenica* hence participated in the making of a "suffering history" whose narration represents a common denominator of a Serb identity among the Republika Srpska population that overlooks the very recent and artificial creation of the entity (Benbassa, 2007). Violence is therefore not only signified in the national narrative but aestheticized and magnified, so those who suffered from it as well as, by extension, those who inflicted it as justified retribution became pantheonized as national heroes. This pattern in the Bosnian Serb national narrative is not circumscribed to an historiographic issue, but also has to do with contemporary Republika Srpska politics as it was used to fuel nationalist rhetoric against the central government in Sarajevo, the unicity of the Bosnian states and the other constitutive peoples. It was favored and fuelled by the conditions of historiographic production and the historicising strategy implemented by Republika Srpska governments since Dayton, which puts historians into the position of creators of the national narrative.

3. Historians, Historicizing Strategies and the Production of the Semiotics of Violence

The production of the national narrative by historians stems from a policy of research administration and attribution of funding that favored topics related to the history of Republika Srpska, the history of the Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the history of violence as a founding paradigm for their quest for statehood. A typology of the means of historiographic production reveals that they depend mostly on direct government financing through channels that are not only those of the Ministry of Education. The historiographic production from the main universities of Republika Srpska, namely the University of Banja Luka and the University of East Sarajevo, proves interesting when examining the trajectories of their most visible scholars. Indeed, in contemporary history in particular, the "national history" of Republika Srpska became one of the shared themes among their respective research interests. Subsequently, many of the history or philosophy faculty members' focus was on topics related to the medieval, modern and contemporary political, social or cultural history of the Serbs either in BiH as a whole or in localities that nowadays constitute parts of the Republika Srpska territory. Publications of the faculties reveal the predominance of national history with a focus on the struggle for achieving statehood in the research interests of the faculty, with works like Young Republic of Srpska (BiH) at the beginning of the 21st century, Science and education: essential factors of Serbian spirituality, One hundred and twenty years since the beginning of the struggle of the Serbian people in Bosnia and Herzegovina for church-school self-government (1896-2016), and the rise of Serbs in Herzegovina and Bosnia (1875-1878).

This proves that in the academic circles of Republika Srpska universities, the elaboration of the entity's national history is continuing apace. To this must be added the historiographic production stemming from institutional orders, plethoric in comparison to the overall publications in the field of history. Most of the time, those books inscribe themselves in a commemorative context related to the history of Serbs, of the polity or of its institutions. For instance, the book *25 Years of the National Assembly of Republika Srpska* was commissioned by the institution in 2016 to three historians: Bojan Stojnić, also the director of the National Archives, Verica M. Stošić and Goran Đuran. In their advertising for the book, which took the shape of a feuilleton published in the local newspaper *Glas Sprske*, the authors described the historical foundations of the Republika Srpska and its National Assembly as a century old, fluctuating in the wake of "Serbian rebellions in the Ottoman Empire and under the Austro-Hungarian occupation, with great engagement of the political and social leadership of the Serbian people" (Stojnić, Stošić & Đuran, 2016). In the book, the National Assembly of Republika Srpska is placed in a long tradition of self-determination and searches for national autonomy, defined as "categorical historical imperatives." The proclamation of the National Assembly of Republika Srpska resulted then from this long process, and the institution was considered as "the guarantor of the Serbian national interest and an expression of the general will of the Serbian people" (Stojnić, Stošić & Đuran, 2016, 7).

Another case of historiographic work commissioned by the government can be found in the *Istorija Republika Srpske*. Funded directly by the Presidency of Republika Srpska and resulting from a common involvement and close collaboration between the authors and staff from various institutions of Republika Srpska in order to provide archival and other types of resources, the book was quickly translated into English in order to reach an international audience, especially among the diaspora communities. It obeyed the same logics as those that were behind the publication of the anniversary book on the National Assembly, since it was depicted by the authors during the promotional campaign as a "testimony of the struggle of the Serbian people for the creation of Republika Srpska and a kind of historical view of the movement in this area." Again, the description of the work stresses the historical depth that backed the justification for the existence of Republika Srpska as a territory and supports the national narrative about Republika Srpska as a result of a history of violence.

The government can also rely on its own institutions to produce historiographic texts. Among them is the work of the Republican Institute for Researching War, War Crimes and Missing Persons. This institute, with which we have been able to conduct interviews, observations and archival consultations, depends on the Ministry of Justice, even though it has a mostly research-centered vocation. The institute has been granted its own publishing house in order to enable the broader diffusion of its research. Gathering legal scholars, sociologists, archaeologists and historians, these researchers collaborate on various projects that aim to shed light on war-related historical events that have directly impacted the Serbs either in Republika Srpska when focusing on the past war or in Bosnia and the broader area when focusing on WWII and the NDH ruling. Among their publications are *Aggression led by Croatia in Republika Srpska: The Occupation of Mrkonjic Grad (Sept 95-Feb 96)*, *Women Victims of War in Republika Srpska (1992-1995)*, *Political Anatomy of One Judgement* on the Hague trial of Radovan Karadžić, and *War Crimes Committed against Serbs in the Municipality of Visoko* (Velimirović, 2012; Vranješ & Miodragović, 2016). The institute also publishes books close to its own research thematic and whose historiographic line fits in with it as well, that is, the interpretation of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a civil war in which the Serbs were depicted unfairly as the perpetrators.

For instance, the book *Undercover Operation at Tuzla's Kapija Square* by Ilija Branković denies any involvement by the Bosnian-Serb military in a bombing targeting civilians in Tuzla in 1994 and instead accuses the army of BiH (Branković, 2016). While the author is a retired General of the VRS who never, during his active career, held any research position, the institute nevertheless published and promoted the book at the same level as its own. Also, as a governmental organ of Republika Srpska, it was able to sign a Protocol of Cooperation with Radio Television Republike Srpske in order to "work together to build a culture of memory through media reporting and certain documentary content of RTRS on the topic of the past defensive-homeland war, and with the professional capacities of the Republic Centre ... train the RTRS staff on how and in what way to transfer certain content, as well as marking important historical dates regarding the suffering of the Serbian people" (RTRS, 2009). Therefore, this means of producing historiographic knowledge, because of its proximity with the government, can benefit from multiple opportunities of diffusion through other governmental channels and thus, as the institutional commands, from a larger audience not restricted to the scientific circles.

Despite their variety, all these initiatives have some common points not only in their making but also, and more particularly, in their expected outcomes: they benefit from funds invested by the authorities in order to achieve, in the long-run, the narration of the Republika Srpska national story, thus conferring the entity with some historical depth. This way, a dominant and state-approved historiography will come to help legitimize the existence of Republika Srpska as a territorial and political outcome of the history of Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It underlines an extreme porosity between scientific production and politics in the first place, including by the governmental political discourses taking up the most salient patterns of the historiography.

The porosity between academia and politics proves much more visible when focusing again on the trajectories of the people who produce this dominant historiographic knowledge. This system lies on two types of actors, who might be referred to as "historians involved in politics" and "politicians involved in historiography." Coming back to the cases of Nenad Kecmanović and Čedomir Antić, the authors of *Istorja Republike Srpska*, their biographies directly insert them into the first group. Kecmanović, a Bosnian-Serb, got involved in politics in the early 1990s, following the authorization to hold free and fair elections in BiH. Contrary to most Bosnian-Serb intellectuals and scholars from Sarajevo, he did not rally the emerging SDS and rather chose to serve as the main candidate of the SRSJ in BiH, even though he had been offered the position of President of the new political formation. Multi-positioned in his academic career, since he taught at Belgrade University and at the same time in Banja Luka and East Sarajevo after the war, he has also experienced a political career in parallel. He served as a Senator in the Republika Srpska Parliament from 1996 and was reinstalled to this office in 2009 by the President, Milorad Dodik. Then, even though he did not confirm or deny it during a meeting with Kecmanović in Belgrade, it is quite likely that, at the time of appointing two historians to carry out the monographs on Republika Srpska's history, Dodik found it suitable to pick someone whose political line he could agree with. Kecmanović has also been very vocal about his lack of belief in the survival of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a unitary country, to the point of entitling his newest book, in which he relates the allegedly structurally conflicting dynamics that have weakened Bosnia and Herzegovina since Dayton, *Nemoguća država* (meaning, "the impossible country").

The members in the category of "politicians involved in historiography," though less numerous, undeniably participate in the elaboration of an official history. Since these are already public characters, the

impact and outreach of their books surpass those of scholars in the public debate. Among them, the case of Slobodan Nagradić deserves to be focused on. Born in 1957 in Gradiška, he oscillated throughout his career between politics, high public service and academia. He served as an advisor to the Minister for Human Rights and Refugees in the Government of Republika Srpska, after which he served for almost a decade as Vice-President and President of the Progressive Democratic Party (PDP), and today he is the Director of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural, Historical and Natural Heritage of Republika Srpska (Nagradić, 2016). After running unsuccessfully for President (2006) and Deputy at the Republika Srpska National Assembly (2010), he left the party for good and, from his office at the Institute, became very prolific when it comes to book-writing. His book *Bosna vs Srpska* points out the antagonistic nature of the relations between the central state and the entity without any possibility for compatibility regarding Republika Srpska's complete political fulfillment within a failed state (Nagradić, 2015). Given that he has acted for most of his career in the decision making-circles of the government of Republika Srpska, it seems very likely that his evolution had been conditioned, not to say favored, by his support of the dominant historiographic patterns that punctuate scientific production in the entity.

4. Historicizing Strategy and the Case of the Referendum on 9 January

The political signification held by the semiotics of violence in the Republika Srpska national narrative, reinforced by the conditions of historiographic production in the entity, was notably translated into the controversy about the National Day of Republika Srpska, which ended up in the most important constitutional crisis post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina had had to face. As Susanne Citron states in the *Le mythe national*, "what we take for [our] history is the result of a writing of the past by elites in the service or support of different powers" (Citron, 2017, 207). This apologetic historiography of the state underlies the national imaginary and is much more political than scientific. In Republika Srpska, this phenomenon is all the more visible as the scientific community is totally locked by these purveyors of official history, and a critical approach of the discipline is still not present enough. The official history serves to spread the sense of national belonging necessary to the government project, but also to make it legitimate in intellectual terms. It participates all the same in building a community of references, a space of common Serbian references in the territory of Republika Srpska, the transmission and solidification of an identity conceived by the elites. When it comes to the entity's violent past, the semiotics of violence have been integrated within the historicising strategy in order to fuel the political rhetoric and perpetuate symbols of unity among the Serbs and disunity between them and the other constitutive peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

On 25 November 2015, the BiH Constitutional Court ruled that the Law on Holidays of Republika Srpska was not in conformity with Article I(2) of the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Constitutional Court of Bosnian and Herzegovina, 2015). In other words, the Court ruled that the National Day of Republika Srpska, marked on 9 January, does not fit the constitutional principle of non-discrimination on a religious and/or national basis since it excluded the entity's non-Serb population from the celebration. A review of the constitutionality of the Law on Holidays had been requested by Bakir Izetbegović in 2013, then a Bosnian Muslim member of the BiH government, who called out the National Day of Republika Srpska as a celebration of the Declaration Proclaiming the Republic of the Serb People of Bosnia and Herzegovina of 1992, which proclaimed "territorial demarcation between them and political communities of other peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina" (*Glas Sprske*, 2013).

Here, the symbols that bide and divide are at work in what turned out to be

a memory crisis at the same time, with collective group memory weaponized to harm the memory and commemorations of another (Assman, 2006, 20) and a constitutional crisis with the government of Republika Srpska run by SNSD (Alliance of Independent Social Democrats) leader Milorad Dodik declaring the organization of a referendum for Republika Srpska citizens to vote on the validity of the Constitutional Court's decision. In this case, two competing narratives faced each other, as the Bosnian-Muslim narrative of the war of 1992-1995 has been reciprocally shaped by the same mechanisms as the Bosnian-Serb one. While the Bosnian-Muslim leaders considered the celebration of 9 January as the celebration of the irredentist and genocidal project carried out by Republika Srpska leaders of the time, their Republika Srpska counterparts undermined the legitimacy of celebrating Bosnian independence, on 1 March, as a symbol of denying the Bosnian-Serb right to self-determination. Igor Radojičić, then the Serb representative at the tripartite BiH Presidency, depicted Independence Day as "perceived by the Serbian people in this country as a symbol of the majorization of two peoples above the third" (*Politika*, 2014). According to him, "Republika Srpska will never agree to celebrate 1 March because a referendum on the secession of BH from the then SFRY was held that day, which was the prelude to the bloody war" (*Politika*, 2014). In fact, Republika Srpska officials used the same argumentation as Izetbegović in his complaint to the Constitutional Court to contest the celebration, based on the statements that it should not be imposed as a binding holiday in the whole country because it is accepted differently by the constitutive peoples and that it is the date of the Federation of BiH, which will never be accepted in Republika Srpska.

The public and political indignation raised by the Constitutional Court's judgment among the Republika Srpska's Serb citizens and their leadership reveal how the semiotics of violence served their role in the national narrative. The violence depicted as being a century long by the dominant historiography had been signified as indissociable from a quest for statehood that climaxed with the past war. Consequently, 9 January falls into this semiotic dynamic within the Bosnian-Serb collective memory, and the declaration of its unconstitutionality gave an opportunity to the Republika Srpska political leaders to put this collective memory at the service of politics, and more particularly at the service of making a stance against the central government in Sarajevo. Benefiting from a seemingly sacred union between the nationalist parties on this issue, Dodik had repeatedly promised a referendum to assess whether or not 9 January would remain the National Day of Republika Srpska (*Politika*, 2016). In April 2015, the National Assembly of Republika Srpska voted for a Declaration, in prevision of the ruling, that "expresses its full will and readiness to use all legal and political means in order to defend legitimate interests and to preserve the identity of Republika Srpska confirmed by the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina" (National Assembly of Republika Srpska, 2015).

After months of confrontation and heated debates between Banja Luka and Sarajevo, on 15 July 2016, the National Assembly of Republika Srpska crossed the Rubicon. With an absolute majority of the present representatives (64 out of 83), a "Decision on calling a referendum" to assess the binding character of the Decision of the Bosnian Constitutional Court on the territory of Republika Srpska was adopted (National Assembly of Republika Srpska, 2016). Without any surprise and with no major obstacle able to prevent the government from carrying out its objective, the referendum took place, as planned, on 25 September. The turnout was minimal, barely enough to validate the results according to the Law on Referendums and Popular initiatives. In total, 55% of Republika Srpska voters went to the polls, but 99,81% of them answered positively to the question "Do you

agree that 9 January should be marked and celebrated as the National Day of Republika Srpska?" Parts of the media that were supportive of Dodik and the SNSD relayed messages from officials that 25 September embodied the day when democracy rose in Republika Srpska and when the Serbs stood up for their national interests (*Glas Srpske*, 2016).

The calls for participation in the referendum, if they only mobilized those in Republika Srpska who were already inclined towards ethnonationalist discourses, showed how the narrative of violence and conflict being historically linked to achieving statehood has shaped collective representations on the necessity to fight for Republika Srpska's integrity when threatened. Referenda, because they testified to the ability of local autonomist or secessionist leaders to mobilize the population of the territory they intended to govern, had provided them with significant political leverage. Republika Srpska was no exception in that regard, and this shows the power of a shared national narrative when it comes to political mobilization.

5. Conclusion

The semiotics of violence have been intermingled with the Bosnian-Serb national narrative to a deep point, so deep that they still influence the perceptions and representations of Republika Srpska's contemporary politics, as shown by the example of the National Day referendum. They have been shaped within the national narrative as a deep expression of nationhood and as indissociable from the quest for statehood pursued by the Serbs of Bosnia and Herzegovina before and after Dayton. Systemic upsurges of war crimes, mass deaths and ethnic cleansing are, according to the dominant historiography that shaped the national narrative, more fights in the century-long struggle for self-determination, freedom and statehood, in which violence paradoxically becomes an incidental part of the struggle when committed by the Serbs but a founding paradigm when committed against them.

It is worth reflecting on how the semiotics of violence meet the semiotics of nationhood and statehood in the national narrative of Republika Srpska. The semiotics of violence play a great part in presenting a symbolic version of the Bosnian-Serb identity. Apart from historiography and the making of the national narrative, the convergence between semiotics of violence and semiotics of nationhood is manifested elsewhere in the public space. Popular celebrations and commemorations constitute another field in which the overlapping of the semiotics of violence and nationhood can be observed, and they participate in the same logics of the historicising strategy depicted throughout the article. Every year on 12 May, the authorities, regardless of the political party in power, still commemorate the Day of the VRS, even though it has been incorporated among the joint armed forces of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Negationism does not hold back commemorative ceremonies, which unfold every year as high-scale denials of any wrongdoing that could have been committed by the VRS and its leaders. The *Dan Vojske Republike Srpske* therefore attests that both the intellectual and political elites of Republika Srpska have embraced and assumed on their behalf the main historiographic lines as conveyed in Republika Srpska: the war of 1992-1995 as a war to defend the homeland and Republika Srpska's aborted historical progression towards statehood.

References

Sources

Corpus of Works about the Historiography in the Republika Srpska

Antić, Č. and Kecmanović, N. (2016). *Istorija Republike Srpske*. Beograd: Nedeljnik.

Bogićević, V. (2015). *Assassination in Sarajevo: original stenograph notes from the main hearing against Gavrilo Princip and his comrades, held in Sarajevo in 1914*. Banja Luka.

Branković, I. (2016). *Undercover Operation at Tuzla's Kapija Square*. Banja Luka: Republički centar za istraživanje rata, ratnih zločina i traženje nestalih lica.

Kecmanović, N. (2007). *Немогућа држава: Босна и Херцеговина*. Beograd: Filip Višnjić.

Krestić, V. (1983). "Политички, привредни и културни живот у Хрватској и Славонији." In *Историја српског народа*, Vol. 6, Part 2, 375–431. Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga.

Krestić, V. (1998). *Геноцидом до Велике Хрватске*. Beograd: Matica Srpska and Arhiv Srbije.

Kojić, M. (2017). *Намјерном силом на Републику Српску*. Banja Luka: Republicki centar za istrazivanje ratnih zlocina.

Predrag, L. (2018). *Република Српска у Одбрамбено-отаџбинском рату*. Banja Luka: Republički centar za istraživanje rata, ratnih zločina i traženje nestalih lica.

Nagradić, S. (2015). *Босна versus Српска: социолошко-политиколошко-историографске енеаде о Републици Српској и БиХ*. Banja Luka.

Spaić, J., ed. (2008). *Агресија Републике Хрватске на општине у Републици Српској: Нови Град, Костајница и Козарска Дубица у септембру 1995. године, Службени гласник Републике Српске*. Banja Luka.

Stojnić, B.; Stošić, V. and Đuran, G. (2016). "ФЕЉТОН: 25 година Народне скупштине РС (1991-2016): Вјековне основе за РС и парламент." *Глас Српске*, 28 November 2016, Narodna Biblioteka Republike Srpske, Banja Luka.

Velimirović, J. (2012a). *Свједоци говоре о ратним злочинима над Србима у општини Високо 1992-1995*. Banja Luka, Republicki Centar za istrazivanje ratnih zlocina.

Velimirović, J. (2012b). *Агресија Републике Хрватске на Републику Српску и окупација општине Мркоњић Град. Септембар 1995 - фебруар 1996*. Banja Luka, Republički centar za istraživanje rata, ratnih zločina i traženje nestalih lica.

Vranješ, A. and Miodragović B. (2016). *Наша исповијест, Републички центар за истраживање рата, ратних злочина и тражење нестали лица*. Banja Luka.

Institutional Archives

Bureau for relations with the ICTY. (2012). *Report about Case Srebrenica (Part 1)*. Banja Luka.

International Criminal Court for Former Yugoslavia. (1997). The Prosecutor vs Zeljko Raznjatovic, also known as 'Arkan', IT-97-27. Initial Indictment, 23 September 1997.

Republic Statistical Office of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. (1954). 1953 Census. Belgrade.

National Assembly of Republika Srpska. (2016). "Decision on calling a referendum." In *Minutes from the nineteenth special session of the National Assembly of the Republika Srpska*, 15 July 2016

Radiotelevizija Republike Srpske. "Protokol o saradnji Radio-televizije Republike Srpske i Republičkog centra za istraživanje rata, ratnih zločina i traženje." https://lat.rtrs.tv/vijesti/vijest.php?id=324786.

United Nations Security Council. (1994). *Final Report of the United Nations Commission of Experts Established Pursuant to SCR 780 (1992), S/1994/674, 27 May 1994; Annex IV: The Policy of Ethnic Cleansing.*

Press Archives

"Сенатори Поплашен, Радишић и Миловановић." *RSNA*, 20 April 2009.

"Изетбеговић тражи од Уставног суда БиХ да укине обиљежавање Дана РС." Глас Српске, 17 January 2013, Narodna Biblioteka Republike Srpske.

"Празник за половину БиХ." Политика, 1 March 2014, Narodna Biblioteka Srbije, Belgrade.

"Додик: Известан референдум о дану Републике Српске." *Политика*, 12 March 2016, Narodna Biblioteka Srbije, Belgrade

"Дан демократије у Републици Српској." Глас Српске, 27 September 2016, Narodna Biblioteka Republike Srpske.

Secondary Works

Calic, M.-J. (2009). "Ethnic Cleansing and War Crimes, 1991–1995." In *Confronting the Yugoslav Controversies: A Scholars' Initiative*, eds. Ingrao C. and Emmert, T. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press.

Citron, S. (2017). *Le mythe national, l'histoire de France revisitée*. Paris, Les ed. de l'Atelier.

Donia, R. J. (2012). *Iz Skupštine Republike Srpske, 1991-1996: izvodi iz izlaganja poslanika Skupštine Republike Srpske kao dokazni materijal na Međunardnom krivičnom tribunalu u Hagu*. Sarajevo; Tuzla University Press; Fondacija Istina, pravda, pomirenje.

French, B. M. (2012). "The Semiotics of Collective Memories." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41: 337–353.

Gow, J. (2003). *The Serbian Project and its Adversaries: A Strategy of War Crimes*. London: Hurst.

Jouhanneau, C. (2016). *Sortir de la Guerre en Bosnie-Herzégovine. Une Sociologie Politique du Témoignage et de la Civilité*. Paris: Karthala.

Kaplan, R. D. (2005). *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History*. New York: Picador.

Lukic, R. (2004). *L'agonie yougoslave (1986-2003): les Etats-Unis et l'Europe face aux guerres balkaniques*. Québec: Presses de l'Université Laval.

Mink, G. and Bonnard, P., eds. (2010). *Le passé au présent: gisements mémoriels et actions historicisantes en Europe centrale et orientale*. Michel Houdiard.

Mink, G. and Neumayer, L. (2007). *L'Europe et ses passés douloureux*. Paris: La Découverte.

Moeschberger, S. L. and Phillips-DeZalia R. (2014). *Symbols that Bind, Symbols that Divide: The Semiotics of Peace and Conflict*. Cham: Springer.

Ramet, S. P. (2006). *The Three Yugoslavias: State-building and Legitimation, 1918-2005*. Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press; Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Ramet, S. P., ed. (2009). *Thinking about Yugoslavia: Scholarly Debates about the Yugoslav Breakup and the Wars in Bosnia and Kosovo*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sindbæk, T. (2012). *Usable History? Representations of Yugoslavia's Difficult Past – From 1945-2002*. Aarhus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag.

Vukusic, I. (2019). "Plausible deniability: The challenges in prosecuting paramilitary violence in the former Yugoslavia." In *Perpetrators of International Crimes: Theories, Methods, and Evidence*, eds. Smeulers, A.; Weerdesteijn, M. and Holá, B. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

https://doi.org/10.53123/GH_8_4

Israel's Failure to Produce a National War Memorial Site

Fragmented National Memory in an Inclusive Semiotic Sphere

Udi Lebel

Bar Ilan University, Israel
ulebel@gmail.com

Zeev Drori

Interdisciplinary Center (IDC), Herzliya, Israel

Abstract. The article researches the Israeli pioneer attempt to establish its national war memorial—a significant test to Israeli solidarity and its society's ability to uphold an agreed commemoration discourse and narrative. The multitude of tensions, disputes and conflicts raised since the project's led to its cancellation. The article illustrates the sociological tensions characteristic of Israel's army-society and political relationship and the failure of creating an "all-inclusive semiotic sphere" in an era in which discourse communities uphold their "memory work" within exclusive spaces.

Keywords: Mount Eithan, Semiotic Reduction, Israel, Memory Communities, Commemoration, Collective Memory, Fallen Soldiers, Victimization, National War Memorial Site.

1. Israeli Commemoration of its Fallen Soldiers: Bottom-Up, Spontaneous and Communal

A leaflet issued by the 'Golan' Regional Council in northern Israel listing tourist attractions in the area also included an article proposing a tour entitled "Post war road marks." The article opened with the following paragraph: "It is impossible to tour the Golan region without encountering memorial monuments every step of the way... that integrate almost naturally with the extraordinary landscape and nature of the Golan" (*Eretz HaGolan* 2013: 32). This is not a unique proposition. Nearly every touristic book or instruction leaflet about Israel, whether intended for tourists or students, families or individuals, includes tours of memorial monuments. Israel holds a world record for the commemoration of its soldiers. In 2013, 2,900 memorial monuments and sites

Picture by Karine Nahon, *Inauguration of the Israeli national memorial hall, Apr. 30, 2017.* © CC BY-SA 4.0.

were counted throughout the country, meaning an average of one monument for eight fallen soldiers, while in Europe the parallel ratio is one monument per 10,000 fallen soldiers (Aharoni 2013). This statistic does not include monuments not embedded in the landscape but rather those built within institutions and organizations in memory of their students and workers (such as in schools, universities, youth movements, sports associations and workplaces), nor does it include physical commemorations that are not monuments (such as the naming of clubs, synagogues, schools, town squares and streets after fallen soldiers or military operations). Commemoration is an integral part of the pronounced identity of every Israeli community: every settlement, city, regional council or youth movement commemorates its members who have fallen during their military service, and this commemoration serves as testimony to the community's contribution to national security.

This notwithstanding, it is interesting to note that no common national commemoration site exists for all fallen soldiers of Israel and its wars. Of the total number of memorial monuments, 47% were established by bereaved families, 5.5% by military units, 1.7% by NGOs to commemorate underground organizations that operated before the establishment of the State, 22% by municipalities in memory of their residents who have fallen during the various wars, and the rest by other initiatives (Aharoni 2013). The State of Israel has never built a national war memorial. The majority of commemoration practices were created "bottom-up," following civilian or military initiatives (memorial monuments established by army units and divisions). Although a large number of these monuments are maintained through institutional funding and support, they were built thanks to voluntary, extra-institutional funding. This facilitated an interesting process by which all these commemoration initiatives were part of what is known in semiotics as "the language of nationhood" (Keane 2003) – a language that envelopes wars, sacrifice, casualties, loss and suffering under a cloak of collective allocation of meaning. In parallel, however, we can also identify differences between such initiatives, not in their national semiotics but in their myths and battle stories that are based on the relative weight of their contribution to the national project and language as depicted by their initiating communities. In fact, this process can be seen as a "democratization of commemoration," which in itself enabled the reproduction of a national language. The emerging competition between these distinct memory groups and communities is aimed at determining who holds more seniority and therefore more rights over the national language. This form of democracy serves to reinforce, rather than undermine, national semiotics.

No form of organized national commemoration was established following Israel's War of Independence in 1948. In 1959 the State founded the 'Public Council for Commemorating Soldiers' at the Ministry of Defense, whose members included bereaved parents and public figures. Dr. Ziva Shamir, the Council's historian, noted that only a small number of memorial monuments were initiated by the Council and that most of its activities were characterized by what she referred to as a "non-intervention policy" consisting of the adoption of a "democratic commemoration pattern" which has characterized the State of Israel since its establishment. Hence, the Council only decided whether to support commemoration initiatives and coordinated between them (Shamir 1996: 16).

Effective collective memory from the standpoint of the national-military establishment is one that relies on the de-politicizing discourse. Commemoration taking place within this discourse gives meaning and productiveness to bereavement and sacrifice while expropriating memory from daily life and transforming it into something "holy" and separate

from daily disagreements and rifts (Hermoni and Lebel 2012).

Allegedly, forms of commemoration that are nearly entirely "bottom-up," as opposed to those carried out by the establishment, could be expected to lead to the politicization of Israel's bereavement and memorial discourse, as different groups have different ways of perceiving battles and wars. Veterans of various underground organizations from the pre-State era are convinced that their actions are responsible for the establishment of the State of Israel, while other organizations only hindered the national effort. Likewise, specific military divisions perceive themselves as responsible for victory while marking other divisions who fought alongside them as having hindered the war effort.

In parallel to these initiatives, Israel's political right, led by former leaders of revisionist underground organizations – the Etzel and Lehi –, was not part of the political leadership at the time and was likewise removed from the collective memory. The names of their fallen warriors, most of whom fought against the British, were not a part of the national pantheon. However, they fought this by erecting their own monuments, building their own museums, publishing their own books of commemoration, and holding a range of independent memorial ceremonies, through independent funding, where they were able to present their narrative regarding Zionist history, which according to them would not have led to the establishment of the State of Israel had they not operated underground movements who battled the British colonialists and chased them from the land. This historical epos was completely absent from history books studied at schools, which were written exclusively by the ruling socialist party until the revisionist movement came to power toward the 1980s (Lebel 2013: 190). These two movements are in fact "counter semiotic movements" (Solik 2014), the first having referred to Israel's War of Independence for years as "the war of restoration," illustrating their view of David Ben Gurion as the "restorer" of the State, while the revisionist movements aimed to promote (culturally, but also formally and legally) the term "the war of liberation," emphasizing the approach by which the underground organizations brought about an act of liberation: the liberation of the land from the Mandate of the British colonialists (Lebel 2009).

This type of confrontation is relatively marginal in Israeli memorial discourse, precisely because of the State's "non-interference" policy. Thus, each individual "memorial community" (Welzer 2008: 291) has a monument built through communal initiatives, and so, on the national Memorial Day, each community turns to its "own" memorial monument, thereby creating its unique narrative. An example of this phenomenon can be seen in the case of parents of soldiers killed in a training accident. While on Memorial Day some of them attend the memorial monument of the division in which their son has served, so as to pay tribute to his memory in a "traditional" national ceremony, others prefer to visit a unique monument built by parents of the soldiers who died in that accident, where they attend a ceremony characterized by victimological attributes and the pointing of accusing fingers toward the State. Due to the extent of options and level of fragmentation, memory and commemoration discourse are publicly perceived as apolitical and consensual, with no confrontations between members of different memory communities, in the absence of a common monument. Instead, there is a mosaic of memory, a corporation of monuments. As mentioned above, while there may be different versions of the past, the semiotic language is relatively uniform, and even when there are differences, they do not lead to crisis because the different semiotic communities are not obligated to stand side by side and on the same stage in national days of remembrance. Hence, fragmentation is what enables remembrance days to proceed without conflicts, because differ-

ent communities create inclusive stages for their unique languages. Had all of these been required to mix together on the same stage or fill the same space, it would have led to a crisis, or, in Bowden's words, would have led to reaching "the limits of containment" (Bowden 1993).

And although the State provides financial support for these communal monuments, it does not attempt to create a common language between them. This condition of the State can be explained by three central reasons. The first is the fact that a national, hegemonic, all-controlling Zionist language had been adopted by everyone from the start, the only competition remaining being who is more committed to it than others. Second, the existence of an allegedly spontaneous advantage for groups who identify with the narrative promoted by State authorities makes it superfluous to create something formal when versions supported by the State spontaneously take the lead. And third, even when narratives of commemoration languages which may be perceived as counter-hegemonic are promoted, the very fact that they have their own separate commemoration space further enables a public sphere that is devoid of clashes and conflicts, resulting in a semblance of quiet solidarity and consensus. Thus, contrary to most areas of public life that the State of Israel has nationalized during its formative years, the area of war memorial monuments has from the outset been perceived as one that should remain within the realm of civil society, operated and initiated by NGOs and voluntary initiatives, thereby preventing memorial disputes or confrontations.

2. Methods and Aims

This paper will examine a unique initiative in Israel: the establishment of an Israeli National War Memorial. This is an interesting initiative, both because it was considered after years in which Israel was devoid of any official national war memorial, and also because it was initiated at a time in which Israeli society began developing post-modern and post-heroic attributes: privatization, individuation, globalization, fragmentation and even post-nationalism. In terms of the commemoration discourse, it evolved "from domination to competition" (Lebel 2015). The attempt to establish, for the very first time, a "top-down" national memorialization at this time was a significant test of Israel's solidarity and society's ability to uphold an agreed commemoration discourse and narrative. The multitude of tensions, disputes and conflicts raised since the project's initiation illustrate the sociological tensions characteristic of Israel's army-society relationship, tensions which ultimately prevented the implementation of the national memorial initiative. This paper will examine whether this nationalization attempt did in fact lead to a de-politicization and formation of a solidary and consensual memory arena or, alternatively, if it evoked tensions and rifts that reinforce the magnitude of politicization.

The paper will illustrate the various confrontations and disputes raised in the attempts to develop the Mount Eithan initiative as an official national war memorial site by analyzing the Mount Eithan archives (MEA), which include many files, protocols, expert opinions and correspondence that took place during the historical periods in which the initiative was being developed. In addition, we shall offer an analysis of the discourse about Mount Eithan as found in the Knesset archive in Jerusalem, the Ministry of Defense archives and through interviews conducted by the authors with senior officials involved in the project. Using discourse analysis combined with a positivistic analysis, as is acceptable in historic political discourse studies (Wodak 2001), we shall extricate the main barriers to reaching a common agreement for a united, solidary national war memorial and will attempt to reach conclusions regarding the existence of war memorialization in present times as well as Israeli society's collective memory. In doing so, this study implements the accepted tools toward identifying competing narratives in the study of collective memory (Goodson and Choi 2008).

3. The Mount Eithan War Memorial Initiative

In 1974, public figures, architects and bereaved families presented the idea of establishing a National War Memorial to Shimon Peres, Israel's Minister of Defense at the time. They protested that the scattered nature of the Israeli commemoration of fallen soldiers was counterproductive to the existence of ceremonies attended by all government ministers, forcing national leaders to attend different monuments and resulting in certain monuments remaining without any government representation on Memorial Day. The establishment of a national monument commemorating all wars and all fallen soldiers would prevent this situation. Peres expressed his support for the idea of a central memorial site that "would express Israeli heroism... and will serve as a central monument for commemorating our sons" (Peres 1974) and its establishment at Mount Eithan.

Mount Eithan is one of the Jerusalem Mountains, reaching a height of 788 meters above sea level. It is a historical spot in which archeological remains have been found of a population that lived there 6,000 years ago. Until Israel's War of Independence, there was a Palestinian village called Hirbat Luz on the mountain, whose inhabitants fled following the war. During the first years of the State the site was used for absorbing new immigrants from Yemen, but the harsh weather conditions eventually led to their resettlement. The idea was that the establishment of the Mount Eithan memorial site would complete the "Israeli memorial triangle," topographically located on the mountains surrounding Jerusalem. Had the project been implemented, it would have been possible to take an aerial photograph of three memorial sites that form the three vertexes of an isosceles triangle on the mountains of Jerusalem and thereby semiotically would have presented a central element of Israeli identity. The triangle was supposed to be marked by the following spots: "Yad Vashem" – the Holocaust memorial center situated on the Mount of Remembrance in Jerusalem; Israel's national cemetery on Mount Herzl, where prime ministers and presidents are buried; and the National War Memorial site, which was planned, as aforesaid, to be established on Mount Eithan, giving the "memorial triangle" its heroic military side. The military identity of the Israeli nation would consequently have been inscribed into its nationhood, as the State of Israel was born out of a sense of "defense." Minister of Defense Peres confirmed that the site would extend over 30,000 square meters and be surrounded by a 4,600 square meter national park.

After Peres approved the initiative in 1974, some initial steps were taken toward the project's initiation, most of which involved the establishment of committees asked to form the project's pedagogical and architectural conceptualization. In 1977 the Likud Party won Israel's general elections and Menachem Begin was elected Prime Minister. Begin, who was informed of the initiative, approved it and decided that it would be established during his office. He transferred the handling of the project to the Ministerial Committee on Symbols and Ceremonies, and on 29 December 1982, the Committee declared "the establishment of Mount Eithan," referring to it as "The National Center for Heroism and Commemoration." According to the Committee's decision, historical documents began to be written to serve as the theoretical foundation for the establishment of the site and to stress its semiotic meaning for the nation, as until that time Israel did not have an official, central memorial site, nor an official military history for that matter, and a conceptual foundation had to be developed to define which events and which military operations would be included in the commemoration destined to take place there.

However, a number of transformational events took place during Menachem Begin's term as Prime Minister, namely the war in Lebanon and the resulting financial crisis, meaning the government was unable to fund the project,

and it was essentially put on hold. Only in 1991 did Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir complete the inclusion of the "Mount Eithan Law" in Israel's book of laws, alongside the State's financial commitment to fund the project. The work commenced, but again the government was replaced when, in 1992, the Labor Party leader Yitzhak Rabin was elected Prime Minister. The Rabin administration continued to support the project even after Rabin's assassination, as when Shimon Peres served as Prime Minister, he continued to fund the host of committees that acted to promote the project, including historians, sociologists, educators, architects and former army officials all working to form the site's conceptual and esthetic foundation. Even after a further political upheaval resulting in the Likud returning to power with Benjamin Netanyahu as Prime Minister in 1996, support for the initiative continued, and a special Ministerial Committee was appointed for its implementation. On 27 January 1998, the Knesset voted in favor of the government decision: "The Knesset once again adopts the decisions made by the four previous Israeli government administrations, that the Commemoration and resistance center would be established at Mount Eithan, opposite Yad Vashem and Mount Herzl." In 2001 Mount Eithan's management presented, for the first time, a proper plan for its establishment, with a proposed budget of US$ 100 million. The government, then headed by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, committed to grant the required funds, and in 2002 the cornerstone for the project was laid by Sharon in a ceremony attended by many officials. It was then decided that the site would be called 'Mount Eithan Museum: The Israeli National War Memorial.' At that stage, neither the Prime Minister nor the public were aware of the fact, in addition to the millions of dollars already invested, countless disputes, unsolvable disagreements, and huge tensions surrounding the formation of the initiative, that representatives of the various memory communities, including bereaved families, academics and representatives of the existing commemoration organizations, had for years been unable to reach agreements as to the concept of the commemoration to take place at the site and, moreover, that behind the scenes, the heads of civil and military commemoration organizations had been asserting their extensive influence to convince senior politicians to stop the planned initiative that was threatening them both financially and conceptually. This multitude of tensions and pressures eventually resulted in the cancellation of the initiative in a way that we believe encompasses the "politics of Israeli memory."

4. Right vs. Left: Historical-Political Confrontations

Before the establishment of the State of Israel, during the British Mandate in the region, a number of Jewish underground resistance organizations were operative, the largest being the "Hagana" that operated under the auspices of David Ben Gurion, later the leader of the Labor Party ("Mapai") and Israel's first Prime Minister and at the time the head of the representative Zionist organizations. The Hagana attracted mainly youths from Kibbutzim belonging to the "Kibbutz Hameuhad" movement, while its daughter organization – the "Palmach" – mostly attracted youths from Kibbutzim belonging to the "Kibbutz Haarzi" movement and reported to the leadership of the "Mapam" Party. These two underground movements, operating on behalf of the two Jewish socialist parties, were perceived as "legitimate" underground movements, focusing mostly on fighting against the Arabs and not on opposing the British rule. In parallel, on the right side of the political map, underground movements were identified with what is referred to in Zionist-nationalist history as "the revisionist ideology," later to be followed by the "Herut" Party that formed the opposition to the socialist parties. These revisionist underground movements – the "Etzel" and "Lehi" – were committed to anti-colonialism and therefore acted against the British rule. Members of these under-

ground movements were considered by the Zionist leadership as "dissidents" for not following the authority of the elected institutions (which collaborated with the British) and for acting on behalf of opposing political groups, leading to the perception of their acts as illegitimate.

For many years following the establishment of the State of Israel, the Labor Party headed the country, and in an act intended to use the collective memory to its benefit, its leaders opted not to recognize "Etzel" and "Lehi" soldiers, injured and fallen, while those of the "Hagan" and "Palmach" were very much recognized, and they and their families were thus granted financial and symbolic benefits (Lebel 2013). Israeli legislation led by the Labor Party did not allow funding for the rehabilitation of families of revisionist underground movements and prevented them from being eligible for military tombstones at the cemeteries. The purpose of this exclusion was to ensure that new immigrants and Israeli youths continued to perceive the Israeli political pantheon as being comprised of only socialist parties, holding exclusive legitimacy for governance. Of course, the establishment of commemoration sites for revisionists was not prevented, but these were largely ignored by the State. Only after the political transformation of 1977, when Menachem Begin, a former "Etzel" commander, became Prime Minister, was this situation remedied. Fallen warriors from the revisionist underground movement gained national recognition, military tombstones were placed on their graves, national symbols were added to their memorial monuments (national flag, army emblem), and government officials attended these sites on Memorial Day.

Due to the unique nature of Israeli commemoration, it has never before been examined whether the historical opposition of the political left to recognize the contribution of right-wing movements to the establishment of the State have in fact been abated, mostly because each community tended to focus on its "own" memorial monuments. The Mount Eithan project was the first opportunity in which the ability to establish a national war memorial commemorating the pre-State era had been put to the test, requiring common agreement by all political movements in Israel.

The most extreme opposition and tension centered around "the Resurrection Pavilion" – a wing within Mount Eithan that was supposed to be dedicated to the pre-State efforts prior to the establishment of the State and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The group of experts appointed to plan the concept of the Pavilion, representatives of the various museums commemorating the underground movements and museums that had operated independently since the establishment of the State, fell almost instantly into past disagreements, as if 50 years had not elapsed since the events in question.

The first confrontation took place over the question of the framing of the revisionist underground movements. "Hagana" and "Palmach" veterans in the group viewed themselves as "gatekeepers" whose role was to prevent the distortion of what they perceived as "historical fact," demanding that the Mount Eithan guide books refer to members of the revisionist underground movements as "dissidents" and that it should be clearly stated that "These people refused to accept national order and did the unthinkable: established their own militias, and in fact acted as theorists, undermining the national efforts" (Resurrection Pavilion 1). Conversely, the veterans of the revisionist movements demanded that the museum present their fallen warriors alongside those of the "Hagana," claiming that the question should not be political and should be devoid of any subjective-retroactive judgment: who contributed to the resurrection of the State? Who fought? Who sacrificed?

As expressed by one of their members: "We discussed the resurrection pavilion. By all means, the resurrection pavilion should teach that we all contributed to the resurrection of the State. Were we loyal to the authority of the official Zionist leadership? Does it matter? The main

thing is the contribution to resurrection" (Resurrection Pavilion 13).

5. The Begin Era: An Opportunity for Rehabilitation

A further disagreement concerned the commencement of commemoration, defining the historical period covered by the Resurrection Pavilion. This question is deeply rooted in the history of the State of Israel. Since the establishment of the State, the socialist establishment has preached that 29 November 1947 should be the official date on which the War of Independence began, the reason being that, prior to this date, the revisionist underground movements fought against the British rule, a confrontation which the socialist establishment wished to exclude from the history books and from the Israeli consciousness. Here, too, the "Hagana" representatives demanded that the Pavilion cover the War of Independence commencing on 29 November 1947 since, to their understanding, all events that occurred before that not only were not a part of the war effort but were even detrimental to its success. Conversely, "Etzel" veterans claimed that "Etzel's struggle against the British was a war of liberation against a foreign rule, and not, as has been written... terrorism against the British" (Avinoam 1994). Their socialist counterparts responded to this letter as follows: "Their offenses against the British are a stain on the Zionist movement, and there was no reason to commemorate them or include them in Israel's story of resurrection. At the most it could be mentioned as part of Jewish acts of fascism that went on at the time" (Resurrection Pavilion, Authors' Interview 2016).

But disagreements were not limited to defining the period of commemoration. Questions were also raised regarding the scope of the contribution of each underground movement, with veterans of the "Hagana," the largest of the pre-State underground movements, emphasizing the balance of power between the organizations, while "Etzel" and "Lehi" veterans opposed the idea of presenting the size of the forces, alleging that it is quality and not quantity that determines the true contribution of their acts (Frank 1994).

Due to the parties' inability to settle their differences on this matter, there was never a single document expressing the full agreement of all members of the Resurrection Pavilion committee, and many of them wrote to the Minister of Defense or to the Prime Minister declaring their wish to withdraw their participation in the committee due to unbridgeable disagreements.

6. Conservatism vs. Post-Modernism

In 1992, when Yitzhak Rabin went into office as Prime Minister, Israel suddenly had a leftist government that signed the Oslo Accords (1993) and aspired to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Contrary to previous governments, this administration included extensive representation of parties having neo-liberal, dovish, cosmopolitical and even post-nationalist positions. For instance, the Ministers of Education in that government were Shulamit Aloni and, later, Yossi Sarid from the leftist "Meretz" Party, who believed in human rights, social activism and an anti-militaristic critical pedagogy. This government, upon entering office, appointed new members to the Mount Eithan work teams, i.e. people identified with its general worldview on peace, neo-liberalism and secularism. This, of course, led to further unsolvable disagreements.

6.1. Nationalism: Essentialist Truth or Social Construct?

To illustrate the extent of the commitment of the Mount Eithan initiative to the nationalist idea as perceived in conservative Zionist thought, it is worthwhile to note that since the establishment of the Zionist movement in the late 19th century, its founders have perceived it as a continuation of biblical Jewish history. Zionist ideologists viewed the terms "people" and "nation" as objective and essential concepts which need to be empowered and disseminated through Zionist work. The new government established in 1992 included, as aforesaid, members that held critical views toward the nation-

alist idea in its republican form. This was expressed, for instance, in Shimon Peres' book *The New Middle East*, published during that period. In his book, Peres illustrates his vision of Israel as a nation that would be above nationalism, with a place for "all citizens of the world" (Peres 1994: 171). Many of those appointed by the government that Peres was a part of expressed their rage and clear opposition to the idea that Mount Eithan would serve as a nation-building instrument, as had been the general direction of the committees since their formation in 1982.

Back in 1982, when the then right-wing government drafted the goals of the Mount Eithan initiative, it was stated that: "The period to be covered by the national center will include the people of Israel's wars in the land of Israel since the time of Yehoshua Bin-Nun [biblical leader of the Israelites after Moses] to the beginning of the resurrection in present times" by creating "a historical continuum from biblical times and the heroism of the Maccabees" (Ideological Committee 1982). Prof. Mordechai Gichon, one of the founders of military intelligence in the IDF and among Israel's senior researchers of military history and archeology, was appointed head of the team responsible for carrying out these goals. Gichon requested that Mount Eithan be called the 'National Center for Israel's Wars' and that a special pavilion illustrate the continuum of military history from biblical times to present times. To this end, he planned a number of wings, covering the wars of Israel in ancient times, in the times of the second temple, etc., marking 27 military wars since the occupation of Jericho through to the beginning of the modern period, all to be illustrated and commemorated at Mount Eithan. Furthermore, it was decided that the biblical story would be mentioned in a number of points on Mount Eithan, emphasizing the message that "[t]he land of Israel is the homeland of the Jewish people, and the Jewish people have remained faithful to their land" (Ibid.). The team also selected a number of events from the biblical period of judges and kings, the Hasmonean period and the Bar Kokhba revolt, all examples of nationalist wars, chosen for their "historical importance and heroic message," the purpose of which would be to illustrate the connection between "the warriors of our times and past stories" and to frame "the consciousness journey of the Jewish warrior" (Museum Conceptualization 1994).

Naturally, committee members appointed by the Rabin-Peres administration could not accept this type of conceptualization, perceived by them to be a nationalistic indoctrination. For instance, Prof. Irad Malkin, a historian who was asked to join the committee, wrote that Prof. Gichon's propositions were a part of a "political manifest that consists of an outdated rhetoric and historical lie" and that "there is no historical presence and no historical continuity of combat from biblical times to present day" (Ibid.). A similar position was expressed by Asa Kasher, a professor of philosophy, who during the Peres administration was asked to author the Israel Defense Forces' Code of Ethics, a code that ignited substantial anger from traditionalists for being a universalist-cosmopolitical code that defined Israel as a democratic and not a Jewish State, and did not include the value of "the love of Zion." Moreover, Kasher had previously been one of the ideologists of a movement that supported the selective refusal of military service in Lebanon and was identified with Israel's extreme left (Hauser 1997). He too was invited to join the Mount Eithan committee, where he stated that "[t]he relationship between the Jewish people and the land of Israel cannot be an underlying principle of the museum" (Meeting of the Academic Consulting Committee, 17 August 1994, Mount Eithan File). Kasher was joined in his position by writer Amos Oz, one of the leaders of the peace movement and among the first opponents of war since 1982, who stated that "under no circumstances should a war be presented as if motivated by the memory of the Bible or the Holocaust" (Oz 1994).

6.2. War or Peace?

A further disagreement between the representatives of "the Oslo government" and those of the previous administration regarded the basic goals of Mount Eithan. The new members of the "site's treasures" team demanded that it be committed to a new purpose: "Presenting peace as a central goal of the Israeli people and the IDF, and demonstrating the hope that each war will be the last" (Publicity Leaflet 1994). Contrary to the original idea that the site would only demonstrate the values of combat and the memory of wars, they wished to teach that the ultimate purpose of sacrifice and fighting is peace. In line with this belief, the museum team decided that one of the wings to be built would be called "the Peace Gallery," presenting the various peace accords and armistice agreements signed by Israel and its neighbors, as well as historical quotes and sayings by Israel's political and military leaders in favor of peace. Semiotics researcher Dalia Gavrieli-Nuri referred to the peace discourse in Israeli society as an "oppressive discourse" (Gavrieli-Nuri 2010). It is identified with the Israeli left, and in the relevant era even parts of the Zionist left tended to avoid it (as a discourse, not a political aspiration). During this period, many on Israel's left began to perceive the Oslo peace accords signed between Israel and the PLO as having had no likelihood to lead to actual peace due to the PLO's steadfast commitment to terrorism. In the context of Mount Eithan, many on the Israeli left attempted to diminish the "achievement" of the peace accords, while the political right demanded that victims of the ongoing conflict with the Palestinians be recognized as "Oslo casualties," thereby not only refusing to acknowledge the accords as a peace agreement but also presenting Israel's leadership that signed them as victimizers responsible for the death of thousands. There were, of course, many representatives of the left who continued to perceive the Oslo Accords as peace agreements and who insisted that "The Peace Gallery" should be established as originally planned – both for the sake of historical precision as well as for the purpose of promoting the discourse of peace in which they strongly believed. Supporters of this idea wished to "[c]onvince critics that to justify the development of a strong IDF and the various military operations since the establishment of the State, we need to achieve peace and security. The soldiers did not fight for the sake of fighting ... the main goal and aspiration is peace" (The Peace Gallery 2012).

The representatives of the new administration believed that the establishment of Mount Eithan as a war museum was in contrast to the spirit of the Oslo Accords as it preserved militaristic values instead of replacing them with values of peace. They believed that this would lead to a situation in which instead of educating the young generation about peace, visiting the site would educate them to love war and refuse to perceive it as a problem, thereby thwarting future peace accords. They demanded that at the end of the tour, in each pavilion dedicated to one of Israel's wars, a way would be found to "[e]xpress the hope that this would be the last war," emphasizing the "[h]eavy price of war and our continuous strive for peace, despite its price" (Ibid.). Right-wing members of the museum team as well as from the political arena argued in opposition to what they viewed as

> [a] distortion of the entire Israeli military history ... we have never fought for peace, we fought for our existence. We have never sent soldiers to battle and risked their lives for peace ... it is a manipulation to present peace as a national aspiration worth dying for, and this actually happened during that period, when Palestinian terrorists murdered Jewish soldiers and civilians. We could not have agreed to this level of distortion. (The Peace Gallery 2012)

6.3. War: An Epos of Heroism or Victimhood?

A related issue involved the focus of the site on heroism and presenting fighting as the foundation of Israeli heroization. Some of the new members of the

various committees were not pleased with the connection between heroism and militarism and raised a number of proposals intended to "illustrate a different face of the war experience, one that does not require heroization" (Museum Concept, April 1994). Thus, for instance, these members demanded that the site also present the war experience while explaining "the misgivings and fears of a soldier in battle" (Ibid.) or the psychological effects of fighting – clear post-heroic representations. In this context, it is interesting to note that letters were received from bereaved parents whose sons did not fall in battle or military operations (hence, there is no heroic story behind their death), who are the majority of fallen soldiers (Lebel 2014). These parents not only requested that the site should not focus on heroism but that it refrain from mentioning the circumstances of soldiers' deaths. They asked that the site establish a policy of "equality among the fallen," as "the very mention of their sons would provide support to the bereaved families" (Bereaved Parents, Correspondences, March 1994).

Representatives of anti-militaristic political groups expressed their clear opposition to the site's focus on values of heroism and sacrifice. At the beginning of the 1980s, Israel began to be exposed to a culture of globalization, post-modernism and post-nationalism. This was expressed during the first Lebanon war (1982) when a number of new concepts were introduced into Israeli society: groups of bereaved parents protesting against continued war, soldiers and officers establishing military refusal movements, and most of all, the individual – whether a parent to a soldier, a bereaved parent or himself a soldier or fallen soldier – became the center of public discourse.

This trend, consisting of the victimization of army-society relationships, is part of a political culture in which the soldier began to be perceived as a child whose parents must protect him from the army that may send him to his death, leading to the establishment of social movements of parents to soldiers and mostly bereaved parents who now defined the death of soldiers as a social problem and cause for moral panic (Lebel and Rochlin 2009). This, in turn, led to a growing tendency for the army to adopt post-heroic doctrines characterized by "casualty sensitivity." It is a "discourse of trauma" that is centered on the victimization not of the collective, but the individual; not of the hero, but the victim.

As stated above, Mount Eithan was intended to serve as Israel's ultimate heroic site. Opposite Mount Herzl, where the nation's civil leaders are buried, and Yad Vashem, representing the period of the Jewish people's victimization, its ideologists wished to establish Mount Eithan as a place of collective heroism in its republican sense. A place where the commemoration of soldiers would have a collective rather than a personal nature while praising the heroism of their ultimate sacrifice. The semiotics of the place would thereby create a sense of community, a sense representing the Israeli nationhood. These two ideological attributes were criticized and opposed, leading to harsh confrontations involving perceptions of critical pedagogy intending to civilize society and opposing the militarization of culture. Referring to such positions, Knesset member and army general (reserves) Ori Orr said:

> For the Jewish people in the State of Israel it is much easier to commemorate the Jew as victim. We have yet to find the way to commemorate the warrior Jew fighting for the resurrection of his land ... we need to delve into the depth of the idea of the Jew that has fought and is still fighting for resurrection, and I fear... that still our conscience, after two thousand years of exile, has not given us the ability to stand and truly want to commemorate resurrection as it deserves to be commemorated ... it cannot be that there is a "Yad Vasahem" museum to commemorate the Jew as victim but there is no museum or site to commemorate our resurrection since the onset of the Zionist movement until today. (Orr 1998)

He also opposed the connection between focusing on the ethos of heroism and accusing the initiative of excess mil-

itarism: "We are not militaristic. Does the Jew hate war? ... the Jew... recites a prayer for peace every single day ... the consciousness and sacrifice have made victory possible... so that all our ill-wishers shall know that they will not be victorious over us ... the project... will be... a memorial for that heroism" (Ibid.).

6.4. Focusing on the Individual or on Society?

A further aspect of the disputes over the concept of Mount Eithan related to the question of whether the site should focus on society or the individual. These disputes were expressed in all discussions regarding the site's goals. Those in favor of focusing on the individual saw it mainly as a soldiers' memorial site, while those who preached for a more social focus did not view personal commemoration as being part of the site's goals and instead opted for a social memorial site that would give national meaning to the wars fought by Israel.

During the Menachem Begin administration, the two primary goals of the initiative were praise for the heroism in Israel's military history and teaching visitors of Israel's various wars and military confrontations. Commemoration of the fallen was relegated to third place and sometimes even lower than that (Ministerial Committee on Symbols and Ceremonies 1982). Since the beginning of the 1990s, official bereavement organizations have been formed (Yad Labanim – representing bereaved parents – and the IDF Widows and Orphans Organization) to ensure that the principal goal of Mount Eithan would be the commemoration of fallen soldiers. And in fact, in 1994, during the Peres administration, the primary goal of the initiative was defined as follows: "To commemorate all the soldiers that have fallen in military operations or during their military or national service" (Goals and Purposes 1994). One of the supporters of dedicating the site to the personal commemoration of the fallen was Prof. Asa Kasher, himself a bereaved father. Loyal to his views of opposing the transformation of the initiative into a national instrument per se, he stated that the site should be dedicated to the personal commemoration of the fallen soldiers, believing that this was the most effective strategy for "coping with forgetting and the erasure of memory ... emphasizing the individual rather than the general level (Drori and Lebel 2005: 79).

Opposed to this approach were members of the Steering Committee, who reminded everyone that the original purpose of the initiative was not to be a memorial for fallen soldiers that would improve the wellbeing of their families but the formation of a social ethos, involving the development of a discourse on collective issues such as the meaning and discourse of sacrifice. Moshe Netzer, who chaired the Mount Eithan commemoration committee at the time, stated that as a bereaved father, it is enough for him that his son's name is "displayed in other memorial sites" and that he believes that the uniqueness of Mount Eithan requires it to be "an official, national commemoration site that will give a wider, more general meaning to my son's death" (Netzer 1998). Others mentioned that the Mount Eithan initiative was envisioned "because there are so many memorial monuments built by families, which are focused on the fallen, but there is no central, national place that focuses on society" (Bereaved Parents, Correspondences 1998).

Yet it appears that the individual ethos gained momentum among many of the decision-makers of the time. Even Reuven Rivlin, at the time a Knesset member on behalf of the Likud Party, who was among the strongest proponents in the Knesset for funding Mount Eithan, argued that

> the collective ceremonies and big words have been replaced by individual acquaintance and intimacy ... young Israelis today are much more interested in the personal story of a pilot whose plane was bombed in the Suez canal, a tank crewman from in the Golan during the Yom Kippur War, a warrior from the Golani brigade who died in the Beaufort during the first war in Lebanon, or a navy commando man who died on the Lebanese shore.... The identification with the fallen, that amorphous concept... is much more difficult for today's youth to grasp. (Rivlin 1998)

> For this reason he proposed that the Mount Eithan concept be updated so as "to relate to the Israeli's of the mid 1990's ... with the personal stories of the fallen ... this is how the Israelis of the 1990's identify with the big national ethos, with the memory of the fallen.... Commemoration in the 1990's is breaking down the big words into personal details ... and this is the importance of Mount Eithan" (Ibid.).

7. Historical Truth or National Myth?

In Israeli historical-sociological research, the 1990s are considered formative years for "historical revisionism." Schools of thought referred to as "new sociology" or "new history" began studying Israel's military past without hesitating to challenge "sacred cows" while shattering many myths (Shapira 1995). More and more studies published during those years presented theories that contradicted past perceptions regarding the Israeli army, exposing operational failures, corruption, the abuse of prisoners, the expulsion of Palestinians, and more (Morris 1995). This atmosphere permeated the discussions of the Mount Eithan committees, especially in light of the demands made by military commemoration and heritage organizations, fearing 'new' versions of history that would undermine their own.

Dr. Elad Peled, a Major General in the IDF reserves and a member of the team discussing the historical approaches of the Mount Eithan initiative, expressed his opinion that "[t]hings should not be whitewashed, even if they are difficult ... a few generations from now the truth will be exposed and if it would become apparent that this type of museum has whitewashed history, they would not believe even the truthful things. We need to present the entire range of opinions, and the public will be the judge" (Peled 1994). Writer Amos Oz joined this position by saying that we must not lend a hand to "transforming the museum into an instrument of propaganda" (Oz 1994). Even the agreement of many of the team members that the IDF's history division would make the final decision in case of disagreements and disputes – clearly a conservative approach – did not palliate the old commemoration organizations, if only because until then no "official military history" had been written in Israel, and the army's history division had never exposed its research to the public.

Using a range of strategies including discrete meetings with Prime Ministers, Ministers of Defense and Knesset members, the publication of newspaper articles, and furious appearances in front of the Mount Eithan work teams, leaders of the military commemoration organizations worked to prove that the project was unnecessary. Heading these attempts were the leaders of various military commemoration organizations, including the Yad La-Shiryon memorial site for fallen soldiers from the armored corps, the Ammunition Hill national memorial site, the Paratroopers Heritage Association, the Association of the Intelligence Corps Community, the Airforce Museum, the Givati Brigade Museum, the Artillery Corps Association, the Engineering Corps Association, and the Communication Corps Association. All of these organizations were headed by retired Generals or current or past senior officials in the Ministry of Defense, who not only feared the loss of visitors who would prefer to visit Mount Eithan but also losing the foundation of their own versions of national consciousness and historical truth. Israeli military history is laden with many events, the necessities of which are under continuous dispute between various military corps or divisions. The members of the Mount Eithan Steering Committee decided that it would be "a site of open dialogue that will encourage research on security related topics while presenting a pluralistic variety of opinions and attitudes towards the historical materials" (Presentations 1995). When this goal was revealed to the heads of the commemoration organizations, this only served to accelerate their opposition to the project, as up to that time the controversial archives of battles had not been exposed to the public and

no official institution acted to encourage this type of military research.

8. A Hierarchy of Heroism

A further issue that caused the heads of the commemoration organizations to perceive Mount Eithan as a threat was the influence of its future establishment of the "hierarchy of bereavement" or "hierarchy of Israeli heroism" within the public consciousness. The commemoration organizations represented military corps and divisions that are associated with Israel's political and financial elites, a fact that had helped them to obtain budgets and gain increased visibility for the commanders and fallen soldiers of the corps commemorated by them. The establishment of Mount Eithan could have disrupted this trend. As explained by Shevach Weiss, the Knesset Chairperson at the time, in a Knesset discussion on the opposition of the commemoration organizations toward the project, "the establishment of equality among the dead and equality among the bereaved families is a central concern ... there are more prestigious corps ... there are centers of commemoration for various groups that may be considered elitist, maybe they also had an easier time raising the money. Here we are concerned maybe with the common people" (Weiss 1997). He was joined by reserve army General Ori Orr who stated in the same discussion that "8000 IDF soldiers who died since the establishment of the State have no memorial site. Why? Because they were not part of the stronger corps like the Air Force, Armored Corps, Paratroopers, and others" (Orr 1998b).

Silvan Shalom, Knesset member and deputy Minister of Defense at the time, told the Knesset members after the project was canceled that its cancellation was not a result of anti-militarist, anti-chauvinist, or anti-nationalist opposition, but rather the opposition of those who were allegedly the ideological partners for cultural militarism in Israel: "The greatest opposition to Mount Eithan did not come from the Ministry of Finance but from all those other commemoration sites scattered across the country ... they acted and sent letters and did everything to prevent the project from happening" (Shalom 1998).

9. Abandonment of the Mount Eithan Initiative and the establishment of a "National Memorial Hall for Israel's Fallen"

Initially, the Mount Eithan initiative was presented as a reflection of the national Israeli-Zionist consensus. On one of the occasions in which the Knesset once again voted for a legislative bill to fund the initiative, Ori Orr presented the decision as one that expressed "[t]he national agreement, the consensus on the importance of Mount Eithan." The approval of the bill was received by a round of applause from the Knesset Plenum balcony (Knesset Meeting 171, January 27, 1998). However, and as illustrated above, even if there had been a national consensus on the importance of Mount Eithan, there was none concerning its conceptualization, a fact that ultimately led to its cancellation.

On 9 September 1997, the government of Israel decided to cancel the Mount Eithan project. Minister of Finance Yaakov Neeman explained that "[a]ll of the basic work done is being kept and will be maintained in a format that would facilitate its use at any time in future" (Neeman 1998). This was the first but not the last time that the government of Israel declared the cancellation of the initiative. In later years, various government administrations attempted to resurrect the project. One of the project's managers explained why it was canceled:

> It's true that the cancellation of the initiative can be attributed to financial reasons or others, but in practice – it was a 'political swamp' – a no-win situation. Any decision by any government would have ignited the fury of parties that no one wants to be perceived as their enemy: bereaved families or decorated warriors, commemoration organizations of army corps or decorated generals. So everyone preferred not to decide, not on the conceptual level and not on the matter of the identity of the commemorated, or any other areas, leading in practice to the cancellation of the project. No one predicted the outrage and struggles that this initiative would lead to. All of a sudden

> the entire world of commemoration and memorials became a world of conflict, politics, disputes ... who needs it? Maybe the idea was good, but it caused the exact opposite. (Management 2015)

His words correspond with those of Israeli poet Haim Guri, who had expressed his opinion of the project three years previously. Guri believed that the initiative was a "social and political minefield," explaining that "[r]egarding such concepts as 'the release of Jerusalem,' 'the release of the territories,' 'the occupied territories'... who has the authority to rule what is right and what is wrong? ... how can we prevent the transformation of a place that should represent consent, into a place that is entirely disputed [especially when] everyone is entitled for representation?" (Drori and Lebel 2005: 5).

In April 2012 the government of Israel approved the establishment of a "National Memorial Hall," budgeted at NIS 40 million. This was a return to the Mount Eithan idea, albeit a somewhat more modest one. This time the initiative was supposed to be limited to commemorating all fallen soldiers without dealing with historical contexts, values, or narratives about the past. The Ministry of Defense had already selected the architects to design the project and stated that the works were about to begin. However, immediately following the publication of the press release reporting the project's initiation, families of civilians killed in terror attacks appealed to the Supreme Court, alleging that as the Ministry of Defense was the initiator of the project, clearly those who would be commemorated by it would be soldiers, not civilians murdered by terrorists. In parallel, many social organizations protested that while Israel's welfare policy was crumbling, there was no justification to invest funds in unnecessary military monuments.

The initiative was delayed for an indefinite period of time. Eventually, in 2018, next to Mount Herzl in Jerusalem, as a replacement to the Mount Eithan project, without much prior warning or planning, the government inaugurated a "National Memorial Hall for Israel's Fallen" – a structure made of thousands of bricks, each engraved with the name of a fallen soldier and their date of death. This "semiotic reduction" (Popova, 2004; Rahman and Mahdi, 2014; Dimitriadis, 2017) of memory consists of avoiding any feature which may create disagreements and lead to disputes. Had the texts also included the name of the battle or war, this would have led to disputes, as each community allocates different names to specific wars and battles. Even including the place of death would have led to a polemic – would it be Judea and Samaria? The Western Bank? The occupied territories? Therefore, in view of all these possible semiotic, rhetoric, and linguistic struggles – which are nothing but a capsule that contained not only the politics of Israeli memory but also the fragmentation of Israeli society –, decision-makers ultimately chose to abandon the Mount Eithan initiative, replacing it with a site that tells no story and therefore cannot serve as a place of memorialization or commemoration for Israeli society, only as a collection of bricks engraved with names and dates. As such, it is desolate and devoid of narrative, rhetoric, and semiotic values for Israel's public space. Although it was intended to "whitewash" memory struggles, in reality it whitewashes memory itself so that it is finally completely concealed.

10. Concluding Reflections

This paper followed an initiative that began in 1974 when the government of Israel launched the Mount Eithan initiative: a plan for the construction of a national-military memorial site, following years in which communities, organizations, towns, and military brigades had engaged in independent spontaneous channels for creating collective memory and commemorating their fallen soldiers. Although these initiatives always maintained a "national language," this was done within exclusive spaces that enabled the creation of semiotic autonomy (Joslyn

1998; Raudsepp and Ventsel 2020) and discursive sovereignty (Scott 1996).

Contrary to bottom-up initiatives by communities, NGOs, towns, or military brigades commemorating their fallen, the proposed site aimed to create a uniform narrative of Israel's military history, complete with cultural content and museums depicting Israel's wars and commemorating its fallen through a representative national center for education purposes, diplomacy, ceremonies, and commemoration. In discourse research, such a challenge entails what Merrel (2014) referred to, following the semiotics of Charles S. Pierce (1994), as "an all-inclusive semiotic sphere." The failure of the initiative and the way in which politicians worked to create an alternative commemoration space can serve to illustrate the semiotics and rhetoric of nationhood in the communal and fragmental era of the State of Israel, and maybe even beyond it.

Hannah Arendt pointed to the etymological link between "author" and "authority (Arendt 1977: 91-141), and Roland Barthes declared the "death of the author" and the birth of the reader – or a transition of power from the writer of the text to its interpreter (Barthes, 1977). The present study could have pointed to (Israeli) society refusing to accept the authority who would write its national story, but this would not be completely true. The Israeli language of memory does not lack authority and therefore is not devoid of its story. However, both its authority and its story are communal. Community semiotics links individuals with national semiotics. The ultimate failure of the Mount Eithan project lies in the belief that this mediation between the individual and the nation can be discarded. The nation is able – and in fact this ultimately occurred – to create a bureaucratic index of names and dates. Beyond that, it does not have the legitimacy to form a language, narrative, discourse, or memory. This would be done for it, or on its behalf, by the community, by each individual and their own epistemic community (Lebel and Orkibi 2019). In fact, the failure of the Mount Eithan initiative serves as testimony that the nation state needs national discourse communities in order to maintain and preserve itself through crises and challenges not only on the symbolic but also the political and civil levels.

References

Aharoni, A. (2013). "2900 official monuments were built in Israel to commemorate its fallen soldiers." *Globes*, April 15, 2013. http://www.globes.co.il/news/article.aspx?did=1000836381.

Almog, O. (1991). "War Memorials in Israel: A Semiotic Analysis." *Megamot* 44, 2: 179–210.

Arendt, H. (1977). *Between Past and Future*. New York: Penguin Books.

Avinoam, Y. (1994). Letter written by Yitzhak Avinoam, member of the 'Mount Eithan' management and former Etzel member, to the 'War of Independence Pavilion' Steering Committee, 3 October 1994, MEA, file: War of Independence Pavilion.

Azriyahu, M. (2005). "Jerusalem's monuments of Heroism and Sacrifice." *Ariel*: 150–156, 171–172.

Barthes, R. (1977). *Image, Music, Text*. London: Fontana.

Baudrillard, J. (1983). *Simulations*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Bereaved Parents, correspondences (1994). Letters from bereaved families to the Mount Eithan Management, March 1994. MEA, file: Bereaved families/correspondence.

Bereaved Parents, correspondences (1998). Letters from bereaved families to the Mount Eithan Management. MEA, file: Bereaved families/correspondence.

Bowden, D. (1993). "The Limits of Containment: Text-as-Container in Composition Studies." *College Composition and Communication* 44, 3: 364–379.

Dimitriadis, Y. (2017). "The Psychoanalytic Concept of Jouissance and the Kindling Hypothesis." Front. Psychol. 8: 2–17.

Don-Yehiya, E. and Liebman, Y. (1984). "The Dilemma of Traditional Culture in the Modern State." *Megamot* 28, 4: 484–460.

Doron, G. and Lebel, U. (2004). "Penetrating the Shields of Institutional Immunity: The Political Dynamic of Bereavement in Israel." *Mediterranean Politics* 9, 2: 201–220.

Douglas, K; Whitlock, G and Stumm, B (2008). "Trauma in the Twenty-First Century." *Life Writing* 5, 1: 37–41.

Eliade, M. (1963). *Myth and Reality*. New York: Harper and Row.

Erickson, K. T. (1964). "Notes on the Sociology of Deviance." In *The Other Side*, ed. Becker, H., 9–21. New York: Free Press.

Fitzgerald, T. A. (1999). "My culture made me do it: Media, identity and the politics of recognition." *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 6, 1: 69–90.

Foucault, M. (1973). *The Order of the Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*. New York.

Frank, Z. (1994). Letter from Zvi Frank, member of the Mount Eithan Management, entitled: Comments to the "Resurrection Period" document, 25 August 1994, MEA, file: Resurrection Pavilion.

Gavrieli-Nuri, D. (2010). "The Idiosyncratic Language of Israeli 'Peace': A Cultural Approach to Critical Discourse Analysis (CCDA)." *Discourse and Society* 21, 5: 565–585.

Gelber, Y. (2011). *Nation and History: Israeli Historiography between Zionism and Post Zionism*. London: Valentine Mitchell.

Gichon, M. (1990). *The Story of Mount Eithan*. Jerusalem: Mount Eithan Press.

Goals and Purposes (1994). Protocol of the 'Goals and purposes' Committee, October 1994, MEA, file: Goals and purposes.

Goodson, I. and Choi, P. L. (2008). "Life History and Collective Memory as Methodological Strategies." *Teacher Education Quarterly* 35, 2: 5–28.

Gusfield, J. (1963). *Symbolic Crusade*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Hauser, T. (1997). "The Spirit of the IDF." *Azure* 2. http://azure.org.il/include/print.php?id=403.

Hermoni, G. and Lebel, U. (2012). "Politicizing Memory." *Cultural Studies* 26, 4: 496–491.

Hill, J. H. and Wilson, T. M. (2003). "Identity Politics and the Politics of Identities." *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 10: 1–8.

Hobsbawm, E. (1983). "The Invention of Tradition: Introduction." In *The Invention of Tradition*, eds. Hobsbawm, E and Ranger, T., 1–14. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ideological Committee (1982). Protocol of the Mount Eithan Ideological Committee, March 1992. MEA, file: Ideological Committee.

Joslyn, C. (1998). "Models, Controls, and Levels of Semiotic Autonomy." *Proceedings of the 1998 IEEE*, 747–752.

Katz, Y. (2006). *Heart and Stone: The Story of the Military Tombstone in Israel*. Tel-Aviv: Ministry of Defense.

Keane, W. (2003). "Public Speaking: On Indonesian as the Language of the Nation." *Public Culture* 15, 3: 503–530.

Kim, N. (2012). "Multiculturalism and the Politics of Belonging: the Puzzle of Multiculturalism in South Korea." *Citizenship Studies* 16, 1: 103–117.

Kober, A. (2015). "From Heroic to Post-Heroic Warfare – Israel's Way of War in Asymmetrical Conflicts." *Armed Forces and Society* 41, 1: 96–122.

Krips, H. (2012). "New Social Movements, Populism and the Politics of the Lifeworld." *Cultural Studies* 26, 2: 242–259.

Land of the Golan 48 (2013). http://www.golan.org.il/694/3532.htm.

Lebel, U. and Orkibi, E. (2019). "'Exempted soldiers' in the 'New Sensitivity Military': public opinion among Jewish Israelis concerning selective conscientious objection (military refusal) and the Military Recruitment Model." *Middle Eastern Studies* 55, 1: 92–110.

Lebel, U. (2009). "Exile from national identity: memory exclusion as political." *National Identities* 11, 3: 241–262.

Lebel, U. (2010). "'Casualty Panic': Military Recruitment Models, Civil-military Gap and their Implications for the Legitimacy of Military Loss." *Democracy and Security* 6, 2: 183–206.

Lebel, U. (2013). *Politics of Memory: The Israeli Underground's Struggle for Inclusion in the National Pantheon and Military Commemoralization*. London: RoutledgeLondon.

Lebel, U. (2014). "'Second Class Loss': Political Culture as a Recovery Barrier? – Israeli Families of Terrorist Casualties and their Struggle for National Honors, Recognition and Belonging." *Death Studies* 38, 1: 9–19.

Lebel, U. (2015). "From Domination to Competition: The Yom Kippur War (1973) and the Formation of a New Grief Community." In *The 1973 Yom Kippur War and the Reshaping of Israeli Civil-Military Relations*, eds. Lebel, U. and Lewin, E., 55–80. Lanham, MD: Lexington.

Lebel, U. (2016). "The 'immunized integration' of Religious-Zionists within Israeli society: the pre-military academy as an institutional model." *Social Identities* 22, 6: 642–660.

Lebel, U. and Drori, Z. (2005). "The Public Relations of Death." *Democratic Culture* 9: 49–84.

Lebel, U. and Hatuka, G. (2016). "Israeli Labor Party and the security elite 1977–2015: De-Militarization as Political Self-Marginalization." *Israel Affairs* 22, 3–4: 641–663.

Lebel, U. and Rochlin, Y. (2009). "From "Fighting Family" to "Belligerent Families": Family-Military-Nation Interrelationships and the Forming of Israeli Public Behavior among Families of Fallen Soldiers and

Families of MIAs and POWs." *Social Movements Studies* 8, 4: 359–374.
Mayo, J. M. (1988). *War Memorials as Political Landscape*. New York.
Merrell, F. (2014). "Semiotics and Literary Studies." In *The Commens Encyclopedia – The Digital Encyclopedia of Peirce Studies*, eds. Bergman, M. and Queiroz, J. http://www.commens.org/encyclopedia.
Ministerial Committee on Symbols and Ceremonies (1982). The Decision of the Ministerial Committee on Symbols and Ceremonies, 29 December 1982, MEA, file: Government Decisions.
Mookherjee, M. (2005). "Affective Citizenship: Feminism, Postcolonialism and the Politics of Recognition." *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 8, 1: 31–50.
Morris, B. (1995). *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved.
Moscovici, S. (1988). "Notes Towards a Description of Social Representations." *European Journal of Social Psychology* 18: 211–250.
Moscovici, S. (1993). *The Invention of Society. Psychological Explanations to Social Phenomena*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Moscovici, S. (2000). *Social Representations. Explorations in Social Psychology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Mount Eithan Management (2015). Interview with a member of the Mount Eithan Management, Givataim, December 2015.
Mount Eithan Peace Gallery (2012). Interview with a former member of the 'Peace Gallery' (the interview was held in Jerusalem in February 2012).
Mount Eithan Peace Gallery (2012b). Interview with a former member of the 'Peace Gallery' (the interview was held in Tel Aviv in March 2012).
Mount Eithan Presentations (1995). Summary of presentation to the Mount Eithan Management, 10 July 1995, MEA, file: Presentations.
Mount Eithan Publicity Leaflet (1994). Project publicity leaflet, 1994, internal printing, MEA, file: Publications.
Mount Eithan Resurrection Pavilion Interview (2016). Interview conducted by the authors with a member of the Mount Eithan Resurrection Pavilion during the 1990s (the interview was held in Jerusalem in January 2016).
Museum Concept (1994). Discussions of the Committee responsible for the museum's concept – Draft for discussion, 23 January 1994, MEA, file: Museum concept.
Neeman, Y. (1998). Speech by Minister of Finance Yaakov Neeman, meeting number 166 of the 14th Knesset, 3 January 1998, Knesset Archive.
Netzer, M. (1998). Personal letter by Moshe Netzer to the Mount Eithan Management, 29 January 1998, MEA, file: Bereaved families/correspondence.
Nora, P. (1993). "Between memory and history: On a problem of the place." *Zmanim* 45: 4–19.
Orr, O. (1998). Speech by Knesset member Ori Orr, meeting number 171 of the 14th Knesset, 27 January 1998, Knesset Archive.
Orr, O. (1998b). Speech by Knesset member Ori Orr, meeting number 193 of the 14th Knesset, 18 March 1998, Knesset Archive.
Oz, A. (1994). Minutes of meeting between the Mount Eithan Management and Amos Oz, 14 March 1993, MEA, file: meetings.
Peirce, C. S. (1994). *Peirce on Signs: Writings on Semiotic*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
Peled, E. (1994). Minutes of meeting between the Mount Eithan Management and Major-General (Reserves) Dr. Elad Peled, 25 April 1994, MEA, file: Meetings.
Peled, Y. (2010). "Towards a Redefinition of Jewish Nationalism in Israel? The enigma of Shas." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 2, 21: 37–41.
Peres, S. (1974). Meeting with the management of the Public Council for Commemorating Soldiers, 17 October 1974.
Peres, S. (1994). *The New Middle East*. Tel Aviv: Steimatzky.
Perez, G. M. (2010). "A Tale of Two Barrios: Puerto Rican Youth and the Politics of Belonging." *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture and Society* 4, 3: 39–47.
Popova, Y. (2004). "'Little is Left to Tell': Beckett's Theater of Mind, Ohio Impromptu, and the New Cognitive Turn in Analyzing Drama." *Current Trends in Stylistics* 38, 4: 452–467.
Rahmah, L. and Mahdi, S. (2014). "Comparison of Structural Reduction in Indonesian Legend and Myth." *International Journal of English and Education* 3, 3: 300–304.
Raudsepp, M. and Ventsel, A. (2020). "Systemic Power and Autonomy from the Perspective of Semiotic Cultural Psychology." In *Interdisciplinary Approaches to Cultural Theory. Approaches to Culture Theory 8*, eds. Kannike, A.; Pärn, K and Tasa, M., 176–216. Tartu: University of Tartu Press.
Rivlin, R. (1998). Speech by Knesset member Reuven Rivlin, meeting number 171 of the 14th Israeli Knesset, 27 January 1998, Knesset Archive.
Rosenthal, R. (2001). *Is Bereavement Dead?* Tel Aviv: Keter.

Schwartz, B. (1991). "Social Changes and Collective Memory: The Democratization of George Washington." *American Sociological Review* 56, 2: 221–236.

Schwartz, B. and Vagner-Pacifici, R. (1989). "The Vietnam Memorials." *American Image* 44, 3–4: 315–320

Scott, G. A. (1996). "Foucault's Analysis of Power's Methodologies." Auslegung: A Journal of Philosophy 21, 2: 125–133.

Shalom, S. (1998). Speech by Knesset member Silvan Shalom, meeting number 164 of the 14th Israeli Knesset, 7 January 1998, Knesset Archive.

Shamir, A. (1996). *Commemoration and Memory*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved.

Shapira, A. (1995). "Politics and Collective Memory: The Debate over the 'New Historians' in Israel." *History and Memory* 7, 1: 9–27.

Solik, M. (2014). "Semiotic Approach to Analysis of Advertising." *European Journal of Science and Theology* 4, 10: 207–217.

Sperber, D. (1979). *Rethinking Symbolism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Suerdem, A. (2009). "A Semiotic Network Comparison of Technocratic and Populist Discourses in Turkey." In *Do They Walk Like They Talk? Speech and Action in Policy Processes*, ed. Imbeau, L., 257–278. London: Springer.

Weiss, S. (1997). Speech by Knesset member Shevach Weiss, meeting number 152 of the 14th Knesset, 3 December 1997, Knesset Archive.

Welzer, H. (2008). "Communicative Memory." In *Cultural Memory Studies*, eds. Erll, A. and Nunning, A., 285–300. New York: Walter de Gruyter.

Wodak, R. (2001). "The Discourse Historical Approach." In *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, eds. Wodak, R. and Meyer, M., 63–94. London: Sage.

Yeandle, P. (2014) "'Heroes into Zeroes'? The Politics of (Not) Teaching England's Imperial Past." *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 42, 5: 882–911.

Zilber, D., ed. (1992). *Mount Eithan, The National Center of Israel Wars: The Principles of the Program*. Jerusalem: Mount Eithan Press.

https://doi.org/10.53123/GH_8_5

Masculinities in Digital India
Trolls and Mediated Affect

Amrita De

SUNY Binghamton
ade1@binghamton.edu

Abstract. This article analyzes the proliferation of post-2014 social media trolling in India assessing how a pre-planned virtually mediated affective deployment produces physical ramifications in real spaces. I first unpack Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's hyper-masculine social media figuration; then study the generative impact of brand Modi Masculinity through a processual affective rendering regulated by hired social media influencers and digital media strategists. Finally, I assess the impact of Modi Masculinity on individual social media users, who voluntarily or sometimes circumstantially become enmeshed in this constructed network.

Keywords: masculinities, social media, trolling, affect.

For Baisakhi Chakraborti, a routine bus journey from her departmental office at a North American University in November 2018 turned into "nothing short of a nightmare".[1] Oblivious to her surroundings and with the deceptive assurance that the school bus was a safe space, she was in the middle of an animated conversation with her colleagues about the current state of Indian politics when she was rudely interrupted. This was before the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections in May 2019 when Narendra Modi was re-elected as the Prime

1 The subject's original name has been changed to protect her privacy. This excerpt is from a conversation I had with her on 10 January 2019. Names of all social media users have been changed for privacy reasons.

© Photo by Jeremy Bishop on *Unsplash*

Minister of India for another 5-year term. Baisakhi had referred to the rise of Hindu vigilantism when she was belligerently interrupted by a group of young men, presumably from the same university. They accused her of spreading lies and misinformation about her country. Soon after, she got off the bus, too scared to engage with this unexpected burst of vitriol. This was only the beginning of targetted social media attacks.

In another incident that took place on a different scale, on 23 April 2018, an Indian journalist, Rana Ayyub, found herself trapped in a targeted viral social media hate campaign. Ayyub, who had been targeted many times before for her Muslim identity and her often critical condemnations of India's government, was not unfamiliar with the online ecosystem of hate campaigns. However, this time she became the victim of "an online lynch mob" (Chatterjee 2018). This targeted, online blitzkrieg was prompted by a communally charged fake tweet in her name from a Twitter handle posing as the official account of Republic TV (a prominent right-wing media channel in India). Soon after, a pornographic video with her face morphed on it was relentlessly circulated on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter alongside the personal details of her address and phone number. More recently, on 3 July 2020, in the aftermath of another violent encounter between militants and security personnel in Kashmir's Sopore region, Ayyub spoke out against the unlawful killing of a 65-year-old man, Bashir Ahmed Khan. She was again inundated with hate messages online; a Twitter account called 'Hindu Rashtra' (Hindu Nation) reminded her of Gauri Lankesh—a journalist who was shot dead in 2017 (Taskin 2020).

1. Methodology

From October 2018 to the months leading up to the general election from 11 April 2019 to 23 May 2019, I performed a close reading of both official and personal Twitter accounts. I first singled out the Twitter accounts that had specifically participated in disseminating the initial false tweet and the pornographic video ascribed to Rana Ayyub in 2018. I first traced the *DailyO* news report, which had shared Rana Ayyub's tweet, to find the troll accounts. Some of these accounts appeared to be defunct or bot accounts. However, this search rendered a pervasive online digital ecosystem where I repeatedly noticed similar online behavioral patterns. Out of the first hundred accounts that came up with the initial tweet, ninety-two of them belonged or *appeared to belong* to men.[2] While Baisakhi's virtual abusers were more toned down in terms of their abusive rhetoric, the comments on Rana Ayyub's profile on every tweet reflected a persistent toxic culture of online vitriol. Several investigative media reports further confirm that global digital trolls overwhelmingly turn out to be men (Gudipaty 2017; Megarry 2014). An examination of these Twitter accounts and their general online behavioral patterns revealed an over-reliance on images and text that can be attributed to traditional representations of 'manliness.'[3] Due to the frequent nature of their occurrence and similar replicative patterns, I have parsed these traits to launch an analysis of masculinities in the Indian digital ecosystem. By way of evidence, I draw from a multi-disciplinary corpus, moving from an investigative account by the journalist Swati Chaturvedi (2016) to official BJP social media campaigns and to scanning Twitter for a close reading of accounts[4] that regularly participate in trolling.

2 Some of the accounts appeared to be generated by generic online bots.

3 By 'traditional representations of manliness', I am specifically alluding to socialized as well as culturally idealized representations of heteronormative masculinities, such as personality traits that refer to initiative, risk-taking, and physical prowess, among other things (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Reeser 2011).

4 This article mainly provides a study of masculinities as a heuristic to understand the online architecture. For security reasons, the names of personal profiles have been changed.

Following the available scholarship on Hindutva masculinities (Banerjee, 2005; Chakraborty 2011; Vijayan 2019), my work primarily locates Hindutva masculinities in the contemporary Indian digital ecosystem, attending to its semiotic dissemination in both real and virtual spaces. In the first section, I trace the particular constituents of Modi's hyper-masculine figuration, evident from his constant social media use. I note how he has emerged as the perfect embodiment of a traditional ideal of Hindu masculinity, highlighting how his digitally mediated masculine persona results from careful semiotic branding. I then unpack the nature of its processual rendering by both individual and collective economies by considering the role of pre-planned affect and semiotics in the dissemination of the Modi masculinity brand. It is necessary to note here that I have used masculinities mainly as a heuristic to observe dominant practices in the digital ecosystem. More specifically, I note how digitally mediated masculinities are produced through a pre-planned affective deployment, further enabling the construction of a vigilante public culture.

2. Vigilante Nation and Hindutva Masculinity

While the above two incidents appear to be isolated cases with varying degrees of harassment, they only provide a microscopic glance of what seems to be a seamless continuum in Indian digital space, regardless of the specificity of the geographical location. Additionally, contemporary Indian public spaces (social, political, real, virtual) are inundated by visual codes and semiotic cues that demonstrate solid allegiance to Hindu iconography. From pictures of Ram and Hanuman to the ubiquitous usage of the color saffron and repeated exhortations to a revisionist history delineating a mythical Hindu past, images and texts actively abound in the public imagination, affectively generating Hindutva and, in turn, the *Hindu Rashtra* (Hindu nation) as the default logic and end-goal of contemporary governance. Though Hindutva is by no means synonymous with Hinduism, right-wing leaders and their followers (both local and global) have ensured that they appear as a singular, uniform entity (Banaji 2018). From the Sabarimala Temple issue of 2018[5] to cow-vigilantes lynching Muslim butchers on the suspicion that they were trading beef, to the recently resolved Babri Masjid issue (November 2019), where the Supreme Court permitted a Hindu temple to be built on the same site as the previously demolished mosque—there is a repeated adherence to Hindutva as the governing logic, right down to the granular details at every level.

It is important to note here that Hindutva is not a monolithic cultural construct (Banerjee 2005); it has undergone several mutations according to its cultural context's specificity. Though some organizations are depicted as key ancillaries of the Hindu right like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), and current Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), there are some tactical, ideological differences between them; however, all these organizations present a formidable meeting ground of Brahmanical patriarchy with virulent nationalism. Excessive militarization is the *sine qua non* of these nationalist organizations, situating violence and the masculinist logic of decisive leadership as the structure of Hindutva nationalism. Initially mobilized by Vinayak Savarkar in the 1920s, Hindutva is a religious-political ideology that identifies the creation of a Hindu nation as its ultimate goal (Ba-

5 The issue related to the Sabarimala Temple in Kerala rendered visible the entrenched patriarchy of Hindu religious laws which restrict the entry of women into temples. In September 2018, the Supreme Court lifted the ban on the entry of menstruating women to the temple, citing the practice as illegal and unconstitutional. This sparked nationwide protests against the verdict by millions of devotees of the Sabarimala deity who saw the Supreme Court verdict as a violation of their religious beliefs (Babu 2019).

nerjee 2005). This logic is emboldened by technological affordances,made accessible in neoliberal India, which further promote the politics of hurt and religious divides against Muslim minorities cultivating a pervasive atmosphere of hate (Appadurai 2019). The politics of hate is then affectively translated as aspirational in contemporary India.

In my consideration of contemporary Hindutva masculinity, I highlight the diffuse processes of networked exchange which translate Hindutva into a "mediating discourse by its own right" (Reddy 2011), consistently presenting itself as the bedrock of Narendra Modi's projected narrative of a *Hindu Rashtra*. In the following sections, I draw attention to both personalized and collective official, state-sanctioned social media transactions and the circulation of semiotic codes that enable the production of a vigilante public culture in real and virtual spaces. The group of young men who interrupted Baisakhi and the online mob who trolled Rana Ayyub belong to these "vigilante publics" (Banaji 2018)—generating a consensus for a majoritarian Hindutva discourse, mobilized by the present BJP and its cultural ideologue, the RSS.

3. "Modi Hai Toh Mumkin Hai": Social Media Transactions and Affordances

Detailed scholarly ethnographic accounts show how mediated images, texts, and audiovisual content have been historically deployed by the BJP and RSS since their inception to enable a nationalist Hindu project by culturally indoctrinating everyday consumers in their political agenda. Central to this dissemination is the idea of a composite Hindu identity that fosters modes of belonging and recognition of a primordial grand narrative of secure Hindu supremacy. Scholars have focused on the visual landscape (Brosius 2005), the internet (Lal 2014; Jaffrelot and Therwath 2012; Udupa 2018; Sinha 2017), and traditional media artifacts like state-sponsored television channels (Rajagopal 1994).

The 2014 Lok Sabha elections saw an unprecedented use of social media campaigning through which voters were mobilized to support Narendra Modi, the prime ministerial candidate. Modi is known for his active participation on various social media platforms. His engagement on Twitter in the form of personalized political broadcasting, endorsement, and self-promotion has become central to the management of his public persona (Govil and Baishya 2018). This persona is carefully calibrated to promote a visually inclusive space through the dissemination of personalized messages in the form of the monthly program 'Mann Ki Baat'[6] (Voice to the Heart), which is first delivered on the radio and then shared across various digital platforms. Unlike previous Indian leaders, Modi does not conduct press conferences—in doing so, he has effectively deregulated mainstream media and unequivocally endorsed alternate digital channels of communication. Modi's usage of technology, social media, and popular culture is integral to the processual rendering of his public image as deeply personal (Rai 2019).

Much of the semiotics of this social media branding is focused on projecting his image as decisive and unflinching, inflected with a brash aspirational machismo. Modi framed himself as the deliverer from Congress party's corruption through the projection of the Swaach Bharat (Clean India) campaign, announcing himself as the ultimate mascot of development or vikas for neoliberal India (Srivastava 2015; Jaffrelot 2015).[7] The theatrical semiotics

6 Narendra Modi conducts a monthly broadcast called 'Mann Ki Baat' (roughly translated as 'Voice from the Heart') through All India Radio. Since television is not available all over India, radio was selected for maximum outreach. Through this program, Modi conveys his ideas directly to the general population.

7 I use the phrase 'neoliberal India' to hint at the growing disparity between the rich and poor in India. BJP came into power with the agenda of 'development' which they hoped to achieve through more foreign investment and neoliberal economic policies—which essentially meant more privatization and access to global markets through

of his political campaign on social media engendered a brand of populist politics, uniformly integrating disparate public cultures underlined by class caste intonations into a singular ideological construction. This discursive branding of him as an ideal leader is initiated through an innovative mix of Hindutva protectionism and developmental rhetoric.

Through popular sloganeering and simplistic rabble-rousing messaging like "India First" and "Make in India,"[8] Modi has dominated public discourse as the ultimate embodiment of a leader who stands for a bold national character, daring to deliver the country from parasitic elite figures that cling illegitimately to power (Sinha 2017). While Modi's 2014 electoral victory capitalized on the anti-incumbency wave against Congress, which was the ruling party before 2014, in 2019 the rallying cry was "*Congress mukt Bharat*" (Congress-free India) and the popular '*chowkidar*' (watchman) campaign. The Congress party failed to secure 10% of the seats (55) in the Lok Sabha, leaving the present government without an official opposition party. The BJP alone won 303 seats and 353 seats in total with the National Democratic Alliance (NDA).

Complementing the developmental rhetoric of 2014 with increased emphasis on national security, the BJP's 2019 election campaign mobilized muscular Hindu nationalism as its key ancillary. I want to draw attention to the semiotics of popular electoral campaign rhetoric, publicly visible through Modi's and the BJP's official social media accounts: a case in point would be the much-publicized '*chowkidar*' campaign.

Modi announced the '*chowkidar*' campaign for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections on his official Twitter account on 16 March 2019. He followed this announcement with a four-minute video clip, which immediately started trending on Twitter. Featuring Indian citizens from all walks of life—from peasants to corporate professionals and women dancers in traditional, regional attire—, everyone was seamlessly interpellated to the lyrical cadence of '*main bhi chowkidar hoon*' ('I too am a watchman'). Immediately following this campaign's launch, Indian social media resonated with renewed fervor, with BJP supporters and ministers adding the prefix '*chowkidar*' to their social media handles. While mapping the Twittersphere at this point, I noticed most of the social media accounts who had actively participated in the trolling of Rana Ayyub, on several accounts, had also added the prefix '*chowkidar*' to their handles.

This campaign can be regarded as a demonstrative example of Narendra Modi's reliance on social media. A closer inspection of the signs and symbols pertaining to this campaign and other popular campaigns undertaken by the BJP during the last five years, from Modi's father-daughter selfie campaign to '*Modi hai toh mumkin hai*' ('It is only possible with Modi'), reveals a persistent invocation of desirable Hindu masculinity. This is visible through the consistent patterns deployed in the semiotics of the official political messaging in the '*chowkidar*' campaign: repeated calls to militarize and collectively organize to protect the nation and capitulate to Modi's vision. A snippet from the video of this campaign featured Modi on a tank dressed in army clothes. This image was relentlessly circulated across all social media platforms. Gesturing to conflated discourses of protectionism and patriotism, as articulated through the figure of the watchman—someone who stands guard— a particular brand of Hindu masculinity was discursively injected into the national public sphere. This construction is twofold: the watchman is virtuous/patriotic and aggressive/militaristic—with Modi as the perfect embodiment of both these qualities. Widespread, digitally mediated circulation further enables an idealized representation of Hindu masculinity, which

'minimum government, maximum governance' (a popular election slogan).

8 Both of these slogans render visible the explicitly nationalistic imperative of the current administration.

is then affectively cast as aspirational. In the following sections, I track popular instantiations of the semiotics of this discursive deployment vis-à-vis official BJP social media accounts and personalized responses to them.

4. Key Regulators of Hindu Masculinities and its Affective Deployment

While seemingly abstract and expansive in scope (what is masculinity?), the term becomes more recognizable when analyzed for its iterations or *performances* (Butler 1988). The appearance of masculinities then becomes familiar when seen in the light of its manifestations through speech (verbal as well as non-verbal acts), embodied behavioral patterns, gestures, and seemingly projected dominance against its perceived antithesis, femininity (Srivastava 2015). Its hegemony is further emboldened through various channels such as the state and its mechanisms, laws and regulations, family, popular culture, and media. Among these, media and its various ramifications remain the most formidable and prolific site for the transmission and circulation of global and local ideas of masculinities (Athique 2012). This was clearly visible in the Lok Sabha elections in 2014 and 2019.

A 2019 study by the University of Oxford identified India among 70 nations where the government has deployed "cyber troops" for social media manipulation. This study identified Indian cyber troops as "medium-capacity," which means they are full-time employees hired to control public online information (Sirur 2019). Indian investigative reports have noted that Modi has a team of "150 paid social media influencers hired by PR companies, according to an insider who is photographed with the prime minister at various times" (Ninan 2019). These influencers run Facebook pages and WhatsApp groups, which relentlessly spread fake news, doctored videos, photoshopped images, and paid news.

Investigative journalist Swati Chaturvedi's 2016 book *I Am a Troll* puts forward a revelatory account of the organized social media presence behind the enduring success of the BJP. Chaturvedi notes that the overwhelming majority of these social media influencers, who could be defined as committed Modi *Bhakts*, are men hailing from mostly semi-urban, lower-middle-class backgrounds (2016: 81). Neoliberal consumption, with its easy access to affordable smartphones and internet connections, has fostered a "distinctly middle-class discourse which has gained prominence since the urban middle-class constitutes a major group of Internet users in India" (Udupa 2018). These influencers generate specific iterations of digital Hindu masculinities to write the nation into being through a combination of affect and publicly endorsed religious, socio-political discourse. Pre-planned affect is thus retooled through increased digital consumption to foreground an "affectively charged ideal of communicative immediacy" (Govil and Baishya, 2018).

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) famously described affect as something that exists "beyond subjectivity" existing at the pre-subjective level, free from discourse or language (Reeser 2017). Susanna Paasonen's (2019) work on networked affect studies the capacity of bodies to affect and be affected by one another, stating that affect cuts across and joins together bodies human and nonhuman, organic and machine, material and conceptual, of flesh and of thought. The collective affective economy of networked affect are always in transition, moving in between bodies (both material and virtual). This is key to the semiotics of the affective deployment of masculinities by social media influencers and 'cyber-troops.'

Chaturvedi further reveals that among the Twitter handles followed by Modi, 26 accounts "routinely sexually harass, make death threats and abuse politicians from other parties and journalists with special attention given to women, minorities and Dalits" (2016: 6). All these handles profess religious and/or national sentiments, ranging from 'proud Hindu' or other variations like '*garvit hindu*' to '*desh bhakt*' (lit-

erally, 'devoted to the nation') and '*Bharat mata ki jai*' ('long live Mother India').[9] They also identify themselves as 'blessed to be followed by the prime minister of India.' Far from distancing himself from these people, Modi legitimized their trolling activities by inviting them to a selective meet-and-greet under the banner of 'Digital Sampark,' held at his official residence on 1 July 2015 (*The Quint* 2015).

As is evident from the online trolling of Rana Ayyub, women who openly criticize Modi and the BJP's exhortation of a *Hindu Rashtra* are subjected to violent organized trolling by Hindutva proponents. Repeated sexualized trolling in the form of rape threats and online doxing results in many women closing their accounts and choosing to stay away from any kind of social media engagement. Mohan (2015) identifies these influencers as *Internet Hindus*: bloggers and tweeters who are fierce supporters of Hindu nationalism, people who cohere in digital spaces to generate opinions passed off as pithy truisms. Their activities include sharing memes, posts, and videos in support of Modi, consistently ridiculing Rahul Gandhi, sharing posts calling for the protection of cows and banning burkhas for 'security' reasons, and sharing the false propaganda of love jihad.[10] The sheer force and gravity of the consistent messaging and its related semiotics produce truths out of unverified, misrepresented, incomplete data points that take on the semblance of factual certitude.

People who dare to question these facts are routinely denounced as 'sickular,' 'libtards' or 'presstitutes' (derogatory terms directed at liberal-left journalists).[11] Special hashtags targeting journalists deemed anti-Modi are created every day. Thousands of tweets are then rapidly sent out in quick progression by these cyber troops—each of whom has thousands of followers. Sometimes tweets are generated through active bots, thereby amassing online consumers as a cognate around politically charged keywords.

In the following section, I examine the semiotics of the affectively modulated processes engaged in the transmission of masculinities through the repeated sharing of crudely composed memes, social media bios, and virulent hashtags. I also circle back to the opening incidents to highlight how bodies (virtual or physical) are transformed after coming into contact with the premeditated affective intensities, like the '*chowkidar*' campaign deployed by the current BJP government in India.

5. Anatomy of Official 'Internet Hindus'

For a closer study, I singled out Twitter accounts from Modi's list of followers who, at first glance, did not appear to be profiles of public personalities. Most of these accounts mention that they are being followed by Narendra Modi and the BJP President, Amit Shah. For instance, I came across an account named Rajiv Sharma—his Twitter bio described him as an RSS follower, graphic designer, student, social media strategist, cricket enthusiast, and 'blessed to be followed by PM Modi and Amit Shah'—with over 37,000 followers. His profile picture, presumably his portrait, revealed a strapping youth, flexing muscles in a tight shirt and Ray-Ban sunglasses. From direct Islamophobic content to shared images of rows of muscular men wielding sticks, his newsfeed revealed a dominance of an exclusively male homosocial space. Under his tweets, the comment threads indicated a frequent male readership, while he retweeted images shared by other men with common hashtags as captions. All these accounts were collectively engaged

9 These handles visibly demonstrate love and devotion for the nation and are meant to be read as signposts for their ideological allegiance to the creation of a Hindu nation.
10 'Love jihad' is a term that has come to be pejoratively associated with Muslims since 2014. It refers to the act of feigning love for non-Muslim women by Muslim men with the agenda of converting them to the Islamic faith.
11 Chaturvedi also points out that not every one of these trolls believed in Modi—some were also doing it for money.

in the dissemination of socio-cultural idioms that have previously been weaponized and imbued with an exclusive Hindu consciousness by the BJP and their cultural ideologue, the RSS.

It becomes evident that through concerted, carefully calibrated messaging, these groups of social media influencers are aspiring for a performative transaction between them and other netizens by imbuing them with selectively designed information. They simultaneously bind them to a uniform affective register through repeated direct and oblique gestures to conventional codes of masculine performances, such as muscularity and virility. While virility as a character trait was not directly visible, Hindu-centric social media influencers are mostly engaged in disseminating propaganda that police and relegate sexuality to the private sector—some of these profiles did have family pictures depicting happy conjugal relationships. I also noticed that tweets and retweets are shared with captions and hashtags that have direct allusions to Narendra Modi as a 'strongman' leader through cues such as '56-inch chest'[12] and 'mard' (man)—all of which are suggestive of a 'strong masculinity' at the descriptive level.

One of the accounts named 'Hindu Rashtra' (literally 'Hindu nation'), whose Twitter bio states that he is the social media manager of the official BJP4INDIA account, shared repeated images of Modi—sometimes on a tanker in the olive green khaki jawan uniform, sometimes in a militaristic pose holding a stretched bow and arrow, as identified in popular images of Ram. In the aftermath of the Pulwama incident in February 2019,[12] there was consistent usage of the hashtag *Modihaitohmumkinhai* ('It is only possible with Modi') with catchy captions stating that Modi has given a fitting reply to Pakistan after he carried out the Balakot attack on Pakistan. This again underscored his projected digitally mediated militaristic, masculine, 'decision-making' capacity. These tweets were generated simultaneously by other official BJP Twitter accounts and hired 'cyber troops.'

Considering these accounts of state-sanctioned narratives, both officially as mediated through official government accounts and individually through accounts of recognized trolls followed by the Prime Minister, it is instructive to ask how these collective economies (state-sanctioned messaging) affectively cast individual performances (like the men Baisakhi encountered on the bus and the ones who participated in the online trolling of Rana Ayyub) embed within a shared ecosystem, where ideals of aggressive, muscular manliness are solidified and Hindu masculinity emerges as its most aspirational articulation. What are the commonalities that emerge from these transactions?

6. Individual Economy of Trolling and Its Affect

A survey of the Twitter accounts associated with the trolling of Rana Ayyub revealed repeated markers inflected with mood, diction, and speech traditionally associated with cultural definitions of hegemonic masculinities. Some of the Twitter handles went by names like 'alphacharlie,' 'mard,' and 'Gujaratichokro'[13] (varying linguistic degrees of direct reference to the word 'man') with expensive cars and motorbikes as display pictures. The hashtag *mard* (Hindi word for man) appeared very frequently on their newsfeeds, followed by images depicting strength (in terms of lifting weights or other kinds of muscular performances) and virility through captions and comment threads that could be directly linked to the erotics of desiring women.

12 On 14 February 2019, a military convoy of Indian security personnel was attacked by a suicide bomber in the Pulwama region of Jammu and Kashmir.

13 While by no means exhaustive, I identified a common pattern in the Twitter handles that appeared to be most virulent, i.e. the ones who were actively engaged in social media trolling. They also repeatedly changed the names of their Twitter handles, but each version signaled an active display of toxic machismo. Most of it was explicitly visible through the names of the handles themselves.

I noticed many images where users are seen in the company of celebrity Bollywood heroines like Aishwarya Rai and Katrina Kaif; as if proximity to celebrities amplified their aspirationality. Some of these accounts disappeared over the six-month window (May-November 2018) of my research, presumably owing to accusations of trolling against these handles. One of the tweeters had previously appeared on the radar for tweeting, "Barkha Dutt is WHORE of #India" (Centre for Social Research 2016). In addition to tweets with aggressive slurs and abuse directed at women journalists like Nidhi Razdan, Rana Ayyub, and Barkha Dutt, who are recognized faces of the opposition, they also shared regular tweets praising Narendra Modi's leadership.[14]

Two noticeable commonalities that are directly visible in this online ecosystem were the repeated invocation of Hindu gods and Hindu religious signifiers, especially the figures of Ram and Hanuman, and the depiction of Muslim men as primitive, bestial misogynistic figures. Several critical works (Anand, 2007; Bannerjee, 2005) have elaborated on the connection of Ram with an idealized representation of Hindu masculinity; while the Muslim man has always been seen as the "ravisher and active force compelling a response from the passive and supine Hindu" (Bahri 2004). One of the Twitter accounts went by the name of 'mandir wahi banayenge'[15] (will build the temple here) with a cover photo of Modi's face conflated with the faces of Ram and Hanuman—both widely recognized Hindu deities. Bahri (2004) also notes that the mythological figure of Ram is connected to a deep-seated, colonial fantasy of a utopian time when the Hindu nation was at the helm as a marker of progress and good governance. Hindu Gods and relegious signifiers are actively disseminated, serving as a cultural shorthand to activate the pre-existing mythology of the Hindu nation that has always been associated with the RSS and, in turn, the BJP. A February 2020 article in the *Guardian* reported that the RSS, founded 94 years ago with clear fascist inclinations, filled with men besotted by Mussolini's fascism, is the present day holding company propelling BJP's mobilization of Hindutva politics (Subramanian 2020). Modi's social media public persona endorses religious signifiers, borrowed from a pre-existing cultural repository, comprising signs and signifiers endorsed by the RSS with the goal of generating consensus for a brand of Hindu masculinity that is now imbued with the affective charge of aspirationality; this can be directly linked to Bradbury's (1978) theorizations on the science behind semiotics: "The transference of culture in time can, in large measure, be described as the conservation of sign systems serving as a control on behavior." The semiotics of online and offline Hindu nationalism in contemporary India are predicated on the successful transference of these religiously imbued signifiers to create an overpowering identity of the ideal Hindu man that is always seen in opposition to the Muslim man.

In terms of the visible, anti-Muslim content, there is a direct exhortation to a sense of fearmongering. Tweets dispensing misinformation such as exaggerated numbers of the rapid growth of the Muslim population and fake news, suggesting that they are instigating riots in different parts of India, are constantly circulated. One of the accounts, 'Alpha Charlie', who consistently participated in this messaging, shared statuses like, "If you see a cobra and M [short form for Muslims] kid, you know whom to kill first." Dibyesh Anand notes that the "inimical figure used to mobilize the Hindu nationalist identity is a stereotyped Muslim masculinity" (Anand 2007). Efforts to compen-

14 Chaturvedi too was systematically targeted over a period of six months in a vicious online campaign that insisted she had had a sexual relationship with a politician.

15 A reference to Ayodha as the mythical birthplace of the Hindu deity Ram and the demand to build a Hindu temple on that land.

sate for the hypermasculinity of this figurative 'other' are predicated on the drive to re-masculinize or over-masculinize the Hindu male body by constantly weaponizing the Muslim body as something that must be defeated for the safety of the nation. Some of the other Twitter bios of accounts that participated in this messaging had descriptions like, 'let's unite to establish a Hindu nation,' 'proud nationalist works from Canada, patriot, die-hard 56 inch Modi supporter', and 'non-secular, a supporter of Hindu nation, no blocking policy.' These descriptions reveal that 'internet Hindus' are not just specific to the Indian geopolitical space but are spread across all quarters of the world. Therwath's (2012) incisive study on diasporic Hindu nationalism reveals that Hindu nationalist organizations like the RSS have transferred the bulk of their online activities to North America, where the Indian diasporic population is over 3.2 million, revealing the development of new strategies of discretion to evade the gaze of authorities back in India. Therefore, it is not surprising that several of the virulent profiles I encountered that engaged in trolling against Rana Ayyub and Chaturvedi indicate a diasporic origin—they share images and posts in real-time from foreign locations outside India. They also have allied handles that are strategically deployed to escape detection. The relative anonymity dispensed by digital platforms enables these toxic engagements.

How, then, do these trolls produce embodied, cultural experiences through online iterations of gendered performances? More specifically, how do digitally mediated texts generate a kind of 'affective masculinity' that cannot be defined but exists in the pre-subjective? If masculinities are produced in the specificity of class-caste locations, affect too operates within that discursive register—an upper-caste Bengali Hindu male, residing in America, removed from the violence of the political conflict in Kashmir, will arguably not react to a digitally circulated image-text in the same way as someone residing closer to the physical geopolitical location. The semiotics of the personal and collective affective economies of networked media need to be considered together to measure its capacity to produce guided embodied reactions that can transcend the mediated contours of the virtual to affect the materiality of lived experience in real spaces.

This is explicitly visible in the opening scenario, where the life of a diasporic immigrant, Baisakhi, is affected in the bus's physical space by a group of young men, who have been influenced by BJP's political messaging. Online cultures of toxic machismo digitally networked through internet access to local public cultures are thus reflected in offline actualities of embodied space. Spreadable data, therefore, interpellate both viewer and creator in a *constructed* network.

The circulated image-texts shared on Twitter deliver a message that is deeply felt and personalized, provoking a response from the viewer. The image-text's affective force is rooted in the fleeting immediacy of the moment when one sees/reads it. Despite the spatial difference, due to geopolitical positioning, there is a degree of commonality in this initial affective viewing. Judith Butler (2015) notes that "norms impress themselves upon us, and that impression opens up an *affective register*." Through the repeated deployment of images and texts that are semantically housed within discursive presentations of traditional, Hindu masculinity/ies, generated *affective masculinity/ies* come to be housed within a Hindu cultural imaginary. It is important to clarify here that masculinity is always conceived in the plural, even if they appear to be monolithic in terms of their capacity to exercise hegemony over other kinds of non-normative masculinities (Connell and Messerschmit 2005). Multiple iterations of Hindu masculinity are therefore digitally transmitted. Combined, they contribute to a kind of *affective Hindu masculinity,* which can be read in Srivastava's (2015) words as 'Modi masculinity.' Digitally mediated images and texts available for free consumption

thus cater to a brand that can *travel* both spatially and temporally, existing in "a temporal sink, a hole in time as we conceive of it and narrativize it" (Massumi 2002). Through the composition and dissemination of pre-planned images, texts, or audiovisual records, it is a specific kind of *affect* that is deployed—one that has been conceived and narrativized before the real time of the act of viewing.

7. Modi Masculinity as Circulated Affect

The semiotics of Modi masculinity as an affect are directly imbricated in the neoliberal condition of global modernity with thriving free markets. A spirit of consumption governs everyday activities; active social media consumption is also symptomatic of this global modernity. Guided by nationalistic ideas, the semiotics of "Modi-masculinity's peculiar characteristic lies in its judicious presentation of Indian manhood as both deeply national (and hence territorialized) as well as global (and de-territorialized)" (Srivastava 2015). Directed at both local and diasporic audiences, 'Modi masculinity' as a brand affectively travels to enable a Hindu cultural consciousness. Motivated by an air of desirability, Modi masculinity thus becomes aspirational, and in turn, Hindu religious identity becomes aspirational. From his public speeches, where he quotes Sanskrit verses in his saffron attire, Modi wears his religiosity on his sleeve, and is quick to turn any opportunity into an endorsement of Hindu values. All the pre-planned affects that are strategically deployed by the BJP's social media influencers contribute to the constitution of Modi masculinity, which also becomes an idealized representation of Hindu masculinity. Unsurprisingly, images depicting him as reincarnations of Ram are actively circulated.

Drawing from traditional concepts of familial masculinity such as strength and protectionism, Modi masculinity is predicated on a perceived narrative of strong, bold leadership, which takes the form of model masculinity the consumer automatically aspires to emulate. Media discourses surrounding Narendra Modi attend to the perpetuation of this image, projecting him as a strong-willed, efficient, dynamic leader capable of writing a new history of dynamic progress and growth. His masculine, decisive image—"that of an inflexible man of action" (Jaffrelot 2015)—is further mediated by his political opponent, Rahul Gandhi, who is presented as weak, inefficient, and incapable. Gandhi's inability to develop decisive arguments and business models is seen as the perfect contrast to Modi's dynamic, powerful masculinity.

A preliminary examination of Indian digital media also reveals a proliferation of memes that allude to Rahul Gandhi's *failed masculinity*. Given the epithet 'pappu'—a term that directly refers to his 'weak' masculinity—, hashtags surrounding Gandhi regularly trend in real-time, further amplifying Modi masculinity. Some of the popular memes depict Modi and Gandhi in a wrestling match where Modi emerges as the clear winner. One particular meme, shared by a user calling himself 'Gujarati Chhokro' ('lad from Gujarat'), trended with the hashtag '*mard ko dard hoga*' ('men will feel pain'). In this meme, Rahul Gandhi's face is superimposed on a muscular body. He struggles to lift a clay vessel when Modi appears, whose face is superimposed on a frail body. He lifts the vessel with ease, gleefully walking away as the focus pans to the dejected face of a disappointed Gandhi. In another meme, Rahul Gandhi's face accompanies the hashtag 'Pappu is a duffer' with a limerick, 'Amul is the taste of India, Pappu is the waste of India.' There are various memes where Gandhi is shown hiding behind his mother, Sonia Gandhi,[16] an accomplished politician

16 Sonia Gandhi took over as the party leader of the Indian National Congress in 1998 and currently serves on the advisory board of the party after administering control to her son, Rahul Gandhi. She is regarded as the most influential voice in the party.

herself, once again drawing reference to his 'failed masculinity.' All these images reside in a pre-constructed simulacrum, which, to echo Baudrillard (1994), exists as a pure simulacrum, sealing creator and consumer within a fantastical projection directly imbued with meaning-making codes that can be retroactively traced back to cultural scripts of traditional manliness. Alongside Roland Barthes's conviction to treat "collective representations as sign systems" (Barthes 1972), any attempt to demystify the semiotics of these visual scripts must also take into account the specific role this affective charge plays in the greater scheme of things.

Affect then opens up a "discursive register of norms that is more forceful than it might appear without affect" (Reeser 2017). A man might be *affected* after consuming such images and then attempt to make sense of that *affect* through feelings that translate into physical actions. For example, when de-territorialized, non-resident Indian males living elsewhere, like the group of men Baisakhi encountered in the opening context, regularly consume nationalist images and texts circulating through WhatsApp messages, Facebook posts, or Tweets, they simultaneously become integrated within a generated national consciousness. These images then serve the purpose of *affectively* mooring them to a sense of national belonging and participation by constructing a vigilante public sphere where any subscriber can become an equal participant. Circulated affect then takes the form of feeling and emotion, which is demonstrated through various levels of interactions both in the real and the virtual space. In Baisakhi's case, this prior affective rendering found expression in the real, physical space of the university bus, where she was interrupted by a group of angry men. Similarly, Rana Ayyub was virtually lynched by an online mob who had been similarly affectively indoctrinated by trending hashtags and the strategic deployment of pre-planned data both at macro and micro levels. In this context, it is necessary to consider the limits of this digitally mediated constructed vigilante public sphere.

Most cyber-theorists have acknowledged that the 'virtual' and the 'real' are not exclusive categories (Nakamura 2013); virtual, digital communities are built from offline interactions between real, full-bodied people located in different geopolitical spaces. Therefore, it would be reductive to assume that masculine performances in digital media are interchangeably linked to masculine performances in the real world. While there are both predictable and visible links between the two, the physical male body operates with different degrees of freedom in the 'real' world. For instance, the individuals who monitor dissent, acting as 'vigilante publics' like the trolls outlined by Chaturvedi, build a hyper-masculine online persona to appear aspirational to other digital consumers, also, perhaps, putatively compensating for a lack of something in the real world.[17] Material practices in digitally mediated environments operate through a constellation of hierarchical networks; as Marvin states, "the focus of communication is shifted from the instrument to the drama in which existing groups perpetually negotiate power, authority, representation, and knowledge" (Marvin 1988). Class caste regional vectors are more fluidly mediated in the digital platform, enabling the production of *traveling masculinities*, where users are free to occupy different subject positions that can appear impossible within the physicality of bounded regionalities in India, since class caste status is an important, immutable signifier of physical embodiment. Therefore, these *traveling masculinities* are produced within an interconnected transnational homosocial digital space that has already been charged by the pre-planned affective deployment of Modi masculinity. With respect to individual economies, each

17 Chaturvedi notes that some of the trolls she interviewed cannot speak fluently in English but engage in social media exchanges in English. Engagement in English is seen as an aspirational quality.

user can be identified as discrete named entities occupying distinct digital spaces; however, their individual gendered performances coalesce together to form a greater collective. This collective dynamically participates in the project of nation-building engendering an "imagined community" (Anderson 2006), which performs the task of producing the BJP's goal of a Hindu nation for mass consumption.

8. Conclusion

While digital media does offer enormous potential in terms of the production of different masculine subjectivities that can exercise hegemony over other variants through its intrinsic fluidity, in the context of the present political landscape, *traveling masculinities* are produced within a classed matrix.[18] Both ground-level majoritarian Hindu politics and their vocal supporters on digital media inform and strengthen the other existing in a mutually symbiotic relationship. In another article documenting the rise of cow vigilantism through WhatsApp messaging, Rahul Mukherjee (2020) highlights the consumption practices of cow vigilantes, pointing to the commoditization of religious practices through new media affordances, which is tightly braided with a consumerist performance of manliness: "Such performances involve riding fancy motorbikes, donning sleek sunglasses in pitch-dark night, incorporating the latest hip-hop music in entrapment videos, and inscribing a vande mataram tattoo" (Mukherjee 2020). The Twitter landscape also reveals similar semiotics; personal profiles engaged in Hindutva messaging appear to be continually performing an inscription of aspirational manliness that is simultaneously religious and modern, effortlessly imbued in technological literacy that allows for the easy tweeting, retweeting, creation, and dissemination of mashups and memes. The bios on their Twitter accounts sometimes mention they are government employees who are not officially affiliated with any political party. As Mukherjee points out, it also speaks to a culture of leisurely consumption, using the time outside work to indulge in the "high-tech consumption of smartphones and the most recent software apps to receive and forward the message of Hindutva" (Mukherjee 2020). The continuous proliferation of these social media transactions cast the online digital ecosystem into a dominantly heteronormative masculine space. Non-normative representations of masculinities are either side-lined through active forms of censorship or given visibility through the mediated gaze of the heterosexual subject, who inadvertently portrays these performances as caricatures that should be ridiculed and repressed (Shah 2015).

The digital homosocial space that emerges out of these affective subjective transactions is thus exclusively based on performing masculine roles that can be reverted to essentialist descriptors of strength and machismo grounded in a Hindu-centric discourse. This performance hinges on an enactment where dissenting voices are routinely harassed, as in the cases of Chaturvedi, Rana Ayyub, and Baisakhi. Binary essentialized representations of gendered identities are privileged, and toxic hypermasculine performances are exalted and expanded in sync with the "muscular nationalism" (Bannerjee 2005) endorsed by Hindu-centric right-wing groups. Through a planned affective rendering, Modi's masculine figuration emerges as the ultimate aspirational articulation of contemporary Hindu masculinity.

This article has demonstrated how digital media's power is effectively harnessed to produce a masculinist Hindu nation for mass consumption. Going be-

18 Most hetero-cisgendered Indian men who populate digital media, across different geopolitical spaces, also have access to some form of material wealth. This figure is mainly located within the socio-cultural matrix of an upper-caste Hindu. All other masculine performances are therefore constructed in relation to the upper-caste, heterosexual Hindu man.

yond the suggestion that digital media is a key component of the present administration's infrastructure, I have illustrated how the dissemination of digitally networked pre-planned images, texts, and memes produce a uniform idea of Modi masculinity that affectively stitch together disparate registers of class, regions, and religion into a uniform articulation of Hindutva as the ultimate goal and structuring structure of *Hindu Rashtra*, leaving Muslim voices, dissenting figures who do not subscribe to this imperative, vulnerable to relentless trolling. I have also shown how this affective rendering transcends the virtual to have direct corporeal ramifications in physical spaces, as the opening incident suggests. The connection between the digitally mediated affective inscription of an aspirational Hindu masculinity as a response to the projected 'dangerous masculinity' of the Muslim man fortified through trolling and general behavioral patterns by purveyors and consumers— is key to understanding the vigilante nature of contemporary online Indian ecosystem.

No conflict of interest was reported while writing this article.

References

Anand, D. (2007). "Anxious Sexualities: Masculinity, Nationalism and Violence." *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 9, 2: 257–269.

Anderson, B. (2006). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso Books.

Appadurai, A. (2019). "A Syndrome of Aspirational Hatred is Pervading India." *The Wire*, 10 December 2019. https://thewire.in/politics/unnao-citizenship-bill-violence-india.

Athique, A. (2012). *Indian Media*. New York: Polity Press.

Babu, R. (2019). "Sabarimala Explained: Supreme Court Verdict, Protests and Controversy." *Hindustan Times*, 13 November 2019. https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/sabarimala-explained-supreme-court-verdict-protests-and-controversy/story-FtwmVlSbfa3tQuIOuTEQVP.html.

Bahri, D. (2004). "Arguments to Kill and Die for Colonial Fantasy, Postcolonial Masculinity, and the Rhetoric of Hindu Fundamentalism." *South Asian Review* 25, 2: 23–42.

Banaji, S. (2018). "Vigilante Publics: Orientalism, Modernity and Hindutva Fascism in India." *Javnost – The Public* 25, 4: 333–350.

Banerjee, S. (2005). *Make Me a Man! Masculinity, Hinduism, and Nationalism in India*. Albany: SUNY Press.

Barthes, R. (1972). *Mythologies*. Trans. Annette Lavers. New York: Hill and Wang.

Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra and Simulation*. Michigan: University of Michigan Press.

Bradbury, D. (1978). "The Science of Semiotics." *New Literary History* 9, 2: 199–204.

Brosius, C. (2005). *Empowering Visions: The Politics of Representation in Hindu Nationalism*. New Delhi: Anthem Press.

Butler, J. (1988). "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal* 4, 4: 519–531.

Butler, J. (2015). *Senses of the Subject*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Centre for Social Research. (2016). "Violence Against Women on Social Media – The New Reality?" *Gendermatters*, 20 May 2016. https://gendermatters.in/trolling-to-be-a-crime/.

Chakraborty, C. (2011). *Masculinity, Asceticism, Hinduism: Past and Present Imagining of India*. Delhi: Permanent Black.

Chatterjee, R. (2018). "'I couldn't talk or sleep for three days': Journalist Rana Ayyub's Horrific Social Media Ordeal Over Fake Tweet." *DailyO*, 26 April 2018. https://www.dailyo.in/variety/rana-ayyub-trolling-fake-tweet-social-media-harassment-hindutva/story/1/23733.html.

Chaturvedi, S. (2016). *I Am a Troll: Inside the Secret World of the BJP's Digital Army*. New Delhi: Juggernaut Books.

Connell, R. W. and Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). "'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept." *Gender & Society* 19, 6: 829–859.

Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. B. Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Govil, N. and Baishya, A. K. (2018). "The Bully in the Pulpit: Autocracy, Digital Social Media, and Right-Wing Populist Technoculture." *Communication Culture & Critique* 11, 1: 67–84.

Gudipaty, N. (2017). "Gendered Public Spaces. Online Trolling of Women Journalists in India." *Comunicazione politica* 18, 2: 299–310.

Jaffrelot, C. (2015). "The Modi-centric BJP 2014 election campaign: New techniques and old tactics." *Contemporary South Asia* 23, 2: 151–166.

Jaffrelot, C. and Therwath, I. (2012). "The Global Sangh Parivar: A Study of Contemporary

International Hinduism." In *Religious Internationals in the Modern World*, eds. Green, A. and Viaene, V., 343–364. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lal, V. (2014) "Cyberspace, the Globalisation of Hinduism, and Protocols of Citizenship in the Digital Age." In *Indian Transnationalism Online: New Perspectives on Diaspora*, eds. Sahoo, A. K. and De Kruijf, J. G., 121–146. Farnham: Ashgate.

Marvin, C. (1988). *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking about Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Massumi, B. (2002). *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Megarry, J. (2014). "Online Incivility or Sexual Harassment? Conceptualizing Women's Experiences in the Digital Age." *Women's Studies International Forum* 47: 46–55.

Mohan, S. (2015). "Locating the 'Internet Hindu': Political Speech and Performance in Indian Cyberspace." *Television & New Media* 16, 4: 339–345.

Mukherjee, R. (2020). "Mobile witnessing on WhatsApp: Vigilante virality and the anatomy of mob lynching." *South Asian Popular Culture* 18, 1: 79–101.

Nakamura, L. I. (2013). *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet*. New York: Routledge.

Ninan, S. (2019). "How India's Media Landscape Changed Over Five Years." *The India Forum*, 8 June 2019. https://www.theindiaforum.in/article/how-indias-media-landscape-changed-over-five-years.

Paasonen, S. (2019). "Bit on Networked Affect." https://susannapaasonen.org.

Rai, S. (2019). "'May the Force Be with You': Narendra Modi and the Celebritization of Indian Politics." *Communication, Culture & Critique* 12, 3: 323–339.

Rajagopal, A. (1994). "Ram Janmabhoomi, Consumer Identity and Image-Based Politics." *Economic and Political Weekly* 29, 27: 1659–1668.

Reddy, D. (2011). "Hindutva as praxis." *Religion Compass* 5, 8: 412–426.

Reeser, T. W. (2011). *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

Reeser, T.W. (2017). "Theorizing the Masculinity of Affect." In *Masculinities and Literary Studies: Intersections and New Directions*, eds. Armengol, J. M. et al., 109–117. New York: Routledge.

Shah, N. (2015). "Thrice Invisible in its Visibility: Queerness and user-generated 'Kand' videos." *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology* 8. https://adanewmedia.org/2015/11/thrice-invisible-in-its-visibility-queerness-and-user-generated-kand-videos/.

Sinha, S. (2017). "Fragile Hegemony: Modi, Social Media and Competitive Electoral Populism in India." *International Journal of Communication* 11: 4158–4180.

Sirur, S. (2019). "India among 70 nations hiring 'cyber troops' for propaganda, says Oxford University study." *The Print*, 30 September 2019. https://theprint.in/india/india-among-70-nations-hiring-cyber-troops-for-propaganda-says-oxford-university-study/299042/.

Srivastava, S. (2015). "Modi-masculinity: Media, manhood, and 'traditions' in a time of consumerism." *Television & New Media* 16, 4: 331–338.

Subramanian, S. (2020). "How Hindu Supremacists are Tearing India Apart." *The Guardian*, 20 February 2020. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/20/hindu-supremacists-nationalism-tearing-india-apart-modi-bjp-rss-jnu-attacks.

Taskin, B. (2020). "'Remember Gauri Lankesh': Rana Ayyub receives death & rape threats after posts on Kashmir." *The Print*, 3 July 2020. https://theprint.in/india/remember-gauri-lankesh-rana-ayyub-receives-death-rape-threats-after-posts-on-kashmir/453884/.

The Quint. (2015). "Twitter Trolls Among #Super150 Invited by PM Modi." *The Quint*, 6 July 2015. https://www.thequint.com/tech-and-auto/tech-news/twitter-trolls-among-super150-invited-by-pm-modi.

Therwath, I. (2012). "Cyber-Hindutva: Hindu Nationalism, the Diaspora and the Web." *Social Science Information* 51, 4: 551–577.

Udupa, S. (2018). "Gaali Cultures: The Politics of Abusive Exchange on Social Media." *New Media & Society* 20, 4: 1506–1522.

Vijayan, P. K. (2019). *Gender and Hindu Nationalism: Understanding Masculine Hegemony*. London: Routledge.

CONTRIBUTORS

Contributors

Amrita De is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Comparative Literature at SUNY Binghamton. She is an interdisciplinary scholar of South Asian Literature and Masculinity Studies. Her articles have been published in Boyhood Studies and NORMA: International Journal of Masculinity Studies. She is also a creative writer and is presently working on her first novel which also explores Indian masculinities.

Zeev Drori is a retired ranked Colonel in the IDF (he had a diverse and extensive experience as an IDF career officer as paratrooper and commander) and currently is a Research Fellow at the ICT (International Institute for Counter-Terrorism) at the Interdisciplinary Center (IDC) Herzliya, Israel. He holds a PhD in Military History from Ben Gurion University (1996) and served as an Associate Professor since 2016 in Kinneret Academic College. He was the Chairman of the Association of Researchers of Military and Society in Israel. His main research interests: Israel Military History; Guerilla and Terror Warfare; Israeli Security Studies. Decision Making and Military Affairs.

Sophie Guedet is a Post-doctoral researcher at the Norwegian Institute for International Affairs with a PhD in History. Her research interests revolve around conflict and post-conflict situations, nationalism, cross-border nationalist movements and contested forms of statehood, with a focus on South-Eastern Europe, Central Europe and Eurasia.).

Frank Jacob is Professor of Global History at Nord Universitet, Norway. He received his PhD from Erlangen University, Germany, and held positions at Würzburg University, Germany and the City University of New York (QCC), USA before he moved to Norway in 2018. His main fields of research are nationalism, migration and revolutions. Jacob has authored or edited more than 80 books, including the monograph Gallipoli 1915/16: Britanniens bitterste Niederlage (De Gruyter, 2020) and the anthology War and Semiotics (Routledge, 2020).

Udi Lebel is an Associate Professor in the School of Communication and a research fellow at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies; at Bar Ilan University, Israel. He holds a PhD in Middle East & Mediterranean Studies from King's College, University of London (2001). His main research areas include the Discourse of Loss and Bereavement; Victimology and Trauma Communities; Civil-Military-Media Relations; Commemoration Communities and the study Collective Memory Discourse; the sociology of the Military and Security Communities.

Francesco Mangiapane is a Research Fellow in Semiotics at the University of Palermo, Italy. He deals with Sociosemiotics of Culture. He has been focussing on issues related to Visual Identity and Branding, the Internet and the Social Media, Food and Cultural Identity. He has been teaching in various courses of the Media Studies program at the University of Palermo and has also been tenuring the courses of Semiotic disciplines (in particular Food Branding and Gastronomic Cinema) at the University of Gastronomic Sciences in Pollenzo. Mangiapane collaborates with national and local magazines as a contributor and is a member of the editorial staff of E/C, the online magazine of AISS, the Italian Association of Semiotic Studies, www.ec-aiss.it. His works include *Retoriche Social: Nuove politiche della vita quotidiana* (2018) and *Cuccioli: Critica dei cartoni animati* (2020).

The nation is a powerful idea that creates a sense of belonging, but is often also used to separate people according to their different national identities. How the idea of nationhood determines the individual and collective identities of people and how it helps to create national narratives will be discusses in this issue of Global Humanities. It thereby emphasizes the power of nationhood and its impact with regard to forging identities until today.

ISBN 979-12-80664-01-3

€ 16