

Zoran Djindjic Remembered: The Formation of Collective Memories

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Abstract:

Zoran Djindjic was the Prime Minister of Serbia and Montenegro from 2001 to 2003. Throughout the 1990's, Djindjic was a leader in the Serbian opposition movement to President Slobodan Milosevic who advocated for major economic, social and political reforms in Serbia. In 2000, he helped engineer the removal of Milosevic from power. After two years in office and several attempts on his life, Zoran Djindjic was assassinated on March, 12th, 2003. Now, six years after his murder, Belgrade is in the process of constructing her memories of Zoran Djindjic. It is a special moment when, in the negotiation of a collective memory that will influence the identity of a society, memory becomes alive. This paper will explore that negotiation.

The paper begins by establishing a general biography of Zoran Djindjic, the political situation in Belgrade during the 1990's under the regime of Slobodan Milosevic, and definitions of memory and identity. After providing a context to understand the significance of Zoran Djindjic in modern Serbian history, I document and analyze memories of Zoran Djindjic. The qualitative research is restricted to an elite class of Serbian society: highly educated Belgrade residents who identify as Djindjic supporters and on the political spectrum of liberalism. Therefore, these individuals do not represent the whole of Serbian, or even Belgradian society.

In the interviews, people used Djindjic's style of speech to describe him in their memories. Consistently, they remember Zoran Djindjic as an exceptional leader who embodied the values of hard work, personal responsibility, positive energy, and the ability to enact change. Their memories of Zoran Djindjic are connected to the mass demonstrations that ultimately removed Slobodan Milosevic from power on October 5th,

2009. Therefore, Djindjic has already become a symbol of change/ the promise of change in the current manifestation of collective memories of this particular Belgrade community. Although these interviewees are aware of criticisms and compromises made by Djindjic during his political career, their memories focus instead of his vision of reformation and a modern, European, democratic Serbian society.

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Introduction:

My research project in Belgrade is two-fold, intertwining the themes of memory and identity in a study of the assassination and legacy of Zoran Djindjic. To begin with, I aimed to document and critically analyze memories of Zoran Djindjic. The people interviewed are all, to some degree, supporters of Zoran Djindjic. However, they span several different generations and hold different definitions of what it means to be a Serb. I chose to focus on this section of society because his supporters actively contribute to the establishment of Djindjic as a reformer in collective memories.

Memories are not the simple truth. They are all, to some degree, socially constructed narratives. Therefore, an individual's memories can be critically dissected in order to reveal his or her political and social identities. Researching collective memories of Djindjic can be a platform to explore Serbian national identities and society. Thus, for the second part of my research, I will explore the relationship between how people remember Zoran Djindjic and their conceptions of Serbian national identities. Although all the people I have interviewed use the same catch phrases when describing Djindjic and his significance (a symbol of the ability to change, a destroyer of Milosevic-induced political apathy, a hard worker, a pragmatist, and a source of energy) I believe these memories and symbols have roots in very different places based on an individual's age and chosen national identity.

Research Questions:

- What are the collective memories of Zoran Djindjic as a politician?
- What are the similarities and differences in people's memories of Zoran Djindjic?

- What does he symbolize as a leader?
- Are there competing narratives about his work as Prime Minister?
- Are generations in Serbia impacted differently by his assassination? If so, how?
- How do people remember March 12th, 2003, the day of his assassination?
- Is there a connection between how an individual remembers Djindjic and his or her definition of what it means to be a Serb?
- Have people created an idealized mythology about his role in democratizing Serbia?
- Did he offer an alternative vision of national pride divorced from violence and hatred?

Methodology

My research focuses on documenting and critically analyzing memories of Zoran Djindjic. Given the lack of academic articles and books in English specifically on Zoran Djindjic, The following paper relies heavily on its qualitative research, in the form of fourteen interviews, to provide the theoretical framework and the social evidence. In other words, my main form of data collection will be interviews. One of the great parts of this topic is people's willingness to speak and share; I wanted to take advantage of this wealth of memories. For my selected research participants, I began with questions that establish their chosen political identifications, background, and definition of what it means to be a Serbian citizen (national identity). Because all of my interviewee were from Therefore, in my research, I was able to place them within different contexts during the nineties and within the context of mainstream Serbian society. Then I will ask my

first set of questions about their memories and perceptions of Zoran Djindjic during three distinct time periods: the 1990's under Milosevic's control, post-October 5th, 2000 during his time as Prime Minister, and on and after his assassination on March 12th, 2003. My second set of questions will aim at discerning the interviewee's national identity and its relationship, or lack thereof, with the life and assassination of Zoran Djindjic.

Literature Review

Caveat

My literature review is severely crippled by my inability to fluently read in Serbian. I have not discovered any publications, in English, that specifically focus on communal memories of Zoran Djindjic after his assassination. While I was excited that my research covers a previously non-academically explored territory, it means that as an outsider and novice academic, I have no theories from inside Serbian society against which I could compare my ideas. In many journals or articles on Serbia, the author mentions that the assassination of Zoran Djindjic represented the end of hope/democracy/possibility for change for Serbs, implying that Djindjic embodied those characteristics while he was alive. There appears to be a general consensus that Djindjic's assassination represents the end of something positive, something embodied in the mass protests on October 5th, 2000. But none step beyond that basic level of observation and examine why: why Zoran Djindjic has come to symbolize what he does (and what exactly does he symbolize), why an unpopular politician drew one million mourners to his funeral, why Djindjic has such a powerful role in the memories of his supporters today. There are no connections between collective memories of Djindjic and how people view

their relationship with their state, once led by Djindjic. There are no questions about how people see his impact, or lack thereof, on Serbian society today. Generally, writers appear to believe that the most effective way to understand Zoran Djindjic is to “objectively” judge/study his political career. I would argue that the most relevant way to understand Djindjic, and the current challenges facing Serbian society today, is actually through Serbs’ memories of him. The collective memories of Zoran Djindjic, especially those of intellectuals and activists, illuminate the challenges to reforming Serbia. Therefore, in my literature review, instead of analyzing previous arguments, I will provide a background for understanding the memories of Zoran Djindjic.

Biography of Zoran Djindjic

I will provide a basic biography of the former Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic. Since complete objectivity is impossible, I will instead highlight events in his life that have become, legitimately or illegitimately, points of conflict or controversy in the Serbian or Western media and/or Serbian politics. His early life has not been subject to any known criticism. A non-native son of Belgrade, Zoran Djindjic was born on August 1, 1952 in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Yugoslavia. In his early political life, Djindjic participated in student protests against Tito’s communist regime. For his activism, he was sentenced to a year in prison. After his graduation from the University of Belgrade’s Faculty of Philosophy, Djindjic earned a doctorate in Philosophy while living in Germany. Both his citizen supporters and critics cite this higher level of education as something that made Djindjic exceptional, positively or negatively - but certainly different than the majority of Serbian society.

Djindjic returned to Serbian politics just as Yugoslavia imploded. He quickly became one of the leading figures in the opposition movement to Slobodan Milosevic's nominally socialist, "democratically elected" regime. As a member of Serbia's Democratic Party throughout his political career, Djindjic established himself as a proponent for reforms to transform Serbia into a liberal, democratic state with a capitalist economy - "modernized" following the example of Western European countries. However, during the mid-1990's, Djindjic began to use popular Serbian nationalist rhetoric within his speeches, visiting (as a symbolic show of support) Bosnian Serb militia units as they besieged Sarajevo, the "soul" of an integrated, multi-national Yugoslavia.¹ In 1997, Zoran Djindjic briefly became Belgrade's first democratically elected mayor in several decades. He led the mobilization of thousands- strong student and civilian protests to pressure Slobodan Milosevic to accept the election results. However, even with this display of popular support, Slobodan Milosevic's government removed Djindjic from office several months later. Before the 1999 NATO bombings, Djindjic received death threats and left the city for Montenegro. As a result, he did not live through the 78 days of bombing. For some, according to Western journalists, missing this experience (finally proof of Serbia's victimization) separated him further from mainstream Serbian society, cementing his position as an elite "other".

In 2000, with a push from the anti-Milosevic student organization, OTPOR, Zoran Djindjic became a critical figure in coordinating a united opposition movement to remove Slobodan Milosevic from power. In the Serbian Democratic Opposition (DOS), Djindjic engineered the presidential campaign of Vojislav Kostunica against Slobodan

¹ Eric Gordy, *The Culture of Power in Serbia* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 50.

Milosevic. In September 2000, Kostunica, a politically moderate, democratic nationalist, won the majority of the vote, handily beating Milosevic. However, Milosevic did not concede defeat until October 5th, 2000, the culmination of days of protests in the capital. Over a million Serbs from all over Serbia marched in the streets. There was no violence; Djindjic made deals with organized crime bosses and Milosevic's secret police in order to ensure a peaceful transition of power.² On January 25th, 2001, Zoran Djindjic became Prime Minister of Serbia. Ideally Djindjic wanted drastic and quick changes to Serbia's economic and political systems, such as legally trying Milosevic and his allies for their crimes in the 90's, establishing civil freedoms, privatizing business and generally readying the country to enter into the European Union. Despite these aspirations, much of Djindjic's energy was focused on his political battle with Kostunica for control of Serbia's new direction and keeping his diverse coalition together.

During this period, Djindjic did not enjoy popular support. Milosevic's allies retained control of the secret police, government law enforcement organizations. Criminal organizations, the cornerstones of Serbia's economy under Milosevic, continued to exert great economic and political control. Continuing their 90's coverage, Djindjic remained vilified by nationalist media outlets and criticized by liberal media. Despite working for a democratic Serbia, Djindjic upheld Milosevic's election laws in order to nullify Kostunica's presidential election victories in 2002 and, like Milosevic, continued to restrict and use the media to further his own political agendas. However, in the beginning of 2003, Djindjic had won a decisive political victory against Kostunica, allowing him to aggressively pursue his desired reformations. In February and March of

² Obrad Kesic, "An Airplane with Eighteen Pilots: Serbia After Milosevic," *Serbia Since 1989* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2005), 29-30.

2003, Djindjic began to aggressively attack Belgrade's leading criminal organizations, building legal cases against their leaders, and entered negotiations with Albanian government officials to find a definitive solution to Serbia's relationship with Kosovo.

On March 12, 2003, while exiting his car in front of a Serbian government building, Djindjic was shot by a sniper. At 1:30 pm, he was pronounced dead in the hospital.³ His murderers were found to be members of the Zemun Gang, an organized crime organization associated with the Red Berets, a notorious nationalist militia group supported by Milosevic. However, the identity of all the players involved in the assassination is not known; many theories agree that the actual assassins were just the blunt instruments used by more powerful figures. Controversy and confusion remain about the reasons and masterminds behind Djindjic's death. To some extent, according to the social and economic realities of the time, to remove Milosevic from power and make changes in (or even govern) Serbia, Djindjic must have associated with heads of organized crime. Djindjic was assassinated because he began to go after organized crime. But the extent of involvement by members of the government or nationalist opposition forces is unknown.

Directly after his assassination, the government declared a state of emergency. With their newfound authority, the parliament managed to arrest criminals and the remains of Milosevic's power structure to a degree Djindjic was never able to accomplish with the limitations of his situation. Around one million people attended Djindjic's public funeral in St. Sava Church four days after his assassination. But the Democratic Party was unable to parlay newfound support and respect for Djindjic and his administration

³ International Crisis Group, "Serbia After Djindjic," *ICG Report No. 141*. 18 March 2003.

into a sustainable movement or power base. The Serb people elected Kostunica as prime minister in the next election.⁴

Political Environment in Belgrade During the 1990's: An Apathetic Society

However, the events of Zoran Djindjic's life are not the only basis for the formation of his collective memory. Belgrade's repressive and limited political and social environment during the nineties critically influenced the current construction of memories of Djindjic. In Belgrade's 1990's oppressive, apathetic society, Djindjic shone as a possibility of something else, a different Serbia where Belgrade would once again attract foreign intellectuals, politicians, artists and tourists. Under Slobodan Milosevic's regime, Djindjic represented an alternative to the nationalist, insular vision of Serbia promoted by the media and the government. He was an "other"- and in his otherness, the embodiment of Belgrade's position within the rest of Serbia. Eric Gordy and especially Obrad Kesic, in his essay "An Airplane with Eighteen Pilots: Serbia After Milosevic," criticize Zoran Djindjic and other leaders of Milosevic's political opposition for missing numerous opportunities to put aside their egos and build a united platform against Slobodan Milosevic.⁵ While both authors put forth convincing arguments for Djindjic's failures of leadership, these criticisms do not affect Djindjic's positive symbolism for his supporters.] Instead, Djindjic's energy is predominantly viewed in the context of Milosevic's induced political apathy.

⁴ "Biography," Zoran Djindjic Fund; Office of Media Relations, "Zoran Djindjic (1952-2003)," Website of Serbian Government; International Crisis Group, "Serbia After Djindjic," *ICG Report No. 141*. 18 March 2003.

⁵ Gordy, 59; Kesic.

As Eric Gordy explains in his book, *The Culture of Power in Serbia*, Milosevic stayed in power by destroying political alternatives while simultaneously claiming credit for “democratic” reforms like political pluralism.⁶ Over time, mired in a situation where they had no outlet for their voices or to enact change, Serbian society sunk into apathy and resignation; they turn their focus onto their private lives, an area they still have the freedom of choice.⁷ They were not allowed to be citizens. Slobodan Milosevic further cemented his hold on power through nationalist wars in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. Gordy reasons, ‘the war provided the regime with the following possibilities: the ability to categorically disqualify political opponents as treasonous, unpatriotic, and fomenting division when unity is need...’⁸ Therefore, Zoran Djindjic becomes an “other” and a dangerous traitor during the nineties, undermining a chance for popular support. However, these very characteristics that the media and Milosevic used to vilify him have become such an important element of his symbolic meaning today. He represents everything that was denied to the people under Milosevic.⁹ His collective memories could potential form a new way of seeing themselves as patriotic.

One must place Djindjic within the urban vs. rural divide exploited by Milosevic during the 1990’s. Milosevic’s regime, needing a core of supporters, idealized rural Serbia as typifying quintessential Serbian values of nationalism. Focusing on elections in the early nineties, Gordy identifies, “the deep social division of the country between older and younger people, between urban and rural people and between the small group of

⁶ Gordy, 21-22.

⁷ Ibid.,22.

⁸ Ibid.,24.

⁹ Gordy explains that the power of Milosevic’s speeches to move the people came from their simple, clear, directness- a welcomed contrast to the convoluted “babble” of Yugoslav communists Interestingly, my interviewees testified to the same clear, direct qualities in Djindjic’s speeches. Ibid., 26, footnote.

highly educated people and the much larger group of less educated people.”¹⁰ Belgrade became the traitorous heart of Serbia, the center of the opposition. Simultaneously, thousands of young, urban, highly educated and talented individuals left Serbia, seeing no hope for their future. These individuals, who could have formed the core of Zoran Djindjic’s movement to reform Serbia, were lost to that society.¹¹

Media is another critical component in creating collective memories of Djindjic. Throughout the nineties, Serbian main media stations, under Milosevic’s complete control, restricted the flow of information and only broadcast propaganda for the regime. Of course, this led to the vilification of Zoran Djindjic as one of the main opposition leaders, drilling into the public his un-Serbian nature. At times he was the main shareholder in Coca-Cola, a greedy capitalist worth millions. At others, he was a German or American spy, completely in their pockets. Sometimes he was even the great grandson of Hitler. These images of Djindjic remained in collective consciousness after Milosevic left office. Like in any democratic society, the liberal media criticized Djindjic for his political decisions they disagreed with while the former media puppets of Milosevic continued to brand him as a treasonous Serb.¹²

Memory and Identity

W. James Booth, in his book “Communities of Memory: On Witness, Identity, and Justice,” provides the theoretical frameworks for memory and identity that the following paper will use to analyze the memories of Zoran Djindjic. In his preface, he establishes

¹⁰ Ibid.,52.

¹¹ Ibid.,56.

¹² Ditimar, 22 April 2009 Interview (Belgrade, Serbia); Velimir Curgus Kazimir, 14 April 2009 Interview (Belgrade, Serbia).

that, "...memory is essential to the coherence and enduringness of the community (or person), to its boundaries and persistence, in short, to its identity."¹³ He further explains, "group memories define who we are in the world in a way that distinguishes us as a community."¹⁴ Applying this idea to this paper's specific focus, I would argue that the memory of Zoran Djindjic is essential to establishing a democratic community in Serbia. This argument will be built throughout the paper.

Although identity is not the central focus of this paper, memory defines identity and those resulting identities inform the creation of further memories. Ultimately, shared memory is the glue of a community. Therefore, any paper about collective memories, especially in a country with a recent troubled history of the issue of its identity, must begin with an understanding of identity. According to Booth, "...assertions of identity normally seek to do (at least) three related things: to draw a boundary between group members and others; to provide a basis for collective action; and to call attention to a life-in-common, a shared history and future."¹⁵

Memory is not linear. Our present informs what we remember about the past and our memories (about what occurred in the past) are the foundation and tools by which we build the future. Djindjic's life, his decisions, philosophy, and actions, provide the blueprint for how people remember him. At the same time, present circumstances alter how people understand the past, the life Djindjic lived. Wood uses a Japanese paradox to explain this complex relationship between past, present and memory: "Art [and in this

¹³ W. James Booth, *Communities of Memory: On Witness, Identity, and Justice* (USA: Cornell University Press, 2006), xiii.

¹⁴ Booth, 12.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*,3.

case, memory] is defined as an echo of something that has already existed which one events.”¹⁶

Body of Paper

In the following body of my research I will present the significant similarities (repetitions) and differences in the interviews about memories of Zoran Djindjic. Based on these memories and perceptions, I will advance theories about the future direction collective memories of Djindjic might take, their connection to the history and present circumstances of Belgrade, and the possible implications for the memories. The most important concept to keep in mind while reading the following pages is that the formation of socially-based, collective memories of Djindjic is an ongoing process. This is just the beginning. The following are personal memories (which are already influenced by external forces) starting to morph, build the foundation, for a collective memory. Please take this research for what is truly is: stories of a select group of people, something alive and changing.

My research is based on interviews with fourteen individuals. Twelve of them are formal interviews, recorded and based on a similar set of questions. The other two were informal encounters, based on conversations with my academic advisor and an acquaintance’s colleague. Only one of the interviewees is a woman, a result of two other women being unable to make interviews and the lack of focus in this research on gender. The interviewees fall on a limited spectrum of liberal political views, with only two of the students (in their early twenties), self-identifying as having conservative views on the issues of national interests. All of the interviewees hold or are in the process of working

¹⁶ Ibid.,33.

for degrees in higher education, predominantly from the University of Belgrade. In order to protect their privacy, I have assigned them pseudonyms to be used in the following paper.

The majority of the interviewees have been active in either politics or civil society. What is even more important is that all of the interviewees, with the exception of one individual, are or have been, in some capacity, trying to change Serbia to become a modern, democratic, economically stable state according to their understanding of Zoran Djindjic's vision. Their level of education, liberal views, socio-economic status and agency make them atypical within their society; they do not represent Serbia or even all of Belgrade. However, they do accurately show the process, consciously or unconsciously, of transforming a leader in their lives into a memory in their society.

While I have tried to find a cohesive narrative in the research, I am aware that certain areas might contradict each other. For example, the representations of Djindjic as the only individual who could have changed Serbia versus Djindjic as a leader who was stuck in a bad situation that impaired his ability for change. To the same people, both may be true. Memories can be contradictory, and the analysis will reflect that.

Language of Memories

When I began my interviews, I was baffled by the use of elaborate or strange metaphors to describe Zoran Djindjic. When the interviewees were discussing their own political leanings or elements of their identity, their language became stripped of these strange phrases. But then they reappeared particularly when describing Djindjic's theories on reformation of Serbia. Two of my interviewees, Pavle, a 27 year old finishing

up his military service and heading to Cambridge University and Dragoslav, a 36 year old who was one of the founders of OTPOR and mentored by Djindjic until his death, both used four of the same anecdotes, although they had only met each other briefly. Over the course of our discussion, they each: 1. used the image of Djindjic taking multiple stairs at a time to explain his work ethic and push for quick governmental changes; 2. conveyed the magnitude his loss by saying a man like him was born only once in fifty years; 3. quoted the same “ancient Jewish saying” about not recognizing loss until it was gone to explain Djindjic’s shift upward in popularity after his assassination; and 4. illustrated Djindjic’s intelligence by describing how quickly he mastered English while prime minister. According to my academic advisor, the “ancient Jewish quote” is a popular saying used in Serbia to refer to someone who has died. Therefore, it does not inform anything particular about memories of Djindjic.¹⁷ However, the stair analogy was actually used by yet another person over the course of my interviews and Zoran Djindjic’s ability to learn English was told to me by around five individuals overall, as well as several mentions of analogies about eating frogs and surgeons versus witch doctors. Finally, Dimitar, a 27 year old film director who is putting together a documentary of Djindjic, told me my interviewees have been mirroring the Djindjic’s characteristic method of explaining his agenda to the people.¹⁸ The call to climb up stairs several at a time was particularly a famous metaphor for speedy reforms used by Djindjic in his speeches. The majority of my interviewees mentioned the role of the Serbian media in dictating social images of Djindjic, especially and logically, those in their late thirties

¹⁷ Although it does settle Zoran Djindjic within a Serbian tradition of thinking a man will always be more appreciated after his death. Dragoslav, 20 April 2009 interview (Belgrade, Serbia); Pavle, 23 April 2009 interview (Belgrade, Serbia).

¹⁸ Dimitar, 22 April 2009 interview (Belgrade, Serbia).

or older who would have experienced the propaganda. However, although they emphasized the significance of Djindjic's speeches and three interviewees immediately formed huge smiles across their faces at memories of hearing him speak, my interviewees were unaware how much the rhetoric of Djindjic plays a role in formatting and articulating memories of him.

The Generational Divide in Memories of Djindjic

During Zoran Djindjic's political career, his colloquial and direct orations and messages particularly resonated with young men and women, particularly students living in Belgrade. As Dragoslav, one of the prominent members of the generation who were high school and college students in the 1990's, describes,

We (his generation) were old enough to remember the good ol' Tito's times and young enough to be persuaded to go to senseless Milosevic wars. One third left the country, one third ended up with depression and addiction and one third led the 1992, 1996-7 student protests, formed OTPOR and won.¹⁹

Dragoslav is a part of the generation, the third, that felt like they made a change in the country, who defeated Milosevic. As he said, "they won". But, Dragoslav explained, Zoran Djindjic brought these individuals together, drawn to his charisma and message like desperate moths to a flame.²⁰ He empowered them, gave them a purpose- to fight- and a means to do so. Djindjic relied on them starting with his Democratic Party "mutiny" to become president in 1994 and young Serbs living in Belgrade continued to be the backbone of his campaigns throughout the nineties. While I believed this

¹⁹ Dragoslav, 20 April 2009 interview.

²⁰ "And besides his politics, he has this type of magic. You speak with him and his optimism and positive ideas are contagious. In the nineties, that was the only light at the end of the tunnel. When you were a young man in the nineties, you only had two options: to live somewhere the life was better, and probably 100,000 youngest and best educated people left, or to stay here and fight. The common point for that for those young people who chose to stay and fight) was Zoran." Ibid.

connection in memories between Djindjic and young Serbs to be significant or unique and theorized about its implications, my advisor, Djordje Pavicevic, assured me that Individuals who were in their late teens and early twenties during the nineties are not claiming him retrospectively; Djindjic, as a living leader, always belonged specially to them.

Interestingly, several people from the “older” generation I interviewed, colleagues or active supporters of Djindjic during the nineties and now older than forty, believe the connection between Zoran Djindjic and the new young men and women of Belgrade has been broken. When I separately asked Nada, a 42 year old graphic designer and advertiser for a liberal, private college, who worked for a women’s NGO and Petar, a former musician and now student at that same college (who I estimate to be in his forties), how they think young people remember and are impacted by Djindjic, they denied Djindjic meant anything to young people today.²¹ These two individuals interact with young students on a daily basis. However, the official interviews I did, as well as the many casual conversations I have had about my research, revealed Djindjic was far from forgotten.

Although I interviewed a select group of young men who have chosen to study politics, for them, at least, Zoran Djindjic has strongly imprinted himself within their memories. One student, Branislav, who I unfortunately only had the opportunity to speak to for fifteen minutes, expressed the loss of Djindjic simply, but in as emotionally poignant terms as the interviewees who marched alongside him during the student protests of the nineties. Disproving the older generations’ assumptions, he explained, “I always said, whatever happened, I would always stay in this country and do anything that

²¹ Nada, 17 April 2009 interview (Belgrade, Serbia). Petar, 23 April 2009 interview (Belgrade, Serbia).

I can to improve the conditions for myself, my family, my friends, and the people who live with me. But in that moment I, for the first time, thought about leaving the country because I simply did not see any hope.”²² In the first sentence, Branislav, a Democratic Party member born and raised in Belgrade by “Yugonostalgic” Djindjic supporters, reveals an internalization of Djindjic’s signature challenge to take on personal responsibility and agency.²³ This level of commitment he expressed in improving and changing his country, embodied in the use of the word “always”, emphasizes how deeply Djindjic’s assassination impacted him. Zoran Djindjic, who two of my interviewees older than forty professed that young people would not even remember, moved this young man to reassess the base values of his life and think about leaving his home- even though home was no longer at war or under the control of Slobodan Milosevic. He might have been a child during the worst oppression and deprivations of the nineties, but it was still, maybe even more so, his future that he saw Djindjic building. This student grew up on the hope Djindjic represented. It is as hurtful, although maybe a different kind of hurt, to see that constant hope in one’s life murdered.

The following interview, a group interview with three male political science students, only reinforced my perception of Djindjic’s continued meaning to at least a selection of young people. Throughout the discussion, Milos repeatedly called Nikola “the next Zoran Djindjic” after the latter’s pronouncements of establishing a modern, Europeanized, democratic Serbia- a loving repetition of Djindjic’s vision for the future.²⁴

²² Branislav, 15 April 2009 interview (Belgrade, Serbia).

²³ “Yugonostalgia” has entered the popular vernacular in the Balkans to denote nostalgic feelings and memories for aspects of life during the existence of Yugoslavia. The Democratic Party was Zoran Djindjic’s party and is currently in power in Serbia. While it still claims it follows the vision of Djindjic, as this student said in our interview, many liberal Belgradians heavily criticize the party for becoming more politically conservative and investing in preserving the status quo.

²⁴ Milos and Mikola, 15 April 2009 interview (Belgrade, Serbia).

Milos, who offered the most criticisms of Djindjic out of all my interviewees, nonetheless interrupted Nikola with a jab of his hand and a smile on his face. It was a compliment, marking Nikola as a man of optimism and drive to create reforms in Serbia. It was exactly this use of Djindjic's memory that the older generation did not expect to happen.

Possible Reasoning for False Perceptions

Nada and Petar's ignorance of Djindjic's continued importance to young people today means more than they are out of touch with portions of Belgrade's youth. The tensions about who remembers Djindjic suggest fissures in Belgrade's society between the children of the nineties and the children of Yugoslavia. For the generations who reached adolescence under the benevolent gaze of Comrade Tito, memories of Djindjic are bound to the experience of political impotency during the nineties. The memory of Belgrade under Milosevic's enforced apathy and cultural stagnancy has made Djindjic a symbol of energy and the possibility for change. However, in this train of thought, because the experience of living through the nineties as a responsible citizen gives Djindjic meaning, the younger generations now, who have just become citizens, cannot possibly understand Djindjic. I believe this reflects an overall challenge in Serbia: there is a chasm in society based on experience. Liberal, educated individuals in Belgrade, instead of supporting the energy of young men and women who might be inspired by Zoran Djindjic, distance themselves because they believe the young kids have been brainwashed by nationalism. Nada explained how professors at her college try to "deconstruct" the students' unquestioned national identities.²⁵ According to her, "the young people want to feel that they belong to something that has value" and they have

²⁵ Nada, 17 April 2009 interview.

been taught that a Serbian nationalist identity has that value.²⁶ However, Nada never makes the connection that Zoran Djindjic, who gave her purpose, an alternative to nationalism during the nineties, could be transformed into collective memories that do the same for her students. Instead, dismayed by the gap between her identity and the students, Nada says she has avoided getting to that close of a level (discussing identity and national connections) with the younger generation, because she will be disappointed. In her words, “it would take ten years to explain how it feels to be free of hatreds of nationalism...”²⁷ During this interview, by her request really more of a discussion than anything formalized, a lot of the differences between the different generations crystallized in my mind. At the end of the interview, I shared my theories with her about the different meaning of Djindjic based on experiences in the nineties and national identities. I gave my impression at the time that young people could not understand Djindjic the way she did; while for her he deconstructed the fake Serbian nationalism, his memory now constructs for young people Serbian patriotism.

Although October 5th, 2000 resulted in only a regime change, it was revolution that the students were after. Djordje, a professor at University of Belgrade’s Faculty of Political Science, told me a former student of his said Djordje’s generation (men and women in their thirties and forties) were trapped in their mindset of revolution. I believe this is coupled with a lack of belief that the upcoming generation will enact a movement of change equal to the student protests of 1991, 1996-1997, and 2000. For them, Djindjic’s assassination closed the possibility of their revolution ever being realized. Djordje’s response to this theory was that they, his generation, were protesting against

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

war and Slobodan Milosevic, basic, defining issues in society. Now that Serbia has somewhat stabilized, slowly but steadily moving in the European direction, the current students are protesting against student fees and other practical, but boring matters. Unfortunately, their fight is about the details of societal structures, not the future of society.

Fortunately for Serbia, at least some young people have not been discouraged by the unglamorous aspects of their battle. As I stated above, in Belgrade, there is the student calling his friend “the next Zoran Djindjic”; and the friend accepting the compliment and challenge of that statement. Branislav believes Djindjic was correct when he said that even if he died, democracy in Serbia would not die with him.²⁸ Pavle, just a few years older, was less sure that the democratic tradition started by Djindjic is alive and strong in Serbia today, but still saw its presence. Commenting on the same Djindjic quote as Branislav (both of whom mentioned it independently of my question), Pavle said that Djindjic’s assassination slowed the process of reformation in the long-term, but “his sacrifice ushered in an era of ultra-reformation.” A 25 year old friend in Belgrade, a well-traveled, politically liberal student, once told me he often feels overwhelmed by the pressures to explain himself and change society.²⁹ But the very fact that he feels and takes to heart this personal responsibility as a citizen, a personal responsibility Djindjic introduced to Serbian popular discourse, proves memories of Zoran Djindjic are present and inspirational for young people today.

Memories of Djindjic have become intimately intertwined with the 2000 anti-Milosevic movement. Because the movement’s immediate sense of promise and hope

²⁸ Branislav, 15 April 2009.

²⁹ Drago, 13 April 2009 (Belgrade, Serbia).

never translated into concrete changes Djindjic's liberal supporters wanted and needed, October 5th, 2000, only nine years ago, has retreated far back into Serbia's history. Petar informed me memories for Djindjic are really nostalgia for the period of time in 2000-2001 when there was an incredible feeling of agency, excitement and the promise for change- a new optimism. Djordje corroborated this assessment. He continued on to say that the western media and government perpetrated the conception that the problem was Milosevic. Once he was taken care of, a democratic, free happy society would surely blossom. "the problem was not one person and whatever one person can do," but "what is accepted and what is rejected [by Serbian society as a whole], how it was manipulated and what it recognized..."³⁰ This is yet another reason interviewees from older generations do not believe Djindjic matters to young people- they were too young to have formed personal memories of him. This is a contradiction in and of itself: judging the life of Zoran Djindjic as belonging to a distant past, yet revealing continued mourning and pain in their voices.

Petar in particular dismissed the idea that young people had meaningful memories of Djindjic. He believed Djindjic's assassination was history to young Serbs in their early twenties.³¹ But underneath his academic and clinical tone of speaking about memories of Djindjic, hints of emotion would creep into his voice. Petar might have began by saying that he cannot even think of Djindjic as a real person anymore, but then he admits Djindjic was "something special", a leader he misses even now.³² On a personal level, it was hard for me to hear that that young people would not have personally significant memories of Zoran Djindjic's assassination. September 11th, 2001 occurred two years

³⁰ Petar, 23 April 2009 Interview.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

before March 12, 2003, the date of Djindjic's assassination. I was only twelve at the time, but the two planes crashing into the twin towers remains a pivotal moment in my life. I remember all the details of that day. If someone told me I was too young for that to have meaning, I would feel as though that individual was denying me part of my identity. Since memories form identities, in many ways the older supporters of Djindjic are denying young people the ability to make the memories of Djindjic a part of their current identities.

The Exceptionality of Djindjic: A Symbol of Positive Energy and Hard Work

Without exception, the interviewees' remembered Zoran Djindjic as exceptional. However, writing this sentence, I don't know whether he is an exceptional man, leader, human, scholar, politician, or symbol. Nonetheless, in these memories, his positive energy, incredible work ethic, and education make him exceptional. It is these very qualities that made him an exception in the nineties, when nationalistic qualities of blind devotion to one's country gave a man worth.³³ But even in these words of praise rather than condemnation, Djindjic remains something different, not the norm in 21st century Belgrade. In framing Djindjic as being exceptional for those qualities, the interviewees recognize that their society still does not value education, hard work, and personal responsibility/agency above all other characteristics for Serbs. The formation of strong collective memories, and truly collective in the sense they are shared by the majority of Serbian citizens living all over the country, would integrate these values into a new, alternative Serbian national/patriotic identity. Petar, after putting forth his belief that

³³ Velimir Curgus Kazimir, 14 April 2009 Interview (Belgrade, Serbia).

collective memory serves the purpose of shaping the values in society, said he wish Djindjic as more a part of collective memories.

Seemingly contradictory, included with the ideas of Zoran Djindjic as a source of positive energy were testimonials that Djindjic told the hard truths. As Nada described it, Djindjic had the charisma to win over thousands of people with his speeches, to have masses blindly shouting “Yes We Can” and believing in him on the basis of his personality alone.³⁴ But instead, Djindjic chose to risk his popularity and tell the people the truth of the situation- a decision he continuously made to put what was right over what was popular. After decades under the illusions of Tito and Milosevic, saying anything but the highest praise about Serbia had become downright traitorous.³⁵ When my interviewees spoke about their memories of his speeches, they really wanted me to understand how special Djindjic’s honesty was.³⁶ However, he did not stop with the bad. Djordje asked me if everybody said that what was special about Djindjic was his vision, a plan when other politicians were silent. In Djordje’s experience, collective memories of Djindjic focus on Djindjic’s vision. The basis of Djindjic’s plan was to establish a symbiotic relationship of responsibility between Serbia’s citizens and its government, the foundations of a democratic society. But in even simpler terms, it was to build a different future. In telling the people about his plan, his energy was so great that he could overcome the entrenched apathy of Belgradians after a decade of war, oppression and isolation. Nada said, “People were like they had been woken up from a long sleep. Like

³⁴ Ironically, Dragoslav used the same comparison to Obama in a positive way. He felt like “Yes We Can” after Djindjic’s speeches because he convinced him and all his audience, that they had the power to enact change in Serbian society. For (Dragoslav), “Yes We Can” represented the worth of Djindjic as a politician and the worth of his vision. But for Nada, it is just an empty phrase. Nada, 17 April 2009 Interview; Dragoslav, 20 April 2009 Interview.

³⁵ Dragoslav, 20 April 2009 Interview.

³⁶ Ibid; Nada, 17 April 2009 Interview; Dimitar, 22 April 2009 Interview; Pavle, 23 April 2009 Interview.

Hmm...it is good to be a part of Europe. There is something that we call the future and this is not another war, imagine that.”³⁷

His supporters believed in his plan because of Zoran Djindjic’s work ethic and philosophy. According to his speeches and his actions, anything was possible- it is important to try to solve the problems. Ivan, the program director of an NGO in Belgrade, while explaining to this innocent, young American student Djindjic’s mistakes, called Zoran Djindjic a patriot for fulfilling the duties of his position as Prime Minister and working hard in office. However, in the case of two of the strongest Djindjic supporters interviewed, Dragoslav and Nada, traditional Balkans stereotypes of Serbs as lazy, uneducated people accompanied descriptions of Djindjic’s work ethic.³⁸

Surprisingly for an outsider, these most prized qualities of Djindjic, what he symbolized, are not idealized. I hypothesized to my advisor that memories of Djindjic emphasize these qualities to combat pervasive stereotypes about lazy Serbs. Djordje emphatically responded, “but he was!”³⁹ Objectively, Djindjic was a highly educated man with a doctorate in philosophy who consistently worked hard his entire political career in pursuit of his goals and verbally spoke a message telling Serbs that they could change their society and should take responsibility for it. To this American outsider, hard work is not a remarkable quality- it is a standard characteristic for all levels of society. But to my interviewees, Djindjic’s work ethic shone against the nepotism of the Milosevic regime where Slobodan Milosevic’s wife, son, and daughter became titans in the media, economy, and politics just because of their blood. He was a proof that basic,

³⁷ Nada, 17 April 2009 Interview.

³⁸ Dragoslav, 20 April 2009 Interview; Nada, 17 April 2009 Interview.

³⁹ Djordje Pavicevic. Associate Professor at University of Belgrade’s Faculty of Political Science. (Belgrade, Serbia).

normal values, which had become extraordinary, were present in at least one of Serbia's leaders. Djindjic was a living reminder of what they could be, but not yet achieved. In memory, Djindjic has become the vision, as much as democratic society. However, this theory is complicated by the fact that all of the individuals I interviewed were intelligent individuals who, by value of their education and activism, must have a strong work ethic. To an outsider, they are proof in and of themselves of the potential for change present within Serbian society.

Zoran Djindjic: The Pragmatic Idealist/ Idealistic Pragmatist

Djordje warned me that collective memories of Zoran Djindjic overestimate what he actually accomplished in office.⁴⁰ Donning the rosy glasses of hindsight, they confuse what he, their ideal champion of democracy, would have done with what he actually did—focus his political energies on ousting Kostunica from a position of power instead of focusing on lasting reforms, upholding Milosevic era media and election laws for his own political purposes, sending Milosevic to the Hague tribunal on the anniversary of nationally historical defeat in Kosovo and other human and imperfect actions. However, I found that only one interviewee, Dragoslav, a member of Djindjic's government, spoke about specific reforms initiated by Djindjic.⁴¹ Instead, my interviewees' memories focused on the emotions excited by Djindjic and his vision for the future. The majority of the individuals explained Djindjic as a lone figure of reformation stuck in a pile of dirty

⁴⁰ Djordje Pavicevic, 29 April 2009 Meeting.

⁴¹ Of course, much of his career and success rests on Djindjic's reputation, giving him an uncritical perspective of Djindjic's work in office and a motive for including specifics.

mud, forcibly keeping him from going forward.⁴² No one blames him for being unable to translate his vision into a sustained movement for change. Pavle observed, “I don’t think he could have united us, we are too divided, but I think he could have dragged us.” Once again, it is not Djindjic’s fault, but the fault of the Serb people. Many of my interviewees explained to me (who they assumed to be an uninformed outsider) that Djindjic had the media, secret police, Kostunica’s party, remainders of Milosevic’s government and regular law enforcement working to slow or stop his reforms. To compound Djindjic’s problems, most Serbs are uneducated (in both politics and academics) and warped by nationalist propaganda. A popular refrain in the interviews was the lamentation “if only Djindjic had one more year...”⁴³ Ironically, while he was prime minister, Zoran Djindjic was criticized for being too pragmatic and not committed to any ideals.⁴⁴

However, in many of the memories of Zoran Djindjic, people have allowed him to remain human. There was less idealism than I expected and great awareness of the accusations against him, particularly in relation to the nature of his dealings with Serbia’s criminal syndicates. However, as Dimitar simply explained to me, the good Djindjic did always far outweighed the bad.⁴⁵ Just as Djindjic validated the decision of young people to stay in Belgrade by providing them with a plan of action, I believe Djindjic’s own decision to return to Serbia provided a basis for his supporters’ faith in him. With his

⁴² My writing has obviously been affected by my study of Djindjic. I find it easiest and most fulfilling to write about him in terms of perhaps overwrought metaphors. In fact, Dimitar used a variation of this analogy, metaphorically explaining that a person cannot clean up shit without coming out smelling himself. Dragoslav, 20 April 2009 Interview.

⁴³ Realistically, if he had lived, Djindjic would have only had a couple more years in office. He was not popular enough to win the office of prime minister in a second election. Dimitar, 22 April 2009 Interview; Dragoslav, 20 April 2009 Interview; Nada, 17 April 2009 Interview; Pavle, 23 April 2009 Interview.

⁴⁴ Djordje, 3 May 2009 Meeting.

⁴⁵ Dimitar, 22 April 2009 Interview.

doctorate in Philosophy and his drive, Zoran Djindjic could have gone and succeeded anywhere in the world (or chosen to use his intellect to become rich through illegal and immoral means). No one purely power hungry would chose to promote a liberal, democratic agenda in opposition to Milosevic during the 1990's. Furthermore, my interviewees advised me that Djindjic was willing to risk his own popular support time again to make the tough decisions necessary for Serbia's long-term benefit.⁴⁶ Their evidence was Zoran Djindjic's unpopularity with Serbia's majority uneducated and nationalistic population. Dragoslav and Ditimar included the perfect Djindjic analogy to illustrate this point; if a villager has cancer, he will like the local witch doctor who gives him a magic get-well pill better than the qualified surgeon who advises painful surgery. This analogy, which pits the educated, presumably urban, doctor who uses modern medicine against the rural, educated man relying on falsehoods once again echoes the rural/ urban and uneducated/educated divide exploited by Milosevic in the nineties. In this comparison, there is a sense of vindication of the urban and educated side for the suspicion and oppression they suffered under Milosevic, when they were denied the right to represent Serbs. Djindjic is the embodiment of this section of Serbian society, centered in Belgrade, who finally had their voices dominate Serbian discourse. Being supporters of Djindjic has defined Belgrade's urban elites, and "identity involves possession of a past that thereby differentiates me from others."⁴⁷ In other words, this community in Belgrade are claiming and shaping the memories of Djindjic to reflect their own struggles in the past.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Although I did not really here exactly what those decisions were. Of course, I did not ask either.

⁴⁷ Booth, 12.

⁴⁸ Dimitar, 22 April 2009 Interview; Dragoslav, 20 April 2009 Interview.

These two aspects of his life, the decision to fight Milosevic in Serbia and the deals and manipulations he made along the way, allow Zoran Djindjic to symbolize seemingly oppositional characteristics of pragmatism and idealism. As Aleksander wrote in response to a question about Djindjic's symbolism, "yes, he was an idealist in many ways, but he was also very, even brutally realistic -- you could look at the many compromises made in DOS or in his government as examples."⁴⁹ One of the political science students, Branislav, also referred to Djindjic as a "man of compromises."⁵⁰ In the nineties, only an idealist could dream up and battle for a vision of Serbia's free, European, democratic future.

While I was troubled by Djindjic's flirtations with nationalist rhetoric in the mid-nineties, every interviewee I asked about it reassured me that Djindjic did not believe in any of it. An infinitely pragmatic man, it was good he used all the resources available to draft supporters. This sequence of logic comes straight from Djindjic himself and logically would be used by his political supporters. Unlike Kostunica, who believed preserving the legality of the system offered the best chance for building a democracy in Serbia, Prime Minister Djindjic consistently advanced that achieving speedy reforms and a complete break with the past justified any abuses of the legal system. Moreover, history has validated his controversial philosophy of a clean break from Milosevic's political structures, so it becomes preserved in memories as forward thinking rather than mistakes.⁵¹

In these memories, the non-supporters of Djindjic are punished in their depictions. On the other hand, it could merely be a statement based in reality to depict the majority of the Serb population. Regardless, that aspect of memories of Djindjic will have to change or the resulting collective memories will only further enforce these divisions in Serbian society.

⁴⁹ Aleksander, 25 April 2009 E-mail Interview (Belgrade, Serbia).

⁵⁰ Branislav, 15 April 2009 Interview.

⁵¹ Djordje, April 29th, 2009 Meeting.

However, about the question of nationalism and Djindjic in broader terms, there was more of a diversity of answers. Realistically, it would be impossible to be prime minister and not look after national interests. Aleksander, a 35 year old American educated Serb who was involved in OTPOR, responded to the question of nationalism and Djindjic, “he obviously rejected any project like a greater Serbia but by the same token rejected that Serbia had no national interests, especially as regards Kosovo and that there were practically no demands which post-Milosevic Serbia should reject because of the role of the Milosevic regime and the population of Serbia in the wars of succession.”⁵² In other words, although Djindjic did not subscribe to the radical, exclusive values of nineties hyper-nationalists, Aleksander believes Djindjic was a patriot, looking out for the best interests of Serbia. That necessitates a belief that there is a unique state called Serbia with certain qualities and values that could be defined as quintessentially Serbian. While Ivan and the political science students would certainly agree with this assessment, Nada would fervently oppose it, seeing Djindjic as promoting a deconstruction of Serbian specific identity and a return to the values of an inclusive Yugoslavia. This question will be further discussed later in the paper.

Theories about Symbolism in Memories

After hearing person after person emphasize the importance and power of this one man in creating change, a man who had to be assassinated to stop his vision of the future, I wondered how much this formation of memory was actually about Djindjic. According to Djordje, Djindjic was not always perceived as a singular leader while alive; throughout his political career, he was always a part of a coalition of politicians and parties. But now,

⁵² Aleksander, 25 April 2009 E-mail Interview.

according to Branislav, a student of political science, Djindjic was the man who created the 2000 revolution. The power these individuals now imbue on this one man perhaps relieves them of making the sacrifices Djindjic did (committing and ultimately losing his life) to steer Serbia in a modern, democratic direction. Even more importantly, by memorializing Djindjic as a once in a generation agent of change, my interviewees can rationalize to themselves why all their hopes and work in the nineties have not begotten a normalized, free Serbia. In their memories, Zoran Djindjic has become a “scapegoat”- a memory that allows them to live in a state with a population that has disappointed them, without remaining in a constant state of depression and despair. For these individuals are keenly aware that October 6th, the day after Milosevic left power when essential changes would start, never arrived. Petar explains, “There is a big discrepancy between this society and the promise of society at the time when Djindjic was alive. Still there is a huge gap, some hole you feel in society as a consequence.”⁵³ Ironically, the man who relieved the liberal elites’ apathy during the nineties and made them fight and care about Serbia might now be used to create a protective shield of apathy.

These memories of Djindjic as a singular leader for Serbia, or as Pavle semi-jokingly called him, a “messiah”, also might serve the purpose of keeping the valued qualities of Djindjic untarnished.⁵⁴ These Djindjic supporters need to deal with a cognitive dissonance between their faith in Djindjic and the reality of Serbia. They love and respect Djindjic and believe in his promotion of the personal responsibility and power of the citizen to enact change, but having followed Djindjic’s instructions, stayed in Serbia to fight, believed in the importance of education, they are not living in their

⁵³ Petar, 23 April 2009 Interview.

⁵⁴ Pavle, 23 April 2009 Interview.

reformed, democratic Serbia they had envisioned and hoped for. But if only Djindjic had the ability to make his promises come true, then it is not his fault that change no longer seems possible- his memory can remain pure. It is sometimes easier to blame the living, one's peers, than a beloved assassinated leader. Pavle criticized his generation for not being willing to give up their material happiness to put in the hard work necessary to follow Djindjic's example.⁵⁵ Dragoslav said his generation is burnt out, hit out of the ring by Djindjic's murder.⁵⁶ Neither of these men had anything negative to say about Zoran Djindjic.

The Intersection Between National Identity and Zoran Djindjic

The issue of age becomes central when examining the relationship between memories of Djindjic and national identity. As a consequence of speaking to many people in the field of education, more than a few people responded to my questions about identity by informing me identity is a fluid construction. Thus, no one really associated Djindjic with their definition of what it means to a Serb without prompting from my questions. However, unconsciously talking about the issue of their own national identity, Ivan and Dimitar called Zoran Djindjic a patriot.⁵⁷ Both times it occurred, I had finished with my questions and we were casually talking with my tape recorder off. All of my interviewees showed extreme awareness of the implications of "nationalism" and an outsider's probable associations between nationalism and Serbs committing acts of ethnic cleansing. Goran, one of the three students interviewed jointly, said, "I don't think that I am a nationalist, I am only proud to say I am Serb, I would be proud to say whatever

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Dragoslav, 20 April 2009 Interview.

⁵⁷ Ivan, 8 April 2009; Dimitar, 22 April 2009 Interview.

nationality I was, that I was Croat. . . .but that question is too painful for some people, so that would be the reason why I would put in first position citizenship and not nationality, in this case.”⁵⁸

In the case of the other two students, they carefully used “patriot” as a safe word to describe their connection to Serbia. In answer to a question about which political issues that matter to him, Milos replied that he is liberal on the one hand, but on the other, “Patriotism is one big thing in my life. I love Serbia, I love Belgrade.”⁵⁹ I asked him why he separated his patriotism and liberalism, but he denied he made any distinction. When I asked him to define patriotism, Milos elaborated that Serbian patriotism meant good education, developed country, growing population. The next student to speak, Nikola, responded to Milos’s cue by saying, “I am a patriot, but I define a patriot as a good friend, good student. . . .[to have good relations with other countries] . . .work hard, work well. It does not have any negative connotations with anyone else.”⁶⁰ All three of these young men have a firm idea of Serbia as their state and never question its legitimacy as a nation. This complete acceptance of Serbia as their country stems from nationalist influences, like Milosevic, on Serbian society in the nineties. However, Goran’s association between citizenship and pride at being a Serb and Milos’s explanation of Serbian patriotism including education and economic development is rooted in Djindjic’s vision of Serbia and his concept of personal responsibility. Nikola, the “next Zoran Djindjic” practically defines his patriotism using the same group of values associated with Djindjic in this research’s previously stated memories. For these young people,

⁵⁸ Goran, 15 April 2009 Interview.

⁵⁹ Milos, 15 April 2009 Interview.

⁶⁰ Nikola, 15 April 2009 Interview.

Djindjic and Serbian patriotism work in symphony with each other. Their memories of Djindjic have helped construct their definition of what it means to be a Serb.

Pavle and Nada, respectively around 8 and 22 years older than the political science students, reveal different connections between their memories of Zoran Djindjic and how they conceive of their national identities. Although Pavle claimed a Yugoslav identity did not exist anymore, Nada is the personification of his error.⁶¹ Although she would rather avoid the issue of identity, Nada considers herself a Yugoslav rather than a Serb, to her an “imposed” artificial identity created in the nineties. She defined being Yugoslav as an inclusive identity, “which means really a lot of nations, no hate... a kind of happiness that we are all together, yet so different.”⁶² To her, Zoran Djindjic promised the deconstruction of the Serb national identity and a return to defining Serbia by its community of nations.⁶³ Serbia would once again value inclusion and celebrate differences like it did during the first half of Nada’s life. This time around, it would just be the European Union instead of Yugoslavia.⁶⁴ Then Nada could once again be proud of her national identity.

Pavle stands at the halfway point between Nada’s and the student’s concept of identity. Incredibly articulate throughout our interview, Pavle verbally stumbled when discussing his identity; “I can’t say, I am not sure, if I am a patriot, I just have a sense of duty towards this country and its people...I did inherit these identities that could define me as a Serb, but I think identity is a state of mind, not of blood. Despite all the

⁶¹ Pavle, 23 April 2009 Interview.

⁶² Nada, 17 April 2009 Interview.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

categories I still can't say that I feel like a Serb.”⁶⁵ When I asked then how does he define his country, he answered by listing his levels of identification, starting with Belgrade and ending in Europe.⁶⁶ Yet when I asked him later why he decided to remain living in Belgrade and to serve in the military rather than civil service, he once again spoke about a duty to his country.⁶⁷ Although I believe he has cognitively chosen to reject a Serb identity based on his education, liberal family and awareness of its connotations, he still feels a connection to the Serbia of today, as it is now. While I think this unexplainable duty might be rooted in memories of Djindjic's work ethic and principle of personal responsibility, I am honestly not sure. Pavle's lack of understanding about his identity either way, trapped between what he thinks and feels, demonstrates the need for Zoran Djindjic to become a part of Serbian collective memory.

Based on this generational spectrum of identities, ranging from inclusive anti-nationalist Yugoslav to inclusive, patriotic Serb, I theorize that the memories of Zoran Djindjic will eventually create an alternative to nationalism as a form of Serb national identity. The connection has yet to be consciously made in Serbian society; Nikola, the best example of internalizing memories of Djindjic into a definition of what it means to be Serb, even said that Serbia is still looking for her identity as a country. But rather than the deconstruction of Serbia's identity that Nada hoped for, memories of Zoran Djindjic will construct (and are constructing) a different reason for young people to be proud they are Serbs. As Petar explained,

⁶⁵ Pavle, 23 April 2009 Interview.

⁶⁶ I wish I had asked him how he understands his feelings of duty to Serbia when he does not choose to define himself as a Serb. Ibid.

⁶⁷ He also spoke about his traditional views of the military as necessary for bringing together the masses and the elite, between which there is a pronounced gap in Serbian society. From the way he spoke about it, it reminded me of affirmative action in the US- a gesture to relieve the guilt of privilege for the elites rather than a real step to bridge inequalities in society.

Collective memory is a utility. Not everything we can remember. What we should remember is something that will help us achieve something today, in real practice. In that respect I think I feel the urgency of remembering Zoran Djindjic and his political thoughts and work... it is absolutely necessary.⁶⁸

His comment set my cognitive wheels in motion to think about the greater implications of how Serbian society remember Djindjic. The values of Djindjic that dominate memories of him, personal responsibility, education, a strong work ethic, are key characteristics for creating a community of citizens, rather than a group of people. By building an alternative Serb identity from collective memories of Zoran Djindjic, the Serbian national identity and the identity of citizenship could become integrated.

Memories of March 12th, 2003

This process of forming collective memories of Djindjic began with the end of his life on March 12, 2003. Although Nada was expecting, dreading, that Djindjic would be assassinated for his work, “when it happened, I felt like, oh okay, all of our dreams crashed in one second.”⁶⁹ For Pavle, it was a complete shock, “really unbelievable, I thought that he would make it to be quite honest with you...it was like the society was decapitated.”⁷⁰ Ivan got drunk after he heard the news.⁷¹ Dragoslav felt the urgent need to keep the country from spiraling into chaos and did not have time to mourn; “I cried first time at the funeral. I did not have time to cry for four days.”⁷² These are just snapshots of the incredibly detailed memories of March 12th, 2003. The events of that day have been preserved as flashbulb memories, “memories that are sharpened and

⁶⁸ Petar, 23 April 2009 Interview.

⁶⁹ Nada, 17 April 2009 Interview.

⁷⁰ Pavle, 23 April 2009 Interview.

⁷¹ Ivan, 8 April 2009 Interview.

⁷² Dragoslav, 20 April 2009 Interview.

persevered because they were emotional events.”⁷³ Six years after the assassination, Dragoslav knows who he was sitting next to when he heard, Ditar clearly remembers who told him Djindjic died, and all their voices still register fresh pain.⁷⁴ Pavle compared March 12th, 2003 to September 11th, 2001, two days that are deeply embedded people’s memories because of their significance and extreme trauma.⁷⁵ Dragoslav said that he had trouble separating his personal and political perceptions, and therefore memories, of Zoran Djindjic.

Although many of the memories of Djindjic reinforce divides within Serbian society, structured as educated, urban Djindjic supporters against uneducated, rural non-supporters, memories specifically of March 12th contain a Belgrade or Serbia united by the realization of what they have lost. As Nada recalls it, in Belgrade,

Everything stopped. It was a scary moment. It was like aha, even you guys who were so against him kind o feel that no you won’t move from this moment on. It was kind of tribute. It last for good few hours until they said he actually died...It wasn’t like that when NATO bombing happened, maybe it happened when Tito died, but it was Tito...But this city understood the one possibility we had to move on was violently stopped. It was nice to know even for a second.⁷⁶

Aleksander had the same memory of Belgrade, more concisely recounting, “indeed, in the coming days, I noticed how quiet and calm the city was -- it reminded me of the mourning I recalled when Tito died.”⁷⁷ With their echoed comparisons between Djindjic’s assassination and Tito’s death, Nada and Aleksander emphasize the degree of mourning and disbelief in Belgrade that only occurs when they have lost a recognized

⁷³ Dr. Abigail Baird, “Practice Exam for Introduction to Psychology,” Vassar College. 12 May 2007.

⁷⁴ Dragoslav, 20 April 2009 Interview; Ditar, 22 April 2009 Interview.

⁷⁵ Even though I chose to research memories of Zoran Djindjic because of the similarities between the impact of his assassination on Serbian society and the impact of September 11th on American society, I did not share with Pavle my connection. He made the comparison without my interference. Pavle, 23 April 2009 Interview.

⁷⁶ Nada, 17 April 2009 Interview.

⁷⁷ Aleksander, 25 April 2009 E-mail Interview.

leader. After the assassination, they felt as if their city came together- imbuing Djindjic with even more power in their memories. However, Pavle spoke of the dark side of the assassination that brought people together. He alludes to a potential way to remember Djindjic would further oppress any of Djindjic's positive energy. In Pavle's opinion, "I think his assassination had a negative impact on the Serbian self view. Because... all the reformers are shot here and it reinforced the question what kind of people are we to kill the philosopher became a king."⁷⁸ He opens the possibility that for some Serbs, Djindjic's assassination was proof that Serbia had not changed, that she was what the world accused her of. Both Dragoslav and Nada also used Serb reactions to Djindjic's life and assassination to draw broad illustrations of the Serbian people's self-destructive nature.⁷⁹

Conclusion

The Biography of Memory

This is the biography of the Zoran Djindjic of memories. In an apathetic, bleak time when bombs were literally dropping down on Belgrade, Zoran Djindjic told the Serbs what a "shit" situation they were in. He told them that Serbia was a small and poor country, contrary to the nationalist visions of Greater Serbia propagated by Slobodan Milosevic. But then he had a plan to make Serbia, a modern, democratic, normal society once again a part of the world. Zoran Djindjic worked tirelessly to implement his vision of reformation. An eminently pragmatic man, he did what he needed to do in a hard situation without any true allies. Although his actions might be criticized, his motives

⁷⁸ Pavle, 23 April 2009 Interview.

⁷⁹ Dragoslav, 20 April 2009 Interview; Nada, 17 April 2009 Interview.

should not be- he was always working for the ultimate good of the Serb people. He was assassinated because he could and would bring change, because he made deals with the criminal powers in society to free Serbia from Milosevic, because Serbia was too crippled by its past to understand and support his vision. In doing so, Serbia hurt her future- she shot herself. But not all hope is lost for a democratic society in Serbia- it will just take many more years to be realized without him. In our first meeting about our research, Djordje said that Serbia needed the myth of Zoran Djindjic. I believe that statement is the conclusive theme in my research.

Implications of Collective Memories of Zoran Djindjic: The Building Blocks for His Vision of Serbia

As shown in the analysis above, generational differences emerge in perceptions of current memories of Djindjic and the issue of identity. Interviewees from older generations, who experienced people in their late 30's and 40's, who grew up in Yugoslavia, believe young people today do not have memories of Zoran Djindjic. However, the college students I interviewed not only remember Zoran Djindjic, but have also integrated his symbolism into their national identities. Based on this research, I have concluded that collective memories of Djindjic, if his supporters mold his shared societal symbolism, could create a strong, alternative national Serb identity. This identity, based on the values my interviewees have emphasized in their memories of Djindjic, could provide a different basis for way to express patriotism and Serbian pride instead of the current hyper-nationalism. Moreover, this set of values, based on collective memories of Djindjic, could define Serbia as a state where its citizens believe in a reciprocal

relationship between themselves and their elected government. It would build a foundation for Serb citizens both to accept and have the ability to exercise personal responsibility for their structures of power. For the sake of Serbia's future, Serbian mainstream society must embrace the positive memories of Zoran Djindjic that emphasize his vision for Serbia, work ethic, and sense of personal responsibility.

Limitations of the Study

Unfortunately, due to my limited time in Belgrade and limited understanding of Serbian, I think there are several gaps in my study. I only had the ability to interview an elite section of Serbian society who were all Djindjic supporters. My small pool of interviewees all belonged to a highly educated, liberal selection of society; all of my subjects are either in the process of achieving higher levels of education or have achieved them. Except for one interviewee, all my subjects were born and raised in Belgrade. Of interviewees 30 and younger, all had parents who were supporters of Djindjic during the nineties. Therefore, because of this limited pool of interviews, I can only make theories, not conclusive statements, about both the formation of collective memories of Zoran Djindjic and how the process and memories reflect Serbian society as a whole.

My inability to read Serbian analyses of memories of Zoran Djindjic hampered the accuracy and depth of my own theories. Except for comments from my academic advisor, my research could not transcend its position outside of Serbian society. Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of what is written by Serbs about memories of Djindjic post-assassination is in Serbian- and there is not a lot of material even in Serbian. I could not find one article in English that specifically analyzes Serbian memories of Zoran Djindjic

and the formation of his collective memory. Therefore I cannot compare my theories against Serbian academics, adding an element of insecurity to my writing and thinking processes.

On a fundamental level, I must wrestle with my status as an outsider interviewing in English. Because I am not a part of Serbian society, nor am I a Serbian citizen, I do not share in the collective memories of Zoran Djindjic's assassination. I am not connected to my interviewees by the moment, the events. From my own experience with the moment of September 11th, 2001, I always feel more comfortable and share more when speaking about what happened with New Yorkers. I know they share a basic level of understanding. Therefore, my participants might leave out details and feelings of their memories that they believe I cannot understand. At every interview, the individual spent at least some (or significant) time giving me a biographical lesson on Djindjic. Although I informed my interviewees at the beginning of our conversations that I have been researching Zoran Djindjic and reminded them of my knowledge during the interview, they continued to tell me basic information.

Recommendations for further Research

Ideally, I believe a Serbian academic with a background in interdisciplinary work should commit to a yearlong research project on the formation of collective memories of Zoran Djindjic. Initially, the study would try to establish the status of current collective memories of Zoran Djindjic. The research should combine qualitative and quantitative research methods in order to provide a context for analyzing the memories of Zoran Djindjic in relation to the issues of identity, patriotism/nationalism, citizenship, and

overall society in Serbia. The quantitative study would allow the researcher to additionally explore the differences in memories of Djindjic based on divisions in society exploited by Milosevic during the 1990's: rural vs. urban, educated vs. uneducated, supporters vs. non-supporters, and old vs. young. With his or her knowledge of Serbian, the researcher should compare dominant images and descriptions of Djindjic in the Serbian media to memories of Djindjic today, especially in the case of individuals younger than 25. Furthermore, the researcher should compare the language and imagery in Zoran Djindjic's speeches to language and descriptions used in memories of Djindjic. Finally, because this would be the first comprehensive, academic study on memories of Zoran Djindjic, the researcher should present his findings to leading Serbian academics of memory, history, identity, and political science in order to begin a written dialogue. Then, the paper would hopefully include a theoretical or "thought" review- a literature review rewritten by the other authors themselves.

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Appendix

Because I desired my interviews to be discussions rather than formal question and answer sessions, I did not go into interviews with a set of questions. I found that creating a specific set of questions prior to an interview actually created a sense of anxiety about the interview. Although I wrote a comprehensive set of questions at the start of my research, I did not bring them with me to interviews. Instead, I had a list of certain topics I needed to cover. Therefore, the questions included below are one form of the questions I used in various ways and combinations to integrate them naturally into my conversations.

Moreover, I spent a lot of time during my interviews asking questions about their national and political identity. However, because I changed the focus of my study from studying the same age group in the political spectrum to studying a cross-generational group in the same general, political spectrum, many of my questions became obsolete (or, at best, interesting background not crucial to a short, one month, study.)

Interview Questions

Background Questions (to discover political identity and rural/urban upbringing):

My main goal was to uncover the individual's concepts of identity without asking any leading questions that would influence his or her answers.

Where did you grow up? Do you consider it an urban or rural environment?

(If they did not grow up in Belgrade) When did you move to Belgrade? Why?

What did you think about your identity and your country growing up? Did you consider yourself a Serb/Yugoslav/ other?

What are you currently doing?

Where would you place yourself within the political spectrum?

What political party, if any, do you identify with?

What issues matter for you during elections?

What were your expectations after Milosevic was removed from power?

What actually happened politically and socially with the 2000 regime change?

What are the benefits and responsibilities of a Serbian citizen?

National Identity Questions:

To you, what does it mean to be a nationalist?

Do you identify as a nationalist?

What are your ideas about citizenship?

What are the responsibilities and/or benefits of Serb citizenship?

Has your definition of Serb citizen remained constant during your life or changed?

What do you believe your national identity is based on?

Do you believe Zoran Djindjic was a nationalist?

What do your expectations for Serbia's future?

Politically, in what direction would you like to see the government go in?

Zoran Djindjic Questions:

These were the most important questions for researching the formation of collective memories of Zoran Djindjic. The answers were used to create a significant portion of the body of this paper.

When did you first hear about Zoran Djindjic?

What were and are your family and community's opinions about Djindjic?

Did you ever hear him speak? What are your memories of his speeches?

What are your perceptions about his work as Prime Minister?

What were your opinions of Djindjic while he has in office from 2001-2003?

What are your memories from March 12, 2003? How did you feel when you heard the news he was assassinated?

Why do you believe he was assassinated?

How did the media cover his assassination?

To a foreigner visiting Belgrade for the first time, how would you explain Zoran Djindjic?

How do you believe your generation was impacted by Zoran Djindjic's life and assassination?/ What do you think his assassination meant for members of your generation?

How would you like to see Djindjic preserved in Serbian collective memories?

Personally, what does Zoran Djindjic symbolize for you?

On a societal level, what is Zoran Djindjic's legacy?

What are your memories of March 12, 2003, when you heard Djindjic was assassinated?

How did Djindjic want to define the responsibilities and benefits of a Serbian citizen

living in a democratic society?

Do you believe Djindjic's vision for Serbia's reformation and state structure continues to be present and powerful in Serbian politics?

What was your perception of the relationship between Zoran Djindjic and Nationalism?

How do you believe young people today remember Zoran Djindjic?

Did your perceptions of Djindjic change after his assassination?

What you believe was Djindjic's vision for Serbia?